

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



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## Corruption in Infrastructure Development

Corruption in different forms and in different sectors in Afghanistan has had some very drastic impacts on the country as a whole. The resources and energies that could be spent for the development and progress of the country were hijacked by corruption. While the common people who required support during tough times and deserved those resources were kept deprived. Corruption has been one of the most dominant factors that has hampered any sort of development work in Afghanistan and may even push the country back to the era of misery and underdevelopment.

Infrastructure development is one of the sectors highly influenced by corruption. Recently an investigative survey by Construction Sector Transparency Initiative Afghanistan (CSTIA) of the Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) revealed that billions of dollars had been embezzled in infrastructure projects in Afghanistan due to lack of transparency over the past 15 years. The survey report also highlighted that the absence of transparency in implementation of infrastructural projects over the past one and a half decade caused embezzlement of billions of dollars. Sibghatullah Karimi, CSTIA coordinator, also said that corruption was rampant and problems plagued implementation of construction projects by the government and private sector and some projects were awarded to companies based on favoritism without going through a legal procedure. Moreover, poor reporting about construction process was one of the major problems.

This clarifies the bad condition of the infra-structure development in Afghanistan. Because of the corruption committed by few individuals and organizations, millions of people have been suffering in different ways. They have been negated their rights to development in other sectors because of misuse of resources in infrastructure development, which is the key to progress in many other areas.

Among the different priorities in the infra-structure development, the roads play a very crucial role. Without well-constructed and well-maintained roads, it is impossible to improve economy and even security. For economic activities, it is important that there should be useful roads that can help in transportation of raw material, capital, fuel, final goods, and even labor. If these all factors are not transported on time, the whole businesses tend to suffer huge losses and, therefore, they are disheartened and decide not to invest in the country.

As far as security is concerned the timely transportation of the troops and the arms is really vital. If the forces are not able to transport enough number of troops and weapons, the consequences can be really very much severe. In past, on many occasions in different parts of Afghanistan, when Taliban were able to carry out serious assaults, Afghan forces were not able to defend themselves because of the same reason that the troops and weapons were not transported on time. It is also crucial to note that there are many places in the remote areas where troops do not have any way of reaching except using the aerial route, which is always very expensive and not convenient for transferring large number of people at short span of time.

Certain major catastrophes in the country, mostly brought by natural disasters also revealed the fact that the country is not properly equipped with enough roads. Landslides, severe snowfall, avalanches and floods, at different instances, brought to the light the fact that the concerned authorities could not reach to the effected people because of roads. In some cases, the roads were never present; while in other cases they were in pathetic condition, not possible to use.

The roads are also very much necessary for bringing about beauty to a place and support people to have safe recreational journeys. It is really weird and unpleasant to find the roads that are broken and dusty. Moreover, the ugliness further increases in such roads when there is rain or overflow of drain water. Such conditions can cause different types of diseases as the drain water may remain on the roads for days and invite mosquitoes and other insects. In addition, the drain water, containing different types of bacteria, dries on the road and afterwards is blown in the air by passing vehicles and wind and becomes the stuff the people breath, which can cause different types of lungs diseases.

Thus, infrastructure development projects are really vital for Afghanistan; however, the important factor is that these projects should be pursued with true intentions and enthusiasm. Negligence in this regard would be a dishonesty with the entire nation. Therefore, there should be every effort not to allow corruption and fraudulence creep in these projects and thus fail them pathetically. Government, businessmen and investors should join hands and stand strong against every sort of corruption in infrastructure development and provide the people the opportunities to avail the required resources. Ultimately, it remains a fact that corruption on the part of an individual or organization in the sectors that involve a large number of people at a time is a great disservice and injustice to the community as a whole and must not go unpunished.

## Individuals and Institutions

By Dilawar Sherzai

With the evolution of state and politics, there has been a movement from personality-centered structures and setups to the institutional-led structures. A thorough study of the journey from monarchy to today's democratic era will substantially prove the mentioned argument. The monarchies were the setups dominated by the personalities of the kings that ruled them. They largely depended on the kings who used to be all in all and were not answerable to anyone and enjoyed extreme authority. Though institutions existed in their primary forms they were not able to function on their own and they all waited for the orders of the kings. As the kings had to order for all the matters in the country, the systems did not use to be very much efficient and effective and largely depended on the use of power and authority and even violence to get the works done.

