

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



April 22, 2018

Our Dilemma!

Our nation has reached to such a stage of ignorance and hunger that the dream of stability and order itself has become a daydream. And for our plight we are worthy of sympathy and criticism and even an excuse, as we have been witnessing few decades of social, political and economic instability and at the same time conflict and wars. Now, the time that we have to mend our all losses seems to be very short and in this short time we have to make up for all the blunders that we have committed.

Though this excuse seems to be valid, we cannot get rid of our responsibilities and have to react as responsible citizens of the country. Yes, this excuse would suffice if in earning the losses that we experienced in the past decades, there had not been our own share; however, that is not the case. In the meanwhile, the role of certain strata in the past tragic phase of history has been very controversial and negative. Unfortunately, they have continued the same in the present as well.

Though there have been certain strata who have been involved negatively in the mentioned phase of history, the role of the ruling elite has been the most dominant one. This particular stratum has been involved mostly in pursuing its own self centered incentives instead of pursuing the interests of the people as a whole. The rich people have been basically busy in accumulating wealth in whatever way possible. They have, in this particular capability, achieved great milestones and since the installation of the so-called democratic political setup and the inflow of the aid money, they have had more opportunities to do so, while the condition of the poor people has remained the same. They have shown great miracles to the people – they have been able to build great building and grow large amount of money over night on the completely barren lands. And, they have been able to do so because of the misuse of their authority and unlimited power of their positions. If discussed seriously, such people have given great loss to the nation. They have installed a system, wherein the people only value money and they run after wealth. There is no respect for the true social values and ethics. The materialistic gains have become the motive of the life of all the people; however, only they themselves have been able to gain them. For them, it does not matter where the nation stands; the important thing for them is where they themselves have reached. Progress and development have different meanings for them – they think competing with each other by building new designs of houses and buying the latest models of cars is the real progress and development.

The question at this crucial moment is whether the country can go ahead with such a setup, wherein most of the people of the country suffer from hunger and poverty while only few families have all the luxuries of life? Is it just that almost all the people of the country went through era of instability and chaos and mostly the common people gave sacrifices and their whole lives were influenced negatively by socio-political and economic circumstances, yet they remain the most unprivileged stratum? Is it really ethical that by gaining authority the ruling elite has gotten the license of having all the privileges they want and it, at the same time, remains unaccountable?

It is really important to consider all the questions thoroughly and try to find out their true answers. The sort of negative practices and thinking mentioned above have become a part of daily life and soon they will become a part of our nature; therefore, it is necessary to understand them and take action against them before they are able to become irreversible. Unfortunately, the common people are so ignorant that they do not even realize that they are being dodged and their rights are being violated. They are kept in dark and instead of demanding for light they have started to make compromises in order to live in the darkness.

It is the demand of better living and higher thinking that the intellectuals in our society must rise to the occasion and strive to let the people know the evils of ignorance they have and must suggest economic reforms and clear changes in the socio-political setup. They have to start a comprehensive movement against ignorance, hunger and poverty. They have to demand for better living standard for the common people; the country does not need large bungalows and latest model cars; it requires schools, colleges, institutions, hospitals, productive farms and efficient industries.

Moreover, People have to be made vigilant and they need to understand what their basic rights are and what the government is responsible for giving them. Asking for their rights is not something wrong and the government is responsible to facilitate them their due rights. They have to start thinking in a different way and, at the same time, start acting differently; otherwise, the pitiable plight will continue indefinitely.



China and Afghanistan are “Heart to Heart” Brothers, Saving the Heart and the Children Admits of No Delay

By Liu Jinsong

I have been very busy these few days, accompanying the Chinese Red Cross Foundation (CRCF) Medical Team to carry out a series of medical treatment activities in Kabul. But in the meanwhile, I'm quite happy because I truly felt the friendship between the peoples of our two countries.

This is a project of treating Afghan children with Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) by the CRCF and the Afghan Red Crescent Society. Last August, crossing the heavy smoke of explosions, the CRCF Medical Team came to Kabul from Beijing and took 21 Afghan children with CHD disease back to China for treatment. Most of the children and their parents had never travelled out of their village. The trip was the children's first time on a plane, first time going abroad and of course, first time undertaking an operation. All the children received timely, comprehensive and personalized treatment in Urumqi, and all the operations were very successful. This is a miracle on earth! After a few weeks of recovery, children who came with a gray face and purple lips reinstated a flushed healthy look, and the long-absent smiles came back to the worried and sad parents. All the 21 children returned to health and all the 21 families came to have a bright future.

