

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



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### Feminizing the Peace Process: a Vital Missing Factor in the Political Decision Making Process

It is clear that the paucity of women in political leadership positions in a society accounts for their absence from the formal decision making positions including the peace table. It is clear, as many studies have proven, women are globally marginalized at all levels of public decision-making, and Afghanistan is not left out of this trend. For a traditional country that is particularly plagued by armed conflict, Afghanistan is widely known for masculinizing the public space including political governance. As a result, women in Afghanistan are either formally excluded from peace processes or they just play symbolic role in the peace process. This causes them to be singled out from playing any distinctive role during and after conflicts in the country, but they suffer from the conflicts both during the conflicts and the post conflict impacts.

#### How can government involve women in the Peace Process?

The lessons learned in countries like Colombia and Nigeria show that increased political representation of women both in government and decision-making points of the peace machinery enhance the peace process. But, inclusion of women in the political decision making processes including the peace process, is a social issue that in the past have acted as the main barrier to women inclusion in decision making issues in the society. To overcome this social issue, the government shall realize its commitments in terms of women empowerment and women inclusion in decision making processes. This requires a social perception change in terms of the societal notions and ideologies that under-gird the role perception and construction of women as

Inferior members of the society, a second gender doomed to lower status to the men. Such dominant traditional perception that perceives women as inferior or even the second gender in the society always paved the way to victimization of the women in the society. Therefore, these societal notions and ideologies under-gird the role perception and construction of women as 'victims only' in any social issue including the conflict situations, has always helped to fuel their exclusion from political and social decision making processes including the peace processes. What we learn from this approach is that lack of inclusion of women in the political and social decision making processes not only leads to the failure of the decisions but victimize the women too. Further, it vastly limits the resources and chances of the success of such processes nearly to fifty percent, as women form nearly half of the population of the society.

#### Women as Agents of Peace

As mentioned before, women have almost suffered during the course of the history due to negative social perceptions to their roles. These roles have always been identified and institutionalized in the society with the social perception support. Now, it is time to redefine the role of the women in the society including the political decision making processes. And it is not an easy task, especially in a traditional society like Afghanistan. So, changing the social perception requires a holistic approach at individual and social levels; families play the most significant role in this regard. Of course, educational institutions are one of the most influential institutions in terms of forming the social perception in any society. To do so it is necessary to study the initiatives of other countries, especially the successful ones. And elaborate how the significant variables that can explain the perception that more women in politics would enhance peace building can be included in the Afghan political decision making.

#### The core findings of the studies on the role of women in peace building show that:

First, women often articulate conflict and peace in different ways to men based on the ethic of care which defines their femininity. Second, women are victims of armed conflict; they are also agents of peace. Third, in partnership with men, women make peace building more effective than if there are few or no women. Fourth, women are active peace agents (as reconcilers and community builders) at the informal levels in their communities and they can be used for reconciliatory roles in the peace process – that is to break down gender dualism which perpetuates conflict. Fifth, given the failure of male dominated politics to prevent and manage violent conflict, women need to be encouraged to come into politics as women so that they can bring their own values to bear.

Therefore, involving women in politics and governance on an equal basis with men would enhance the peace process in conflict-affected societies in like Afghanistan. In order to involve women in the social and political decision making it is not only necessary to change the social perceptions about women's role in the society but also requires a strong political will to realize the women empowerment commitments of the government in Afghanistan in order to change the women to active members of the society and agents of peace in the country.



## The Past Glories are at Stake

By Hujjatullah Zia

Afghan nation paid large sacrifice to embrace freedom and protect religious principles and moral values. The historical wars against the invasion of Soviet Union and Britain show that Afghans sought to free themselves from the shackles of tyranny. Although the deadly wars, which were imposed on them, inflicted heavy casualties upon the nation, they could not undermine their determination in protecting the national and religious values.

