

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

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Reintegration Prior to Reconciliation

The situation in Afghanistan seems to be getting serious again. Escalation in insecurity, political disorder and the upcoming elections have casted many doubts about the future. The expectations that there could be any sort of reconciliation with Taliban have do not seem to be coming together and the National Unity Government (NUG) does not seem to have real unity. There are evident differences between the offices of the President and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Moreover, there are differences among the team members of the same office as well. This has become evident in the current controversy regarding the self-exile of first vice president, Gen. Dostum and his return to country. At the same time, his and Muhaqiq's, deputy CEO, involvement in the formation of National Coalition for Salvation of Afghanistan (NCSA) and the Grand National Coalition (GNC) is also an evident example of diverting ways of the member of NUG.

As a matter of fact, there are many other issues as well where there are marked differences among the members of NUG. From the issue of election reforms, postponement of parliamentary and district council elections and electoral division of Ghazni to the reconciliation process with Taliban, almost all the members seem to have their own views and conditions. In such a scenario, it is very difficult to create unity in the government and then among the people, which is very much important for the future of the country.

Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic society and there has to be a comprehensive process of national reintegration so as to strengthen the roots of national harmony. However, that has been neglected by the authorities in Afghanistan and they have kept on chanting the slogan of reconciliation process. Attending the issue of reconciliation without dealing with the problem of reintegration is like putting the cart before the horse.

Political stability and harmony are the most important factors for the integration of the nation. Nonetheless, achieving such a position is a far cry and the present attitude of Afghan government and its Western allies are further deterring the process. Currently, many crucial decisions that were made on behalf of the government, mostly did not have the consent of all the NUG members. Moreover, there are very serious questions about the current structure and its future. Initially it was decided that the NUG setup would continue for two years and then there would be grand Jirga where the CEO would be given a position similar to a prime minister in a parliamentary system. However, about four years have now passed, but there has never been such a move and now the next presidential election has been announced to be conducted in April 2019. And, there are fears that the government would not be able to convene the elections because of the differences and the lack of resources, or elections would be conducted in a fraudulent way.

For the reintegration of Afghan society, it is necessary that all the major social and political groups within the Afghan society must start feeling a sense of attachment with the social, political and economic lives of the country.

The reintegration of the Afghan society is only possible through a separate process – it can neither be the outcome of a miracle nor the result of the reconciliation process alone as is mostly thought. At the present scenario, even it seems improbable that the reconciliation process may reach to any sort of viable agreement with Taliban, let alone the integration of the entire nation. For reintegration to happen, it is necessary to bring about some very basic structural changes within the Afghan political setup. One of the most basic of them is a true democracy within the country that has the capacity to represent different ethnic and minority groups appropriately so that heterogeneous Afghan society must be integrated within a single whole. Different ethnic and minority groups will not be integrated within the society if they are kept away from participating within the affairs of the country and the most crucial decisions of the nation. Therefore, it can be said that the reintegration process is a two-fold process. Along with making these groups the part of the ongoing reconciliation process, there have to be important political amendments within a short span of time; otherwise, neither reintegration will take place nor will reconciliation produce any fruitful outcome.

In fact, the reintegration of Afghan society is a phenomenon that is much wider than the reconciliation process. For it to happen; there has to be consistent efforts and a true democratic system assisted with socio-economic stability and cultural integration. However, it cannot be said that reconciliation process, which is narrower in scope, is totally ineffective on the Afghanistan's reintegration. Rather, at the moment, it is one of the factors that will have a very important influence on the future of reintegration process in Afghanistan but it is important that the process must be led keeping the same concept in mind. Integrating all the important factions of Afghan society within the ongoing reconciliation process will definitely result in a promising episode in the reintegration of Afghan society.

The US is at Risk of Losing a Trade War with China

By Joseph E. Stiglitz

What was at first a trade skirmish – with US President Donald Trump imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum – appears to be quickly morphing into a full-scale trade war with China. If the truce agreed by Europe and the US holds, the US will be doing battle mainly with China, rather than the world (of course, the trade conflict with Canada and Mexico will continue to simmer, given US demands that neither country can or should accept).

Beyond the true, but by now platitudinous, assertion that everyone will lose, what can we say about the possible outcomes of Trump's trade war? First, macroeconomics always prevails: if the United States' domestic investment continues to exceed its savings, it will have to import capital and have a large trade deficit. Worse, because of the tax cuts enacted at the end of last year, the US fiscal deficit is reaching new records – recently projected to exceed \$1 trillion by 2020 – which means that the trade deficit almost surely will increase, whatever the outcome of the trade war. The only way that won't happen is if Trump leads the US into a recession, with incomes declining so much that investment and imports plummet.