As the English historian, politician & writer John Emerich has said, "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely," therefore, the extreme authority, with which the monarchs were gifted, had corrupted them to a large extent. And on most of the occasions they were very much likely to use their authority in a wrong manner because many of them would not consult others and would even take decision on the basis of past experiences and whims. They even did not have much time to ponder upon the issues as they had to deal with so many issues at a time. There was no distribution of responsibility and there were no marked boundaries among government institution like executive, judiciary and legislature and the king was all of them at a time. Even there was no distinction between the state and the government as is in the modern concept of state and government.

However, the development of institutions continued even within monarchies and most of them in the certain parts of their histories had strong institutions that stood in support and on certain occasions in conflict with the king. One such institution was the religious institution. Kings largely depended on them while taking decisions and they used to have a great say in the affairs of the government. For example, during the Dark Age in Europe, the church used to have a strong position within the monarchies. On certain occasions even the kings used to be dominated by them. As the people including kings were highly influenced by religion and religious believes, the church used to be their favorite and it was able to exert its authority within the system. However, during the Enlightenment or Renaissance, the authority of church was challenged and efforts were made to keep the church away from the affairs of the state. It was the time when the concept of Secularism was introduced within the European society.

The later period of Renaissance was also the time when efforts were made to move from monarchy to a democratic state and it was also the time when the institutions that are very much necessary for the better performance of the government and democratic setup were formed in the modern sense. The famous concept of "Separation of Power" was revitalized during the same era, which proved to be the foundation of the modern political institutions.

In the concept of separation of power, the state is divided

into branches or estates, each with separate and independent powers and areas of responsibility. The normal division of estates is into an executive, a legislature and a judiciary. The opposite of separation of powers is the fusion of powers, often a feature of parliamentary democracies. In this form, the executive, which often consists of a prime minister and cabinet, is drawn from the legislature. This is the principle of responsible government. Although the legislature and executive branches are connected, in parliamentary systems there is usually an independent judiciary and the government's role in the parliament does not give them unlimited legislative influence.

The term, "Separation of Powers" is ascribed to French Enlightenment political philosopher, Baron de Montesquieu. Montesquieu described division of political power among an executive, a legislature and a judiciary. He based this model on the British constitutional system, in which he perceived a separation of powers among the monarch, parliament and the courts of law, but such separation, in reality was difficult to be marked. Among the abovementioned organs of the state, Montesquieu insisted greatly on the judiciary; he specified that the independence of the judiciary has to be real and not apparent merely. The judiciary was generally considered by him as the most important and the least dangerous of powers, and he suggested that it must be independent and unchecked.

There is no doubt that today the most of the democracies of the world have the concept of division of power in their systems in one way or the other. According to the modern concept of state and government, the nature, form and characteristics of institutions of executive, legislature and judiciary decide the form and quality of the system. However, the most successful (in terms of promoting democracy) among the systems of the world are the ones that have the independence of the institutions mentioned above and their transparency and accountability.

The political system in Afghanistan has been facing certain problems regarding the separation of power and the nourishment and dominance of the political institutions. The system is, to a certain extent, marked with the dominance of personalities, rather than the institutions, while the institutions are ill-managed and ignored and they are not even given their due authority. The executive is not, in true sense, answerable to the legislature and even, in a sense, to judiciary, which has generated concerns regarding the transparency and the accountability of the executive.

Even the members of the executive are chosen on the basis of personality traits, rather than their experience in the political institutions like political parties. Therefore, it is really important for the political system in Afghanistan to respect the institutions and try to create circumstances that can play a dominant role in the development and nourishment of the political institutions. True political institutions will guarantee a long-lasting and durable democracy as they die hard and have larger scope of influence.

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## Terrorism Leads to Growing rift

By Hujjatullah Zia

The recent spike in militancy has triggered a sense of mistrust between Afghan-Pak officials. Following the attack in Lahore and Sehwan, Islamabad claimed that the militants held sanctuaries in Afghanistan's soil, and it violated the country's territorial integrity through firing rocket in Nangarhar province which sparked off a sense of anger among the public. The bonhomie between the two countries melted away and harsh rhetoric between the officials ensued. On March 8, the militants targeted Daud Khan's Hospital in Kabul, which left heavy casualties behind. For both the Kabul and Sindh's attack, the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claimed responsibility.

