

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



October 30, 2018

Governance and Poverty Reduction in Afghanistan

The main argument on poverty in development economics center's basically on the interface between economic growth and poverty. Whereas on the one hand some contend that unless an economy is able to produce steady economic growth, poverty reduction cannot be possible. Economic growth typically has a spill-over effect on poverty. And there are distributional consequences that result from economic growth through a competitive market structure. A good example for this argument are countries like South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong, which are countries that got on the high growth path and could substantially lessen poverty. Defiantly, some others do contend that economic growth is necessary but not enough to engender poverty reduction. Certainly, the process of engineering economic growth usually worsens inequality and poverty in the society. If no mindful effort is made to mitigate the side effects of economic growth, it may deepen poverty, increase social resentment and invariably provide a wave of popular discontent that may negatively impact on the growth process itself. Some level of redistribution and redressing economic inequalities in society is necessary to achieving stable economic growth.

Development economics rarely placed any emphasis on political issues in relation to poverty. Poverty was considered a strictly economic domain.

However, it is only the New Institutional Economics that talks about the role of institutions in generating economic growth and alleviating poverty. Effective institutions with clear rules of economic engagement reduce transaction costs, correct market imperfections and make non-market allocation of resources in some instances. The spirit of institutions in this case is simply to support the economy; it is not to give superiority to politics, democracy or governance in poverty issues. But, in recent times, new thoughts have begun to emerge on the notion of poverty, its causes and the strategy to combat it.

Governance has become a key issue in the discourse on poverty. Poverty is a policy issue that exists in the political domain. Poverty, inequality and governance are now seen to be inseparably related because without good governance, bad policy choices will be made, the people would have neither voice nor power, and the economy may likely deteriorate. Likewise, when poverty and inequality continues in a society it weakens the political process and promotes deficient governance. Governance provides the institutional, legal and political framework not only for the design of poverty reduction policies but also for the improvement of the capacity of the poor to deal positively with and improve their material conditions. Governance ensures the participation of the poor in decisions that affects them and empowers them to get their views on the policy agenda. Giving voice to the people in the policy process especially on poverty issues is a necessary and progressive step in an attempt to promote and sustain growth, development and socio-economic transformation in Afghanistan. Governance and democracy are about making choices, which the people determine for themselves and choose to live by. The choices offered by Poverty Reduction Strategies are more apparent than real, and more hollow than substantive. Poverty Reduction Strategy is a repackaged form of structural adjustment with slight modifications on the social content and emphasis on the issues of national ownership and consultation, which are some of the lessons learned from the failure of past strategies.

For economic growth to be engineered as a basis of poverty reduction in Afghanistan, the country should be given the right to make choices on the economic policy and agenda it wishes to pursue; not an uncritical imposition of the market ideology and have the total freedom to determine their social policy including poverty reduction strategy. What Afghanistan's development partners should encourage is a commonly shared vision of economic and social development by the people, which they can be committed to, rather than a disguised external policy embellished with political clichés of participation and spurious national ownership. Poverty reduction in Afghanistan is not only entwined with dimensions of power at the national level; there is also an international dimension to it.



US Survey Reveals Unprecedented Pessimism in Afghanistan

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

According to Gallup, a US polling organization, people in Afghanistan are showing unprecedented levels of pessimism about the future of the war-ravaged country. The survey sought the opinions of Afghan Adults on quality of life, satisfaction with leaders, and views toward other countries through conducting interviews from 2,000 Afghans. The survey has found that two-thirds of Afghans say things in their life are worse now than 12 months ago and almost half say they expect things that will be worse a year from now. The survey also found that over two thirds (69 percent) of Afghan adults say that things in their life today overall are worse than they were 12 months ago, just over a quarter (26 percent) say things are the same, and fewer than one of 20 (4 percent) say they are better. According to Gallup, this is the lowest figures it has recorded from different countries since the polling organization began such global studies in 2006.

Afghans in cities were, however, found to be more dissatisfied than those in rural areas (51 percent vs. 39 percent) to say that things in their lives are much worse than they were a year ago. The survey shows that people almost half (46 percent) of adults expect their lives are getting worse, one in five (22 percent) say things will be about the same, and just 2 percent say they expect things to be better a year from now. Three in ten (30 percent) say they don't know how things in their lives will be 12 months ahead. However, more than three-quarters of Afghans are dissatisfied with their national leaders.

In a statement issued by the organization, it stated that three-fourths or more of Afghan adults express their dissatisfaction with the performance of their country's leadership. 81 percent say they are dissatisfied with the performance of the National Unity Government; 76 percent say they are dissatisfied with President Ashraf Ghani and 86 percent say they are dissatisfied with CEO Abdullah Abdullah. Overall, the figures in the annual study mark a sharp deterioration comparing to previous years.