The "best" outcome of Trump's narrow focus on the trade deficit with China would be improvement in the bilateral balance, matched by an increase of an equal amount in the deficit with some other country (or countries). The US might sell more natural gas to China and buy fewer washing machines; but it will sell less natural gas to other countries and buy washing machines or something else from Thailand or another country that has avoided the irascible Trump's wrath. But, because the US interfered with the market, it will be paying more for its imports and getting less for its exports than otherwise would have been the case. In short, the best outcome means that the US will be worse off than it is today.

The US has a problem, but it's not with China. It's at home: America has been saving too little. Trump, like so many of his compatriots, is immensely shortsighted. If he had a whiff of understanding of economics and a long-term vision, he would have done what he could to increase national savings. That would have reduced the multilateral trade deficit.

There are obvious quick fixes: China could buy more American oil and then sell it on to others. This would not make an iota of difference, beyond perhaps a slight increase in transaction costs. But Trump could trumpet that he had eliminated the bilateral trade deficit.

In fact, significantly reducing the bilateral trade deficit in a meaningful way will prove difficult. As demand for Chinese goods decreases, the renminbi's exchange rate will weaken – even without any government intervention. This will partly offset the effect of US tariffs; at the same time, it will increase China's competitiveness with other countries – and this will be true even if China doesn't use other instruments in its possession, like wage and price controls, or push strongly for productivity increases. China's overall trade deficit, like that of the US, is determined by its macroeconomics.

If China intervenes more actively and retaliates more aggres-

sively, the change in the US-China trade balance could be even smaller. The relative pain each will inflict on the other is difficult to ascertain. China has more control of its economy, and has wanted to shift toward a growth model based on domestic demand rather than investment and exports. The US is simply helping China do what it has already been trying to do. On the other hand, US actions come at a time when China is trying to manage excess leverage and excess capacity; at least in some sectors, the US will make these tasks all the more difficult.

This much is clear: if Trump's objective is to stop China from pursuing its "Made in China 2025" policy – adopted in 2015 to further its 40-year goal of narrowing the income gap between China and the advanced countries – he will almost surely fail. On the contrary, Trump's actions will only strengthen Chinese leaders' resolve to boost innovation and achieve technological supremacy, as they realize that they can't rely on others, and that the US is actively hostile.

If a country enters a war, trade or otherwise, it should be sure that good generals – with clearly defined objectives, a viable strategy, and popular support – are in charge. It is here that the differences between China and the US appear so great. No country could have a more unqualified economic team than Trump's, and a majority of Americans are not behind the trade war.

Public support will wane even further as Americans realize that they lose doubly from this war: jobs will disappear, not only because of China's retaliatory measures, but also because US tariffs increase the price of US exports and make them less competitive; and the prices of the goods they buy will rise. This may force the dollar's exchange rate to fall, increasing inflation in the US even more – giving rise to still more opposition. The Fed is likely then to raise interest rates, leading to weaker investment and growth and more unemployment.

Trump has shown how he responds when his lies are exposed or his policies are failing: he doubles down. China has repeatedly offered face-saving ways for Trump to leave the battlefield and declare victory. But he refuses to take them up. Perhaps hope can be found in three of his other traits: his focus on appearance over substance, his unpredictability, and his love of "big man" politics. Perhaps in a grand meeting with President Xi Jinping, he can declare the problem solved, with some minor adjustments of tariffs here and there, and some new gesture toward market opening that China had already planned to announce, and everyone can go home happy. In this scenario, Trump will have "solved," imperfectly, a problem that he created. But the world following his foolish trade war will still be different: more uncertain, less confident in the international rule of law, and with harder borders. Trump has changed the world, permanently, for the worse. Even with the best possible outcomes, the only winner is Trump – with his outside ego pumped up just a little more.

Joseph E. Stiglitz is the winner of the 2001 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences. His most recent book is *Globalization and its Discontents Revisited: Anti-Globalization in the Era of Trump*.

Where are the Nurses in the HIV Response?

By Ian Hodgson

Since the beginning of the HIV epidemic, nurses have been at the forefront of the response to this once fatal infection. The nurse is involved at every stage of the trajectory of a person living with HIV – from usually being the first to counsel the newly diagnosed person, to one of the last to be with him/her at the point of death.

