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## What if Law Protectors Turn to Law Violators?

Afghan men and women flocked to ballot boxes to celebrate democracy through casting their votes so as to send their representatives to parliament, which is called "the beating heart of democracy". They participated in parliamentary election in life-threatening situation and a number of people have been killed during registration for voting.

Afghans paid heavy sacrifices in support of democracy and the fingers of some voters were amputated by the Taliban fighters for being inked to cast their votes. Although the Taliban militants sent threatening messages to Afghan men and women for their participation in elections and sought to mar election process, the masses, except for the few, cast their votes regardless of the danger.

However, the newly elected MPs have had serious quarrel over the chairmanship of the parliament. The undemocratic attitude and furious argument of MPs outraged the public conscience and disappointed the voters. Videos and photos of the MPs, showing their physical involvement and angry expressions, have been posted online and changed into a political satire on social media. Footages, apparently captured by some lawmakers, showed that MPs trying to stop the new speaker to take his seat as the chairperson.

In addition to putting the reputation of parliament and MPs under question, the MPs attitudes had been a strong blow to democracy. In fact, if MPs are not able to resolve a minor issue within the parliament through peaceful means and violate law in the beginnings, how could they manifest the public will, monitor the government, and approve law?

It is self-evident that resorting to violence and hurling vitriolic attack on each other, instead of resolving the issue through legal means, is against the country's law. Apart from the law, the pugnacious attitude of MPs is morally outrageous and hurtful to citizens.

The tension sparked off when Mir Rahman Rahmani, who was competing for the seat with Paktia MP Kamal Nasir Osuli, was declared as the Speaker of the Lower House of the Parliament after getting 123 votes - one vote lacking to form 50+1 and qualify him for the seat - while Osuli got only 55 votes.

Political maturity in Afghanistan is a lot to be desired. It is believed that racial and sectarian orientation still plays a dominant role in the election of a representative across Afghanistan. For example, a large number of people, especially in remote areas, consider family relations and racial and sectarian backgrounds of a candidate as qualification for being elected. Therefore, only few political elites are elected as MPs.

It is stated in Article 81 of Afghan Constitution, "The National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, as the highest legislative organ, shall manifest the will of its people as well as represent the entire nation. Every member of the Assembly, when voting, shall be judged according to the general interests as well as the supreme benefits of the people of Afghanistan." Hence, MPs have to consider the national interests and work for the betterment of the society, and manifest the public will properly, rather than self-interests. They have to respect law and moral principles of the society.

Unluckily, the prerequisite for parliamentary election is so simple: being Afghan citizen, being at least 25-year-old, and "shall not have been convicted of crimes against humanity, as well as a crime or deprivation from civil rights by a court". There is no mention of political maturity and level of knowledge.

The MPs have to be cautious not to create a racial or sectarian rift within the parliament. They are the representatives of the entire nation rather than of a racial or sectarian group and have to manifest the will of all citizens. Thus, they should think out of the box and struggle for national interests. MPs are supposed to monitor the government and make sure that the law is implemented thoroughly. If they themselves lack knowledge and moral principles and act beyond the law, the social and political crises will continue unabated.

Considering the social, political, and economic challenges of the country, Afghan lawmakers are expected to resolve the issues devotedly. Afghan people elected them as their representatives in the hope that they would support democracy, legal principles, and national values. Therefore, MPs have to respect the law and national values and perform their duties responsibly. Indeed, MPs have a high moral and legal responsibility to fulfill and keep "the beating heart of democracy" moving. If law protectors turn to law violators, lawlessness will prevail and the society will fall in the quagmire of social and political crises.



