

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



November 01, 2017

## Security Situation Remains Fragile

It seems like the security situation in Afghanistan does not seem to have calmed down with the start of the winter season. Neither there are evident hopes of peace negotiations, nor the offensive against the militants seems to have achieved something worthwhile. There are many parts of the country where the insurgents are in a state of fighting with Afghan security forces. Moreover, the security situation in the capital Kabul does not seem to be in total control. Recently, there have been various attacks in the capital that have raised serious concerns about the future of peace and stability in the city.

In one of such attacks on Tuesday, October 31, a suicide bomber ripped through the city's heavily-fortified diplomatic area of Wazir Akbar Khan. The attack killed at least seven people and injured around 21 people. According to the Ministry of Defense (MoD), which has an office in the 14th Street of Wazir Akbar Khan, the explosion happened close to its building but it said that the ministry was not the target.

The suicide bomber reportedly entered the area through a park that borders the zone and was able to penetrate the layers of security and gain access directly into the highly-fortified area that houses numerous embassies, some government offices, guesthouses and a few private companies.

The attack once again raises questions about the security arrangements in the city. Though there appear to be many check points and, normally, people have to go through tight security checks before than can reach such an area, the easy access of the insurgents to such areas raises many questions about the quality of the security provided. On many occasions, the insurgents have reached to highly protected areas in the heart of Kabul city with an immense quantity of explosives; sometimes, truck-loads of them. Whereas the security authorities have remained clueless.

The fact is remains solid that the overall security situation in Afghanistan is getting really serious and it is very important to consider the situation seriously so as to be able to have better prospects of peace and tranquility. The Taliban and Daesh have become so much bold and active that they are not afraid of targeting even the most guarded places; at the same time, they have become so cowardly that they are not afraid of targeting the civilians more frequently now.

They intend to disrupt the security situation and want to show their strength as a response to the aggressive US security policy announced recently, so that they must not be understood as defeated.

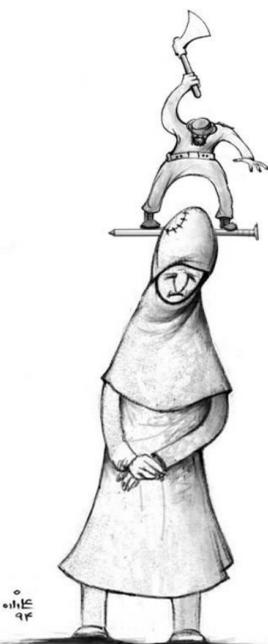
The current gloomy reports about security situation show how insecurity and terrorism have been threatening the lives of the common people in Afghanistan. The common people, after suffering from decades of war and bloodshed deserve a relatively peaceful life. They have given so many sacrifices and now they hope that they would have tranquil life in the times to come. However, there is no guarantee that their hopes would turn into reality. The common masses in Afghanistan really worry about the deterioration in security as they are basically the ones who have been suffering and may suffer to a further extent if instability and terrorism prevail in the country. It is really pathetic to see the civilians losing their lives when they have nothing to do with the war.

In the economically unstable and war-torn country like Afghanistan, people have not only suffered the hardships of the poor and miserable lives but also the horrors of war.

They have been killed mercilessly as if their lives do not have any value or meaning and it is important to see that the Taliban and Daesh insurgents are mostly behind the demise of the poor civilians. It is really unfortunate to note that they still remain powerful enough to conduct their merciless efforts to target the innocent civilians.

Different attacks, bombings, shootings and suicide bombings of the vicious guardians of the so-called holy war have only been able to target the children, women and non-military figures. With the presence of such facts, it is weird to find Taliban and Daesh calling themselves friendly to Afghan people. They have been trying to develop an image of caring and affectionate body that is trying to liberate the people of Afghanistan from the Western forces. But the fact is just on the contrary. They just want power and for that they will never hesitate to sacrifice the poor Afghan people. If they come to power, it is evident that Afghan people will never have peace, contentment and above all their due rights.

