

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



May 11, 2017

CSO Estimations and Population Census in Afghanistan

The Central Statistics Organization (CSO) of Afghanistan has estimated the country's population to be around 29.2 million people including 14.2 million women. In its 1395 solar year's statistical yearbook released on Tuesday, the Organization estimated that 6.9 million people live in urban centers and 20.8 million in rural areas. There are many other estimates as well in the book regarding population, agriculture, education, health, stock, industry, construction, rehabilitation, energy, services, foreign business, currency and foreign aid. However, it is disheartening to see that these estimates are not based on any comprehensive census data; rather they are based on obsolete data and varied sources.

The most reliable information about the whole population within a society can only be measured through a comprehensive scientific census. Afghanistan's first census carried out in 1979-80 could not be completed because of the political changes in the region. For almost thirty-six years the country has depended on the same data, which contained major errors. Later on, a census was scheduled for 2008, but it was further postponed for 2010, and again it could not be conducted that year as well. Estimations that are available as that of 2010 are also with many controversies. They are derived from the incomplete census of 1979. The most current statistics are also based on the same projections. These estimations are not considered true representative of the people of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the structure of Afghan society has been very diverse. The estimations depicted today about Afghanistan's demography by many statistical sources are overwhelmingly opposed by different ethnic groups in the country. They believe that these estimations tend to misrepresent different ethnic groups. Such controversies in the country can serve as severe blow to democratic evolution and can discriminate the people from their true representation in the government.

The statistics by CSO are also dependent on the earlier incomplete projections and many other sources. These sources are diverse in nature and do not unify into a single whole homogeneously. Moreover, some of the data are based on samplings; though they can have certain accuracies in some specific areas, they are not always useful for making projections about the population as a whole. In fact, nothing can substitute a comprehensive and scientific census, and in case of Afghanistan this substitution becomes even more difficult as there has never been a complete census in the country.

The diverse and suffering people of Afghanistan have been in dire need of such census. Large amounts of funds and support have poured in Afghanistan for the last few years but because of no detailed data available for its population, the deficiencies have not been identified appropriately and the funds and supports have not been able to be used effectively and for the required areas.

It is important to understand that a reliable information through comprehensive census is of utmost importance for policymaking, planning and decision making and administration. The authorities relevant to public administration can receive valuable information from census data, which makes them capable of making better decisions and design effective policies and arrangements. Apart from that the same data and information can be really helpful in management and evaluation of programs in education sector, housing, health facilities, labor force, transportation and other necessary areas that are essential for public welfare.

Without reliable census data, the deficiencies and the shortcomings in the areas mentioned above cannot be ascertained and the authorities cannot carryout effective decisions on how and where to allocate resources and how often to do so. One of the most important uses of the census data is in the demarcation of constituencies and the allocation of representation to governing bodies. This use of census data can be helpful in providing just government system, which is one of the most basic requirements of a democratic society.

Proper representation of the people in accordance to their number and their constituencies strengthens the grass root democratic patterns and provides a platform to resolve conflicts and to give every member of a society representation in the government. This concept is the true demand of diverse societies, like that of Afghanistan, which is composed of various races and ethnic groups.

Afghanistan requires a comprehensive and reliable data about its people, not just weak projections, and the solution lies in a comprehensive, detailed, scientific and unbiased population census in the country. The relevant authorities in the country must take practical measures in order to facilitate such a census.

International community along with UNFPA, that are determined to carry on population census in all the countries of the world that have been suffering in this regard, can cash the opportunity in Afghanistan to inculcate in the minds of the concerned authorities and common people the importance of a detailed population census. The government, simultaneously, must make sure that all efforts in this regard are facilitated in the best possible way and with complete devotion and sincerity.



Corruption and Politics of Transition Period

By Mohammad Hedayat

Continued from Yesterday

Political Solutions for counter-corruption

While according to Fukuyama's theory and this article are having deep political roots, as it was offered in the first part of this article, it is necessary to offer political solutions for such a phenomenon. In fact, creation of laws, procedures, and policies on counter-corruption and also, methods for prevention of corruption are all in a way political. However, this is better that all of these things be based on political plans.