## Concerns over Rise of Criminal Offences in Kabul City

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Kabul residents worry about increase of targeted robberies, kidnapping and street killings while blaming police for cooperating with thieves and criminals. According to media reports some area of Kabul city is more unsafe than other areas; As quoted by 8am, a resident of the 12th district of Kabul city said that he had been compelled to move into district three because of insecurity problems as theft his home. Refusing to reveal his name, he said a few years ago when his family drove away to spend a night out, robbers had stolen his house. Abdul Ghafour, another resident of Kabul, lives in the fifteenth district said four thieves looted their home at 11 o'clock on pretext that they were national security officers; the thieves burgled his home and all precious goods including jewelry, computers and mobile phones. He said that several days later, one of the stores was also stolen, which, after a week, the owner had to transfer it to another area. He says some of the gangs are located near the security bases, stealing people's property without fear of police.

Actually, every resident has a story how he/she has been thieved or witnessed an event in Kabul city. "Last night, three to four men stabbed a boy and took his money and phone," said Ehsanulla, a Kabul resident to Tolo news. Another resident, Mujtaba, said it is hard to go out of home in the evenings. "People cannot get out of their homes at night. There are some individuals who walk on streets and have knives, pistols and other weapons with them," he said. The growth of addicts and the associated smuggling constitute a major part of crime in the Kabul city. Thus, the illegal narcotics trade undermines the integrity of Afghan law enforcement and funds insurgent and criminal groups. Unemployment environment can also fuel the social crimes but the opium production, addiction and smuggling are more reasonable for the Kabul criminal offenses.

Unfortunately, this situation has negatively impacted capital flow and investment in the country. Private sectors always express their concerns about growing threats against their lives. Recently, the chairperson of Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CEO), Atiqullah Nusrat, said the situation is the outcome of "political instability" and insecurity in the country which has increased kidnappings and extortions against the business community. Political instability and insecurity have been the biggest challenges on the way of private sector's activities and investment development. Extortion and kidnapping have increased due to political instability and insecurity and has prevented the private sector from improving. While we say that the war should end in Afghanistan, in the meantime, crime incidents should also decrease.

However, the security officials inform of serious measures and achievements against social crimes in the Kabul city. The Kabul

Police spokesman, Mr. Faramarz, says they have taken new serious measures to resolve this problem. According to him, it was strongly recommended to districts that have the high number of robberies to bring about a positive change in the relevant area. Regarding police involvement, he did not endorse the police engagement in the criminal cases but asked contribution of people, especially to report the suspected people or cases. "Our demand is that if people have any questions or complaints about this, they shall go to the Kabul police and social pages so that we can follow up." As he cited, the main reason for the rise of the crimes in Kabul is the over increase of population in the unplanned city. Nevertheless, Mr. Faramarz confirms that the Kabul police is responsible to seriously tackle the problem.

As a result, Kabul police arrested five people including a woman on charges of armed robberies. The Kabul Police Headquarters in a statement said the police forces have busted a dangerous gang of armed robbers led by Mukhtar alias Be-dandan. The statement further added that the other members of the gang, Fatima, Abdul Saboor, Noorullah, and Mujeeb-ur-Rahman were also arrested during the same operation. The Kabul Police also added that the members of the gang were involved in armed robberies in Sarak-e-Silo, Karte Parwan, Salim Karwan road, Qala-e-Fatullah, and Taimani areas of the city.

The members of the gang were also robbing the citizens of the city with the support of its female member, Fatima in Qargha, mainly during Thursdays and Fridays, the Kabul Police said, adding that Fatima used to stand on the roadside and was asking for a lift from car drivers to lure them into their trap and rob their vehicles either by drugging, beating, or intimidation by use of arms. According to Kabul Police, the gang was busted during an operation which was conducted in 5th district of the city last week.

According to ministry of interior affairs, more than 100,000 cases of crimes have been registered in the Ministry over the past five years, the Acting Minister of Interior Affairs Massoud Andarabi said in a meeting with Kabul residents few days ago. Although the ratio of crimes has slumped, the figure cannot satisfy the people, said Andarabi. "We cannot rely on the identification, name, the list, and publication of the list," he added. Andarabi said that police arrested 115,000 suspects in connection to the crimes during this period. "In case police faces armed resistance, they will take the same approach within the framework of the Afghan police," said Andarabi. "The security forces seized 32 laser devices, five bulletproof vests, 400 suicide vests, 63 binoculars and a large number of bullets," said Amanullah Chamto, Head of the Ministry of Interior's Department for Fighting Crimes.