The historical wars were gross violation of Afghanistan's territorial integrity and led to horrible consequences. For example, the number of casualties left behind as a result of heavy bombardments and shelling was extremely high. The International Humanitarian Law (IHL) was disregarded and people were targeted indiscriminately. Meanwhile, infrastructures were also ruined seriously.

The scale of hatred against invasion also provoked women to play their role in the wars. For instance, Malalai of Maiwand earned nationwide fame for her bravery and sacrifice. The 18-year-old Afghan national heroine Malalai – who rallied local people fighters against the British troops at the 1880 Battle of Maiwand – will be kept alive in the heart of our history for her heroic act and considered as a role model. She was a native of Khig, a tiny village on the edge of the Maiwand battlefield, and the daughter of a shepherd. Like many women, Malalai was there to help the wounded and provide water and spare weapons. Eventually there came a point in the battle where the Afghan army was losing morale in Battle of Maiwand. Malalai, also known as "The Afghan Molly Pitcher", took the Afghan flag and addressed them by an epic poem as, "Young love! If you do not fall in the battle of Maiwand, by God, someone is saving you as a symbol of shame." This gave many of the Afghan fighters and ghazis a new resolve and they redoubled their efforts. At that moment one of the leading flag-bearers fell from a British bullet, Malalai went forward and held up the flag singing heroic song as, "With a drop of my sweetheart's blood, shed in defense of the motherland, will I put a beauty spot on my forehead, such as would put to shame the rose in the garden." But then Malalai herself was struck down and killed in cold blood. However, her words had spurred on her countrymen and soon the Brit-

ish lines gave way, broke and turned, leading to a disastrous retreat back to Kandahar and the biggest defeat for the British army in the Second Afghan War. Afterwards, Ayub Khan, the king who led the Battle of Maiwand, gave a special honor to Malalai and she was buried in her village, where her grave can still be found. Indeed, her action was enough to turn her into a national heroine and she is still revered today. Schools, hospitals and even a women's magazine have been named after her.

However, the past glories were outweighed by civil conflicts which rooted in ethnic differences and ambitious objectives. The civil conflicts which broke out between those who fought in holy wars, did not only put the sanctity of jihad under question but also increased the number of casualties and sowed the seeds of discord across the country. Besides challenging the past glories, the civil conflicts gave a chance to mysterious hands to plot against the country and exploit public emotion behind the veil. The current militancy appears to be the consequence of the civil conflicts, which widened the gap within ethnic, political, and factional groups. For example, the Taliban network was established and sent to Afghanistan, which was bleeding in the wake of civil unrest. On the other hand, Afghans were weary of violence and bloodshed, in turn, sought a solace in the presence of the Taliban, who entered the country with the message of peace and brotherhood and were disguised in the mask of religion. In short, I do remember when the eyes of people gleamed with hope with the news of the Taliban's presence in the country believing that they would establish Islamic values in the country. But the seamy face of the Taliban appeared with their cruel practices and Afghans were put in another quagmire of violence – which was out of the frying pan into the fire.

To protect the historical glories and national honor, Afghan must promote the spirit of brotherhood and stand as an iron fist against the militant fighters. Moreover, the officials need to fight corruption within the government's machinery and focus all their energy on protecting national interests and social values.

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## What is the Chinese Path?

By Liu Jinsong

I assumed my post one month and a half ago. During this period, most frequent questions I've been asked by my Afghan friends are: Why has China made remarkable achievements in the past four decades? What is the experience and implications of Chinese Path? Is it worthy learning for Afghanistan?

Authoritative answers to all these questions could be found in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) which was held four months ago. The report announced that China has entered a new era. Those days when the imperialist and western powers could force China into surrender by simply setting up a few canons on Chinese coastlines has gone forever. Those days, when I was a child and have to take cloth coupons and food coupons to buy my mom and daddy necessities in a long queue, has gone forever. Those days when western powers despised China as "sick man of East Asia" has gone forever. Today, China is approaching the center of the world stage, and the Chinese people have never been so close to their dream of national rejuvenation.