It is the right of all the people of Afghanistan to be provided security and the opportunities to live their lives without any threat and fear of insurgents. They have been undergoing the hardships of political, social and economic instability for centuries now and the insecurity has been ben main culprit in this regard. Therefore, it is essential that their cries should be heard and their futures and the futures of their coming generations should be guaranteed through peaceful environment.



## Challenges before Women's Participation in Power and Politics

By Abdul Nasir Mowahhidi

In democratic societies, citizens' political participation plays a pivotal role in a country's political development. People constitute the main pillars of democratic government which gains its legitimacy from public vote. The greater participation of people will result in building a stronger government.

Public participation in politics does not necessarily mean to flock to ballot boxes, however, citizens are highly responsible in protecting the government and developing the community. This responsibility comes if people are involved in the structure of policy and power. Thus, governments will have to pave the ground for equal participation of citizens and eradicate political, cultural, and economic obstacles impeding their participation.

Similar to other governments, Afghan government is responsible toward the country's citizens and needs to smooth the path for equal participation of people in all constructive arenas. The question is that what are the practical steps taken by Afghan government and what are the outcomes?

Despite taking step in this regard within the past decade and half, Afghan government is still far from the desired result. For instance, the nation anticipates officials to root out corruption from the government's machinery, but they are involved in this issue. Despite the disclosure of documents from the embezzlement of some government officials in Western newspapers and domestic media, they are still at large and some have even been promoted. This commentary will discuss women's share in power and government since their participation was debated hotly in the media within the past sixteen years and millions of dollars were spent for the same purpose. Empowering women was one of the preconditions of Afghanistan's contributing countries.

**Why is women's political participation important?**

Women constitute the half population of a society and play a fundamental role in determining the political destiny of a country. When women form the half population of a society, how can one imagine that half of this body is paralyzed and earns no share in politics or culture?

The fact is that lack of women's political participation in power and government forces men's hand to expose women to various harms. When women are vulnerable and remain bereft of their fundamental rights, it will put an adverse effect on society and future generation.

In addition to other reasons, disregarding women's status in Afghanistan was one of the main reasons behind its backwardness. Afghan women were not only marginalized from power, but also deprived of their fundamental rights.

If women of this land were equipped with science and knowledge, Afghan people would not be embroiled in the current

fate. An educated mother will teach and train her children and will never allow them to succumb to extremism.

**What role do women play in current government?**

The National Unity Government (NUG) sought the greater role of women in government's body, but women still gain lower access to higher positions. For instance, there are only two female ministers in the current administration.

To view women's position and role within the government's body, it seems that their role is more symbolic rather than real. They are rarely involved in big decisions, which is a matter of great concern for women.

Women are appointed as advisers and assistants in ministries and departments, and have less authority. That is to say, government is likely to attract the public attention and satisfaction of contributing countries through appointing women in such positions.

In spite of women's high abilities and capabilities, they are provided less opportunity. This made some think that women are less qualified for higher positions. But with having chance, women proved their abilities and capabilities.

It is government's responsibility to provide the ground for women's participation in different arenas. The government has to bestow them greater role in government.

It is true that Afghan government faces many challenges, but these problems and its involvement in the issue of terrorism should not undermine its will for governance on the basis of meritocracy, regardless of gender.

**Will observing the gender issue put meritocracy under question?**

A number of individuals believe that there are fewer number of educated and qualified women in the society or they are not qualified enough for key positions. In such a case, the slogan of meritocracy will be trampled upon. In fact, there are many qualified women. Although there are less female cadres, they are not less qualified than men.

The level of women's rationality and thinking is not lower than men, either. For example, there are tens of female MPs in the country who perform their duties with merit. They were neither engaged in corruption. Hence, there is no reason to justify lack of their role in the government.

**What is the solution?**

To achieve a progressive and stable Afghanistan, we need a full-fledged presence of women and men at all levels. First and foremost, we should examine the factors behind the lack of participation of women in various institutions; then figure out how to facilitate their further participation. The doors of schools and universities should be always open to females and all obstacles before their education must come to an end.

