

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



September 25, 2019

Democracy – Path to Peaceful Coexistence

Afghans hold out hopes that presidential elections will pave the ground for forming a civil society, where both men and women could exercise their rights and freedoms. Violation of fundamental and inherent rights and dignity of the public have been the main concern for Afghan people within almost the past two decades.

The Taliban guerilla fighters have been the main obstacle before democracy. They spill the blood of combatants and non-combatants and trampled upon their rights and dignity to impose their warped mind on them. Both the Taliban ideologue and mercenary fighters undermined democratic principles and hampered the smooth implementation of law within the past 18 years.

To view Afghanistan's history, religious fundamentalists played the most destructive role in Afghanistan through killing people and violating their rights and dignity. For example, civil war was triggered by fundamentalist individuals and groups, which destroyed the country and undermined the country's economic and educational systems.

Meanwhile, a number of fundamental individuals protested against the modernist movement of King Amanullah Khan and excommunicated him from the society for his open mindset. Those individuals showed a strong sensitivity to women's rights and freedoms as well as democratic principles. In short, religious tenets and rituals have been repeatedly capitalized on by religious fundamentalists, who still continue their destructive role.

To pave the ground for the establishment of a democratic administration and a society void of violence and conflict, Afghans have to embrace democratic values through participating in elections and exercising religious tolerance towards one another.

The reasons for both peaceful coexistence and conflict have been stated in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." Hence, if people respect the rights, freedoms, and dignity of one another, there will be no room left for violence and conflict. On the other hand, "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts".

However, disrespecting and violating one's rights and dignity have been changed into daily practices in Afghanistan. One's rights and freedoms are violated in one way or another and warring factions have been the main violators of human rights in the country.

People's rights and dignity are violated on the grounds of their race, beliefs, and sects in Afghanistan, which are against both the UDHR and Afghan Constitution. For example, a number of women are discriminated in individual and collective life on the basis of their gender.

It should be noted that gender discrimination has no room in Afghan Constitution, which states in Article 22, "Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law."

To pave the ground for founding a violence-free society, all individuals have to respect the rights and freedoms of one another, exercise tolerance, and practice upon constitution and other national laws.

Meanwhile, warring factions have to understand that militancy and terrorist activities compounded the pain and suffering of Afghan people but never led to peace. The continuation of war will add to the public sorrow and people's rights and freedoms will be violated. With this in mind, they have to stop imposing their radical ideology on people and reduce violence. Subsequently, they will also be able to flock to ballot boxes to elect their representatives and leaders.

Afghanistan's history should be an eye-opener for each Afghan individual. Afghanistan has sustained the strongest harm and destruction from religious fundamentalists, who relentlessly persisted on the righteousness of their own mindset and denied any statements invalidated their ideology through violence and gun. If religious fundamentalists and tribal traditionalists did not resist against democratic principles, Afghanistan would have developed to a great extent.

To resolve their tensions, any individuals or groups have to resort to communication and debate rather than violence. For instance, the Afghan government has constantly called on the Taliban to resolve the issue through dialogue and stop violating people's rights and freedoms. Communication and non-violent mechanism is the best way for mitigating the ongoing tension and conflict in Afghanistan.

Afghans have to participate to the forthcoming presidential elections to support democracy so that they could establish a violence-free society. On the other hand, warring factions have to stop targeting people, mainly those who seek to cast their votes for advocating democracy. The government is responsible to ensure the safety of the voters.

Increasing Impartial Election Monitors is Good Measure to Its Transparency

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

According to Independent election commission (IEC), more than 100 thousand people will monitor from Election Day scheduled on 28 September, 2019. Given the controversy over the presidential election in 2014 and also parliamentary election in 2018, there is a serious need for widespread monitoring from the presidential election. Impartial monitoring from election will not only ensure the transparency and credibility of the election, but also calm down the weak candidates from making unreasonable claims and controversies. In last parliamentary election, almost all candidates claimed winning the election while some of them were righteous but it was too hard to distinguish. Therefore, there is a serious need for national and international organization to supervise from the whole election process including holding election, vote count process, and ballot box transition to the election headquarter. Based on IEC officials, in addition to national bodies such as political parties, national election bodies and representatives of candidates, there will be a large number of monitors from international organization including UNAMA, a group from Australia, NATO, British embassy, Canadian embassy, Indian embassy and so on. The presence of national and international monitors will increase hopes and confidence for ensuring a transparent and qualitative election in the country. As experienced in the past, the presence of international monitors will be more effective for holding a transparent and credible election in Afghanistan.

