

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



December 30, 2017

Living with Awareness

The society that is suffering from the problems of ignorance and hunger cannot have the luxury of dreaming about prosperity and development and, perhaps, it does not have the right, as well. We, though, keep on talking about prosperity and progress but do not realize that only the nations that have reached to a particular stage of awareness and economic stability can have such dreams; otherwise, striving for such dreams is nothing more than woolgathering.

We, as a nation, are standing on 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.

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.

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.



Open a New Chapter for China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Cooperation

By Zhang Zhixin

The first China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue was held successfully in Beijing on 26th December 2017. Foreign Minister Wang Yi of the People's Republic of China, Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan attended the dialogue.

Holding this dialogue is an important consensus which achieved by the three sides during Mr. Wang Yi's shuttle visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan in June, 2017, it is also an important measure for China to promote the building of community with a shared future for mankind, deepen relations with its neighbors in accordance with the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness and the policy of forging friendship and partnership with its neighbors, push forward the Belt and Road international cooperation.

As Mr. Wang pointed out that, The healthy and steady development of Afghan-Pakistan relations is not only in line with the interests of the two countries and the two countries' people, but also beneficial to China and other regional countries.

As a good friend of Afghanistan and Pakistan, China, within its capacity, is willing to play a constructive role in improving Afghanistan-Pakistan ties through the trilateral dialogue. It is highly expected that Afghanistan and Pakistan will make active efforts in this regard. The establishment of the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue mechanism will surely promote the bilateral and trilateral friendly exchanges and cooperation.

This dialogue which achieved complete success is an important milestone for the trilateral cooperation. It enhanced the mutual trust and exchanges among the three sides, laid a solid foundation and marked a good start for the trilateral cooperation in the future. The major achievements of this dialogue can be summarized as "three ones", one serious of important consensus, one joint Press Release and one major cooperative initiative.

One serious of important consensus includes: First, the three parties will work to deepen the trilateral cooperation in accordance with the principle of mutual respect, equal-footed consultation and win-win results under the framework of the foreign ministers' dialogue. Second, the three parties agreed to achieve four goals, namely supporting the peace reconstruction and reconciliation efforts of Afghanistan; assisting Afghanistan and Pakistan in improving their relations; promoting common security of the three countries and the region; and advancing regional connectivity and cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative. Third, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to expedite the improvement of the bilateral relations for harmonious coexistence. Fourth, the three parties reiterated their commitment to an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned reconciliation process.

Fifth, Afghanistan and Pakistan reaffirmed their support for China's Belt and Road Initiative, and expressed their willingness to align their development strategies respectively with the Belt and Road Initiative and discuss trilateral cooperation under the Belt and Road framework. Sixth, China and Pakistan will jointly launch assistance projects for Afghanistan in areas related to people's livelihood like medical care and health, human

resources and agriculture. Seventh, the three parties agreed to, in accordance with the consensus reached through the trilateral vice-ministerial consultation mechanism on counter-terrorism and security, enhance counter-terrorism coordination and cooperation in an effort to combat all terrorist organizations and individuals without any distinction of any sort. Eighth, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to strengthen communication between the Afghan Ulema Council and the Pakistani Ulema Council and prevent the spread and dissemination of religious extremism.

One joint Press Release, namely the Joint Press Release of the 1st China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue. In the Joint Press Release, Afghanistan and Pakistan congratulated China on the successful conclusion of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, and fully supported the initiative proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping to build community with a shared future for mankind.

The three Foreign Ministers agreed to work together on political mutual trust and reconciliation, development cooperation and connectivity, security cooperation and counter-terrorism as three topics of the trilateral cooperation. They call on the Afghan Taliban to join the peace process at an early date. The three sides agreed to conduct win-win trilateral economic cooperation, with an incremental approach, starting from the easier initiatives to the more difficult ones. The three sides reiterated their firm resolve to fight the menace of terrorism. They expressed their strong determination not to allow any country, organization or individual to use their respective territories for terrorist activities against any other countries.

The three sides agreed that the 2nd China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue will be held in Kabul in 2018. One Major Cooperation Initiative is the extension of CPEC to Afghanistan. Afghanistan is an important neighbor to China and Pakistan. It keenly aspires to develop its economy, improve people's livelihood, integrate with the regional connectivity process. So China and Pakistan are willing to work with Afghanistan, on the basis of win-win, mutually beneficial principle, using an appropriate means to extend CPEC to Afghanistan.

In the long run, through Afghanistan, we will gradually connect the CPEC with the China-Central and Western Asia Economic Corridor. The CPEC targets no third party. Instead, it is expected to benefit third parties and the whole region, and become a major motivation for regional integration. The CPEC is an economic cooperation project and should not be politicized. It has no relationship with existing disputes in the region, including territorial disputes, nor should it be related.