The Chinese medical team exerted all their strength and wisdom for these children. There was one operation lasting from 9 am to 4 pm, and the operating doctor Mr. Zhang Haibo, one of China's top pediatric heart surgery specialists in Shanghai Children's Medical Center, said that he had never seen such a complicated and severe state of CHD disease. During the operation, he didn't eat or drink anything. Finally, he saved the two year old Mujiburahman's heart. Top specialist Mr. Liu Mianfen, a 66-year-old veteran of Shanghai, suffered a poor eyesight and lack of stamina and had rarely been on the operation table any more. But in order to save the Afghan children, he forced himself to put on two pair of glasses and did the operation himself. The chairman of board of Shandong Buchang Pharma Mr. Zhao Buchang, who was 80 years old, provided a lot of valuable support and fund for the project. What is more touching is that he and his wife travelled a long way to Xinjiang to visit Afghan children, and brought Eid al-Adha gifts to every child.

One thing is a little unfair: As the children were unconscious with anesthesia and the doctors wearing masks during the operations, the children never had a close look at the faces of the doctors and couldn't really recognize them afterwards. But they knew the nurses well because the nurses took care of them everyday. By the time of departure, the children and the nurses had already been like a family and the scene of farewell was very touching.

This is an Angel project. The footsteps we hear from the Chinese angels are rush but steady. It is a race against death, a relay of life and an reinforcement of happiness.

This year, the CRCF Medical Team will treat 79 more Afghan children with CHD disease. A total of 100 small hearts will

be able to regain health and returned to vigorous beating. But there are still more than 7,000 children with CHD disease in Afghanistan. The thought of the number 100 against 7,000 makes all of us heart-breaking. However, with all our capabilities and limited resources, we will still work hard and save the life every day. We may cure the heart, but may not change the whole situation. We are happy for the children who have been treated, but are very worried for those who still remain to be treated. The days of satisfaction and relief are yet far from near!

H.E. First Lady Ms. Rula Ghani met with the CRCF Medical Team members. Her Excellency praised the long term China-Afghanistan friendship and the sincere cooperation between Chinese Red Cross and Afghan Red Crescent. Her Excellency said, “Children are the future of the country and the Chinese friends are caring the future of Afghanistan. I would like to thank again for the deep friendship of the Chinese people”. H.E. Minister of Public Health Dr. Ferozudin Feroz shook hands with Mr. Sun Shuopeng, Head of CRCF Medical Team and said, “China is giving the most successful treatment for the Afghan children. These lucky children are not only the children of Afghanistan, but also the children of China. I can't find words to express my sincere gratitude for China's unselfish help!”

Mr. Sun and I told H.E. First Lady and H.E. Minister, “the people of China and Afghanistan have always been good neighbors, close brothers and always helped each other throughout history. We are ‘heart to heart’ brothers. In order to do so, above all we need a healthy heart. What we are doing comes from the bottom of our heart and we are sure that our good heart will win the heart of our Afghan friends. For sure, we will continue this project and provide more medical and health assistance to the Afghan people.”

I also quoted the words of Mr. Xi Jinping, President of China: “The Chinese people have always had the sense of justice and compassion. The Chinese people have always tied their destiny closely to that of the people around the world. The Chinese people have always paid close attention and provided unselfish assistance to people who still live in war, turmoil, hunger, and poverty. The Chinese people are always ready to do their utmost to contribute to the peace and development of humanity.”

The world is not peaceful and humanitarian crises happen very frequently. When faced with crisis and difficulties, especially the lack of medical treatment in Afghanistan, we feel that we can't sit back, just wait and do nothing. We should carry forward the spirit of humanity, fraternity and devotion, and send the love and hope to the innocent people, especially to innocent children who are in trouble. We should uphold the basic principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, avoid politicization of humanitarian issues and adhere to the demilitarization of humanitarian aid. This is what I want to say as a Chinese diplomat.

Wish the Afghan children all the best for the future!

