

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



October 03, 2018

Electoral Violence Prevention: Key to the Credibility of the Outcome

Violence before, during, and after elections has been a feature of Afghanistan's political landscape. The Afghan government's first line of defense against election violence is the Afghan National Police (ANP) and the Afghan National Army. However, violence, and the intervention of the army to restore order, casts a shadow over the democratic process. The performance of the ANP will be one criterion for judging the broader political success of the 2018 National Assembly contest.

Afghan security officials have promised to deploy vast numbers of policemen to provide security, and have stressed the importance of preventing the kind of violence that marred the 2014 elections. Therefore, security and defense departments have developed a new strategy that will be implemented in three phases. Maintaining security at polling centers, around the preparation of a voters list and around election day itself are the core areas of the strategy in order people can vote freely and in a secure environment on the day of election. What concerns the security analysts is that out of the 7,000 polling centers, 2,000 of them face high security threats and that operations need to be launched there. According to the institutions overseeing election processes, not only maintaining security around election day is vital, but security around the entire process needs to be maintained in order to ensure a transparent election.

A number of high-profile insurgent attacks on voter registration centers in Kabul and other parts of the country have led to high numbers of casualties. These attacks led to relatively lower voter registration and there concerns that this violence will lead to lower voter turnout- that will undermine the credibility of the outcome of 2018 Wolsi Jirga election.

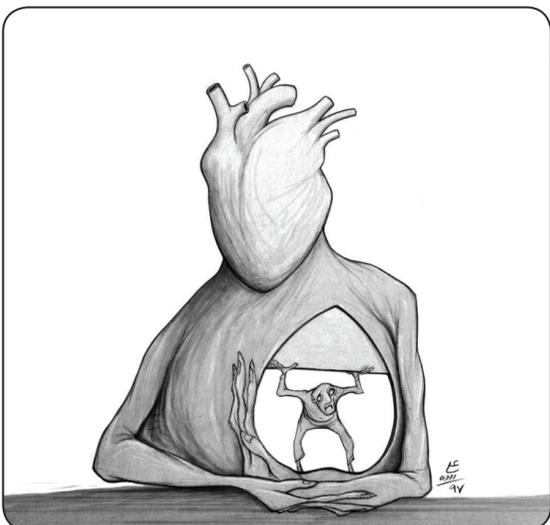
How the security will be ensured by ANDSF?

The recent attacks and violence have underscored the security challenges facing Afghanistan as it prepares to hold parliamentary elections in October. Anyhow, the security and defense departments have announced that they will implement the electoral security strategy in three phases.

First, vulnerable polling stations will be identified and operations will be launched in these areas to remove any risks. Secondly, more forces will be deployed at the polling centers that are high-risk stations and thirdly, the national army will support police where necessary, more supplies will be provided to them and if needed more forces will be stationed at high-risk polling stations.

However, people's electoral security perception suggests that there is little reason for optimism. In the view of many observers, Afghan security and defense forces, especially Afghan National Police, remain plagued by corruption, inadequate training, and a lack of resources. Incompetence and predatory behavior, have deeply alienated the force from the population the ANSDF, especially ANP, is intended to serve. These factors have made it next to impossible for the ANP to develop the intelligence information necessary to anticipate and thwart election-related violence.

In sum, electoral violence is one of the major threats to electoral transparency in Afghanistan. If the ANSDF maintain peace & order at every Polling Station on the Election Day, they will ensure a fair and transparent election in the country. This not only ensures the credibility of the forthcoming elections, but also will show the new and resilient face of the ANSDF as well.



One Hundred Years of Ineptitude

By Helmut K. Anheier

The global financial and economic crisis that began in 2008 was the greatest economic stress-test since the Great Depression, and the greatest challenge to social and political systems since World War II. It not only put financial markets and currencies at risk; it also exposed serious regulatory and governance shortcomings that have yet to be fully addressed.

In fact, the 2008 crisis will most likely be remembered as a watershed moment, but not because it led to reforms that strengthened economic resilience and removed vulnerabilities. On the contrary, leaders' failure to discern, much less act on, the lessons of the Great Recession may open the way for a series of fresh crises, economic and otherwise, in the coming decades.

However serious those crises turn out to be, historians a century from now will likely despair at our shortsightedness. They will note that analysts and regulators were narrowly focused on fixing the financial system by strengthening national oversight regimes. While this was a worthy goal, historians will point out, it was far from the only imperative.

To prepare the world to confront the challenges posed by globalization and technological development in a way that supports sustainable and equitable growth, governance institutions and regulations at both the national and international levels must be drastically improved. Yet not nearly enough has been invested in this effort. Beyond regional bodies like the European Union, international financial governance has remained largely untouched. Worse, because the partial fixes to the financial system will enable even more globalization, they will end up making matters worse, as strain on already-inadequate governance and regulatory frameworks increases, not only in finance, but also in other economic and technological fields. Meanwhile, enormous financial investments focused on securing a higher rate of return are likely to fuel technological innovation, further stressing regulatory systems in finance and beyond.

Major technological advances fueled by cheap money can cause markets to change so fast that policy and institutional change cannot keep up. And new markets can emerge that offer huge payoffs for early adopters or investors, who benefit from remaining several steps ahead of national and international regulators.

This is what happened in the run-up to the 2008 crisis. New technology-enabled financial instruments created opportunities for some to make huge amounts of money. But regulators were unable to keep up with the innovations, which ended up generating risks that affected the entire economy.

This points to a fundamental difference between global crises of

the twenty-first century and, say, the Great Depression in the 1930s or, indeed, any past stock-market crashes. Because of the financial sector's growth, more actors benefit from under-regulation and weak governance in the short term, making today's crises more difficult to prevent.