However, what is political solution? Fighting corruption is a long process and needs time. This is also irreversible that cannot be achieved in short period of time, and the only way to fight this menace is political will. In other words, in the process of fighting corruption three things should be always considered. First, corruption is unavoidable, tangible and real that exists everywhere. Second, fighting corruption is a long term process that cannot succeed in short period of time.

Third, we should not get disappointed as our fight should lead to results as it did in other countries. Keeping these three important issues in mind, only a political solution can be used. The basis for political solution is strong political will that fortunately our government seems to have it. Improvements in fight against corruption in Afghanistan and positive reports on the government's measures and also reforms in the relevant laws and regulations plus the reforms in financial and procurement affairs all prove that there exists a strong will on behalf of the government. Now it seems that political will to fight corruption exists more than ever and this in itself is a positive sign in counter-corruption front.

According to the World Bank, a counter-corruption strategy stands on five key elements:

- Increasing political accountability
- Strengthening civil society's participation
- Creation of a competitive private sector
- Removal of institutionalized barriers to reach to power
- Improvement of government administration

There is no doubt that all of the issues mentioned above are necessary and important, but it seems in Afghanistan we need more fundamental measures as preconditions. As already explained, the foundations of the government do not have enough stability. First of all, every effort should be made towards strengthening the foundations of the government and its stability. According to Lucian W. Pye, a famous political science scholar, basic criteria of government are "compatibility", "complexity", "independence" and "solidarity".

Now all efforts should focus around establishment of these criteria that is a continues process itself. However, what is said does mean to ignore possible urgent solutions to fight corruption. Now that strong will to counter corruption exists inside the government, some urgent solutions that are based on political basis should receive attention. Main solutions that can be used at the moment by the government are as follows:

Direct Fight

In direct fight, the government should fight corruption and its manifestations. All government resources should be used for this purpose. The measures the government has had seems to be related to this level of fight. Establishment of the high council of counter-corruption, amendment of the relevant laws and regulations, unprecedented astringency on public offices, oversight on five key ministries that the highest load of financial works, and establishment of the national procurement committee under chair-

manship of the President are among the important measures that prove a strong political will to fight corruption.

Measures to prevent

Preventing measures are experienced in all the countries of the world that dealt with corruption. At this level, the government should provide for all the basic needs of government employees. Here, implementation of punishment and awards is among the key efforts that can be effective in prevention of corruption to happen. Promotional acts should not be limited to giving awards and job promotions, but it should also include a culture that highlights good work and honesty. Preventing measures should not be about people but also should include transparent policies, institutionalization of accountability, and creation of legal procedures for prevention of corruption

Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation

One of the main ways to reduce corruption that is political is to establish a system for monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation is basically a political phenomenon as it depends on the type of the system and the level of modernization of bureaucracy in a country. Until an organic relationship among the branches of the country's administrative system is not established, a modern and standard monitoring and evaluation mechanism cannot be created. It is natural that in short term an organic system cannot be produced.

However, with regards to the growth of knowledge in the human resources and the educated generation, and also with regards to the growth of the new technology, more facilities and possibilities are available in order to make the system organic. The government can simultaneously strengthen the basic foundations of the government and introduce an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism with the aim to reduce corruption.

Cultural Strategies

Cultural strategies are among the ways that is not limited to the government, media, schools, universities, civil society organizations, mosques, religious entities, etc. should also take a role. Notions such as national identity, national unity, political participation, national symbols and values such as democracy, freedom, human rights, and even religious teachings either do not have a shaped or even if they are shaped, they are shaped wrongly. Therefore, changes into the social and political understandings and institutionalization of new notions are necessities that can help in reduction of corruption.

Last Words

Administrative corruption is a problem and illness that exists in the body and souls of the Afghans that is a tangible phenomenon and at the same time unavoidable as the political system of the country has always been patriarchal and authoritative and the only criterion for its management has been the will of its rulers. This system still exists but is gradually changing. In this country, crises of identity, legitimacy, participation and distribution have always existed and were caused by persons. Individuals, even when they get to a low managerial position, try to take control of whatever they can and feel that everything belongs to them. That may be the reason that analysts are of the view that corruption in Afghanistan is rooted in political structures more than anything else that are inherited from the previous government and feeds the instability crisis and the transition period. Transition from the old structures and reaching to new structures create corruption in itself. However, with basic solutions that are mostly political, corruption can be gradually reduced and finally eliminated.

