

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



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Women: Victims of Electoral Violence

Violence is one of the major obstacles to growth and development. It is self-evident, that violence against women particularly hinders progress in achieving development in the society. Based on the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, violence against women is any acts or gender based violence as a result of physical, sexual or psychological harm of suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty-whether occurring in public or private life.

Elections are accepted as the backbone of democracy and participation in elections is both the fundamental human right of citizens and democratic responsibility of the citizens to take part in elections to uphold the democratic values and norms in their society. Indeed, such elections should be free and fair, the rule or law should enable the elected representatives to practice their decision-making power and the constitution should curb it by emphasizing on the protection of the rights and freedoms of individuals and should develop mechanisms to place checks on the leaders and ensure the will of majority is exercised against the rights of minorities. Though there is a specific legal framework that directs the electoral process, there is usually a rivalry between those who want to gain power and those who may lose power which more often than not, results to violence during the electoral process, regardless of the time and place in which electoral process occurs there.

Considering the importance of the elections and the power it gives to the people, electoral violence is the biggest blow to democracy: It is the biggest enemy of democracy, that can delegitimize the process and gets democracy fail. Democracy in Afghanistan, specifically the conduct of elections, has nearly always been characterized by doubt, uncertainty, gossips, and fears of the safety of people's lives and property. In Afghanistan, conflict ridden situations are the historic features of elections. This is due to the prolong rule of authoritarian regimes and ethnic oriented features of elections in Afghanistan. To say it in another word, we usually are not willing to improve and institutionalize the core democratic values in our country but want to maintain our ethnic preferences and privileges by electoral fraud that follows electoral violence in the given society. Therefore, issues surrounding the election process lead to violence and violations of rights of individuals. As a result, elections instead of serving as a means and process of exercising legitimate political rights, turn out to be a serious political liability: that cause serious political turmoil and conflicts threatening the social cohesion of the Afghan society.

Women due to traditional society norms and values are more vulnerable than men to violence. As the democratic history of Afghanistan show, there has been recurrent trend of gender based violence before, during and after elections in Afghanistan. As Afghanistan approaches to the Wolsi Jirga and District Councils general elections, most Afghans, and especially women political activists and other participants are concerned about their security and doubt about the police force to provide them enough protection against terrorist attacks. It is worthy to mention that, it applies to the men political activists and participants, but the situation is far graver for women than men. As women form nearly half of the population of the country, their active participation both can highly improve the legitimacy of the elected officials and uphold the democratic of values in Afghanistan.

Electoral violence has been identified as one of the major factors of limiting political participation of women in Afghanistan. It has deprived women of their political human right and as a result their voices have not been heard enough through the Afghan Parliament and other elected institutions. Therefore, the government should take all the necessary measures to ensure a free and fair elections. It also should take specific measures to protect women against different forms of electoral violence, and especial measures should be put in place to ensure protection of women against violence and security threats in the country. Further, as the electoral processes in Afghanistan has nearly always been accused of widespread fraud, full participation of women can revive the legitimacy of the electoral process and would improve the core democratic values in the country.



The Long Road to Nuclear Disarmament

By Ramesh Thakur

This is crunch time for the global nuclear order. By May 12, US President Donald Trump must decide whether to recertify the Iran nuclear deal or reimpose sanctions. Only a few weeks later, he is expected to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong-un for a summit that will have implications for that country's nuclear program.

With Trump surrounded by hawkish advisers - like Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton - the odds are good that efforts to denuclearize will suffer setbacks before the month is out. For this reason, it is more important than ever that the international community upholds existing treaty obligations, starting with the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). But to do that, tough conversations must be had.

Multilateral agreements are always prone to gaps in application; the international non-proliferation regime is no different. For example, while neither Israel nor India have signed the NPT, both states are considered responsible members of the nuclear-weapons club. Israel has never been sanctioned for its bomb, and India has a waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group, as well as several civil nuclear agreements with the United States, Australia, Canada, and Japan.

Pakistan's nuclear weapons, on the other hand, are tolerated but not accepted; North Korea's de facto nuclearization is considered intolerable; and Iran's nuclear program was curbed before a weapon could be developed.

Amid this imperfect framework, many countries have become frustrated by the refusal of NPT signatories to discuss their own disarmament. Article VI of the NPT obliges parties to pursue "in good faith" negotiations to disarm, but the nuclear-weapons states that have ratified the treaty do not interpret this as a prohibition on their possessing a nuclear arsenal. Rather, buoyed by the doctrine of deterrence, they argue that reductions would weaken global security.

Perhaps not surprisingly, non-nuclear-weapon states see things differently. And, last year, they committed their views to a supplementary treaty at the United Nations. Today, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) has been signed by 58 countries and ratified by eight, and if it ever comes into force will ban the use, threat of use, or possession of nuclear arms.

Better known as the "ban treaty," the TPNW is an important step toward the establishment of a new international norm. It is also a logical consequence of the NPT's failings. But, because the ban treaty goes beyond the NPT in two key

respects, it has also drawn heavy opposition. The ban treaty would prohibit so-called nuclear sharing arrangements, whereby allies of nuclear weapon states could store weapons on these states' territory. Moreover, it undermines the logic of deterrence by making the "threat of use" illegal.

If the global non-proliferation regime is to remain viable, the competing visions reflected in the NPT and the ban treaty must be reconciled. For that to happen, the international community needs to agree on a strategy to achieve an international order in which the reduction of nuclear stockpiles reinforces, rather than jeopardizes, regional and global security.