The first elections in Afghanistan, especially the presidential election in 2004, were entirely managed by UNAMA with its Afghan personnel. Thought it was the first election and first experience in the country but it was the best election in modern Afghanistan. Thus, in later elections there was no serious controversy across the country. Though there was no national mechanism about election, everyone trusted on foreigners and their impartial management. Unlike recent years, in 2004 all winner and loser candidates accepted the outcome of election without any serious doubts and question. Undoubtedly, the current condition of Afghanistan is not better than 2004 so we need to international contribution in the next week election.

In some of the past election, there were only national monitors such as representatives of candidates, political parties, and civil society and election bodies. As a result, the elections got to become controversial and the national monitors also failed to properly supervise from the election process. This issue has not only damaged the new democracy of Afghanistan, but also caused a lot social and political problem in the country. According to a survey carried out in recent weeks, around 56 Afghan people are not willing to take part in election due to distrust on the process. Therefore, beside national monitors we need to pave the way for presence of international monitors in Afghanistan. Otherwise, we will not be able to restore the credibility of election and democratic process in the

country.

Unfortunately, the political parties and civil society organization are not strong enough to attract people's trust and support for the national process. Therefore, it is not too hard for the candidate teams to penetrate the national monitors. In last elections, a large number of national monitors were influenced by the opponent teams and so, the most important national process was defamed in the country. Therefore, one of the most effective ways to prevent from election fraud and restore its credibility is to increase national and international monitors in the Election Day.

Obviously, there are many advantages for transparent election, especially in the current political condition of Afghanistan. Firstly, a transparent election is the most important way to fight against Taliban and increase legitimacy of the government. Transparent election and widespread participation in election is a big no to Emirate extremist system in the country. As around 9 million people registered for voting; if they all participate, it will mean that absolute majority of Afghan people reject Emirate. If this happens, no power will be able to impose its barbaric system on majority of people while they have international allies also beside us. In this case, Taliban will have no way, except meaningful talks to the republican people of Afghanistan.

Secondly, Taliban will come to confess that peace talks will not be enough with the US. They will understand that a sustainable peace is possible only through meaningful negotiation with opposition of emirate and supporters of republicanism in the country. election is the greatest opportunity for Afghan people provided that not spoiled with poor election management and poor security management. If we had not missed the political and economic opportunities in past eighteen years, today we would be the current condition. Consequently, a poor election many farther open the way to Emirate and other extremist groups in the country.

Thirdly, a credible and transparent election will not only legitimize the next Afghan government, but also delegitimize its alternative options in the public opinion on condition that succeed to hold a sound election in the country. In recent years, different alternations have been raised such as interim government, Emirate and so on because the Independent Election Commissions (IEC), as responsible entity, was not successful in institutionalization of election and smooth transition of power in the country.

On contrary to the above mentioned suppositions, if we fail to hold a successful and transparent election and once again repeat the crisis as in 2014, the consequences will not be predictable for the country. Given the current condition of country, especially extreme poverty, insecurity and peace process, Afghanistan extremely needs to a transparent election. In this condition, Afghanistan will not be able to tolerate such elections and the public reaction will also be different.

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The Constitution Won't Save American Democracy

By: Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson

Revelations that a whistleblower from the intelligence community has accused US President Donald Trump of making inappropriate promises to a foreign leader have reignited the hopes that recently hung on the report of Special Counsel Robert Mueller. Many of those exasperated with Trump's norm-violating, truth-bending, and polarizing presidency had believed that the system would somehow discipline, restrain, or remove him. Yet these hopes were misguided then, and they are misguided now.

The majority of voters who are fed up with Trump and the Republican Party that has loyally fallen behind him should not look to Washington insiders or a white knight to hold Trump accountable. That is society's responsibility, first and foremost at the ballot box, and by protesting in the streets if necessary.

The conceit that the United States can be saved by Washington insiders and the Constitution is part of a common narrative about the origins of American institutions. According to this narrative, Americans owe their democracy and freedoms to founders' brilliant, foresighted design of a system with the right types of checks and balances, separation of powers, and other safeguards.

As we explain in our new book, *The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and the Fate of Liberty*, this is not how democratic institutions and freedoms come about. Rather, they emerge and are protected by society's mobilization, its assertiveness, and its willingness to use the ballot box when it can and the streets when it cannot. The US is no exception.

The US founders, like the economic and intellectual elites in Britain at the time, strove to develop laws and institutions that would support a strong, capable state under the control of like-minded rulers. Several of them viewed a monarchy of sorts as the best arrangement.

The US Constitution, written in 1787, reflected these preconceptions. It did not include a bill of rights and enshrined many non-democratic elements. This was not an oversight. The founders' main objective was to calm the rising democratic fervor among common Americans and bring to heel state legislatures, which had been empowered by the Constitution's predecessor, the Articles of Confederation.

