

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



October 24, 2018

## ISO Standards: Challenges and Opportunities

World Standards Day, was held at the Marble Palace in Kabul, on October 23, 2018. As a result, this article reviews the importance of standardization in Afghanistan and explores the challenges and opportunities that Afghanistan faces to achieve standardization goals.

It is clear cut that Afghanistan wants to bring an end to poverty, and ensure security and stability. The overarching goals of Afghan government are to reduce poverty and improve the welfare of the people. Further, Afghanistan wants to grow rapidly, to transform the economy from subsistence to a market economy, to develop its land and introduce modern agricultural methods, to industrialize and to provide more employment opportunities. To do all these things quickly and simultaneously it requires many more resources than it has or can quickly acquire. Therefore Afghanistan must make choices, in deciding how to use its limited resources.

To ensure this, it needs a comprehensive national Standardization plan to provide a framework for making choices, in deciding how to use limited standardization resources through prioritization and planning in medium-term perspective, the development of those standards that if completed and implemented: Would have the greatest positive National economic impact in terms of enabling trade and economic development, move Afghanistan's export engines and National Development Priorities, and would likely receive strong industry and business support; and would have a visible and positive, impact on citizens. Further, to likely receive strong support by Industry, business and the public.

However, there are specific constraints in Implementation of ISO Standards For Afghanistan to fully utilize the immense practical solutions to economic and technological problems that ISO standards offer in terms of responding to local and global market demands, securing access to world markets which, in turn, contribute to economic growth, certain specific challenges and constraints need to be addressed: Afghanistan has to actively participate in all standard setting forums. This will enhance its capacity to challenge and defend country positions. The inability of Afghanistan to participate in these meetings has turned Afghanistan into standard takers. This is crucial and Afghanistan needs to play its full part in the relevant international standard setting systems. Financial constraints coupled with limited capacity to provide credible information based on research needed to articulate and defend Afghanistan's interests, has made Afghanistan vulnerable to changes especially when these changes have protectionist intentions. Most of the Afghanistan industries are small and medium-sized enterprises, compliance to certain standards. Hence, it has a heavy cost implication and complying with international standards can undermine the S.M.E.s in Afghanistan in their access to foreign markets. Moreover, compliance may accompany further upgrading of production processes and equipment which complicates the whole state of affairs.

To participate effectively in global trade, Afghanistan must develop the capacity to meet international standards. This, in itself, is a formidable challenge. Afghanistan has to surmount this challenge in order to achieve an inclusive and sustainable growth in its economy as envisaged in the Afghanistan National Peace and Economic Development Framework.



## Defining Diplomacy Down

By: Richard N. Haass

Some 25 years ago, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Harvard professor who in the course of his career served as United States ambassador to the United Nations and a US senator from New York, coined the phrase "Defining Deviancy Down." The phrase was meant to describe a social trend in which behavioral standards declined over time to the point that what was once intolerable became broadly acceptable.

I am reminded of Moynihan's phrase when I consider the state of diplomacy aimed at bringing about North Korea's denuclearization. Increasingly, the parties involved, including the United States and South Korea, appear to be relaxing their requirements for what is expected of North Korea. Call it "Defining Diplomacy Down."

All this has taken on more than a little urgency, because it is now more than four months since the Singapore summit and there is talk that President Donald Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong-un will meet again soon.

As is always the case with diplomacy, the question arises as to how to define success. Peace is one possible answer. And to be sure, peace is well worth preserving on the Korean Peninsula, given the enormous human and economic costs that any war would entail. But if avoiding war takes precedence over all else, there is the danger that other important interests could well be compromised. There is the danger, too, of arrangements that would lessen tensions over the short-term but threaten peace over the long-term by requiring real compromises and constraints in exchange for promises and possibilities.

Already there is evidence that neither South Korea nor the US is anxious to demand from North Korea a full accounting of all its nuclear materials and weapons, without which real denuclearization cannot be carried out and verified. The concern appears to be that North Korea would balk at such a request, causing a crisis.

Instead, South Korea has suggested that it ought to be enough for the time being if North Korea simply destroys one or another nuclear facility. The US, for its part, is counseling patience and advising skeptics not to demand too much of North Korea too soon. In both cases, what we are seeing is a reluctance to give North Korea a test that it might fail.

At the same time, the "maximum pressure" campaign has effectively ended, with calls to relax sanctions and a reluctance to enforce fully those on the books. The US and South Korea have also canceled military exercises and relaxed their force posture, respectively, easing the pressure on the Kim regime. This is what defining diplomacy down is all about.

This reluctance to press North Korea, however, points to the danger that Kim's regime will be allowed not just to keep but to increase its nuclear arsenal. Indeed, North Korea could close or destroy facilities yet never denuclearize if it continues to build capacity at the same time.

North Korea will perhaps understandably resist a negotiation in which it is asked to do everything before it receives anything. It will demand compensation, most likely in the form of relaxing economic sanctions, if it were to eliminate any nuclear capacity. China and Russia would surely support such a request. But rewarding North Korea generously for partial measures reduces its incentive to take additional steps, much less complete the process of denuclearization.

The Kim regime is also certain to want to avoid being forced to choose between giving up its nuclear and missile programs, which it sees as essential for its security, and improving its economy, which is essential for social and political stability. It wants to have its cake and eat it: both continued security and greater prosperity. North Korea has been pressing for a declaration of the end of war, an aspirational statement that would signal a common desire to replace the armistice that has existed since the Korean War ended 65 years ago with a formal peace treaty. Again, the question arises as to what North Korea would require in return. Already, its suspension of nuclear and missile testing has brought about an end to large US-South Korea military exercises. At some point, North Korea is likely to ask for a reduction in US troop levels in South Korea. This risk is related to the focus on denuclearization. Achieving it is an understandable priority for the US, but South Korea must worry as much, if not more, about North Korea's non-nuclear or conventional military forces that threaten Seoul, home to roughly 20% of South Koreans. The danger is that differing priorities drive a wedge between the two allies, benefiting North Korea.

