

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



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Increasing Concerns about Historical Sites

The concerns about the historical sites and monuments in Afghanistan have multiplied in recent years as insecurity has increased, and the government officials have not been able to take any serious stance against illegal mining or grabbing of the minerals and monuments. On Sunday, April 30, local officials in Badakhshan province warned that the historical sites and monuments in the province were under threat of destruction from local strongmen. Information and Culture Director, Naqibullah Saqibiyar, said in a statement that an important historical site, Dasht-i-Khamchan, a desert located a kilometer west of the provincial capital, ran the risk of being damaged and the historical castle in the area was converted into a residential place by land mafia and powerful individuals.

An earlier statement by the Directorate of Culture and Information (DoCI) of southern Helmand province, had said that of the 80 historical castles in Helmand province, 40 were in places controlled by the Taliban and under threat of destruction and government negligence, rains, storms and water rising for the Helmand River contributed to the destruction of important sites in the province.

Unfortunately, the situation in many other parts of the country is not different. The historical and cultural sites and monuments have not been preserved well and there are serious concerns about them as the insecurity, instability and government negligence seem to be on the rise. Bamiyan is also one of the provinces in Afghanistan that is known world-wide for historic Buddha statues that were believed to be carved out thousands of years ago. However, the people of Afghanistan have not been very much careful about them. Recently cultural activists in the province had voiced out their concerns that the historic sites were in dilapidated condition and government authorities were negligent about their protection and maintenance. They had warned that if proper attention was not paid, the sites would be extinct. The government authorities fail to understand that the initiatives to safeguard Afghanistan's cultural and historical heritage are really important for the feeling of national splendor in the members of Afghan society, which at the moment are non-existent.

The cultural heritage and historical treasure can play a tremendous role in uplifting national sentiments. However, it is also a fact that many years of civil wars and clashes have had severe impacts on Afghanistan's socio-political scenario. Though there has been relative peace and stability and there have been efforts to reestablish the Afghan society after the downfall of Taliban, a lot more has to be achieved to make a real difference in the society.

It is necessary, at the present scenario, that Afghanistan must have a sense of national integration and harmony. It must be reiterated for the people of Afghanistan that they once had a rich culture and civilization and they had times in their history that knew nothing of violence and terrorism and a relatively peaceful and rich civilization flourished on their land. Moreover, this should be insisted for them that they have to preserve the traces and remains of their rich history that should help the new generations realize the worth of their history and tradition. Unfortunately such insistence is very rare to see in the society where most of the discussions are centered on clashes and terrorism.

It is really unfortunate to find that the members of Afghan society themselves have not been very much careful about the rich traditional remains and artifacts. There have been culprits even from within Afghan authorities who have been involved in the filthy business of selling their traditional treasures. It is impossible to imagine that the artifacts that are sold illegally could reach to the Black Market without the support of the responsible authorities. Moreover, the instability and the absence of a particular system to take care of such treasure also help in their smuggling.

It is truly tragic to note that Taliban, during their rule in the country, played a negative role regarding the preservation of the rich Afghan tradition. The destruction of the Buddha of Bamiyan in this regard was clear indication that Taliban had not respect for the historical wealth and they considered them to be the remains of the non-Islamic civilization. However, they forgot the fact that they depicted the truth about the history of Afghanistan and they also depicted a more peaceful and tranquil era.

Though it may seem contradictory, the foreigners have been more helpful for Afghanistan to keep alive its tradition and history and have assisted Afghanistan in this regard to a great extent. International community and international organizations have made efforts every now and then to safeguard the cultural heritage of Afghanistan and at the same time attract the investors and visitors for their revival and promotion.

On the other hand, the insensitive attitude of the Afghan authorities themselves is unfortunate and requires to change quickly. It can never neglect such issues, particularly at a time when the country requires a strong integration to stand on its own as a nation.



Afghanistan's Water Management - A Bright Future of Self-Sufficiency

By Zia Danish

From 1960s, struggles were made for utilizing water which were hampered by war. Within the last decade and half, Afghan state and nation have resumed the plan to manage this unique asset, by the world's technical and scientific cooperation, with the aim of reaching sustainable progress and development. Managing water, mainly flowing water, will minimize poverty, provide security, fortify citizens' health, increase welfare in the region and develop trade and agriculture in the country.

