

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



May 30, 2016

## Reviving the Anti-Corruption Campaign

Government officials say police special unit responsible for fighting serious crimes and corruption have arrested two senior officials of the Kabul municipality on charges of corruption and abuse of authority. The arrests come shortly after President Ghani reiterated his determination fighting corruption and announced that his government would soon take new measures to fight corruption. Despite that corruption remains highly pervasive in government offices in Afghanistan and most of government officials are involved in corruption, such high-profile detentions are rare and corrupt officials manage to easily elude prosecution by law.

The government is apparently boosting the efforts to revive the fight against corruption. The national unity government maintains that despite challenges it is committed to lead an effective campaign against corruption. However, critics believe that the national unity government has failed to deliver its promises on eradicating corruption and promoting good governance. Although, fighting corruption has been one of the key objectives of national unity government, the government has fallen short of establishing a comprehensive policy and taking a sustained approach. The government has so far led an on and off anti-corruption campaign that has been unable to promote the efforts against corruption to a new level producing tangible results. Afghanistan continues to remain one of the most corrupt nations in the world while the national unity government's anti-corruption plans are being criticized as a failed endeavor.

The recent measures taken by the government aimed at curtailing corruption suggest that the Afghan government is attempting to revive the anti-corruption efforts. While many praise the measures aimed at curbing corruption, they still doubt the government's resolve and sustainability of its approach for eradicating corruption in Afghanistan. It has taken serious anti-corruption measures in past two years: it has brought some key government agencies like procurement, recruitment, construction and customs offices under scrutiny and dismissed or detained a number of government officials on corruption charges. The measures, though, initially sent a shockwave through corrupt bureaucracy but ultimately failed to develop into a sustainable campaign. Therefore, the measures have largely been ineffective to make any major differences in curtailing corruption.

The national unity government needs to demonstrate that there are sufficient political will backing up the anti-corruption efforts. The efforts will go nowhere unless there is a robust political will in the national unity government to lead the initiatives aimed at eliminating corruption and promoting good governance in Afghanistan. According to analysts, high-ranking officials having the highest share of corruption and embezzlement. But so far very few senior government officials have been put on trial for corruption despite that many names are in the list. Despite that the government maintains that political will exist and it would lead an effective anti-corruption initiative, there is still a long way to see if the plans for fighting corruption would work. Reforming the judiciary is believed to be the key for fighting corruption. There have been considerable progresses in bringing reforms and to empower judiciary that is contribute to the fight against corruption. The government has been working on a plan to establish a special justice center to enable judiciary to spearhead the campaign against corruption. At the center of the initiative lies the initiative to empower the new entity to pursue senior government officials who are accused of corruption. The initiative is believed to be an ambitious plan. But it is expected to bring considerable differences in the efforts to eliminate corruption if it manages to develop as an enduring anti-corruption plan. The initiative is praised as a viable strategy to fight corruption in Afghanistan. The national unity government needs to ensure sustainability of the anti-corruption initiative and avoid unsuccessful efforts such as establishment of parallel anti-corruption commissions.

Many doubt that the government is attempting to revive the anti-corruption efforts with an eye on the two upcoming major international conferences on Afghanistan to be held in July and October this year. There is no doubt that there are some incentive for the government in taking the anti-corruption efforts into the next level. Afghanistan's needs continued funding from the international community as there is no clear sight of insurgency in the country and on the other hand economy remain weak and fragile. The Afghan government wants to have some tangible progresses in this areas when the upcoming key international conferences are going to be held in July and October this year. It is a legitimate motive for Afghanistan to try to persuade the international community to continue supporting Afghanistan by assuring it that the Afghan government is committed to fight corruption. Anyway, the government of Afghanistan needs to work hard to assure the international community that its anti-corruption programs are genuine and will curtail corruption. For this, the government needs to refocus on demonstrating a robust political will and garnering political support from the Afghan political spectrum.



# Democracy in India

By Hujjatullah Zia

To define democracy, It is believed that liberalism is the foundation stone of democracy and the view of John Locke, the 17-century philosopher who is credited with founding liberalism as a distinct philosophical tradition, is highly essential in this regard. According to Locke, man has a natural right to life, liberty and property while adding that governments will not have to violate these rights based on the social contract. He also defined the concept of the separation of church and state. Based on the social contract principle, he argued that there was a natural right to the liberty of conscience, which he believed must, therefore, remain protected from any government authority. Locke's theory echoed in the US Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson, as, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." In India, you will think that the seeds of Locke's theory are sowed there by Indian founding fathers in pursuit of a peaceful life. People's natural rights are ensured under a true democratic state.

The prominent feature of social life in India is religious tolerance. People exercise their rights and freedom without a sense of fear or encountering barriers from the public. The ground is paved for both religious and secular practices and one acts upon his/her beliefs and creed freely. Neither ideological differences nor racial and sexual varieties pose threat to their life and liberty. The individuals do not deem themselves superior or inferior on the basis of their accidental backgrounds such as caste, creed or color.

The true spirit of democracy is exercised in India. The fact is that Indian nation reaps the fruit of non-violent revolution of their founding fathers, who laid the cornerstone of democracy and freedom, and the struggles made by their present leaders. Their democratization process has grown mature enough which let citizens live a peaceful life. Mosques, churches and temples stand proudly next to one another, which reflect the culture of acceptance and tolerance rather than being a bone of contention. Sikh's turban, Muslim's hijab and Hindu's sari, which signal their religion, decorate the chains of people on the street, recreational areas, playgrounds, before Taj Mahal and in queues of polling stations to use their suffrage equally instead of being used as justification for spilling their blood, violating their rights and dignity or infringing on their liberty.