Last year, China's GDP grew at a rate of 6.9%. Now, its total economy has exceeded 12 trillion U.S. dollars, ranking the second in the world, raised by five places in the past 17 years. Amount of China's yearly economic growth is equivalent to the total economic output of the 14th largest economy in the world, that is Spain or Mexico. China's Manufacturing output, foreign trade volume and foreign exchange reserves all rank first in the world. Over the past 40 years, 700 million Chinese people have been lifted out of poverty, and the middle-income group expanded to around 400 million people. At present, China's per capita GDP is nearly \$9,500, 9 times more than that of the year 2000, reaching the level of middle-income countries, and its rank is raised by over 30 places globally in latest 18 years. The principal contradiction of Chinese society has transformed into the contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life, that is, from "have or not" to "good or not", and from high-speed growth to high-quality growth.

When visiting China, our Afghan friends will find that there are few elders on the streets or subways. Most of them are in a hurry, expectations on their faces and hope in their eyes. You will find citizens entertaining themselves by songs and dances on the street, more and more museums and gyms, and also youths enjoying their colorful amateur life.

Therefore, the first characteristic of the Chinese Path is that China has made leaps from independent to rich, and from rich to strong. Our citizen's life has been increasingly rich and diversified. They acquired a sense of gaining, security and happiness. The Chinese people have full confidence in our path, theories, political system, and culture of the Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.

The 19th National Congress of CPC raised and summarized the Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, which made CPC, a party with nearly 90 million members, more united, disciplined and enterprising. We keep the economic development as the central task,

adhere to the people-centered development, uphold the principle of running the country by the people, continue to deepen reform in all areas, remain committed to the new development philosophy, advance law-based governance, promote full and strict governance over the CPC, and ensure harmony between human and nature.

My Afghan friends are very appreciative to words indicating the wisdom of China's economic development. For example, "building roads is the first step to make people rich", "no agriculture, no stability, no industry, no prosperity, no commerce, no validity", "launching pilot projects, establishing special economic zone". Some friends know the "three magic weapons" of the Chinese Communist Party during the revolutionary war: the united front, armed struggle and party building. I also told them that China has accumulated some very important political experiences all these years. For example, cherishing the stability and national unity as cherishing your own eyes, removing corrupt elements like scraping poisons off bones, implementing decision as nailing a nail, striking terrorist activities as wind sweeping away the withered leaves in autumn.

Therefore, the second characteristic of the Chinese Path is that we always have a party leader, which is strong and uphold by the people, and supported by a strong core of leadership. We have constant basic political principles, we have ideological emancipation and policy keeping pace with the time as well.

The 19th National Congress of the CPC has set the development goal to the middle of this century: the immediate goal is to build a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020. In terms of specific numerical indicators, the per capita GDP exceeds 10,000\$, approaching the threshold of a high-income country of 12,000\$; all rural residents living below the current poverty line will be lifted out of poverty.

The long-term goal is divided into two steps. The first step is from 2020 to 2035, with a further 15 years of hard work, we will basically realize socialist modernization. By then China's per capita GDP is expected to exceed 20,000\$. The second step is from 2035 to 2050, we will develop China into a great modern socialist country. Modernization of China's system and capacity for governance will be achieved. China will become a leading country in terms of comprehensive national strength and international influence. Some scholars estimated that, calculated on the basis of per capita GDP, China should reach 40,000\$ to 50,000\$ at that time.

Thus, it can be seen that the third characteristic of the Chinese Path is that every major post on the way has a clear guiding card and mileage meter in the front, and there is a navigator in each car. The Chinese people are good at making plans and better at implementing plans. We have plans of one year, five years and ten years to balance the reality and long-term goals, which will make the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation united the whole nation. Only by concentrating strength and resources can we achieve large undertakings.

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