

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

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Building People's Trust Through Service Delivery

It is one of the most important responsibilities of a government that it must make efforts to provide the basic requirements of life to the people; particularly, to those who are in dire need of such requirements. Doing so will not only support those people, helping them to live their lives properly, but it will also play a role in improving the legitimacy of the government. The people will then start believing the government, and their trust on the promises and initiatives of the government may improve. However, if the government is not able to deliver even on the fronts that are the most rudimentary in nature, the consequences may be terrible for the condition of the people and also the legitimacy of the government.

As Afghan government has not been able to deliver well, the concerns of the people and their scepticism about the future of the country seem to be on the rise. They are losing their confidence on the government and do not expect much from it. It has also given rise to a sense of indifference on the part of the people to do good for the society as a whole. Finding the responsible individuals doing nothing worthwhile, the poor and deprived people seem reluctant to do what they could possibly do on their own for improvements in the country. As a matter of fact, the leading individuals have not been able to set any exemplary guideline for others to follow. They have been involved in pursuing their own self-centred objectives.

The scepticism and negative opinion that the people have developed regarding the performance of the government is not because of their political differences with the government; rather most of it has to do with the incapacity of the government to do something worthwhile in sectors like economy, security and corruption.

Since the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan and decrease in the international support for country's economic challenges, the government should have concentrated properly towards improving the country's economic system and making efforts to make Afghanistan self-sufficient, at least, in certain factors, but the government has not been able to do so. Even today, Afghanistan stands dependent on international support for most of its expenditures as the businesses have not been able to flourish as much as they should have; and the people are very well aware of all these facts.

As far as security is concerned, there is nothing hidden from the people as they are the ones who mostly suffer from the consequences of lingering and, in certain cases, increasing insecurity. They are the ones who die and get injured when the insurgents attack them directly or indirectly. Therefore, they do not seem satisfied with what is being done to control the growing insecurity in the country. Majority of Afghans have become increasingly more sceptical about peace efforts. High Peace Council (HPC) has failed to make a breakthrough in peace talks with insurgents and no tangible outcomes have been achieved. Currently, the negotiations in Qatar do not seem to be bearing any fruits.

Same is the case with the efforts regarding corruption. National Unity Government (NUG) made some huge promises during its initial days and there were expectations that something would ultimately happen but the government took no time in forgetting those promises. And, it is the reason that corruption is still one of the main issues in Afghanistan and it is also hampering the progress in other sectors. For example, one of the reasons that the country has not been able to achieve something worthwhile in the field of security and economic development is corruption. And, the common people have to suffer the consequences to a great extent. Moreover, they also believe that government is not doing enough to eradicate corruption; thus, losing their confidence on the performance of the government in this regard as well.

It is really difficult to make any achievement in any sector as long as there is prevailing corruption there. Before making efforts to improve different sectors, the first step should be discouraging corruption in every possible manner; otherwise, nothing would be achieved.

NUG requires doing an immense amount of work if it wants to restore its image and its legitimacy. Providing services and the basic requirements to the people is the most important factor in enabling the government do so. If it does not have enough resources, at least, it can show through its willingness and resolve that is really serious in solving the problems of the people. If it is able to improve its legitimacy, and people start supporting its efforts, there are possibilities that the nation, as a whole, can fight against different challenges and may even stand victorious against them. If the legitimacy is lost, the possibilities of distrust and anarchy may multiply. People may be diverted towards crimes, vices and chaos. Therefore, the government must make efforts for the welfare of the people and improve its legitimacy for better chances of progress and development.



The Fruit of China's 40 Years Reform and Opening-up

By: Hujjatullah Zia

This year China marks the 40th anniversary of its reform and opening-up, which promoted China to the world's second largest economy. The opening-up policy, ushered in by Deng Xiaoping, has played a highly instrumental role in China's economic development and its contribution to the world.

