

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

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Afghan Political Parties: Trapped in the Ethnic Interests

Establishment of political parties in Afghanistan dates back to the modernization policies of King Zahir Shah in 1940s that led to the formation of a number of parties in Afghanistan. The development of functioning political parties in Afghanistan did not occur until the 1960s, following a provision in the 1964 constitution legally recognizing their right to authorize their formation until later. The decade saw the formation of a veracity of leftist parties of which the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was the most important but the history of the many leftist political movements in Afghanistan is a short one.

Following the overthrow of the King in 1973 by former premier Mohammad Daud, the Saur revolution of May 1978 led by the PDPA and subsequent soviet occupation the next year, seven mujahedin parties were formed with the common goal of resisting Soviet rule. All of the groups were Sunni Muslims, and all were majority Pashtun except Jamiat-i-Islami, which was predominantly Tajik. Another, smaller but dominant Mujahideen alliance, was composed of mainly Shi'a Muslims. It was named the Tehran Eight - an alliance of eight Shia Afghan factions. These eight groups were amalgamated in 1980s and Islamic Unity of Afghanistan was formed out of their alliance.

Importance of Political Parties in a Democratic Society

In democratic societies, political parties are indispensable voluntary and informal associations of society, where people share commonly understood values, customs and attitudes to their role in politics. They are products of and operate within economic structures, and in a context of interests that are affected by and respond to the accumulation and distribution of goodwill and resources, including the wealth of society. Political parties are instruments of collective action; they are created by the political elite in a bid to control resources and personnel of government in order to implement an ideology or a political program in certain context. Weiner holds that, in competitive political systems, parties are organized by politicians to win elections. On the other hand, in authoritarian systems they are organized to affect the attitudes and behavior of the population.

The political parties straddle the space and span the connective linkages between citizens and government, and between a multitude of private, market-based, civil society and nongovernmental organizations and the general public.

Political parties by nature are representative institutions that endow regimes with legitimacy; provide ideologies that represent social, economic and political interests; and produce leaders who through democratic elections form the machinery of government of opportunities for political participation, or a combination of all three.

However, the Afghan political parties have not been able to play such roles in the country; the democratic content of Afghan political parties is still fragile and the prospect of genuine democratic consolidation is an issue, nearly missing in the agenda of the Afghan political parties in practice. There are different factors contributing to the current situation of the Afghan political parties that are discussed below.

Heavy Economic Dependence

Most of the Afghan political parties are heavily dependent direct or indirectly on government; even some of them are dependent to other countries. Further, no party has provided itself as a national party, representing all or at least most ethnic groups of Afghanistan.

Lack of strong private sector to support the establishment of strong and vibrant civil society

The Afghan private sector is too weak to support the establishment of strong and vibrant civil society and a non political middle class that are autonomous of state. If interest associations, which are the backbone of civil society, are subsumed by the state, what leverage can they have to make demands both on the state and non party where the relationship between these three supposedly autonomous entities is so blurred and entangled?

Perceiving state capture as a source of elite entrenchment Afghan political parties Perceive state capture as a source of elite entrenchment; As a result, politics itself becomes a tool to an end, devoid of any idea of protecting public interests vis-a vis private gains in the country.

Afghan political parties are sustainable only at ethnic elite level because the ethnic elites depend on them to access the resources of the state. It is hard to maintain that the political parties are sustainable because the ethos of party politics has also been internalized by the party membership, often because of ethnic and regional loyalties rather than ideology or party programs.

Lesson learned from the Nezamuddin Qaisari saga:

Paradigm shift needed to transform 'Revenge to Justice' (P1)

By Upendra Baghel

Nezamuddin Qaisari, the Police Chief of Qaisar (Qaysar) district in Faryab province was arrested on 02 July 2018, Monday when he was amidst a meeting at the Camp of 209th Shaheen Army Corps, Maimana. He is considered a close aide to First Vice President General Abdul Rashid Dostum, who is in Turkey for the last one and half years. Both belong to same ethnicity and also political affiliation, Junbish-i-Millilislami Afghanistan (National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan). He is also a commander of Khezesh-e Mardomi (Public Uprising), a local militia group in Faryab province fighting the Taliban.

