

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



October 17, 2017

Time to Put the Governed First

In today's modern world of ours, human beings live within states that do not only differentiate them from one another politically but also strive, at least in theory, to facilitate them to benefit from the positive aspects of social and cooperative life. States evolved in human history as the need for organized life. The requirements of human beings developed in such a way that it was necessary to divert human life towards a political entity. Whatever may be the reason of the inception of organized life its basic incentive has been to provide human beings their rights, bring them bliss and contentment and secure them from discrimination and disorder. However, it is debatable on whether these incentives have been achieved by different states that exist in modern world.

In a state there are two very integral elements – the government and the governed. The government is the body in a state that is responsible for the management and administration of state affairs. There are different forms of government based on different political systems. Throughout human history there have been many forms of government that have been experienced by human beings; however, the most modern one and the one with most support in modern world is the democratic government. The democratic government, in theory, is basically chosen by the people themselves through their votes in election process. Even within the democratic government there may be different forms; nonetheless, the basic nature of the government remains the same – it is elected by the people.

The democratic government in a state is tested much and it is one of the most accountable governments as it is elected by the will of the majority. Moreover, the democratic government has to be effective as well, as after every definite period of time it has to be re-elected by the votes of the people. If it is not able to perform well, it is bound to lose authority. There has been much discussion in the political history regarding the form, nature and characteristics of the government and in modern political history there has been much analysis regarding that of the democratic government but the other factor has not been discussed much and that is the nature and characteristics of the governed.

It is really important to discuss the governed as they participate to a large extent in the formation of government in modern states. There are certain characteristics that must be there in them so as to have better society. As in the state, both the elements are highly interdependent on each other; therefore, both have their roles to play. Moreover, the governed are not just simple masses that have nothing to say as a response to the nature and characteristics of the government. In earlier states, this could happen to a certain extent but not in the modern era.

The masses in a state must be educated and aware because both education and awareness would make them understand the society and their status, roles, rights and responsibilities in it. Though education is debatable, awareness is indispensable. Awareness is majorly based on experience and open-mindedness. Though it is very difficult to achieve awareness without education, it is not impossible.

The governed must also be vigilant and must have an active part in the affairs of the state. They must not be dumb and deaf subjects as in that way their rights would be easily violated. There are political scientists who believe that the rulers are basically the people who gain authority in order to defend their own interests. They are not always interested in what the common masses get; rather their attentions are diverted more towards their economic benefits. Therefore, the masses must be vigilant to identify the policies of the government that are not intended to bring prosperity to them. They have every right to fight for their rights politically and must make sure that their rights are not violated in any way.

In that manner they would be able to stop the rulers from using the authority only for their personal benefits. Political consciousness is another important quality that the masses must develop so as to comprehend the developments and the changes in the political system. Through such a consciousness they would also be able to gauge the policies of the government as per the political demands. Furthermore, they would gain the capacity of strengthening the political institutions and enrich the political culture with democratic and positive elements. They would, at the same time, be able to exert for positive political changes through their voting power, the tendency to change, participation in political affairs and, at most, through democratic demonstrations and protests.

Countries like Afghanistan would also require concentrating on the characteristics of the governed as well. Unfortunately, the common masses in Afghanistan have not been able to gain the attentions. They still lack basic requirements of life and suffer from lack of awareness and consciousness. Therefore, their roles are very limited in Afghan society and mostly the rulers rule the country as per their will.

Even if the rulers have the policies that are detrimental for Afghan people and Afghan society and are contradictory to the wellbeing of the masses, they do not face much opposition as the masses are not able to identify them and insist on the changes through political means.

WFD – Empathizing the Hungry and Awakening Conscience

By Jawad Sorosh

World Food Day (WFD) is celebrated every year around the world on October 16 in honor of the date of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in 1945. This day is celebrated widely by many other organizations concerned with food security, including the World Food Program (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. The theme for 2016 was "climate is changing, food and agriculture must too." One of the biggest challenges to food security is climate change and its effects on agriculture. Many of the world's farmers and fishermen are struggling to cope with increasing temperatures and weather-related disasters. The theme in 2017 focuses on "zero hunger".

Agricultural growth; food security; fight against famine; encouragement of nations, heads of state, international centers, non-governmental organizations to increase production of crops are deemed the strategies to tackle poverty.