Since its reform and opening-up, China has made remarkable achievements in economic development and improved the living standards of people as it lifted more than 800 million out of poverty. Its economic aggregate multiplied 225 times since 1978. Now China is the world's largest industrial country with the largest foreign exchange reserves and the largest volume of trade in goods. Take transportation for example, three decades ago, bicycles were the most popular means of transportation. A total of 63 percent of residents in Beijing traveled by bike and a total of more than 10 million bikes could be found in the city. Hence, China was dubbed "the Kingdom of Bicycles". But today, public transportation and sharing bicycles are encouraged to cope with traffic congestion after the explosive increase in private car ownership.

China launched a high-speed railway, with the top speed of 350 km per hour, connecting Beijing to Tianjin. With high-speed trains, China entered the world high-speed railway and with tickets purchased online, traveling in China is becoming easy and easier.

In May 2017, China's homemade C919 passenger jet completed its maiden flight, an important step in competing with global aircraft giants thanks to reform and opening-up.

E-commerce on day-to-day basis holds strong sway in the daily life of Chinese people, who have everything at their fingertips. Rather than spending time, the Chinese are able to easily purchase online through clicking a button. If you do not have time in China to go shopping, just shop online at midnight while you are reclining on your bed. Likewise, you can call a taxi at any time just through a click.

Meanwhile, the traditional method of payment is hardly in use in China. Chinese people pay through their mobiles in shopping malls. They do not bother themselves to carry wallet with them, mobile payment has swiftly replaced the traditional payment. In other words, China is now accelerating its pace towards becoming a cashless society, as digital and online payments cover almost all aspects of daily life. The country plays a leading role in the global mobile payment market.

China is setting an incredible pace when it comes to digital transformation and innovation. China's opening-up to the outside

world allowed both domestic and foreign enterprises to invest in China. High-speed growth, higher productivity and foreign investment have led to a much bigger industrial and consumer base.

Joining the World Trade Organization in 2001 was one of the milestones in China's history, which changed China to the world's factory setting a good example of accelerating economic reform through opening-up policy. That is to say, China accomplished two major tasks by joining the WTO: First, making its trade and investment compatible with international rules so that the world could better recognize China. Second, it was integrated into the global industrial chain and value chain.

China seeks to provide further opportunities for foreign enterprises. At the 2018 annual conference of the Boao Forum for Asia in April, China announced several significant measures to enhance opening up, including cutting auto import taxes, and has promised to ease limitation on foreign equity in banking, security and insurance industries.

With the opening-up policy, the cultural interaction and people-to-people exchanges between China and the rest of the world also have been stepped up. Now a large number of people have been familiarized with Chinese culture around the world, albeit there leaves a lot to be desired. Annually, China hosts scores of tourists from around the world and countless number of Chinese people travel across the globe as tourists, which do not only contribute to countries' economic development but also cultural interaction.

Considering all the aforementioned issues, Chinese officials have reiterated on multiple occasions that China's door will be never closed, rather it will open wider to the outside world. China is ready to share the fruit of its reform and opening-up with the world so that other nations could also live a moderately prosperous life. In fact, "multilateral trading system", which has been stressed by Chinese officials, cultural ties and people-to-people exchanges will be mutually beneficial and win-win result.

China's rapid economic development can be a perfect example for the rest of the world to pursue open-up policy. In the current global village, closing door will lead to dead-end and no country on earth will improve alone. To pursue common development, all nations have to embrace one another with open arms, enhance bilateral and multilateral ties and strengthen trade and connectivity.

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US & NATO Fatigue Yields the Urge to Broker Peace Deal between Afghan Government & Taliban (Part 1)

