

The German Elections and Setting the Priorities

By: Dr. Eng. Nader Riad

The German elections that took place in September to determine the winning party that would ensure a decisive majority and thus the new chancellor will be chosen as the head of the winning party, has been different this time compared to the previous ones regarding the great difference in party programs presented by both competing parties and due to the pressing priority of internal Egyptian problems that dominated the party programs and consequently the elections.

The results on another level introduced another unfamiliar situation that took place for the first time as the votes for both competing major parties, the Democratic Socialist Party headed by Gerhard Shreuder and the Democratic Christian Party headed by Angela Merkle were very close.

The latter party won with a very slight majority that does not exceed 3% than its competitor.

This has opened a new phase in power struggle between the two parties in Germany.

Each party attempted to build a coalition with another party or more than one of the small ones that competed in order to ensure a comfortable majority in the German Bundestag (parliament) to facilitate setting its policies and

approving them as well as issuing legislations and regulations to implement such policies.

Angela Merkle tended to make promises about reduction of sales taxes to encourage internal trade as an incentive to support export at the end while the Shreuder party insisted on keeping the sales taxes at their current level pointing that Germany's exports this year were the largest throughout its history.

Whether the anticipated coalition would bring either of the two competing parties to formulate the government, the upcoming German Chancellor would have to face a number of problems with definitely unconventional solutions that would give an impact in a very short while so as his or her party would regain the public trust of the German voter who is known to have a very sensible economic and political personality.

Unemployment is on the top of the priorities of all German politicians. The number of unemployed Germans reached more than five million, one-third of them is in the Western part of Germany while two-thirds are in the Eastern part.

Regarding education, training and retraining as well as vocational rehabilitation and higher education, there has been a great debate on these matters. Also the bill the government pays for these services is enormous and it is representing a great burden on the German treasury.

Still the persistence of unemployment would not allow any reduction in such services.

The bill for social insurance and health care especially among the aging population of Germany has also been under great discussion and debate, and

the current negotiations between the hospitals on one side and the social insurance companies on the other taking the government as a common mediator, have reached a dead end.

Thus, the social insurance brackets can never be raised and the government cannot on the other side reduce the health services it provides to the citizens covered by health insurance.

Regarding heavy industries and the privatization of State-owned institutions, there are numerous problems on the upcoming German government to face. Some examples on the European and German level of privatization and international cooperation were successful, such as the privatization of German railways regarding its operation, administration and trains movement, while the tracks of the railways remained owned by the State.

Also the project for building the giant airbus that involves two floors and carries 800 passengers through German, French and Spanish cooperation was a success. This plane has reached a level of excellence that exceeded greatly the American air aviation industry.

Still heavy industries, software industries, remote sensing and remote control, as well as computer business, have lagged behind remarkably in Germany because of the negative impact of privatization and shift of ownership.

In brief, there is a great need for re-arranging the German house from the inside.

This issue is strongly pressing the upcoming German government while the degree of German people's dissatisfaction about the rate of salaries and wages compared to commodity pricing is increasing.

Regarding the Egyptian German relations, they have been characterized with cooperation and warmth over the past decades. Therefore, we should look forward to the upcoming government in Germany with more anticipation and concern out of our keenness for developing our German and European relations.

The progress in Germany provides support to progress in Egypt and vice versa, because the Egyptian progress would support the German one out of the fact that Egypt is in the backyard of European Germany and that the Egyptian German trade exchange comes second in the Arab region, and it has witnessed a tangible improvement this year signaling an anticipated leap forward in 2006.