*Abdul Nasir Mowahhidi is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at the outlookafghanistan@gmail.com*

## Can France and Germany Come Together?

By Dominique Moisi

Seven months ago, when Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Front had a chance of winning the French presidency, Germany feared for France's future. But after Germany's federal election in September, France has not been particularly afraid for its neighbor. The extreme-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), for all its gains, is not about to come to power. Germany, after all, is not Austria.

Nevertheless, French and German elites have found a common cause for concern: Germany may be unable to seize the exceptional opportunity created by French President Emmanuel Macron's victory. Before, the problem was not that Germany was too strong, but that France was too weak. Now the problem is not that France is too ambitious for Europe, but that Germany is not ambitious enough.

For years, Germans complained that France was incapable of domestic reform, and that the French did not understand the meaning of "federalism" in the context of the European Union. Against that backdrop, Macron took the stage, presenting himself as an activist philosopher-president. He is a disciple of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, and speaks of "European sovereignty" in the same way that German philosopher Jürgen Habermas speaks of "European citizenship." It will be difficult to strike a harmonious balance between a French president at the dawn of his power and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who seems to be in the twilight of hers. Above all, it will require Germany to match France's new audacity.

Of course, Germany's suspicion of greater risk-sharing in the eurozone, which Macron's EU reform agenda seems to imply, is understandable. For Germans, that sounds like an updated version of the old EU mantra: "Germany will pay." But the enthusiasm gap between the two governments need not be an unbridgeable abyss.

Le Pen often quipped during the French presidential campaign that, "Whatever the election results, France will be governed by a woman: It will be either me or the chancellor of Germany." The line was witty and provocative; but it was also wrong. Today, Le Pen is well on her way to being a mere detail of history. And while Merkel is still the wise statesperson to whom much of Europe looks for leadership, she is no longer in a position to set the EU's agenda unilaterally. Clearly, French and German politics are on different emotional trajectories. Germany is more or less satisfied with itself and its place in the world.

Merkel's decision to open the country's borders at the height of the refugee crisis surely cost her previous coalition votes in September's election. But, on the whole, Germans remain unwilling to change a European status quo that has proved

highly successful for their country.

France, by contrast, feels that change must come now or never. If France and Europe wait until tomorrow to do what should have been done today, then all will have already been lost. From France's perspective, history seems to be accelerating. The United Kingdom is currently negotiating the terms of its withdrawal from the EU; Catalonia's regional parliament has just declared independence from Spain; and populism is resurgent in Central and Eastern Europe.

If France wants to remain relevant in Europe, it must use the current moment to reform itself. And if the EU wants to remain relevant in the world, especially now that America has lost its way, it needs to put European integration back on track.

The gap between France and Germany is largest when it comes to defense and security, owing to a deep cultural divide between the two countries. To be sure, most French and German citizens identify as European, as opposed to UK citizens, who identify as British - or even as English, Irish, Scottish, or Welsh. This is why German and French critiques of the EU generally focus on the bloc's performance, whereas the British often strike at the European project itself.

But when it comes to security and defense, these affinities are reversed: France and Britain are very likeminded, while Germany, owing to its history, has long shied away from martial pursuits of any kind.

Of course, there are many differences between Britain and France with respect to how they engage with the United States and NATO. The UK is naturally closer to NATO than France is. But the UK, mortified by US President Donald Trump, has also grown more distant from the US, while France, under Macron, has grown somewhat closer. Unlike Macron, British Prime Minister Theresa May is not convinced that she can charm Trump.

The Franco-German partnership has long been the pillar of EU stability. And given the deepening crisis in Catalonia and the resilience of European populists, the bilateral relationship is more important than ever.

Put bluntly, Macron and Merkel represent European liberal democracy, based on reason and openness, in contrast to the populist vision represented by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and de facto Polish leader Jarosław Kaczyński. With recent elections in Austria and the Czech Republic moving Central Europe toward what might be called an Austro-Hungarian populist empire, Germany has as much at stake in successful EU reform as France does. The ball, as the Americans say, is in Merkel's court. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

*Dominique Moisi is Senior Counselor at the Institut Montaigne in Paris.*

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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