

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

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Why the Afghan Leaders Shall Avoid Premature Judgments on Election Results

According to the Afghanistan Electoral Law, Only the Afghan Independent Election Commission has the authority to announce the results: partial, preliminary, and final. However, it is a common issue in the country that the Afghan politicians and their supporters generally publish premature results and judge prematurely on election results. As a result, it has changed to a serious political issue in the country. The new wave of publishing premature results and resorting to premature judgments on presidential elections is not something new; therefore, we shall assess why this trend continues in Afghanistan? What causes the Afghan leaders to do so? And how we can prevent it?

If we look at the previous elections process, accusing the winner team to electoral fraud has been one of the strategic approaches of the loser teams. They have applied this strategy for several reasons that we would mention them here; first, announcing premature results as a tool to mislead the public. When the loser teams concludes that they have no chance to win the elections, they announce premature results and judge prematurely on election results to incite ethnic, language and religious tensions. As Afghanistan is a traditional society and the literacy rate is very low, many Afghan politicians play with emotions of the people. This strategy has worked in the previous elections and the losing teams could have achieved good results by applying them. Second, fearing the electoral bodies may change the electoral results in the interest of particular candidates. Afghan electoral bodies are new and they have weak capacity. These institutions have not performed very well in the previous elections. For example, these electoral bodies could not announce the parliamentary election results for 7 months. When they announced the parliamentary results, the results were full of controversies showing the large fraud in the results. Considering this, it looks rational to some extent that the presidential candidates and their supports to be worried about their votes.

Consequences of Premature Judgments on Election Results

Premature claims about the election process damage the trust of the public. Although, Afghan electoral bodies have weak capacity and have performed poorly in the past, but we shall try to support these institutions to win the public trust. We shall consider this approach as a process that can ensure elections with less fraud and political tensions in the future. From one hand, Afghan politicians shall have enough electoral observers during the elections in order to prevent electoral fraud; on the other hand, they shall take all the necessary measure to boost the prestige of the electoral institutions to be trusted by the people. At the same time, when the election results are announced, if they have any complains, they can complain to the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission.

Premature Judgments on Election Results is a serious political issue in Afghanistan. It has serious negative consequences for democracy and democratic institutions. We urge all the presidential candidates to give time to the Independent Electoral Commission to announce the results and avoid any premature judgments on election results.

Afghans Lost their Trust in Democracy

By: Hujjatullah Zia

Afghan President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani insisted on holding elections before a formal peace talks with the Taliban, which was against the Taliban's demands. After the result of the elections is announced, the Afghan government will call on the Taliban to have direct negotiations.

The voter turnout has been really disappointing. A large number of Afghan people did not participate in the elections. This suggests that there is mistrust between state and nation. Believing that electoral rigging would harm the effect and credibility of the votes, a number of Afghans did not participate.

The Taliban's threat and instability would have been one of the reasons behind the low turnout. According to the public belief, they have paid heavy sacrifices for democracy, but Afghan officials were not able to ensure their rights and freedoms within the past 18 years. Despite their active participation in parliamentary and presidential elections, the situation remains unstable due to the security reason and administrative corruption continued. After all, the strong disagreement between officials within the past five years compounded the public mistrust. Afghan officials exchanged harsh remarks against one another and some candidates sought to blame one another for the past mistakes.

With this in mind, the public will view officials with distrust and would believe that all they do are for their own interests.

Although the country's National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib said in the 74th sessions of the United Nations Assembly that almost three million Afghans voted on September 28 despite the "threat of terrorism". However, the question is that how less than three million people will determine the future of about 35 million population?

Lack of people's participation in the recent presidential elections have put democracy under question. Afghan officials have to ask themselves why people, who flocked to ballot boxes in the past, have not tried to vote. It is really painful to see that despite spending millions of dollars, people are not willing to participate.

Rather than security issue, corruption is the main reason behind public reluctant attitude toward elections. For example, when I asked ordinary people whether or not they participated in the election, they said they would not participate since their vote

made no changes and electoral rigging would take place. If Afghan officials are really concerned about elections and national interests, why they allowed rigging, which was reported, even in their favor. Hence, violation of law starts even since the Election Day.

Whoever wins the elections, he has to win the public trust through carrying out some of the following issues. First, it is the issue of peace talks. Afghan officials have to bring in peace and instability so that people could live a peaceful life. Afghans are concerned about the negotiations and do not have a clear picture about them. Afghan officials have to persuade the Taliban leadership through their leverage of regional and global stakeholders to hold direct talks and stop violence against Afghan soldiers and civilians. If war continues for the next five years, people will lose their hope and it is feared that they will even ban elections if they bring no changes in their life.

Second, Afghans are highly concerned about the unmitigated administrative corruption within the government machinery. For instance, 18 years have passed from the establishment of a democratic government, Afghanistan still remains on the top list of the most corrupt countries in the world. So, what are officials and law enforcers doing here? What are the advantage of democracy?

