

"Resilience, Democracy and Surveillance"

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The position of a state in the world depends on the degree of independence it has attained. It is obliged, therefore, to organize all its internal resources for the purpose of self-preservation. This is the supreme law of the state.

Leopold von Ranke, A dialogue on politics (1836)

1836..... 2014 – self-preservation is a continuous process. In my humble opinion – internal resources of a state are its people, glory and downfall of a state rests in the hands of people. The ones who steer the people have to use the cognitive domain – mindfulness, of policy action and its impact on the communities for self-preservation and long-term stability.

The current fabric of the globe is full of transition and challenges. World is non-linear, in hyper accelerated mode with high mobility. A multidimensional, multipolar world is what we are looking at. Digital, Social and Mobile – I think these terms are so apt for today's societies. There is transference of culture; values, concepts and all have gone through a transition

In the 21st century we are frequently seeing or hearing about places where Democracies are going through troubled times, where autocratic regimes have been kicked out and the opposition has failed to set up a viable system, established democracies are also showing visible worrisome flaws.

The interface between national security and resilience is rooted in individuals' perceptions and attitudes toward institutions and leadership. This is a political-psychological feature.

All the concepts that define resilience are universal and relevant in every society, and in the past the manifestations and collaterals of these constructs were culture-specific with noticeable variations, however in our current times of hyperconnectivity, there is a melding of cultures.

We have to think of terms like hyperdemocracy and technocracy and what these terms will mean to direct democracy, now and in the future.

Resilience – we need to connect for resilience, we need the trust of people, we need to give them trust, we need to make them secure and we need to combat crime and terrorism, and we cannot do this without the support of communities in which we function.

Security in the 21st century has to be seen in categories of realism, multinational security, democratic and internationalism and providing strategic independence.

Security policies need to be re-evaluated, as it is more than defense policy, more than military policy. It encompasses internal domestic security, socio-economic & economic development, psychosocial factors and with political influence so as to influence the international system too, for a peaceful environment regionally

as well as globally. Resilience is a key component of establishing security. Installing resilience in communities is no easy task, resilience starts with awareness of the issues, understanding it and learning how to adapt to the changes created by those issues within a supportive framework and then resilience is built.

Hyperconnectivity is increasing digital interconnection of people and things anytime and any place.

By 2020 there will be 50 billion networked devices such connectivity will increasingly be part of our everyday life. Data from these devices will increasingly shape our societies and economies and our view of the world. We have to go about rethinking personal data, which are shaping norms, and values, what risk and responsibilities will arise due to this hyperconnectivity?

What will democratic values mean in such communities? Can the need of surveillance to enhance security give rise to intractable conflicts? We, generally would not think of surveillance and intractable conflict in one single thought, but I am thinking this because the terms such as a) complex b) difficult c) violence d) gridlocked e) basic human needs etc. brings the perception of an intractable conflict and the need for surveillance and community acceptance is polarized.

This is a conflict.

Intractability is a dynamic state, and if we want that this issue does not morph in to a conflict nor does it become intractable then we as a team have to make sure there are no “win-lose” situation, that is compromising democratic principles for the sake of surveillance, there is ZOPA (zone of potential agreement between all sectors – from policy makers to grass-root level)

Some questions can arise, such as: To what extent is there a political responsibility to promote resilience? How do cultural and social factors increase vulnerability? How can these factors be addressed? How much responsibility rests with individuals and communities, and how much depends on outside forces beyond their control? How can vulnerable groups be empowered to improve their safety and security? How can their strengths be optimized? What other benefits are derived from increased community resilience?

Research from independent organizations have outlined that 2013 was the eighth consecutive year in which global freedom declined, and that its forward march peaked around the beginning of the century. Between 1980 and 2000 the cause of democracy experienced only a few setbacks, but since 2000 there have been many. And democracy’s problems run deeper than mere numbers suggest. Many nominal democracies have slid towards autocracy, maintaining the outward appearance of democracy through elections, but without the rights and institutions that are equally important aspects of a functioning democratic system.

Resilience requires (1) knowledge of the hazard; (2) accurate perception of the risk; (3) understanding available alternatives; and (4) the resources and flexibility to respond successfully. These factors are not spread equally through societies. Rather, their distribution is largely determined by social and economic forces, many outside the control of much of the population.

Resilience should be defined broadly to include not only the concepts of planning and vulnerability reduction through development and socioeconomic conditions but also the concepts of fairness and legitimacy.