The voting suffrage and equal rights of the citizens are supported by law and state. Moreover, magnitude, diversity and complexity of demography, ethnicity and geography place no barriers before citizens while enjoying their rights. Presidential election, which is termed as "festival of democracy" in India, displays

the citizens' equal rights and held to the satisfaction of the public, which strengthen the trust between state and nation. Government facilitates the ground for public voting in the best possible way and a single vote matters for the state. To spread awareness in every part of the country, Indian government launches Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program, a number of voter-friendly services through telephone call centers and SMS-based helplines, ATM-type touch-screen information kiosks at conveniently located public places, internet-based search facilities, etc. in the election held in 2014, the Election Commission of India (ECI) optimized the use of Information and Digital Technology (IT) in the electoral process of India - which provides speed, quality and transparency to electoral processes and reduces the interface with human beings, who may sometimes be biased or causing unwarranted issues.

Similarly, the counting process is held under the watchful eyes of observers, political parties and media. As a result, for counting duty in 2014, deployment of security personnel was drawn up a day before the counting, staff from various departments of state governments across India was deployed, a central observer for each counting center an micro-observer were decided upon, centers were prepared with security and logistical arrangements, video cameras were installed and a 100 m radius around the counting centers was declared out of bounds for public.

Indian deputy election commissioner, Umesh Sinha, said that every polling station had booth awareness group besides sending voter slips, that contain the address of polling stations and election's date, to residents before polling day and also remind the people of the election day through SMS. According to him, the Indian government addresses urban apathy and provides the fastest track for the disabled and facilitates the ground for Indians, living abroad, to vote and also accepts proxy voters.

V.N. Shukla, the director (IT) who was also present in the meeting, believed that electoral reform is a need for Afghanistan and said that issuing electronic Tazkira will support transparency, in elections, to a great extent. In terms of paving the way for a true democracy, it is believed that there is much for Afghanistan to do and electoral reform is one of the key issues. Since election is an essential element in constituting a democratic system, it should be held transparently.

Indian's democratic system can be a role model for Afghanistan. To pave the way for a true democracy, Afghan government will have to strengthen transparency in electoral processes and enforce the law strictly and the nation should cherish tolerance and respect the human rights and dignity of one another irrespective of their racial, sexual or religious backgrounds.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia\_hujjat@yahoo.com

## How the West was Lost

By Carl Bildt

Recent political discourse on both sides of the Atlantic has raised a disturbing question that is becoming increasingly difficult to dismiss: Are the United States and Europe turning away from the policies of openness that have historically driven their economic success?

In the US, Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee for president, is waging verbal war against virtually every trade agreement his country has ever struck. He has threatened to tear up the highly successful North American Free Trade Agreement and pledged to block any attempt to move forward with the recently concluded Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Should Trump's views become part of the Republican Party's platform, the shift will redraw the political landscape regarding free trade. After all, the Republicans have traditionally been the standard-bearers of free trade in the US - in contrast to the Democratic Party, which has had to contend with skeptical voices from the trade unions that make up part of its constituency. Meanwhile, Trump's likely opponent in the general election, Hillary Clinton, seems to have folded the flag and adopted at least part of the anti-trade tirades of Trump and her left-wing primary opponent, Bernie Sanders. Suddenly, she has turned against the TPP agreement, despite having supported it previously. She is opposing US President Barack Obama's tentative plan to have it ratified by Congress immediately after the November election.

This behavior is without precedent. Never before have the leading contenders for the US presidency fueled fears that free trade will undermine America's prosperity. Whichever candidate prevails in November, the consequences are likely to be serious.

In Europe, the situation is only marginally better. Austria's entire political spectrum has come out firmly against the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the US and the European Union. And public opinion seems to be undergoing a similar shift in Germany, a country that owes its affluence to its success in global markets. Even in the Netherlands, which used to have free trade in its DNA

(and would hardly exist without it), vocal campaigners are threatening to hold a referendum to reject any trans-Atlantic trade deal.

Given the history of the West, these are perplexing developments. Europe's rise began when its ships started to explore the world for new markets and opportunities. This underpinned not only rising wealth, but also innovation. To open up markets, after all, is also to open up minds.

Similarly, in the decades since the end of World War II, the security of the West has been built first and foremost on the economic success of the US, Western Europe, and Japan - success that was driven by integration, trade, and innovation. According to nearly every indicator one can think of, the remarkable growth in trade during the past quarter-century has given mankind some of its best decades ever.

That is why it's impossible to imagine achieving ambitious global development goals without placing free trade and globalization at the center of the strategy. If the West, losing faith in itself, turns away from the very practices that made it successful, where does that leave poor and developing countries?

Fortunately, all is not yet lost. But rescuing the West's trade agenda will require exceptional leadership and perseverance. This will be a decisive year. The trade agreements involving the US, Asia, and Europe are important not just in terms of traditional goods, but also in terms of the free flow of data. While trade in physical goods is showing signs of stagnation, data flows have increased by a factor of 45 during the last decade.

If Obama can ensure the ratification of the TPP and bring the TTIP negotiations to a conclusion, he will have laid the groundwork for future progress. If he falls short on either task - or, catastrophically, fails on both - the world will face a far more uncertain future. Political leaders who still believe in the West must dedicate themselves to the defense of free trade and the construction of an ever more open world. They must do everything they can to prevent the introduction of protectionist measures and the erection of barriers to globalization. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Carl Bildt was Sweden's foreign minister from 2006 to October 2014 and Prime Minister from 1991 to 1994, when he negotiated Sweden's EU accession.



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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