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People - 'Your Brethren in Religion or in Kind'

By Hujjatullah Zia

Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. I am not unmindful of the fact that violence often brings about momentary results. Nations have frequently won their independence in battle. But in spite of temporary victories, violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem: it merely creates new and more complicated ones. Violence is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love," these words have been spoken by a Nobel laureate Martin Luther.

Nonviolent mechanism for protecting human rights and freedoms has been disregarded for two main reasons: first, men's megalomania and lust for power have strongly bonded a king with his throne. The bloody war in Syria, which has killed around 500,000 people, unfolds this fact. Syria, once a peaceful country, has been changed into hotbed of horror and terror and streams of blood are shed every day. The shockingly high graph of casualties, gory incidents, heart-wrenching stories, etc. are highly outrageous. Women and children are burning amidst violence and bloodshed. Human rights and dignity are violated in the worst possible way.

Fundamental ideologies of warring parties are excommunicating people for their racial and religious backgrounds and spread hatred. The main players behind this bloody game spur fundamentalists on to slay combatants and non-combatants alike and create ugly episodes. Don't you still believe that "man is man's wolf"?

If one considers the day-to-day catastrophes and tragedies, they will think that we are living in the state of nature - when people shed the blood of one another out of ignorance and oppression. In the state of nature, men lived in tribal structure and it was "war of all against all". In this state, people cherished parochial mindset and view the world and humanity from a very narrow lens. For instance, women were treated as pariahs, racial superiority was practiced widely, ethical code and humanity were meaningless, etc. To understand the magnitude of barbarity, simply imagine the horrible stories of gladiators. A gladiator was an armed combatant who entertained audiences in the Roman Republic and Roman Empire in violent confrontations with other gladiators, wild animals, and condemned criminals. Some gladiators were volunteers who risked their lives and their legal and social standing by

appearing in the arena. Most were despised as slaves, schooled under harsh conditions, socially marginalized, and segregated even in death. In this game, human rights and dignity were violated flagrantly. A number of people, who were considered natural slaves or inferior, were forced to entertain those claiming racial superiority. We claim to live in modern world and condemn the barbaric practices of men living in the state of nature. We claim to live in democratic society and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), approved after the Second World War, to mitigate the sufferings of mankind. Based on the UDHR, men are born free with natural and violable rights and dignity and they are urged to treat one another with the spirit of brotherhood. All people, regardless of their social, political, sexual and religious orientations, are considered members of human family.

Despite this fact, our bleeding never stops and our anguish never comes to an end. Life is extremely cheap. The discourse over human and women's rights, the national and international conferences with the aim of alleviating public sufferings and reducing violence have not been a panacea for our problems. The modern world left men at the mercy of greater threats i.e. more destructive weapons. Nuclear powers menace one another. Lust for power has whetted their appetite for further bloodshed. Moral values are in decline and altruistic feelings are moribund. To put it succinctly, modern people are more unconcerned and stone-hearted than those in the state of nature were.

Worst of all, the emergence of modern terrorist networks blackmails the entire world. People of any race and religion are targeted violently by militant fighters. Disregard and contempt for human rights and dignity are outrageous. Neither men nor women are able to exercise their rights freely.

Peace will remain elusive if this trend continues. To sum up, the reasons behind all this violence are believed to be: practicing no religious tolerance; exercising fundamental ideology; claiming racial superiority; humiliating human rights and dignity and treating one another with disdain. If human societies do not uphold the fundamental rights - the rights to life, liberty and dignity - of mankind, violence and bloodshed will continue unabated. Moreover, one should treat others with the spirit of brotherhood. Hazrat Ali ibn Abi Talib (A.S) writes to one of his governors to treat citizens as brothers. "Remember that the citizens of the state are of two categories. They are either your brethren in religion or your brethren in kind."

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