Police officials are neither expected to be associated with any political party nor with any militia activities, as these are against the Code of Conduct but in Afghanistan, these violations seem to be the prevailing norm.

Geographically speaking Qaysar is almost 50 km south-west of Maimana, the province headquarters of Faryab province and Jowzjan is in north-east. Qaisari is an influential leader and most of the time he could be found in Maimana. He has been supported by the government and was given state patronage.

Reportedly, Qaisari was called to attend a meeting on 02 July 2018, which was attended by senior officials of the Afghan security institutions including Deputy Minister of Defence, National Directorate of Security (NDS) Chief and the Province Police Chief. There, he insulted the officials in relation to the security of the Maimana - Jowzjan highway and warned that he will 'kill them, close security departments in the province and burn them down' if the road security remained insecure.

Immediately after his arrest by Afghan National Army Special Forces, he was flown to Kabul aboard a helicopter and has been held in detention.

Facts are simple and can be paraphrased as follows: insulting and criminal intimidation to government and military officers. Qaisari's acts constitute offences under the Afghan Penal Law and Afghan Military Law. His criminal threats could be extended to waging a war against the state, as he threatened to burn down state institutions. These, at par se, are serious criminal offences if ingredients of crime exist which are: mensrea and actus reus. In the absence of intention, planning and material ability, his acts may qualify to 'do not behave' to his status and position and unbecoming of a public servant. He could be placed under suspension and even dismissed from his position of Chief of Police.

Rule of law based criminal justice system expects that his acts should be credibly investigated. He should face justice on the basis of material facts, which would have led to his arrest and prosecution. Immediate detention is also possible, if he poses serious and grave threats and/ or there are reasonable apprehension of his fleeing and escaping from justice. This was exactly followed but some quarters expressed reservations on respect to the rights of suspect and due process.

Due process ensures 'justice must not only be done, but must be seen to be done' and some of the facts may suggest contrary lead-

ing to violation of his rights.

After 12 days in detention on around 14 July 2018, the attorney general office (AGO) charged him on 20 serious charges including use of force, intimidation, armed clashes with political rivals, hatching conspiracies, committing illegal economic activities, issuing false statements, and committing financial crimes. A responsible police officer entrusted to uphold the law engaged in criminal activities. Also, as reported, recently in Feb 2018, Municipality Administration after getting approval of the provincial governor asked the police and attorney's office to interrogate him on charges of corruption. This move infuriated him and his personnel went to Mazar-i-Sharif and Herat gates where they forcefully removed the municipality personnel and got control over the revenue from toll taxes.

According to reports, all his bodyguards numbering around 20 were arrested on the same day and later eight have been released. It is reported that he runs a force of around 800 armed men who carry light and heavy weapons including Kalashnikovs, mortars, rocket launchers, heavy machine guns, and light artillery guns, in addition to illegally holding 20 police Ranger pickup vehicles, six armored Humvees and a large number of illegally obtained ANDSF personal equipment.

The factual narrative of charges demonstrates the realities of Afghanistan where many de-facto states exist within one state.

People like Qaisari are armed regional leaders who often dominate in their own regions where they can sustain the support systems including financial support, social acceptability, rationalization and local support. These are the products of the weak Afghan state and continued insurgency. These arose out of need of the constituency whom they claimed to represent. They reflect the socio political dynamics of the region and the society.

The state building requires accommodating these realities and then addressing the root cause for these, which are: establishing supremacy of the state across the country, exclusive jurisdiction of the state to use force, inclusive political, government and economic institutions, good governance, transparency and accountability in state affairs including security set up and criminal justice system. States under conflict lack structured institutions adhering to due process respecting the individual rights.

Whatever was the triggering mechanism for the arrest of Qaisari but subsequent fall out: demands in Kabul and few north and north eastern provinces seeking his release, attacks on police and security institutions, closing of the government institutions, and expression of extremely charged emotional sentiments such as 'derail election', 'boycott election', and 'form their own autonomous government' are worrisome.