At the community level, it is closely tied to the economic and political circumstances of a community, as well as to the strength of its social institutions and social networks. Media narratives are a good tool to employ to increase awareness, thereby adaptation and eventually resilience. People need to have faith in their government and trust that they are being represented fairly. This requires community involvement. Top-down official activities do not lead to meaningful resilience.

There is also a need to raise awareness on how technology can play a role in upholding democratic principles we need greater evidence and sort of learning labs to repattern our cognitive process, testing new concepts for understanding the impact of when policies are implemented in the real world.

I don't want to go deep in George Orwell's 1984 or Panopticon society, as we all know much about it, for me we have a situation at hand and a plan needs to be devised on how to incorporate all issues of security, good governance, democratic principles and stability of a state.

Communities must understand the needs for their security, adaptation and be given tools to become resilient. Socio-economic status also matters in how one perceives the meaning of surveillance, democracy and their individual stance.

The struggle for resilience will not be won within the walls of government agencies but rather in the broadly distributed communities that they serve and with which they interact employing mechanism of creative and marble-cake federalism that is common planning with the communities and intermingling of all levels of government in policies and programming.

Decision makers have to expand their views of how to cultivate resilience by enabling communities to become adaptive.

The concept of resilience is hardly new but it is taking on new significance at the heart of aspirations for good government in a period of disruption and wrenching transition.

We all know what is bouncing back, bouncing forward – but before we bounce back or forward do we know what is it we are going to be facing, do we know the meaning of what we will be facing, if we knew then we can be prepared, adapt and bounce back when faced with crisis.

We have to take surveillance as an environment change – to accept this people need understanding, there has to be a process of adaptation. I am using the term “adapt” quite frequently, because an organism does not just learn resilience because they are told to do so, it is a process and has stages, it is a gradual change if the meaning behind it is understood. With meaning and understanding change happens.

Adaptation is based on 2 processes: Assimilation and Accommodation.

At the cognitive level the current environment is interpreted or assimilated using current mode of understanding, then the thinking is modified to accommodate those features, which are gathered from the new experience. These 2 processes are complementary aspects of all psychological activity of an organism, to understand the change in the environment. Adaptive behavior depends on accurate evaluation; extent of accuracy depends on the individual's level of personal experience. People cannot be expected to confidently adapt to the environment unless they have the security of a stable government and the various institutions of the state.

In some countries the cultural values determine the resilient factor, Culture is to society what memory is to the brain in my view. Few examples, which come to my mind, are from Israel, Japan, Romania, and Singapore. But in some countries like Thailand, the very conditions that produce democracy—liberty and equality—also produce factionalism, instability, and violence.

Democracy, though grounded in the values of equality and liberty, is never born in societies perfectly reflecting these values. If they are realized, it is through the patient practice of democratic politics, even when its substantive outcomes conflict with one's political ideals. A successful democracy emerges gradually, inspired by the fierce belief in the ability of democracy to improve the people's political virtue over time.

Distinctions should be made between “general resilience” and “specific resilience”. General resilience is about all aspects of a system, even unforeseen factors. Specific Resilience is a “direct-fire” view of “what to what”. That is “A” affects “B-C” and produces ‘E’ and does “E” tally with the objectives planned in “A” or not. (It may be a crude example but I am sure you understand what I mean)

And not to forget, in the face of evolving technology we need to install a protective innovative framework. Innovation does not necessarily lead to greater resilience but resilience is impossible without innovation.

An essential part of resilience building should include, dialogues of insecurities of a particular country's culture to strengthen the cause and need of surveillance.

1. Public support for (increased) surveillance will differ between countries that have recently experienced events that have tested resilience and those with limited or no such recent experience.

2. Public moods and demands are also shaped by media treatments of social and political events and developments. Media discourse serves to create a climate in which surveillance may be seen as a desirable or it can cast a climate of fear and oppression. The very “need” for surveillance tools conveys the impression that they live in dangerous times or places, so to create resilience we have to weave the acts of surveillance as a normal & routine tool of the society.

Of course link between the actual threat and the adopted solution must be well established.

Architects of innovative democracies where certain measures such as surveillance is required for prevention of crime and terrorism must also recognize that robust checks and balances are just as vital to the establishment of a healthy democracy as the right to vote.