Complicating matters further, the systems affected by today's crises extend well beyond any one regulatory body's jurisdiction. That makes crises far unrulier, and their consequences - including their long-term influence on societies and politics - more difficult to predict. The next crises - made more likely by rising nationalism and a growing disregard for science and fact-based policymaking - may be financial, but they could also implicate realms as varied as migration, trade, cyberspace, pollution, and climate change. In all of these areas, national and international governance institutions are weak or incomplete, and there are few independent actors, such as watchdog groups, demanding transparency and accountability.

This makes it harder not only to prevent crises - not least because it creates opportunities for actors to game the system and shirk responsibility - but also to respond to them. The 2008 crisis cast a harsh spotlight on just how bad we are at responding quickly to disasters, especially those fueled by fragmented governance.

To be sure, as the Hertie School's 2018 Governance Report shows, there have been some improvements in preparing for and managing crises. But we must become more alert to how developments in a wide range of fields - from finance to digital technologies and climate change - can elude the governance capacities of national and international institutions. We should be running crisis scenarios and preparing emergency plans for upheaval in all of these fields, and taking stronger steps to mitigate risks, including by managing debt levels, which today remain much higher in the advanced economies than they were before the 2008 crisis.

Moreover, we should ensure that we provide international institutions with the needed resources and responsibilities. And by punishing those who exacerbate risks for the sake of their own interests, we would strengthen the legitimacy of global governance and the institutions that are meant to conduct it.

As it stands, inadequate cross-border coordination and enforcement of international agreements is a major impediment to crisis prevention and management. Yet, far from addressing this weakness, the world is reviving an outdated model of national sovereignty that makes crises of various kinds more likely. Unless we change course soon, the world of 2118 will have much reason to regard us with scorn.

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Disasters Discriminate - Disaster Response Should Not

By Bharati Sadasivam

When landslides devastated parts of Tajikistan's Khatlon province in early 2009, the village of Baldzhuvan was better prepared than most. Bibi Rahimova, a local community organizer, had spent years alerting people to the dangers of living beneath unstable terrain; when the hillside finally gave way, all of Baldzhuvan's 35 households were evacuated safely, and no lives were lost.

Rahimova was part of a village emergency group trained by Oxfam International in disaster-risk reduction; her efforts before, during, and after the mudslides made her a hero in Tajikistan's rugged west. But her heroism did something else, too: it served as a reminder that lives are saved when women are included in disaster planning and recovery.

Natural disasters disproportionately affect women and children, especially in countries where women's socioeconomic status is low. For example, when Oxfam tallied the death toll from the December 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean, it found that up to four times more women than men had died; in India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, 60-80% of those killed were women. Such ratios have been repeated in countless other disasters. The problem begins with the way in which disasters are reported in the media, with little attention to differences in the numbers of men and women affected.

Many factors contribute to the uneven risk, but gender bias is a leading cause. In poor countries, women are almost always primary caregivers, and their responsibility for children, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled can delay evacuations. When an earthquake hit southeastern Turkey in 2011, the number of women and children killed was significantly higher than men because so many caregivers were at home at the time.

Research also suggests that early-warning systems often fail to recognize that men and women receive and act upon information about disasters differently. After floods inundated parts of Serbia in 2014, focus groups discovered that women had waited for official notification to evacuate, while men based their exodus on informal networks. It is not a stretch to conclude that if official orders had been delayed or had never come, more women would have died.

Nor does working outside the home necessarily offer protection from disaster-related risks. Consider the textile trade, an industry dominated by women that is also notorious for locating factories in unsafe buildings that are often among the most vulnerable in earthquakes.

Adding to these dangers, women who survive disasters often face challenges related to sexual and gender-based violence during the recovery phase. In temporary housing or camps, women and girls are more vulnerable to violence and trafficking, and of-

ten endure poor sanitation, a lack of privacy, and limited access to menstrual hygiene products and reproductive health services. Although people in charge of managing recovery efforts may intuitively understand women's needs, post-disaster planning and response fails to account for differences in the needs and concerns of women and men.

To be sure, some international agreements are beginning to emphasize the gender-differentiated consequences of natural and human-caused calamities. One recent example is the 2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which was adopted in the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan. That resolution calls on signatories to consider gender at all stages of disaster mitigation - from preparedness to reconstruction.

Still, much work remains to be done, with four areas demanding urgent attention. First, increasing the number of women on search-and-rescue teams is essential, in part because women are more likely to know the location of homes with children and elderly occupants. This is among the main reasons a team of firefighters and first responders in Kraljevo, Serbia, has been working since 2016 to increase the number of women within its ranks.

Second, more women must participate in post-disaster counseling efforts, especially in regions where women survivors may not be as comfortable speaking with men about their trauma.

Third, disaster-related funding should be tailored for women's unique circumstances. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, reconstruction programs introduced after floods in 2014 placed a high priority on housing grants for single mothers and channeled redevelopment funds to businesses with large women workforces.

Perhaps the most important challenge is simply to ensure that more women have a say in decisions related to risk reduction and response. One way is for community leaders and authorities to embrace the 20-point checklist developed by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, which identifies ways to make disaster planning more responsive to gender. The checklist also encourages the media to report on gender differences in disaster risk and vulnerability.

Finally, communities and disaster management authorities everywhere should adopt gender-specific strategies in all stages of disaster planning and response; a recent report published by the United Nations Development Programme and UN Women could serve as a useful practical guide.

Although disasters affect entire communities, women often bear the brunt of the burden. Disasters will continue to discriminate, unless we transform our responses to address their different effects on women and men - as the people of Baldzhuvan can readily attest.

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