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Why the World Cup Mattered

By Dominique Moisi

The seventeenth-century philosopher and satirist Jean de La Bruyère once quipped that, "Corneille portrays men as they should be, Racine depicts them as they are." For Europeans, and even more so for the French, the 2018 World Cup was a Corneillian event. The month-long soccer tournament in Russia offered an enchanted respite from a tumultuous world and revealed the better angels of our nature.

In the counter-reality of the tournament, a mood of self-confidence, altruism, and openness to the "other" prevailed. At least for a while, the chauvinism, alienation, and despair that have dominated this era of populist nationalism seemed to be forgotten.

Geographically speaking, all four of the semifinalists - France, Croatia, Belgium, and England - hailed from the Old Continent. Denounce Europe for its supposed weakness and decadence all you want. When it comes to the world's most popular sport, Europe is king.

Moreover, it is clear that Africa is the soccer continent of the future, whereas Latin America is the continent of the past. Having won the Cup in 1930 and again in 1950, Uruguay was once the smallest country (by population) to reach the final. But that honor is now shared by the brave team fielded by Croatia, the newest EU member state.

In stark contrast to the "real world," the two leading powers, the United States and China, played no role in the tournament. Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's dream of turning the US into a great soccer power has proved to be more difficult than he had hoped. And China under President Xi Jinping remains a soccer lightweight, despite having invested billions of dollars in the sport. Instead, North America was represented with brio by Mexico, and Asia by Japan and South Korea.

The strange divergence between the real world and the world of soccer this year was also evident in expressions of nationalist emotion. The great Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges once condemned the sport for its role in fueling toxic forms of nationalism (such as the short-lived "Football War" between Honduras and El Salvador in 1969). But in the 2018 World Cup - a century after the end of the nationalist bloodbath that was World War I - a "soft," even gentle nationalism prevailed.

Russia is hardly an exponent of soft power, yet it deserves credit for the absence of violence during the tournament. International press reports showed Ukrainian and Russian fans fraternizing like old friends. Whereas the Vietnam War-era

Woodstock festival exemplified the slogan "Make Love, Not War," the de facto slogan of the 2018 Cup seems to have been "Balls, Not Bombs."

In addition to channeling a more constructive form of nationalism, the semifinalists and their fans also embodied effective collective action, altruism, openness, and tolerance. Interestingly, the teams that relied on a single star player - whether Cristiano Ronaldo of Portugal, Lionel Messi of Argentina, or Neymar of Brazil - all failed to advance beyond the quarter-finals.

In the real world nowadays, people are increasingly tempted to erect walls and close themselves off from "others." And yet, the strength of the winning team, France, was in its diversity. This year's chant of "Liberté, Egalité, Mbappé" (for the 19-year-old French forward Kylian Mbappé) was a more enlightened version of the slogan from France's victory in 1998: "Zidane for President."

On the eve of the 2017 French presidential election, many political commentators repeated the mantra, "never two without three." After the United Kingdom's Brexit referendum and the election of US President Donald Trump, they warned, a victory for Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Front could complete the trifecta. Similarly, at the start of 2018, many French commentators seemed to think that we were approaching another "May 1968" or "December 1995," when mass strikes and street protests paralyzed the entire country.

Although there have been limited strikes against French President Emmanuel Macron's reform agenda, these commentators got it wrong. The closest parallel to this year is not 1968 or 1995, but 1998, when France first won the World Cup.

Domestically, France's victory likely will have little effect, if any, on Macron's popularity. Soccer emotions are intense, but generally fleeting. On the international scene, however, France's win could have a longer-lasting impact. No one can deny that "France is back," at least in terms of soccer. The country has emerged as an oasis of dynamism, realism, and youthful enthusiasm, much of which is also reflected in Macron himself.

An obvious foil is Germany. Usually a soccer powerhouse, the German team was eliminated in the first round of this year's tournament, just as its politics were entering a deeper malaise. In geopolitical terms, if one were to name just two winners this year, the titles would have to go to Russia and France.

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