If the challenges such as instability and corruption continue in Afghanistan, people will lose their trust in democracy. Under a democratic government, laws have to be enforced and all people, including officials, have to be equal in the eye of law. People should be able to exercise their rights and freedoms under democracy.

But in the past 18 years, lawlessness and violation of Afghan Constitution has been changed into daily practices for some individuals, especially those who had higher political positions. Afghanistan will not be secure and prosperous unless corrupt officials are prosecuted fairly and a strong campaign is launched against corruption. Even security is strongly related with corruption.

Conducting elections, first Afghan officials have to believe in democracy and the rule of law and respect the public suffrage and votes. Reducing democracy to only elections will not be enough. The future president and Afghan officials have to bury their differences and prefer national interests to their personal interests so as to win the public trust.

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The Gandhian Principles for Non-violence and Peace

By: Dr. Ahmad Meraj

Humanity is passing through roads plagued by wars, conflicts, hunger and environmental destruction and loss of natural resources. We must restore the balance between individuals, people and nature before it is too late and non-violence has much to contribute. The ideal of non violent world social order may not be possible in the present state-of-affairs at the global level, but it can be realizable in the future as a result of evolution of human society.

Today marks the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The most important contribution of India to the contemporary world is the message of non-violence and global peace. It was formulated and practiced by Mahatma Gandhi. His principles and values faced changing and challenging condition in our days- but they continue to remain unbeaten and march on.

Mahatma Gandhi, the pioneer of non-violence was born on 2nd October 1869. His prominent role in India's freedom struggle fetched him the title of 'father of the Nation'. The birthday of this Indian preeminent spiritual and political leader is celebrated as "International Day of Non-Violence" throughout the world.

The transition of the concept of peace from absence of war and violence to a dynamic, positive vision of peace incorporating structural and cultural violence has broadened the scope of peace movements from being focused on single issues to a wide range of issues including human rights, gender equality, democracy, social justice and sustainable development and so on.

The beauty of Gandhi's values lies in their simplicity and timelessness. He emphasized on the principles of social justice, and his concern about the environment remained relevant even today. The contribution of Gandhi in developing the contemporary perspectives on the concept of peace and non-violence has been acknowledged by well known peace lover people across the world.

Since Non-violence originates from love, compassion, goodwill, cooperation, harmony, and selflessness, a genuine and enduring peace can be ensured only through non-violent means. Non-violence offers us practical means to struggle efficiently against injustice. Gandhi was striving to demolish the prevailing ideology of violence through his speeches and writings. Violence is unable to shape history; it can often only serve to destroy it. In that sense it is indeed violence, and not non-violence, which is utopia. Our challenge is to cultivate the culture of nonviolence.

The Peace conveys the meaning of Peace with justice. Non-

violence is no longer passive. It is a radical force. Gandhi believed that human beings are essentially non-violent in their nature. Non-violent means is the only alternative to eradicate the beastly and anti-social tendencies from the human mind, and to elevate human society to a superior plane wherein the entire humanity can live in peace and harmony.

Gandhi, perhaps was the only person who changed the concept of non-violence. Ahimsa, the Indian word for non-violence is commonly understood as doing no harm or injury to other people. But Gandhi visualized it as a radical force. Even during the initial stages he explained the idea of positive non-violence. Gandhi's theory and practice and provide five interrelated guiding principles for a sustainable world can be described in principles:

Ahimsa: Ahimsa is the greatest force available to humankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of a man. Gandhi was the first person who applied the concept of non-violence for a political purpose. Gandhi's greatest contribution, therefore, is the use of non-violence into a successful technique for direct mass action.

Satyagraha: Satyagraha is the most cultured way of bringing desirable social change. Satyagraha campaign might involve the use of multiple non-violent resistance techniques. It is the generic term for nonviolent action. It can take the specific forms of direct action, boycotts, strikes, letter writing, mass protests, prayerful fasting and so on. In all cases it tests the hypothesis that all humans, whatever their differential stakes in hierarchical power structures, share a common core of humanity which can be reached, educated, and liberated by non-violent and, if necessary, self-sacrificial action.

Sarvodaya: It is the hypothesis that an ecologically-enlightened, tradition-respecting, labor-intensive, decentralized system of village economies with cottage industries can come about by the tireless application of disciplined human intelligence, imagination, and sheer hard work by methods and institutions morally identical to the ends envisioned.

Injustice is the root cause of all national and international conflicts. Inequality breeds exploitation, fear and strife. Peace is possible only among equals. Therefore, the consciousness of equality is an essential requirement to bring about a climate of peace.

The universality of Gandhi's principles can be utilized as the necessary first step to creating a nonviolent world, since peace begins in our minds and hearts, moral regeneration of individuals and an equitable social order on the other are necessary requirements for achieving global peace.

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