We are acutely aware that while there is a bright future ahead of us, the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral cooperation also faces certain difficulties and challenges. However, the inherent difficulty of cooperation entails extraordinary courage, and only persistent efforts benefit this commendable cause.

The trilateral cooperation meets with our common interests, complies with the current of regional integration, and contributes to achieving regional peace and stability. A good beginning is half done. In the coming future, the Chinese side will work together with Afghanistan and Pakistan to implement the outcomes of the trilateral foreign ministers' dialogue, and push forward trilateral cooperation up to a new stage.

Charge d'Affairs of the Chinese Embassy in Afghanistan.

2017 - A Deadly Year for the World

By Hujjatullah Zia

The carnage and violence occur frequently around the world despite the public concern. The voices of human rights activists in advocating the rights of individuals fall on deaf ears and all warring parties, including governments and anti-government groups, violate the fundamental rights of people flagrantly. The blood of soldiers and civilians oozes every second and all murderers deem themselves right.

Although we are at the end of 2017, it is believed to be one of the deadliest years in many parts of the world, including Afghanistan. Scores of men, women, and children have been killed in one way or another. The war and militancy took their highest toll on human societies and inflicted heavy casualties upon nations. Although the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) lost its ground in Syria and Iraq, it carried out large-scale attacks and people sustained casualties from Kabul to Baghdad, Mogadishu, Manchester, Barcelona, etc. in 2017.

Afghans have also left a bloody year behind as the Taliban and ISIL group intensified their attacks in 2017. In a massacre in Kandahar Province, the Taliban nearly wiped out an entire army unit of 60 men. In April, insurgents drove into the army's headquarters in the northern province of Balkh and killed at least 140 soldiers in a rampage that lasted several hours. In a March attack claimed by the ISIL group, militants barged into the military's main hospital in Kabul, slaughtering dozens of soldiers who were being treated there. The fatalities of civilians are not countable. According to a report released by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 1,662 civilians were killed and more than 3,500 wounded with deaths in the capital Kabul accounting for nearly 20 per cent of the toll in the first half of 2017.

The majority of the victims were killed by anti-government forces, including the resurgent Taliban and in attacks claimed by self-styled Islamic State (IS) group, the report said. The UN's special envoy to Afghanistan Tadamichi Yamamoto said the human cost of the conflict remains "far too high".

The Thursday's bloody attack in Kabul, which killed more than 50 people and wounded at least 84, was also extremely shocking and reflects a spike in terrorist activities in the country. Thursday's attack, claimed by ISIL, shows that this group is able to carry out large-scale attacks in Kabul.

The Yemen conflict, which erupted in 2014, has killed more than 10,000 people and wounded more than 40,000, according to the

UN. Last week, the Saudi-led military coalition airstrikes reportedly killed at least 71 civilians, including women and children, within two days. The Houthi-run Saba news agency reported that at least 48 civilians, including 11 children, were killed in 51 air strikes across Yemen on Sunday.

Saba also reported that scores of people were wounded after four air strikes targeted a public protest in Arhab district against US President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The Rohingya Muslims also suffered severely in 2017. Their rights and dignity were violated by Rohingya security forces on the grounds of their race, color, and creed. Few months back, the UN estimated more than 90,000 Rohingya Muslims were forced to flee their homes since the start of the crackdown. A UN report in February said the campaign against the Rohingya, who were stripped of their citizenship in 1982, "very likely" amounted to war crimes.

To one's unmitigated chagrin, 2017 was recorded the most violent year in Mexico as at least 23,000 people were reportedly killed - on average one was killed every 20 minutes. This death toll is unprecedented in Mexico since the country has been recording murder for two decades. Corruption, lack of law enforcement and violent drug cartels are said to be the main reasons behind the homicide.

Considering the bloody episodes in different parts of the world, 2017 was highly catastrophic and people's fundamental rights were violated, especially on the basis of their racial and religious backgrounds. Atrocities and cruel practices are widespread.

Observing human rights and humanitarian law is an obligation on all parties. Perhaps, militant fighters do not deem themselves committed to international instruments, but the states involved in conflicts do have to practice upon international principles. Those states which trample upon humanitarian law and target people indiscriminately have to encounter global sanctions. The international community must not close its eyes to the persistent violence and carnage.

It is the end of 2017, but human catastrophes are unlikely to come to an end. No parties involved in regional conflicts and terrorist activities show tendency in stopping violence. If people continue to lose their lives as a result of unmitigated war and violence, the world will lose their trust in international principles and discussing human rights and dignity will be bombastic. So, international instruments will carry no weight for the public.

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