In the aftermath of the War of Independence, many people, smitten by the new liberties they had been promised, were intent on actively participating in policymaking. The states were responding to popular pressure, forgiving debts, printing money, and raising taxes. Their profligacy and autonomy struck many of the founders, especially James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington, as subversive. The Constitution they drafted was meant not only to manage national economic policy and defense, but also to put the democratic genie back into its bottle.

Madison emphasized this eloquently: "you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself." Indeed, the founders did not think it was a good idea for people to protest, elect their representatives directly, or become too involved in politics.

Likewise, Madison worried that, "An increase in the population will of necessity increase the proportion of those who will labor under all the hardships of life, & secretly sigh for a more equal distribution of the blessings. These may in time outnumber who are placed above the feelings of indigence." The Constitution was meant to prevent the desire for "a more equal distribution of the blessings" from turning into actual policy.

One of the Constitution's catalysts was Shays' Rebellion in Western Massachusetts in 1786-87, when some 4,000 people took up arms in a protest led by a Revolutionary War veteran, Daniel Shays, in protest of severe economic hardship, heavy tax burdens, and political corruption. The federal government's inability

to finance and field an army to suppress the rebellion was a wake-up call: a stronger state was needed to contain and quell popular mobilization. The Constitution was meant to achieve this.

But that effort did not turn out entirely as planned. The founders' state-building efforts were met with suspicion. Many feared the consequences of a powerful state, especially once the democratic impulse was rolled back. Calls for an explicit guarantee of people's rights grew, and Madison himself started advocating a Bill of Rights to persuade his own state, Virginia, to ratify the Constitution. He subsequently ran for president on a pro-Bill of Rights ticket, arguing that it was necessary "to conciliate the minds of the people."

The Constitution included its checks and balances and its separation of powers partly "to oblige [the government] to control itself." But their primary purpose was not to make America more democratic and people's rights more secure. In the founders' vision, these institutional arrangements, including an elite, indirectly-elected Senate, were needed not to protect the people from the federal government, but to protect that government against excessive democratic zeal. It should be no surprise, then, that at critical junctures of American history, democratic rights and liberties have been furthered not so much by the system's safeguards against excessive democracy or by the Constitution's brilliant design, but by popular mobilization.

For example, in the second half of the nineteenth century, when powerful tycoons, the "robber barons," came to dominate America's economy and politics, they weren't reined in by the courts or Congress (on the contrary, they controlled these government branches). The robber barons and the institutions empowering them were held to account when people mobilized, organized, and managed to elect politicians promising to regulate the tycoons, level the economic playing field, and increase democratic participation by, for example, introducing direct election of senators.

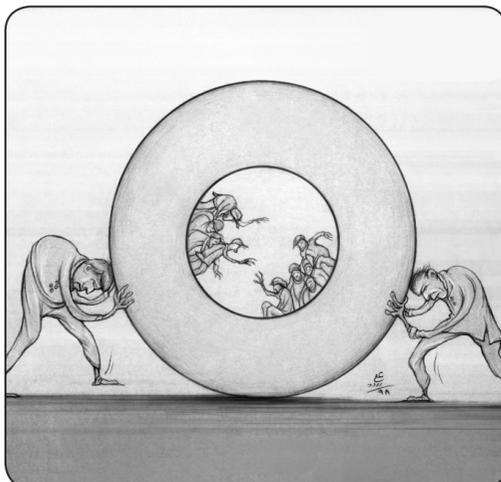
Likewise, in the 1950s and 1960s, it wasn't the separation of powers that finally broke the back of legal racism and repression in the US South. It was the work of protesters who organized, disrupted, and built a mass movement that forced federal institutions to act. President John F. Kennedy was finally persuaded to intervene and subsequently introduced the Civil Rights Act in response to the "Children's Crusade" of May 2, 1963, hundreds of children were arrested in Birmingham, Alabama for taking part in protests. As Kennedy put it, "The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or state or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them."

Today, too, only society's mobilization can save the US in its hour of political turmoil and crisis. White knights or checks and balances cannot be relied on to do the job. And even if they could, anything other than a resounding defeat at the ballot box would leave Trump's supporters feeling wronged and cheated, and polarization would deepen. Worse, a precedent would be set for empowering elites to check elites, relegating society to greater passivity. In that case, what happens next time an unscrupulous leader does even worse than Trump and the elites do not come to the rescue?

From this perspective, Mueller's greatest gift to US democracy was a report that refrained from triggering the impeachment process, but that laid bare the president's mendacity, corruption, and crimes so that voters would mobilize to exercise their power and responsibility to replace bad leaders.

The Constitution will not save American democracy. It never has. Only American society can do that.

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