Learning has 3 stages:

1. Learning to be effective
2. Learning to be efficient
3. Learning to expand.

Each phase has a transition, in the case of U.K I believe we have crossed the first 2 stages and are at a transition phase between efficiency and expansion. Expansion means understanding, cooperation and buy-in from communities, having one vision – political, security and civilian through unified cooperative organizations with implementation of motivational approaches. We have to see resilience as innovation and innovation as operational.

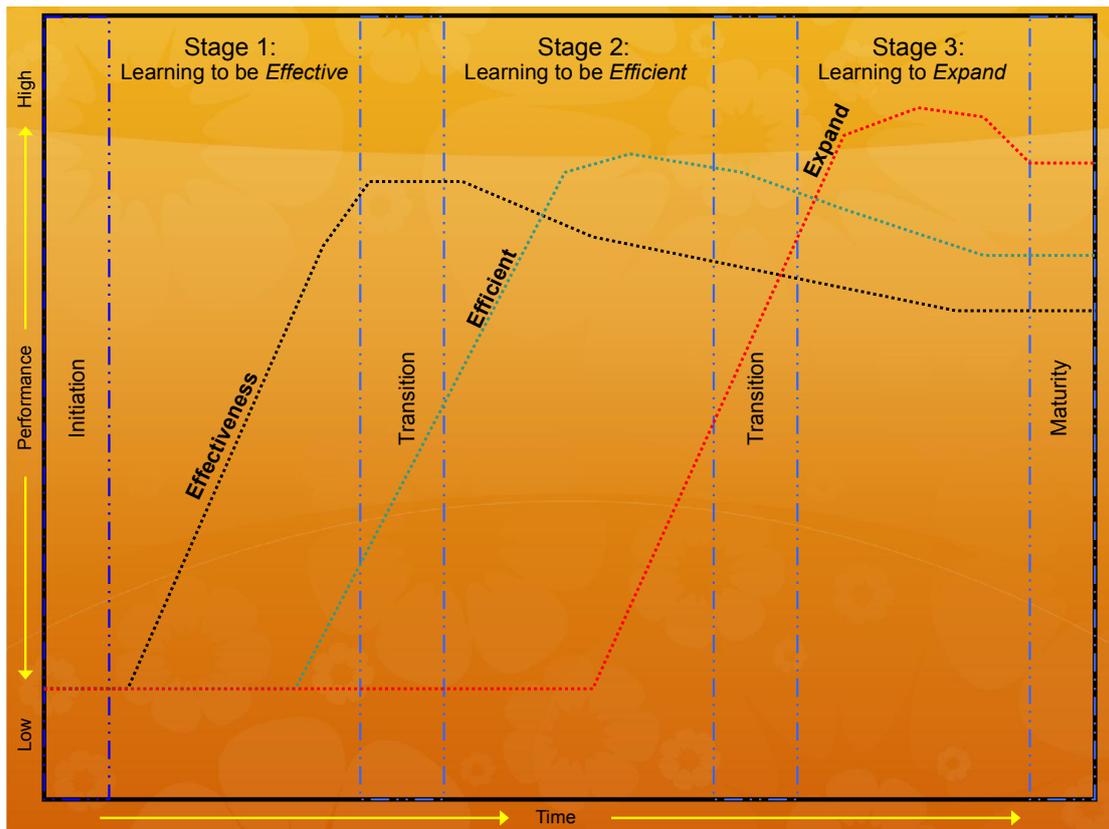


Image source: "The learning Process", Community and Rural development, D.C Korten, 1980)

I take resilience as innovation because the nature of resilience differs from one country to another.

All institutions may adopt a mechanism where –

- Top agency officials continue to allocate resources
- Coordinators work directly on organizational changes
- Innovation is applied to core practices
- Practitioners gain direct experience with innovation

Then

- Public identifies innovation as part of standard practice
- Other jurisdictions become users of innovation
- Old practice are discontinued
- Practitioners derive clear benefits and fully support innovation

To create resilience and embed it in the core function of societies is not an easy task but I am glad we all are thinking and working towards this.

Many thanks for your patience and hope there are some useful points in this to propel your own thoughts and ideas. Along with my own thoughts, I have

referred to many brilliant write-ups from economic times to points from Freedom house to environment resilience and disaster preparedness, to various research done on vulnerabilities, conflicts, surveillance and its impact on societies to paint a holistic picture for you, and I hope it has been useful. Identifying the core, the center where change has to be made is essential, and then resilience will be a by-product of that meaningful change creating positive ripples in the communities.

I end with a quote of W.B Yeats – *“Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.”*