This significant, albeit less recognized, role played by nurses across the world in the care, support, and treatment of people living with HIV (PLHIV) was the key theme of an important event hosted by the US based Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) at the recently concluded 22nd International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2018) in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Nurses are the backbone of effective HIV response. Nurses have always been the front and centre of public health crises. In the most recent outbreak of Ebola during May 2018 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the first health professional to die of the infection was a nurse. At the beginning of the HIV epidemic, nurses provided the bulk of in-hospital care during the difficult pre-ART phases, and though there are no recorded incidents of nurses catching HIV in the workplace, there is an associated toll. Nurses can often be stigmatized because of their place of work, and/or work alone in rural clinics with little support and the expectation that they provide all the required care. Nurses also provide point of care HIV tests, support people following a TB test, counsel pregnant young women following a positive HIV diagnosis, and give immediate information about treatment and lifestyle. Indeed, according to Carole Treston, Executive Director of ANAC, nurses are in a prime position to be champions of human rights, "stigma busters and discrimination fighters."

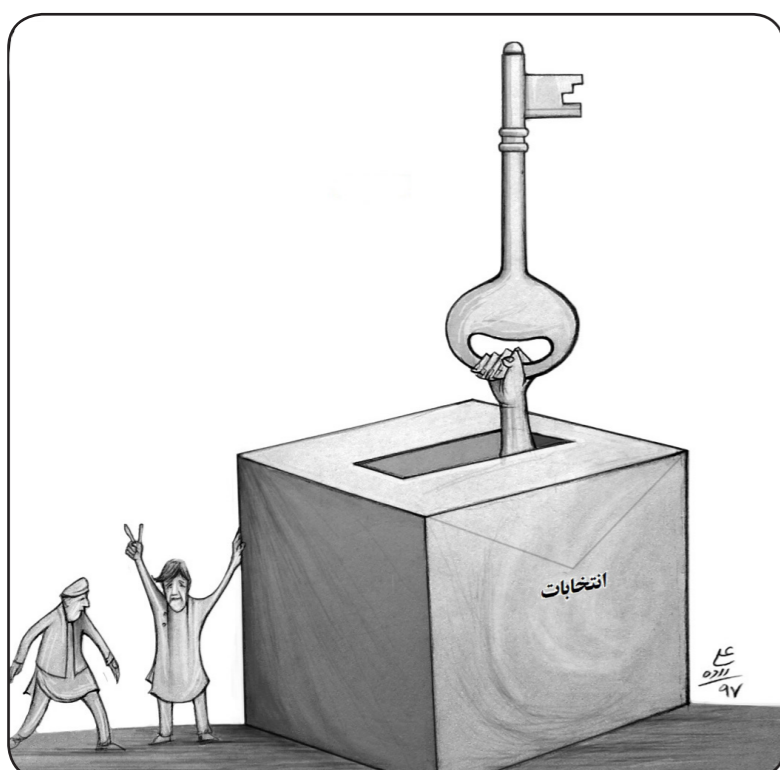
Why are nurses absent from HIV policy making? Yet nurses are usually absent from policy-making, and even the International AIDS Society has never had a nurse on its board. Nurses do seek influence, not through hubris but rather a desire to shape policy impacting directly on the lives of people affected by HIV. This is something they have in common with civil society organisations, a cohort that since the beginning of the HIV epidemic has become, and rightly so, increasingly vocal and influential. But where are the nurses?

Often, they are simply too busy working at the ground. Then again, in some areas of Africa and South America, for example, nurses are routinely rotated around specialties, working as HIV nurses for only a limited period of time and with little opportunity for career progression in the field. There is also the question of gender, with female nurses less likely to progress in countries where gender inequality is endemic and with hierarchical health systems dominated by male doctors. This is perhaps the reason ANAC and other HIV nursing associations find it difficult to reach out and connect with nurses in eastern Europe and central Asia, where nurses are relatively disempowered compared to the west. Nurses here are unlikely to reach the levels of autonomy required for policy-making involvement and networking.

Heed nurses' voices for effective HIV responses. The aforesaid event considered a range of options for nurses to be more influential in the HIV response. Shaun Watson, currently chair of the UK's national HIV nursing association, shared details with CNS (Citizen News Service www.citizennews.org) of the U=U campaign to which an increasing numbers of nursing groups are signing up to, such as NHIVNA (UK), the European HIV Nursing Network, and the Dutch HIV Nursing Association. For Shaun Watson, "As the people who diagnose HIV, start treatment, monitor adherence, listen to and manage concerns over symptoms and side effects, it will be nurses at the forefront of the U=U campaign. The evidence is clear that the risk of sexually passing on HIV when virally suppressed and engaged in care is zero. This is an important message to get across not only to HIV nurses but to every other nurse."

Given the dominance of nurses in HIV care, speaking the truth to those in power must be within their remit. Nurses should not be afraid to raise their voices and be heard against the background of an ever-increasing dominance of medicalisation and reliance on data gathering in the HIV response. For Susan Strasser, Senior Implementation Director of ICAP's global portfolio of public health programmes at Columbia University, the epidemic control of HIV will "only be achieved on the backs and in the hands of nurses."

Dr Ian Hodgson, CNS (Citizen News Service)



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