By: Mohammed Gul Sahibzada

Recent developments in various fronts including sturdy paces of ongoing peace process, hectic diplomatic activities on the part of United States through their envoy, Mr. Zalmay Khalilzad and tangible responses on the part of Pakistan who released senior Taliban leaders, including Mullah Abdul Ghani Bradar - which Afghan government had been asking for since last one decade - reschedule of a peace conference in Moscow next month after a successful roundtable meeting this month at Moscow attended by Taliban and delegations of all stakeholder countries and formation of a delegation by Afghan government to participate in this conference, representing Afghan Government, are signs that clearly indicate international community fatigue in funneling tons of money, equipment and support in all fronts to Afghan government for breaking the ongoing stalemate and impasse in the war against Taliban insurgents, and the lack of progress and inability of Afghan government to broker a viable peace deal or change battlefield position in favor of Afghan government. Despite formation of High Peace Council since last one decade, and hundreds of millions of dollars on this so called High Peace Council expended over these years since its formation, there isn't any realistic breakthrough to bring peace. Prevailing conditions forced US to directly enter into negotiations with Taliban insurgents to make sure a way forward was designed and followed. Despite huge uproar against direct involvement of US with Taliban to bring in peace, the process continued and it seems it is working in right direction as US and Taliban both have realized and publicly acknowledged that the military victory is not possible. According to Upendra Baghel, an expert in state building and international security issues, "Westerners have followed affirmative action in many countries, but they have not attempted to understand the depth of the root problems in Afghanistan as they do not have a similar situation in their countries. They used to have nobility class but such a class slowly disappeared and their influence diminished. Social differences get linked to the economic status in developing and poor countries and hence the impact is more and sustainable peace process should incorporate the social realities and root causes through inclusion and affirmative processes."

Seventeen years and counting, United States of America, NATO member countries, regional powers and development partners of Afghanistan including India, continue to funnel funds in the country to support ongoing efforts to establish a strong central government, which can bring stability, good governance and garner support of its citizens to bring about progress and development in the country. These efforts and huge amount of resources expended so far have failed to establish a strong central government with strong state institutions to bring the desired stability and governance to serve the people. Security situations remain fragile with unabated occurrence of incidents related to both, insurgency and organized criminality. In addition, the social impact of these international interventions also could not bring the desired effect. Literacy rate stands at slightly above 30%, economic growth stands at 2%, 40% of the entire population of Afghanistan lives under one dollar a day,

credit to GDP ratio stands at 3.5%, hence support to business activities remains low, health related services are poorly delivered as most of the patients visit neighboring countries for treatment, corruption, favoritism, nepotism and misuse of power in government agencies continue and violence has skyrocketed during these past seventeen years. Taliban insurgents steadily advanced in battlefronts and established their influence over almost half of the Afghan territory and sizeable population. Currently, 40% of Afghanistan landmass - mostly rural areas with agro-business activities - is under Taliban insurgents. They acquired capability to strike on armed forces, police and even high value state installations making civilians to doubt over the effective capabilities of Afghan security system. The United States and NATO member countries continue to inject huge amount of money and equipment into Afghan security and defense institutions, but the ongoing war of attrition unleashed by Taliban insurgents continues to take immense toll on security personnel, which if this course of destructive war tactics of Taliban insurgents are not altered or stopped, the present rate of casualties, which stands at around 1500 to 2000 security personnel a month, cannot be sustained.

International community - including US and NATO member countries - have cobbled together a government led by people with diverse set of beliefs, background and ideologies who in the absence of strong and objective state institutions continue to serve their narrow interests and personal and group goals by using government positions, authorities and money. This phenomenon has in turn increased mistrust between government and the people, resulting in deterioration of delivery of rule based government services. In addition, corruption, favoritism, nepotism, and misuse of power continue to exist in every government departments, which further alienated ordinary people from the government and strengthened informal networks. International community and Afghan government initiated many mechanisms to counter corruption but those could not bring much impact because they remain fragmented, slow and theoretical. They are not people centered focusing on public services and they do not follow whole of system approach. They focused on donor's interest: utilization of aid money, not on the services, which a state ought to deliver. This situation offered opportunity for Taliban insurgents to recruit young people in their ranks to push them into killing machine, hence to further buttress their writ in territories under their control.

Mr. Baghel said, "Afghanistan should be proud of its nationals with their courage, conviction, knowledge, skills and leadership qualities but they have not been adequately utilized in nation building. The government should start identifying the people who are respected in community for their integrity and who are committed and then bring them to front to manage affairs. The government should start making merit cum inclusivity based interdependent, impartial and professional security, police and civil services."

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