To gain sustainable development and manage water, struggles have been started to some extent and a comprehensive strategy is adopted. The promising outcomes in recent years are beyond doubt such as the inauguration of Kajaki Dam. Moreover, the trip of Afghanistan's President to Australia, Indonesia, and Singapore for gaining the technical and professional cooperation in managing water will bear a tangible result.

Studies show that more than 45 percent of Earth's landmass and 60 percent of the total fresh water of the planet is covered by 276 international common river basin which is shared among 148 countries. Furthermore, the life of about 40 percent of the world's population is dependent on these international rivers and common water resources. Lack of water resources, industrialization of societies, increase in consumption per capita and the challenge of climate change have multiplied the competition for exploiting these common resources.

Studies further show that in 21st century, the world's security depends on their water strategy. For instance, the population growth, climate change, and water pollution make the world adopt effective, comprehensive and futuristic policy regarding their water resources. It is easily noticeable that from the last decade of the 20th century onward, international organizations, multi-national companies, NGOs, and national and international institutions have focused their attention on water resources and managing water - this struggle is on rise.

Water Resources in Afghanistan

Afghanistan's significant rivers originate from melting snow and natural blocks of ice of central and north-eastern mountains of the country. The flow of water is intensified by rain inside the country. These rivers flow out of border and into neighboring countries after passing long routes in the country. To categorize the countries on the basis of water resources, Afghanistan has somehow appropriate position and it is not among the countries suffering from lack of water resources. The amount of Afghanistan's flowing water is estimated 75 billion cubic meters annually - 57 billion cubic meters is formed by surface water and 18 billion cubic meters is formed by underground water. The assessments of Ministry of Energy and Water show that only 30 percent of country's water is used for internal objectives. Afghanistan's flowing water originates mainly from five following river zones:

- 1- Amo river zone, in north-eastern Afghanistan.
- 2- Northern river zone, in north.
- 3- Marghab-Heriroad river zone, in west.
- 4- Helmand river zone, in south and south-west.
- 5- Kabul river zone, in east.

Water's political-security role in international relations

Effective control and water management are a top priority of Afghan government. Therefore, 32 dams are under study, design and opera-

tion in the country for achieving the desired result.

The significance of country's water management

Preferring national interests, considering international principles and respecting the neighboring countries' rights to water, Afghan government is determined to control and utilize the water resources on larger scale. In fact, water management will lead to sustainable progress and development and the country's self-sufficiency. Water management will result in betterment in the following cases:

- 1- Security-economic cooperation with the regions via adopting active water diplomacy.
- 2- Self-sufficiency in generating energy and electricity and transmitting it to regional countries.
- 3- Campaigning against poverty and unemployment through developing and fortifying agriculture and livestock.
- 4- Self-sufficiency and reducing the level of Afghanistan's dependence on other countries through eliminating poverty, and increasing the country's outcome with the right management of water resources.
- 5- Economic boom in the region by effective management and preventing from the waste of water.
- 6- Protecting and reviving the ecologic environment of the country and the region.

Afghanistan's activity and agenda

According to officials, the government has adopted comprehensive agenda for water management. Meanwhile, the state, besides capacity building of human resources, works on constructing water dams and redirecting the water route to agricultural lands. In addition, significant plans have been put into practice for controlling and saving up floods, reforming and reconstructing watering system and strengthening the shores. The state has decided to manage water in a way to be able to use the maximum possible measure. Some of the state's agendas are pointed out shortly below:

- 1- National agenda for strengthening beaches and controlling floods.
- 2- National agenda for developing water resources.
- 3- Agenda for generating energy and electricity.
- 4- Establishing high council for land and water under the president's supervision.
- 5- Completing and utilizing Salma Dam.
- 6- Completing and utilizing different phases of Kajaki Dam and other dams.
- 7- Conducting seminars, conferences and technical and professional meetings.
- 8- Increasing and developing the level of general information.
- 9- Attracting hundreds of millions of dollars for investment in energy production and water management.
- 10- Researching, planning and enforcing an agenda for establishing 32 water dams and generating electricity.
- 11- Assigning several agreements and contracts with internal and external companies for investments.
- 12- Finalizing the document of foundation of water diplomacy of Afghanistan.
- 13- Establishing 50 councils of water utilizers in river zone offices.
- 14- Planning and endorsing policy and strategy for protecting water constructions.

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New Life for the SDR?