Conveying the experiences of developed countries to developing countries, nutrition, technology transfer and modernization of agriculture and economic growth, which improve the food industry in the Third World nations is one of the solutions stressed every year. On the other hand, rescuing nearly one billion people in the world, who are hungry, and increasing the number of those people due to serious economic constraints have worried international organizations more than ever before. According to statistics, one of seven people in the world suffer from hunger or malnutrition, most of them in Asian countries, especially in South Asia.

Afghanistan is one of the countries where the rate of poverty and number of hungry individuals are increasing to a great extent due to the country's political and economic conditions. The continuation of war and insecurity, political turmoil and instability in the country, and the emergence of weak and unplanned governments were one of the main obstacles before Afghanistan's agricultural development and economic growth. Annual reports from international organizations such as FAO and UNESCO suggest that Afghanistan is in a worrying situation in terms of food production and per capita consumption of food. The uncontrolled population growth, high rate of illiteracy and traditional culture, and dry and infertile lands in some parts of the country have seriously curtailed access to food.

On the other hand, Afghanistan has an arid climate due to its geographical location, which has tremendously restricted its food supply in the country. Traditional agriculture, farmers' lack of access to agricultural pesticides, lack of access to improved seeds, lack of human resources in agriculture, and migration of villagers to cities to escape from famine and drought have increased

the number of poor people in the country. Climate change and droughts, soil erosion, declining atmospheric rainfall, acid rain in some areas left Afghanistan more vulnerable to land degradation and destruction of Ozone layer than any other countries in the region.

The impact of the protracted war on economic condition of Afghan people, employment crisis, 4000 annual increase in labor force, and fear of rising unemployment rate have increased the crisis of hunger. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) which works in developing countries with the aim of reducing poverty and ending malnutrition and hunger has ranked Afghanistan first in number of having hungry individuals among Asian countries. The report states that Nepal ranked 72th, Myanmar 77, Sri Lanka 84, Bangladesh 88, India 97, Pakistan 106, and Afghanistan 107th in terms of nutrition and hunger. Considering the report of international organizations and the country's worrying nutrition status, it is imperative that heads of states implement the right strategies for fighting hunger and increasing agricultural products. To alleviate hunger and reduce the number of hungry individuals, the government will be able to implement the plans applied in developed countries with fruitful results. Afghanistan, with the support of developed countries, will have to make coordinated efforts to reduce poverty. In 21st century, as advancement in communication technology continues, there are still upsetting images of hunger in Afghanistan. Poor families even offered to auction their children for money so that they could escape starvation for a short time, which unveils the depth of tragedy in the country. Afghanistan is plunged into the devastating quagmire of poverty and hunger since people seek to survive starvation. This issue bespeaks of the fact that no high step has been taken in the country regarding food.

WFD is celebrated annually so that government officials ask themselves what they have done in terms of reducing poverty. Afghan political officials should know the protracted war has been the main reason behind poverty and hunger. They should further understand that there are many hungry and malnourished people to be supported. Hence, WFD is a good opportunity to empathize the poor and the hungry. This is the day of waking conscience. One can claim with strong confidence that there are hundreds of thousands of Afghan men, women, and children who sleep with empty stomach. Poverty does not only result in many sorts of disease but also in irreparable loss to peace and tranquility. So, only providing food will not mitigate the issue, but all causes of poverty should be figured out and eradicated.

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The Geoengineering Fallacy

By Barbara Unmüßig

As the world struggles to rein in emissions of climate-changing gases and limit planetary warming, a new technological silver bullet is gaining supporters. Geoengineering – the large-scale manipulation of the Earth's natural systems – has been popularized as a means of counteracting the negative effects of climate change. Proponents of this science feed the illusion that there is a way to engineer an exit from the climate crisis, meet the goals of the 2015 Paris climate agreement, and maintain a consumption-heavy lifestyle.

But this solution is not as simple as proponents would have us believe. Betting on climate engineering – either as a planetary insurance policy or as a last-ditch measure to combat rising temperatures – is not only risky; it also directs attention away from the only solution we know will work: reducing carbon emissions. Each of the engineered technologies being discussed carries dangers and uncertainties. For example, the only way to test the effectiveness of solar radiation management (SRM) on a global scale would be to carry out experiments in the environment – either by spraying particles into the stratosphere, or by artificially modifying clouds. While such tests would be designed to determine whether SRM could reflect enough sunlight to cool the planet, experimentation itself could cause irreversible damage. Current models predict that SRM deployment would alter global precipitation patterns, damage the ozone layer, and undermine the livelihoods of millions of people.

