

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



October 10, 2018

Electoral Observation: as a Means to Ensure Electoral Credibility

Election observation has proven that is a valuable tool for improving the quality of elections. Observers help build public confidence in the honesty of electoral processes. Observation can help promote and protect the civil and political rights of participants in elections. It can lead to the correction of errors or weak practices, even while an election process is still under way. It can deter manipulation and fraud, or expose such problems if they do occur. When observers can issue positive reports, it builds trust in the democratic process and enhances the legitimacy of the governments that emerge from elections. Election observation by domestic and international groups encourages civic involvement in the political process.

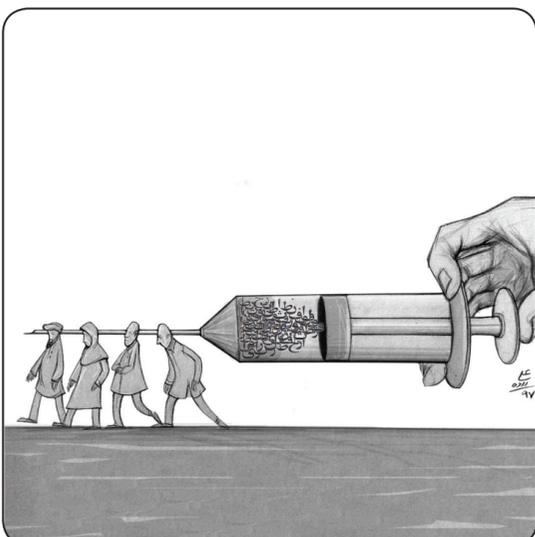
As widespread manipulation and fraud are largely attributed to the Afghan elections, the Afghan government not only shall encourage the national institutions to observe the forthcoming elections but it also shall encourage and provide conducive environment for the international observers as well. However, the ambassador of the EU announced today that he seriously followed the electoral process in Afghanistan and tired hard to ensure the forthcoming election to be a different election than the past ones.

However, it is a very positive and promising development in the Afghan electoral process. Because the much the international community supports the electoral process the more the electoral credibility.

What the concerns of the EU are

One of the main concerns of the European Union is starting a new round of conflicts in the country. As a result the EU tries to ensure electoral transparency to prevent going Afghanistan to a new round of conflict after 20 years again. Public electoral is another concern of the European Union. Therefore, it is working hard to engage fully the political parties to participate in the forthcoming elections and make their representatives to oversight the electoral process in the polling stations in order the electoral outcome to be acceptable for them. Low credibility of the electoral institutions of the Afghanistan is one of the other critical concerns of the EU and International community. As a result, they are making various initiatives to revive the credibility of these institutions. Further, weak legitimacy of the Afghan system is the most critical concern of the EU and international community and they want ensure the revival of the legitimacy of the Afghan government as a critical factor for having strong political institutions in general, and for the Afghan peace talks in specific. Ultimately, the international community knows very well that the insurgent groups are using different tactics to disappoint the people in order not to participate in the electoral process that can undermine all the achievements of Afghan government and the international community.

Election observation missions can make valuable contributions to enhancing public confidence in elections, especially in post-conflict countries like Afghanistan, in which levels of trust in the electoral process is low. Observation can also help in the assessment and advancement of women's participation in electoral processes. As a result, the Afghan government shall take all necessary measures to ensure participation of the national and international institutions in order the outcome of the forthcoming elections to be acceptable to the political parties and the people.



Mirror of the World

By: Sultan Ahmad Baheen

Translated by: Rezaie

They excavated the caves from the cliff decisively and made giant Buddha niches in the heart of the caves to imprint their beliefs to Buddha and continued their effortless measures for one thousand years and made more than 1000 grottes. The second tallest statue of the Buddha is located here. The first tallest statue of Buddha was in Bamiyana and when the Taliban destroyed Buddha's statues, we lost the honor of being the first country with the tallest Statues of Buddha. They yet recognize their historical statues of Buddha as the second in the world. Thanks to these shared historical properties, Bamiyan and Gasno call themselves as sister cities.

More than one thousand Buddha cave temples and grottes that have been excavated more than one thousand years ago in the mountain cliffs in Dunghaun district of Ganso state, has changed the area to big tourism destination center.