This suggested the fact that the Afghan-Pak nations are left at the mercy of "common enemy" and their blood is spilled indiscriminately. Moreover, ISIL group showed that it was strong enough to carry out deadly attacks in the heart of cities. The attacks on Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's Shrine and Daud Khan's Hospital revealed the dangerous ideology of the ISIL fighters - although it is no more a mystery for the world - which pays no heed no humanity and humanitarian law via targeting shrines and hospitals which are to be respected. In other words, attacking shrines and hospitals are curse both from the religious and moral perspectives, if not considering the international law.

In addition to this fact, the ISIL's loyalists play instrumental role in widening the gap between Kabul and Islamabad. With the current tension and border's closure, the ISIL fighters will gain stronger confidence and engage in militancy to view the action and reaction between the two neighboring countries. Since the ISIL fighters are mostly mercenaries rather than ideologues, they will use their destructive role as a strategy to cause a rift not only between countries but also nations and ethnic groups. As a result, the ethnic minority groups were targeted and killed systematically both in Afghanistan and Pakistan with the emergence of the ISIL group. Unknown gunmen were stopping the buses and killing ethnic groups on the grounds of their race, color and faith, including women and children, so as to engender a sense of hatred among ethnic groups.

This strategy of warring parties has created a gap between Kabul and Islamabad governments, which were supposed to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. The mutual relations have been fluctuated between bad and worse. Following the recent meeting between Pakistani PM's Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz and Afghan National Security Adviser (NSA) Haneef Atmar, in London, the relations seem to thaw. In a message posted on his Facebook page after Wednesday's talks, Dr Omar Zakhilwal - the Afghan ambassador to Islamabad - said the London meeting was

held "to discuss and agree on a mechanism for genuine bilateral cooperation on fighting terrorism, agree on steps and measures to improve the current tense bilateral relations and mutual trust". He further wrote, "We are positive that the implementation of the mechanism we agreed upon can inject the needed trust and confidence for constructive forward-looking state-to-state relations and cooperation."

The dialogue in London was focused on mutual concerns about existence of terrorist sanctuaries on each other's soil. Soon after the bombing of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's shrine, the Pakistan Army had handed over a list of wanted 76 TTP and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) terror suspects allegedly residing in hideouts along the Pakistan-Afghan border to Kabul. Subsequently, Afghanistan sent a list of 85 Taliban and Haqqani network 'commanders', living in Pakistan and linked any action against TTP and JuA terrorists to "verifiable action" by Pakistan.

It goes without saying that emotional decision regarding political issues will be naïve of a country. Warring parties pose enough threats to the region and the countries will have to adopt effective strategies to tackle the issue rather than exchanging harsh rhetoric or resorting to arms against one another's territories. In addition to being vulnerable to terrorism, it is believed that political tensions will put pressure on nations. After all, it will compound the challenges.

Secondly, terrorist networks have inflicted heavy casualties upon Afghan and Pakistani nations and scores of soldiers paid sacrifices in combating terrorism.

In another item, terrorism has been changed into a highly serious political issue in our era to put pressure on governments and militant fighters even lead proxy wars in some countries. Shooting the militant fighters on the head will not mitigate the insurgency but all factors and grounds for fundamentalism must be destroyed so as to stop giving birth to radical mentalities.

The questions are that where do the militant fighters come from? What are their financial sources? Where are they trained and how are they radicalized? Why do the teenagers show tendency towards the cruel practices and intolerant attitude of terrorist networks?

Hence, the reasons behind radicalism and supporting factors must be scrutinized. It is highly crucial to come to the roots of the issue and eliminate the supporting factors. Since the entire region is susceptible to the venom spew forth by terrorist elements, all countries are to play their parts with bona fide intension. So, the blame game will be in favor of the fighters, who seek to fish in the troubled waters, and will not tackle the issue. It is hoped that the countries join forces to combat terrorism so as to stop it from further destruction.

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