Beyond the ecological risks, critics warn that, once deployed globally, SRM could spawn powerful weapons, giving states, corporations, or individuals the ability to manipulate climate for strategic gain (an idea that not even Hollywood can resist). But perhaps the most important criticism is a political one: in a world of challenged multilateralism, how would global ecological interventions be governed? Similar questions surround the other major group of climate engineering technologies under debate – so-called carbon dioxide removal (CDR). Proponents of these technologies propose removing CO2 from the atmosphere and storing it underground or in the oceans. Some CDR approaches are already prohibited, owing to concerns about possible environmental consequences. For example, fertilization of oceans with carbon-sequestering plankton was banned by the London Protocol on marine pollution in 2008. Parties to that decision worried about the potential damage to marine life. But other CDR approaches are gaining support. One of the most discussed ideas aims to integrate biomass with carbon capture and storage (CCS) techniques. Called "bioenergy with CCS," or BECCS, this method seeks to pair the CO2-absorption capabilities of fast-growing plants with underground CO2 storage methods. Proponents argue that BECCS would actually yield "negative" emissions.

Yet, as with other engineered solutions, the promises are simply too good to be true. For example, huge amounts of energy, water, and fertilizer would be required to operate BECCS systems successfully. The effects on land use would likely lead to terrestrial species losses, and increase land competition and displacement of local populations. Some forecasts even suggest that the land clearing and construction activities associated with these projects could lead to a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions, at least in the

short term. Then there is the issue of scale. In order for BECCS to achieve emissions limits set by the Paris agreement, between 430 million and 580 million hectares (1.1 billion to 1.4 billion acres) of land would be needed to grow the required vegetation. That is a staggering one third of the world's arable land.

Simply put, there are safer – and proven – ways to withdraw CO2 from the atmosphere. Rather than creating artificial CO2-binding "farms," governments should focus on protecting already-existing natural ecosystems and allowing degraded ones to recover. Rainforests, oceans, and peatlands (such as bogs) have immense CO2 storage capacities and do not require untested technological manipulation.

By pushing unproven technologies as a cure for all climate-changing ills, proponents are suggesting that the world faces an unavoidable choice: geoengineering or disaster. But this is disingenuous. Political preferences, not scientific or ecological necessity, explain the appeal of geoengineering. Unfortunately, current debates about climate engineering are undemocratic and dominated by technocratic worldviews, natural science and engineering perspectives, and vested interests in the fossil-fuel industries. Developing countries, indigenous peoples, and local communities must be given a prominent voice, so that all risks can be fully considered before any geoengineering technology is tested or implemented.

So what conversation should we be having about geoengineering? For starters, we need to rethink the existing governance landscape. In 2010, parties to the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) agreed to a de facto international moratorium on climate-related geoengineering. But today, with powerful advocates generating so much pressure to bring geoengineering technologies out of the lab, informal bans are no longer sufficient. The world urgently needs an honest debate on the research, deployment, and governance of these technologies; the CBD and the London Protocol are essential starting points for these governance discussions.

Among the technologies that require the most scrutiny are CDR projects that threaten indigenous lands, food security, and water availability. Such large-scale technological schemes must be regulated diligently, to ensure that climate-change solutions do not adversely affect sustainable development or human rights.

In addition, the outdoor testing and deployment of SRM technologies, because of their potential to weaken human rights, democracy, and international peace, should be banned outright. This ban should be overseen by a robust and accountable multilateral global governance mechanism. No silver bullet for climate change has yet been found. And while geoengineering technologies remain mostly aspirational, there are proven mitigation options that can and should be implemented vigorously.

These include scaling up renewable energy, phasing out fossil fuels (including an early retirement of existing fossil infrastructure), wider diffusion of sustainable agroecological agriculture, and increased energy and resource input into our economy. We cannot afford to gamble with the future of our planet. If we engage in a serious discussion about ecologically sustainable and socially just measures to protect the Earth's climate, there will be no need to roll the dice on geoengineering. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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