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## Europe's Only Decision

By: Carl Bildt

As the European Parliament election approaches, Europe is abuzz with speculation over who will lead the main European Union institutions for the next five years. Among the positions up for grabs are those currently held by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker; European Council President Donald Tusk; Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; and European Central Bank President Mario Draghi.

Personnel issues are hardly trivial. In politics, personality matters, and it has often played a pivotal role in determining the EU's trajectory. Still, the leadership name game should not be the main focus. Far more important is the debate over the EU's 2019-2024 strategic agenda.

After an informal summit in Sibiu, Romania, earlier this month, European leaders will return to this issue in earnest later in June. And for all of the attention paid to the EU's institutions, it is EU heads of state who will craft the bloc's agenda. In other words, member-state governments, operating through the European Council, will be the actors to watch after the election results are in.

When the European Economic Community, the precursor to the EU, was established in 1957, its primary objective was to secure the peace between France and Germany, starting with a customs union for industrial goods (for the Germans) and a common agricultural policy (for the French).

This arrangement anchored the European agenda for decades. Then, when the Soviet Union and its empire collapsed, countries that had been trapped behind the Iron Curtain wanted to "return to Europe." In the years since, the EU has undergone a massive expansion to include them. Its goal has been twofold: to aid the newer member states in their post-communist economic and political development, and to maintain continental peace and stability by bringing Central and Eastern Europe into the fold of EU institutions.

The immediate post-Cold War period was a time of self-confidence and optimism for the EU. Gradually, its strategic mission expanded beyond merely keeping the peace, to projecting the European model of shared sovereignty and integration abroad. The EU model, it was said, would lead to more stable governance for the entire world.

Over the past decade, however, the EU's effort to project its model outward has collapsed. Following the 2008 financial crash, the euro crisis, and recurrent migration imbroglios, the EU has

turned inward. At the same time, the EU's immediate neighborhood has transformed from a circle of potential friends and partners into a ring of fire.

Now, rather than trying to export stability, Europe's strategic priority is to protect itself from the wider world. In trying to breathe new life into the EU after years of inward-looking crisis management, French President Emmanuel Macron has pushed for "a Europe that protects." Following Macron's call to arms, published by Project Syndicate this March, the EU leadership in Brussels has taken up that mantra and bundled various initiatives under the theme of protecting Europe in an age of global tumult.

Such protection is undoubtedly necessary. Migration pressures, the constant threat of terrorism, and escalating economic disputes all demand a stronger policy response. And while addressing some of these issues has proved controversial and difficult, the larger protection agenda is being carried out.

Yet, looking ahead, it is clear that the current measures won't be enough. The EU finds itself in a world dominated by great-power rivalries, Chinese assertiveness, and revisionist Russian belligerence. Worse, in confronting these threats, it can no longer count on the United States as an unconditional friend and ally.

The EU now must choose between securing its own place on the global stage and becoming a playground for other powers. This is a strategic decision of the first order - all other policy choices will follow from it.

If Europe ignores or checks out of the dramas roiling the world from Amritsar in India to Agadir in Morocco, it will fail to ensure peace in its neighborhood and betray its promise to its citizens to protect them from external danger. For the EU to uphold its original mission - peace and stability at home - it must become a global player.

The choice, then, is clear. Europe's strategic mission in the coming years must be to secure its position on the world stage, and all matters of policy and personnel should be settled in a way that advances that objective. Obviously, a strong European Council president, working closely with a strong high representative, will be essential. Both will need to mobilize the resources and talents of all EU member states to prevent the EU's constituent parts from being pulled in different directions by global forces.

If the EU's member states embrace this mission, Europe will be positioned to act as a global player for years to come. Otherwise, they - and the EU as a whole - will find themselves on a merry-go-round over which they have no control.

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