

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



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Why Women Should Be Involved in the Afghan Peace Talks

Participation of women in peace negotiations plays a key role in durability of peace. Peace studies show that women's participation in peace negotiations have a positive impact on the quality and the durability of peace, independent of international peacekeeping, the participation of civil society actors, and other factors related to gender equality. Furthermore, there are competing theoretical explanations as to why and how women's participation positively impacts peace durability. Case studies research focused on women's participation as civil society activists who pressure warring parties to conclude an agreement, and as delegates who set agendas that often prioritize women's rights and broader issues related to the quality of peace show that women's direct participation positively impacts the durability as well as the quality of peace after civil war. Some policy documents remain unhelpfully rooted in essentialist assumptions about women's inherently peaceful nature to explain their assumed positive influence on peace processes. However, such assumptions cloud our understanding of the mechanisms that causally link women's participation to durable peace. To date, one comparative study conducted by O'Reilly indicates that women's participation in peace processes contributes both to the likelihood of reaching a peace agreement and to its successful implementation. According to Caprioli women's security and the socioeconomic and political status of women directly impact the likelihood of renewed civil war. Based on these findings, we test whether women's meaningful participation in peace negotiations positively impacts the quality and the durability of peace. According to Bell C Ensuring women's right to participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding cannot be equated with inserting gender sensitive language into peace agreement texts. Recent research suggests that it often peace agreements with the most holistic references to women that suffer from chronic implementation failures because these tend to be highly internationalized accords with little real agreement between the conflict parties. Research findings further imply that the policy discourse on women's inclusion in peace processes needs to take the diversity of women groups and potential female delegates into account. Attention has to predominantly be focused on including women civil society activists in peace negotiations. Collaboration between women delegates and women civil society groups broadens the civilian support base for peace and results in networks that can persistently advocate for the adoption of policies that empower women. Afghan women make up 50 percent of the population, and they are well below 50 percent of the problem in what drives the conflict. It's important that they see themselves represented in the discussion and in the debates that will come with the Taliban. They shall take advantage of the opportunity coming up to explore and begin discussing with the Taliban in order they understand the determination of wider society to move forward and not to go back. In sum, women's participation in peace negotiations with voice and influence leads to better accord content, higher agreement implementation rates, and longer lasting peace. Finally, women's direct participation in peace negotiations with voice increases the quality and durability of peace.



Our Basic National Responsibilities

By: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie

Our country is going through most fragile and crucial phase of its history. The incidents that have taken place and the ones that are taking place clearly indicate that we are going through a transition phase that might lead us to stability or even chaos – if we do not act wisely. It is very imperative at this juncture that we must not fall the victim of emotions and carelessness and strive to act prudently. The leaders, who have influence over the minds and thinking of the common people, must try to advice the people not to lose their sanity and they need to strive to understand the demands and the challenges of time.

People, at this crucial juncture require thinking above their personal benefits; the groups and the institutions require functioning more than their own profits and most importantly the privileged class of the society must take decision above their self-centered incentives. It is really important to speak the words that make sense instead of uttering the words that are popular and spoken for the sake of earning fame. The objective conditions want us to be more realistic and if we are not able to act in that particular manner are doomed to failure. The history has taught us so many lessons that by now all of us must have learnt enough lessons and must have acquired sufficient prudence. The world has never given any nations so many opportunities to learn from their past mistakes. But seem not to avail any opportunity and at the moment we are going astray.

The traditions and values in our society are really weird and out of understanding. A limited number of people have decided to devour the entire wealth of the nation. Another group is busy only in the false display of wealth and status. Certain old men have shouldered the responsibility of proving the wrongs of the ruling elite right through holy scriptures; while another honorable group is striving tirelessly to earn fame in every possible manner.

They have, in reality, lost their connection with the actual problems of the time. The most unfortunate fact is that the intellectuals have forgotten their responsibilities. Though they claim their rights from the society but they seem to have forgotten that the society which they ignore cannot be expected to understand their rights, as well. Has earning fame ever been a top priority issue for the sane people of the society? Our society has adopted the non-issues and wasting time on them. As

a matter of fact, we are far behind our actual social, civil and philosophical problems. Our people are behaving like the immature boys and it seems to be written on our foreheads that we do not have any serious issues at the moment and for the times to come God will keep us away from all the problems.

What have the slogans based on extremists sentiments and hatred and division have given us so far? If we still possess the capacity to ponder, we must make use of it and reach to conclusion that our history is one of the most challenging histories in the world and the most tragic fact is that this history has been written with our own blood.

As a matter of fact, we do not seem to have any idea about the gravity of the situation. If we had any idea our reaction would have been very much different from what we are doing now.

Though we are human, we have forgotten the habits of thinking and understanding. The fact is that our people have not been provided the required sanity and boldness to ponder upon the challenges of time and challenge the prevailing values and understandings. We are habitual of saying only those words that seem appropriate to everyone as we are afraid to make others angry. We, from the very beginnings of our lives, are taught to compromise and adjust. Even if there is a place for one person to sit in a car, we can adjust two persons there. We strive to fit ourselves in the mould of traditions and practices even though they may be obsolete and insane.