Dunghaun which in Chinese means a big and developed area that has been located at the silk route and once it has been one of the largest trade centers linking the east and west of the world together. Chinese Emperor Wu of Tang Dynasty encouraged the Chinese Mon [Yuezun] to build the first cave temple by excavating the cliffs. This process continued more than one thousand years and they gradually built more than one thousand cave temples. In one of the cave temples, they built a Buddha Statue with one hand toward the sky and the other one stretched forward with a straight Palmaru. On the birthday of Buddha, the pilgrims walk three times along the corridor at the back of Buddha statue. There are some holes in the size of a small window at the outer parts of the statue in order to let the people stand up at the balcony to see the different parts of the Buddha's body. They believe that the stretched hand of Buddha is not for asking help, but to provide help to the mankind. In another cave temple, while Buddha is sitting in the middle, at both sides, there are two beautiful statues and one ugly statue, symbolizing the good and bad that exist in our world. And there are painting of caravans, pilgrims, trade directions and thieves. And the traders ask the sacred Buddha to forgive them before they depart.

Along the way to the cave temples, a tourism center has been built. It is a big one roof building with all necessary accommodations. Two films are played in two saloons showing the ups and downs of this city and how these statues have been built in order when the tourists leave here to not to forget the background of the city. To realize the glorious history of this city one must know that a British scholar discovered a cave library in 1900 with thousands ancient texts that have been hidden in the cave for more than 900 years. Then he and a French scholar started further excavations here. They transferred thousands of ancient documents to London, Paris and Berlin and they are preserved there. In the mid-19th century thousands of these texts were sent to Beijing that some of them were destroyed and even so, about 8000 texts are preserved in the Beijing library now. Among few ancient remains exhibited here, there are texts in other languages including a text about Zoroast. There is another text about mathematics for 8th grade.

Only lack of rail road and the wise decision of the Chun-li could save of destruction of cultural revolution move by the Red Guard that Chairman Mao to cleanse China of old culture and retrain those who deviated from Marxism-Maoism. The Red Guards travelled by trains on those days and Chun-li had ordered to preserve these ancient remains by any means.

Cultural Expo

It is the third cultural expo in Danghua. Ganso has signed a sisterhood agreement with Bamiyan city of Afghanistan. Holding expos is a normal issue in China. This expo is held in a city that most recently have been paid attention to it and is locate by the old Silk Route and the Big Project of the Century, 'One Belt and Road Initiative'.

The center of Expo has been built according to the ancient Chinese building style along with a flourishing theater center. Constructing such buildings for a city with only 200000 show the strategic approach of the government to boost the city. Matching the views of these two buildings to the cave temples and Buddha's statues has further attracted attention of the tourists. According to the data provided by the tourism authorities, about 5 million tourists have visited here last year that 10 percent of them have been the foreigners and they expect the figure would be doubled in the current year.

Deputy Prime Minister of China who attended the expo, put emphasis on the cooperation of the nations and their common understanding. Afghanistan was among 62 countries attending this expo for the second time. Vice President Danish highlighted the importance of the Silk Route and the historical position of Afghanistan in it and also emphasized on the role of Afghanistan in realizing the "One Belt and Road Initiative". Danish is a different Afghan politician. He is a true scholar. He reads books and writes his own statements. He is a humble and nice man. For Chinese who believe in order and obedience of the seniors, Danish's approach looked wonderful for them. His host at the end of the journey, described him as a politician who loves his country and government; looks with open eyes his surroundings and wants to learn everything. He believes in team work and treats his subordinates as his students. His words were less diplomatic and conveyed the truth he believed in it.

Mr. Danish raised a critical question at the end of the journey: We shall understand the potentials of China and use for the interest of Afghanistan. How much this question is comprehended in Afghanistan, the time will tell us.

The World in One Country

China tries to portray a perfect picture of cultures and innovations of all countries around the world.

Buddhism, Islam, Maoism, Secularism, Christianity, Confucianism, and Marxism in China that is only treated as a belief there and has nothing to do with the politics and governance in China. Communism and Maoism are no more dominant on the life of the people. For example, The Statue of Mao is on one corner of the city and Muslims mosques on the other corner of the city and Muslims perform Eid prayers in the mosques during the Eid holidays. And Buddha's statues are in all corners of Kashghar, even on the plates of meats though it is forbidden in Buddhism. In One country one can behold all the world-China.

Sultan Ahmad Baheen is a prominent Afghan diplomat who has served as an Afghan ambassador to the People's Republic of China.