By Mohamed A. El-Erian

The rise of anti-globalization political movements and the threat of trade protectionism have led some people to wonder whether a stronger multilateral core for the world economy would reduce the risk of damaging fragmentation. After all, lest we forget, the current arrangements - as pressured as they are - reflected our post-World War II forebears' strong desire to minimize the risk of "beggar-thy-neighbor" national policies, which had crippled growth, prosperity, and global stability in the 1930s.

Similar considerations fueled the launch, nearly 50 years ago, of the International Monetary Fund's Special Drawing Right as the precursor to a global currency. And with renewed interest in the stability of the international monetary system, some are asking - including within the IMF - whether revamping the SDR could be part of an effective effort to re-energize multilateralism.

The original impetus for the SDR included concerns about a national currency's ability to reconcile the need for global liquidity provision with confidence in its role as the world's reserve currency - what economists call the "Triffin dilemma." By creating an international currency that would be managed by the IMF, member countries sought to underpin and enhance the international monetary system with a non-national official reserve asset.

Legal and practical factors, as well as some countries' political resistance to delegating economic governance to multilateral institutions, have prevented the SDR from meeting its creators' modest expectations, let alone the grand role of a truly global reserve currency that anchors the cooperative functioning of a growth-oriented global economy. Information and other market failures have added to the challenges, as have weak institutional infrastructure and inadequate branding. The result is a substantial gap between the SDR's potential and its performance.

That gap has meant missed opportunities for the global economy - particularly in terms of asset-liability management, responsive liquidity, adjustment between deficit and surplus countries - and thus a gap between actual and potential growth. With the SDR providing a stronger glue at the international monetary system's core, prudential currency diversification could have been made easier, the need for costly and inefficient self-insurance could have been reduced, and the provision of liquidity could have been made less pro-cyclical.

So, do today's anti-globalization winds - caused in part by poor global policy coordination in the context of too many years of low and insufficiently inclusive growth - create scope for enhancing the SDR's role and potential contributions?

Addressing this question, were it to gain traction, would involve a focus on an ecosystem of SDR use, with the composite currency - which last year added the Chinese renminbi to the British pound, euro, Japanese yen, and US dollar - potentially benefiting from a virtuous cycle. Specifically, the SDR's three roles - an official reserve asset, a currency used more broadly in financial activity, and a numeraire - could ensure greater official liquidity, expand the range of new assets used

around the world in public and private transactions, and boost its use as a unit of account.

Of course, given the advanced economies' embrace of more inward-looking, populist, and nationalist politics, a "big bang" approach to reinventing the SDR is highly unlikely. Even an incremental approach, starting with practical low-hanging fruit that does not require amendments to the IMF's Articles of Agreement, would face political challenges. But it would be worth considering.

Areas of focus would include using the SDR for some bond issuance and trade transactions, developing market infrastructure (including payments and settlement mechanisms), improving valuation methodologies, and gradually developing a yield curve for SDR-denominated loans and bonds. This would also help to leverage the interconnectedness of the SDR's roles, in order to reach critical mass quickly and have a foundation for further incremental gains.

For the effort to succeed, the IMF's approach would need to evolve - just like it did on country-specific issues.

When I joined the IMF in the early 1980s, discussions with non-government counterparts, whether on country or policy work, were discouraged. The situation today is very different. Broader national engagement - with NGOs, local media, and a broad set of politicians - is now viewed as an integral part of effective country advice and program implementation, as well as being essential for the Fund's "surveillance" function under its Article of Agreements.

A similar pivot is needed if the IMF is to deliver better on the supranational issues that are now migrating up its policy agenda. Specifically, the Fund would need to complement its traditional core constituency of governments and other multilateral institutions (particularly the World Bank) with systemically influential sub-national and private counterparts. The resulting public-private partnerships would enhance issuance, the development of market infrastructure, and liquidity provision for the SDR.

While it is not easy to combine developmental and commercial activities, the implications for global growth and stability of not doing so suggest that it is an effort that should be explored. Moreover, the IMF could start small, focusing on interactions with other official multilateral and regional institutions, sovereign wealth funds, and multinational financial companies - all anchored by an active coalition of the willing among the G20.

In an ideal world, the SDR would have evolved into more of a reserve currency during the era of accelerated trade and financial globalization. In the world as it is today, the international monetary system faces two options: fragmentation, with all the risks and opportunity costs that this implies, or an incremental approach to bolstering the global economy's resilience and potential growth, based on bottom-up partnerships that facilitate systemic progress. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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