We have only a single ideal to pursue and that is our 'past'. Unfortunately, the past has not always been glorious and our people seem to follow the same portion of the past that was inglorious. It is difficult to understand why our people do not live their own lives instead of living the lives of their forefathers. If they really want to make difference to themselves and to the world they need to start living their own lives – their present not past.

If we lack a serious consideration to our present and to the life, we would never be able to have a sincere relation with knowledge and even with our beliefs. Though we seem to have inhabited the cities, we have deserted our conscience and our spirits. We seem like alien in our own world. We need to wake up; we need to understand that we are pursuing the wrong directions and the wrong destinations. We must realize that we are not using our humanly attributes in their full capacities and we are not fulfilling the responsibility of being true human beings.

Putin Doesn't Care About Economic Growth

By: Vladislav Inozemtsev

Even Russian President Vladimir Putin's most loyal followers would have to admit, if only to themselves, that this year's televised call-in program – an annual event during which he responds to citizens' questions directly – went worse than ever before. Citizens wanted to know why their lives aren't improving under Putin, with some even asking when he would leave office. The president's reassurances were not convincing.

The Russian economy is at a standstill. From 2014 to 2018, GDP grew by just 1.85% – or 0.4%, on average, each year. (The Kremlin forced the State Statistical Committee to revise upward the figures for 2016 and 2017.) During the same period, real disposable incomes shrank by 10.7%, leaving 13% of all Russians living in poverty. In 2018 alone, 600,000 Russian companies shuttered their operations. To some extent, these developments are not surprising, given the sanctions imposed on Russia by Western countries after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Those sanctions contributed to massive capital flight – in excess of \$317 billion – in 2014-2018, as well as a drop in investment. In the first nine months of 2018, the volume of foreign direct investment in the Russian economy was 11 times lower than during the same period in 2017.

But there are also good reasons why Russia's economy should be doing better than it is. The ruble has depreciated by 45.5% against the US dollar since 2014 – a trend that should have boosted Russia's export competitiveness – and the inflation rate is at its lowest level in years. Moreover, Russia recorded a budget surplus of \$2.75 trillion (\$44 billion) in 2018.

So why has Russia's economic performance been so persistently weak? The answer begins with the supposed "economic miracle" of the 2000s.

Contrary to popular assumption, Russia's rapid growth at the beginning of this century was not exclusively the result of a massive inflow of petrodollars. Three other critical factors played a role. First, the liberal economic and tax reforms of 2000-2002 encouraged entrepreneurs to invest and consumers to earn and spend. Second, foreign capital flooded the Russian economy, and even created several new sectors. Third, industries that had been non-existent or underdeveloped in the 1990s began to contribute substantially to GDP growth. As a result, residential construction, wholesale and retail trade, banking and insurance, personal services, lodging and restaurants, mobile telecoms, and web-based services contributed to about 70% of growth in 2000-2008. The rest was largely recovery growth. Oil production barely exceeded the levels achieved during the Soviet Union's later years.

Then, in 2008, growth in demand for those new services plateaued. The problem was compounded by foreign investors' flight after 2014 and, with the Kremlin shifting back to dirigisme, the demise of eco-

nomical liberalism by 2018.

Russia's economic prospects are unlikely to improve substantially anytime soon, for a simple reason: Putin's indifference. He is confident that Russians – many of whom depend on the state for their incomes, in the form of pensions and welfare benefits – will not revolt. Given this, improving the investment climate or promoting technological innovation are, from his perspective, more trouble than they're worth. He certainly does not want to nurture economic competition robust enough to spill over into the political sphere. For him, the economy has one main purpose: to serve the needs of him and his cronies.

In Putin's Russia, the government's function is to collect taxes and duties from successful enterprises and appropriate oil and gas rents, in order to fund short-sighted policies (such as military adventurism abroad) and buy the loyalty of bureaucrats. Unsurprisingly, public service can be an extremely lucrative enterprise: one colonel at the Federal Security Service, for example, used his position to accumulate a staggering \$190 million in cash.

With the fiscal multiplier either at or below zero and taxes still rising, Russia has no chance of achieving overall economic growth. The only possible source of growth – a rise in household incomes – would require the government to launch a massive campaign to eradicate poverty, and Putin would prefer to channel revenues toward expanding the government's reserves or funding "national projects" that create abundant opportunities for graft.

During Putin's call-in, one citizen complained that the president has now been in power longer than Leonid Brezhnev, whose 18-year tenure made him the second-longest-serving Soviet leader. Given that Brezhnev oversaw an era of economic stagnation, the comparison could not be more apt.

Nonetheless, there is a difference between stagnation and crisis, and while Putin seems to have no interest in fostering economic growth, he also has no intention of taking excessive risks. Low inflation – the result of a lack of consumer demand – means that the authorities can devalue the ruble without causing prices to surge, thereby increasing the ruble value of their revenues. No economic policymaker will bother to look beyond the next election. Ultimately, the economy will remain on petrodollar "life support" – not getting any stronger, but surviving.

As I predicted in 2016, Russia's economy is on track either to stagnate further or to enter a mild recession, both because it has lost its past sources of growth and because the government has shown little inclination to develop new ones. In a paternalistic society divided between masters and serfs, the lord would rather distribute less wealth among his subjects than allow them to generate more wealth themselves. Only then is his position safe.

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