Crazy Rich Asia

By: Kenneth Rogoff

In the surprise hit movie "Crazy Rich Asians" (based on a 2013 Kevin Kwan novel), a New York University economics professor (Rachel), travels with her boyfriend to Singapore to meet his family. There, she learns, apparently for the first time, that her significant other (Nick) is heir to one of Asia's largest fortunes and has a mother intent on making sure her son does not marry a commoner, Asian-American or not.

Partly because of its (terrific) all-Asian cast (an extreme rarity), and partly because it recalls earlier eras of great romantic comedies, the film has caused a lot of buzz. Perhaps there will even be a long overdue Oscar for Michelle Yeoh (from "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon"), who plays the steely but loving mother.

But the film also stars Singapore, a place unfamiliar to most Westerners. For some, the real shocker in the movie will be just how crazy rich parts of Asia have become.

To get a sense of the island city-state's meteoric rise, one need only compare the glittering metropolis depicted in "Crazy Rich Asians" with the hut-filled fishing village depicted in the 1940 classic comedy, "Road to Singapore," starring Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour, and Bob Hope. The comparison makes it easy to understand how the fictional Young family became ultra-rich as early real-estate investors. With annual output of approximately \$325 billion in 2017 and 5.6 million inhabitants, Singapore now ranks with Denmark economically (though its population is more diverse).

This is a flattering comparison, given that Denmark typically ranks at or near the top in global quality-of-life surveys. Singapore does not redistribute income as aggressively as Denmark, choosing instead to maintain lower taxes and concentrate transfers on low-income individuals. Nevertheless, all citizens have access to high-quality health coverage and schooling, and many are also eligible for heavily subsidized housing. In "Crazy Rich Asians," poverty is depicted (rather ingeniously and hilariously) as a long-haul flight in economy rather than first class.

Although Asian Americans have embraced the film as a breakthrough for Asian actors in mainstream Hollywood productions, is hotly debated in Singapore itself. Although many Singaporeans are excited that "CRA" (as it is called in Singlish) will catalyze a tourist boom, complaints are rife. One is that the characters don't use more Singlish phrases; another is that the city-state's large Indian and Malay communities are invisible. Most of all, there is a populist backlash against the Young family's outsize wealth, making some question why Singapore has no capital-gains or estate taxes. Why

should Nick be allowed to inherit so much money?

But the backlash is perhaps less than an American or a European might expect. This may be because the middle class has done fairly under Singapore's unique system, which is very much a market economy, but one where the government plays a big role in long-term planning and investment.

One might cynically say that the backlash would be much more visible if there were less restrictions on the media. But surely slowing growth, especially where it affects middle-class incomes, has been a major driver of populism in Europe and the United States, exacerbated no doubt by the financial crisis. Although Singapore's growth has also slowed, it still compares favorably to Europe. The Monetary Authority of Singapore is forecasting that growth will exceed 3% in 2018, on par with the United States, which is now the envy of the advanced economies.

Singapore's success is all the more remarkable given that proximity to the equator is usually associated with weak growth and poverty. Yet Singapore is situated virtually on top of it. (In one implausible scene in "Crazy Rich Asians," Nick and Rachel are picked up at the airport in an open-air jeep.) Economists who study growth almost come to blows at conferences over whether "institutions" or "culture" are more important to growth, with both sides seeking to take credit for Singapore, which inherited English institutions and elements of Chinese culture.

And now, one hopes, Asia will become a bigger part of Hollywood culture, with more films featuring Asian locales and actors. Produced for just \$30 million (compared to over \$300 million for Disney's "Avengers: Infinity War"), "Crazy Rich Asians" has already grossed over \$200 million worldwide.

That's impressive for any film, and perhaps especially for one that opens with a lesson in game theory. In the first scene, Rachel uses poker to illustrate a concept to a large class sitting in rapt attention, and she schools a graduate teaching assistant. Of course, most courses on game theory involve a lot of mathematics about strategic relationships, not playing actual games. But they can be fun all the same. Princeton University Professor Avinash Dixit famously uses clips from films such as "Dr. Strangelove" to illustrate key concepts. Now perhaps Hollywood will use films like "Crazy Rich Asians" to illustrate key concepts about a region that is the biggest economic success story of the last several decades. There are many more stories about that story to be told.

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