

October 6, 2011

Afghanistan Hopes and Doubts

Regarding the opinion articles “This war can still be won,” by Fernando M. Luján, and “The assassination next door,” by Camelia Entekhabifard (Views, Sept. 29): The pessimism of Ms. Entekhabifard’s article stands in stark contrast to the hope that can be found in Mr. Luján’s. The latter, however, finds optimism primarily in the field of security, and unfortunately touches only briefly upon the hope that should be derived from Afghanistan’s most important asset: a new generation of young people who are not connected to the political infighting and power struggles of the past.

Nevertheless, foreign support for this new generation is still very limited. For example, the United States currently spends much more on training each new Afghan police or army recruit than on creating one more place within the higher education system. Training security forces is undoubtedly important, but for the longer term the international community should pay greater attention to the young men and women — over 30 percent of the population — who will form the backbone of a new, modern and more peaceful Afghanistan.

Jorrit Kamminga, London Director of policy research, International Council on Security and Development