Despite Trump's tweets and statements, denuclearization is neither a fact nor a certainty. On the contrary, it remains a distant and unlikely goal. The challenge for the US and South Korea is to bring the goal closer without growing apart.

The best way to achieve this is through close consultation, a commitment to avoid surprising each other or entering into separate deals, and the forging of a comprehensive agreement on what diplomacy must achieve and what it would require in return. Existing military exercises and economic sanctions should be sustained, until there are significant changes that reduce the North Korean threat. Think of it as defining diplomacy up.

Richard N. Haass is President of the Council on Foreign Relations. His most recent book is *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order*.

## Assessing the Parliamentary Elections Through Different Glasses

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Generally, the parliamentary elections is a great milestone towards institutionalization of democracy in the country but assessing the election cos and pros from different views and glasses will help us to learn necessary lessons for better management of next elections. The appraising aspects of the elections, which appreciated by all the stakeholders, were consist of brave participation of people, active awareness of media and the sacrifices of security forces across the 32 provinces of the country. Nevertheless, there were also some negative issues such as insecurity disruption and logistical and technical mismanagement.

Regarding participation of people and resistance of security forces, all the national and international stakeholders' appreciated bravery of people. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said in a statement released on October 20 that it was "encouraged by the high numbers" of Afghans who braved security threats and waited long hours to cast their votes. UNAMA described it, as "the first completely run by Afghan authorities since 2001," was an "important milestone in Afghanistan's transition to self-reliance." Thus, The NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg commended "the millions of Afghan men & women who have exercised their democratic right to vote & the Afghan security forces who have provided security for the elections despite great challenges. Other foreign diplomats, who visited the voting process in various polling stations in Kabul city, also praised the people for their widespread participation in the elections.

Thus, the Afghan officials warmly appreciated the vast participation of people; the president Ashraf Ghani calling the people said, "You proved to the Taliban that this nation will not surrender to anyone." For now, Kabul can be upbeat about the process. "Great people of Afghanistan, thank you! By casting your votes, you sent a message to the world that you do not want violence; you demonstrated your determination through democracy," However, if past elections are any precedent, Afghanistan's strongmen and the various factions vying for power are likely to question the election results if their candidates fail to win.

The Vice President Sarwar Danish also praised Afghan people for their high turnout to the elections across the country. He termed the high and intelligent turn out of the people as the most beautiful season of the new Afghan democracy. "While there was intense security threats, the proud women and men of Afghanistan proved that they will never return to the dark past days" the Vice President said. "However, it was the first elections that was fully managed and led by the Afghan government, civil and military Afghan institutions and showed the managerial capability of the Afghan government in leading the big national processes" he added.

Whereas, the Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah appreciated the vast participation of people but he also criticized the Independent Election Commission (IEC)'s shortcomings in election and accepted that some of the people were deprived of their voting rights. "There is no justification for the repetition of failures, and clear answers

should be given to the people," Abdullah said.

The leader of Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin Hekmatyar claimed that the election commission has "deliberately" closed polling stations in some regions despite being assured of the security of the centers. Hekmatyar said that the election commission "deliberately" has not sent the election materials in some polling centers despite they have been assured of its security. He said it was a "ridiculous" election and that it the new parliament could represent only one million people out of 30 million population. "It [the elections] will not only solve the problems but it will also increase the issues," Hekmatyar said.

A number of political parties' representatives also criticized the election process, saying the voting centers in some areas have been deliberately closed to people. "The votes of those centers that did not use the biometric system should be announced invalid. We will wait up to the next two days for a complete report," Noorul Rahman Akhlaqi, a member of Jamiat Islami Leadership Council said. Muhammad Nateqi, the deputy of Afghanistan Wahdat-e Mili party stressed, "They planned to organize fraud and irregularities in certain areas with indicating that the biometric system is not working." More than 2,500 candidates are contesting for the Wolesi Jirga or the 249-seat lower house of the parliament. Most of the candidates stand independently as the country did not have many regular and standard political parties.

Finally, the chairman of IEC, Abdul Badi Sayad confessed the shortcomings but vows to investigate the mishandling of the weekend's problem-plagued legislative ballot. "We have assigned a commission to investigate the mismanagement and violations, including the late opening of the centers and use of biometric devices," Sayyad told reporters on Monday. "Anyone who has neglected or is involved in shortcomings will be punished." "The election materials were not sent to 97 polling centers on the first day of the voting but it was opened on the second day," said the chairman of the commission Abdulbadi Sayad.

Initially the election was planned to be held in on Saturday but the IEC officials extended the voting to late Sunday as scores of polling centers were not open or run on Saturday after long delays due low attendance of election workers. Overall, the elections covered 32 out of the country's 34 provinces. Voting in Kandahar and Ghazni provinces has been postponed due to security reasons.

In general, nearly nine million voters, out of nearly 13 million eligible Afghans, were registered to take part in the process and elect their lawmakers for a five-year term. While from the total registered numbers over four million Afghans, with 33 percent of them women, cast their ballots during the two-day elections due to security threats and mismanagement of the election. However, according to IEC, the turnout figure does not include those who voted on Sunday and the remaining two provinces of Ghazni and Qandahar.

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