Regarding regional and international powers, survey indicate that regional powers are seen most favorably, western powers less so, Pakistan and insurgent groups are seen most unfavorably. Asked about their opinions of ten selected countries and organizations, Afghans expressed their most favorable opinions of India 62 percent overall in favor of, followed by China at 46 percent, Russia at 39 percent and Iran at 37 percent. Meanwhile, major western actors in Afghanistan draw favorable opinions from about a third of Afghans: both Great Britain and the United States at 34 percent favorable overall, the U.S. with 11 percent and the U.K. with 10 percent "very" favorable. NATO/ISAF is seen favorably by just under three in ten (28 percent overall, 6 percent "very" favorable).

Almost half (46 percent) of Afghans with post-secondary education express a favorable view of the U.S, compared to 38 percent of those with up to a secondary education, and 28 percent of Afghan adults with no formal education. Two in three Pashto speakers (67 percent) say they have an unfavorable view of the U.S, compared to 44 percent of Dari speakers and 32 percent of Uzbek speakers who express an unfavorable view of the United States.

The survey results were announced in the wake of parliamentary elections, which were held with its ups and downs. The common points regarding public pessimism was also felt in the people's participation in the overall election process. For example, out of nearly 13 million eligible Afghan only nine million registered to vote but eventually nearly four million cast their ballots during the two-day elections. However, the election was described as a widely participated election. People were praised national and also international allies for accepting the risk of threats in the two or three day election. And more than half a million Afghans risked their lives to vote in legislative elections in southern Afghanistan yesterday, after the Taliban-claimed killing of a powerful police chief delayed the ballot by a week.

In fact, the latest survey "reveals just how devastating the negative cycle of poverty and violence has been to Afghans' daily experiences," Gallup said. The outcome of the survey is also similar to a recent UN figures released about poverty and war crisis; regarding poverty, UN called has called the international community for urgent financial assistance for nearly 5.5 million hungry people in Afghanistan. Regarding war casualties, they reported nearly 40 thousand casualties within few last years while droughts has effected at least 22 of 34 provinces. Thus, UNICEF had informed from the bad condition of 7000 Afghan children reached Greece as a result of ongoing crisis in the current year. The Afghan officials also confess the issue but they blame the ongoing war and droughts as the main factors for the crisis.

Therefore, the long-term war and poverty are the main factors for pessimism of people while it has caused many disastrous consequences such as spread of armed violence, huge increase in addition, domestic migration, increasing the population of cities, brain drains and the vacancy of the countryside. More importantly, the increasing unemployment fuels war in the country as the terrorist groups can easily hire unemployed teens to use as suicide attackers, battle forces, or laborers for implanting Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and in some provinces unemployment has also led people to cultivate opium or poppy.

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Political Participation of Afghan Women Will Promote Social Development

By: Li Shuyu, Zhu Like & Li Xin

Afghan parliamentary elections took place in October 20th despite numerous security threats, but this does not affect voter participation in Afghan voters, with higher percentage of female voters in individual regions; this figure is particularly evident in northern Afghanistan.

17 districts among all of 19 districts in Herat opened polling stations. Herat city is second only after Kabul elections population concentration. In Herat city, more than 320,000 people voted, of whom approximately 40% were women. Women's participation in parliamentary elections as candidates and voters is a historic victory for Afghanistan's Afghan National Assembly and a great beginning for Afghan women. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said: "hopefully they will remain enthusiastic about taking part in presidential elections." Great Afghan women! thank you! By voting they sent messages to the world that they did not want violence to occur and their political participation demonstrated their resolve through their political participation. Undaunted, they proved to Taliban organizations that this great nation would not succumb to anyone. " Women in Herat were widely involved in elections from early morning to late night. They queued up in order to vote without complaint at polling stations. Their performance at polling stations responded strongly to Afghanistan's enemies.

Marxist view of women thinks that measuring human liberation natural scale is the degree of liberation of women. Since Taliban extremist organizations ruled Afghanistan, Afghan women became vulnerable groups in society because of historical cultural traditions, mode of production constraints and Taliban ideology, which were attached to men and subordinate

themselves to men. Chronic oppression, no personal freedom, social status low, social participation is very low. This is particularly prominent in women's employment education and medical treatment.

Women under war-torn and Taliban gender discrimination policies do not see a glimmer of hope for advancement and emancipation. In today's new era women can vote exercise their right to vote actively participate in the political system functioning process. This has already been a significant social progress and has improved Afghan women's social status, indicating that democratization and secularization are accelerating progress in their country. History has proved countless times that a relatively egalitarian society is a stable peaceful harmonious society while Afghanistan is in the heart region of Asia where geographical location is superior and unique mineral resources are rich but developing relatively low. Afghanistan is a good neighbor and good partner for Pakistan and China. Afghanistan should seize opportunities between China and Pakistan Economic Corridor and Belt and Road, actively integrate into the friends circle between China and Pakistan, and share development benefits and deepen cooperation in economic and trade, electricity generation, mining and agricultural products, so as to lay solid foundation for Afghanistan's prosperous development. Afghanistan should also attach importance to trilateral counter-terrorism cooperation between China, Pakistan and Afghanistan, promote domestic political reconciliation process and promote peace and stability in Afghanistan. Bringing women into elections and enhance women's social status will surely bring Afghanistan to a more stable and prosperous tomorrow.

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