No doubt these will be difficult discussions, but the alternative is far worse than a few bruised egos. Some experts have suggested that hardline opposition to the ban treaty could prompt a backlash from countries that have grown disillusioned with the NPT, leading to widespread withdrawal from the 1968 treaty. Needless to say, this would be hugely counter-productive. Not only would it destabilize the existing nuclear order and heighten many countries' sense of insecurity; it would also deepen armed states' attachment to the bombs they already have.

Its flaws notwithstanding, the NPT has brought years of nuclear stability. Even countries that have refused to sign the treaty have a stake in its survival, with or without the ban treaty, given the serious global security implications of its unraveling. Therefore, all sides must urgently rediscover their common interest in practical and effective disarmament.

The two treaties can converge in a framework that minimizes nuclear threats in the near term; reduces the number of nuclear weapons in the medium term; and aspires to the complete, verifiable, and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons in the long term. This approach was outlined in 2009 by the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament; a version of it must be resurrected today.

By the end of this week, the fate of the Iran nuclear deal will be clear; Trump's refusal to recertify it would very likely signal its demise. But, regardless of what becomes of Iran's nuclear program, or of North Korea's for that matter, a weakening of the NPT - the bedrock of the global nuclear order for a half-century - represents the biggest threat of all.

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Unemployment Fuels the Social and Political Disorders

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

According to the experts, unemployment issue is the second most fundamental problem of Afghanistan after insecurity but there is no effective strategy to come with the increasing challenges. Even there is no accurate assessment to show the exact unemployment status in the country. Based on Democracy International studies around 82% of the youths are suffering from joblessness but the National Labor Union of Afghanistan estimated 60% of eligible workers are suffering from unemployment crisis. On the other side, the recent figures released by the Central Statistics Organization (CSO), indicates nearly 39.5 % people are unemployed which accounts for about two million jobless in the country but others believe that the rate of unemployment has increased from two million eligible workers to nearly three million since 2013 and 2014. However, the common point is that Unemployment increase has caused lots of social and political instabilities in the country. As a result, there is no optimistic outlook for the future of the current trend while thousands of newly graduated youths also enter to the labor market by end of each year. There are different factors behind the unemployment issue such as insecurity, capital flight, hiring foreign workers, lack of rule of law and more importantly lack of efficient employment strategy. Though it was promised by national unity government to create one million new jobs, conversely thousands of former jobs have been reduced. Accordingly, the internal and external displacement, social disorders, addition, and poverty has increased in a larger scale comparing to previous government. Thousands of job seekers are leaving their hometown or country for the purpose of getting job and a peaceful life. Thus, thousand others either increasing the number of the addiction or preyed by terrorists or mafia groups for destructive and criminal activities.

In addition to mentioned factors, the low quality of educational system is another issue that cannot produce qualified graduate to satiate the needs of the country. Most of the fresh graduates do not have required skills and eligibility to fulfil the technical and professional need of the local companies. Thus, they do not have the creativity to initiate new jobs through opening new entrepreneurs instead of searching to work for others. That is why a large number of foreigners are hired both in private and public sectors. Overall, these issues from one hand increase the crime rates because people cannot solve their financial problems, on the other hand, pave the way for terrorist groups to misuse from the gap. Unemployment is also associated with elevated rates of mental and physical health problems. It increases morbidity and mortality rates, and can cause detrimental changes in family relationships and in the psychological well-being of families. Scientific studies have already pointed out that unemployment can contribute to increased rates of suicide and reduced life expectancy.

As aforementioned, unemployment is the second important problem which causes continuous insurgency in the country.

There are many examples that young unemployed Afghans joined the anti-government armed groups; In fact, they are not joining the extremists or insurgents to follow their ideology, and sometimes they are against their ideology but they joined them to earn money to buy a loaf of bread for themselves and for their families. Unemployed youths are used as suicide attackers, battle forces, or laborers for implanting Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). In some provinces unemployment has also led people to grow opium and take part in its smuggling; as a result, nearly five million has been addicted in the country. So, the killing of insurgents and imprisoning of economic criminals neither weaken them and nor prevent from the illegal trends.

The key solution is to create effective employment strategy otherwise, there is no hope for social security and political stability. Imprisonment of poverty criminals is not a real solution to solve the problem of crime; it does nothing for the victims of crime, but perpetuates the idea of retribution, thus maintaining the endless cycle of violence in our culture. It is a cruel and useless substitute for the elimination of those conditions - poverty, unemployment, homelessness, desperation, racism, greed - which are at the root of most punished crime. While the crimes of the rich and powerful go unpunished.

Other point is to underline is that unemployment lies in active support of private sectors and domestic products. Government is responsible to pave the way for multi-lateral national and international trades to create jobs and ensure economic stability. We need to eliminate corruption and simplify the paperwork process. The easier to run the businesses, the easier to create more jobs in a functioning economy. We have to encourage the new start ups and creativities through cultivating the culture of giving rewards and company to use the national products. In modern society, government are not at doing the business rather they are monitoring, supporting and ensuring their security. That is why, it is said that the governments of the world are not good at doing business and should stay out. Instead, they should ensure security, fight against corruption and remove the barriers for private sector to do their job easily.

As a last point it is suggested to look for foreign labor market who are thirsty for labor force. There are many nations in the region who earn billions by sending their skilled workers to other countries through mutual state protocol. For instance, India annually make 86 billion dollars, Indonesia 46 million dollar and Philippine 12 milliard dollar. But due to lack of such agreement, millions of Afghan workers are suffering from working in illegal labor markets. Sometimes they are not paid while cannot raise their voice due to lack of that formal contract. As Afghans are hardworking and reliable, they can be easily attracted if our government seriously looks for such markets.

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