Wish China and Afghanistan are heart-connected forever!

Liu Jinsong is the Ambassador of China to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Missile Strikes Are Not a Syria Strategy

By Richard N. Haass

NEW YORK – “A perfectly executed strike...Could not have had a better result. Mission Accomplished.” So tweeted US President Donald Trump just hours after more than a hundred American, French, and British cruise missiles hit three sites in Syria believed to be associated with chemical weapons production.

The mission that was “accomplished” was to deliver the message that using chemical weapons would not be cost-free for those responsible. Ideally, punitive strikes such as these would deter Syria's government, or any other, from ever using chemical weapons again in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

But it is far from clear that Trump has achieved that deterrent effect. The somewhat smaller strike undertaken a year ago failed to change Syrian behavior, and the latest attack is no more likely to do so. What Bashar al-Assad's government achieved with chemical weapons – gaining control of rebel-held areas in Douma and eastern Ghouta – outweighed the price it paid. And it is a near-certainty that the Syrian government continues to possess chemical weapons, and could produce additional supplies without detection.

Military action to enforce the international norm against the use of chemical weapons is legitimate and welcome, as was the decision to coordinate the response with allies and to threaten additional strikes if chemical weapons were used again. It is important to signal that opposition to the use of any weapon of mass destruction is both deep and broad.

At the same time, the United States appears to have gone to considerable lengths to avoid engaging Russian and Iranian forces. This reduced the risk of escalation, but it also ruled out many potential targets, limiting the price paid by the Syrian government for what it had done. For this and other reasons, what the missile strikes accomplished should not be exaggerated.

The Syrian government could reasonably interpret US policy as follows: “We will stand by and do nothing while you terrorize or kill your own people so long as you do not use chemical weapons.” In fact, this has been the case for the past seven years, as nearly a half-million Syrians have died and more than ten million have been forced from their homes. Trump's foreign policy is not so much immoral as it is amoral.

It bears emphasizing that the missile strikes were not designed to undermine the Assad regime's long-term prospects. Thanks in large part to Russian and Iranian support, Assad is firmly in control and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future. This is a bitter pill for many to swallow, but it is the reality.

So where does this leave US policy and, for that matter, the policy of the French, British, and anti-Assad Arab governments? Trump

remains committed to ending America's military presence (now some 2,000 troops) in Syria. He made this clear when he announced the missile strikes: “America does not seek an indefinite presence in Syria under no circumstances,” he said. “As other nations step up their contributions, we look forward to the day when we can bring our warriors home.”

But if the goal is to avoid creating a situation in which the Islamic State (ISIS) or other terrorist groups could reconstitute themselves, that day remains far off. The US is reportedly attempting to persuade Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan to create a Sunni force that would maintain order in areas liberated from ISIS. It is far from clear whether such a force will come into being, and even less certain that it could stand on its own, given these countries' modest capabilities and extensive commitments. A considerable US military presence and involvement will still be required.

An ongoing US troop presence is also required to maintain coordination with Syrian Kurdish forces, who did most of the fighting against ISIS. But sustaining support for the Kurds without causing additional problems with Turkey, which has introduced forces into the area to weaken Kurdish control, may prove impossible. That fact calls for reducing US military reliance on access to Turkish bases.

Trump has said nothing about the plight of internally displaced Syrians. America, which accepted more than 10,000 Syrian refugees as recently as two years ago, has rolled up its welcome mat, accepting only a trickle last year. And the matter of who should pay, and how much, to support Syrian refugees and the neighboring countries that have taken them in remains unresolved.

A final question involves diplomacy. There is no realistic hope of engineering a political transition in Damascus, but it may be possible to arrange local cease-fires and create areas where Syrian civilians (but not government forces) could live in safety. Such arrangements, however, would likely require Russian involvement and support to keep the Syrian and Iranian governments on board. Russia has acted irresponsibly of late, but there remains the chance it will choose to offer limited help, if only to hold down the costs of its Syria policy.

None of this adds up to a solution; Syria is likely to remain a broken country for years to come, with an illegitimate government that controls most but not all of the state's territory. But limiting the violence and improving the lot of at least some Syrians might be possible if the US does not rush to leave, if Sunni governments contribute soldiers and money, and if Russia can be persuaded to play a somewhat more constructive role.

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