

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



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Violence against Women: A Culture to Be Abolished

Afghanistan is a country well known for its rich history, culture, literature and arts, hospitable people as well as its magnificent and unique landscape. On the other hand, our country is also known for the wide spread poverty, corruption, lack of basic service and violence. In terms of violence, it is either publicly condoned and neither is challenged by society at large or by state institutions in Afghanistan. It is mainly the mass media and human rights activists that advocate for violence against women, its impact on women and society, in Afghanistan. The governments of Afghanistan and its international partners have challenged the way in which a culture of impunity, and the cycle of violence it generates in the society. Further, they have taken some concrete steps to establish of the rule of law and other efforts geared to building an environment conducive to respect for human rights. As a traditional society, violence is pervasive throughout Afghanistan. One can easily see the diverse manifestations of violence in different parts of the country. Further, violence against women in Afghanistan as a traditional and conservative society is widespread and deeply-rooted as well as acute in all parts of the society. As a result, violence is rooted in Afghan culture, customs, attitudes, and practices, which scars the lives of a huge proportion of Afghan women and girls. In a conservative society women and girls have limited freedom to run away from the norms and traditions that dictate an inferior status for females. It is more than four decades that Afghanistan is in war. These persistent conflicts have also subjected the Afghan women to the violence inherent in armed conflicts. It is clear that when there is wide spread lawlessness and criminality, violence is wide spread there as well. According to the sociologists, all forms of violence are close linked to a deep culture of impunity that is largely an outcome of several decades of conflicts and lack of justice in Afghanistan.

Though violence against woman has been one of the important agendas of the government of Afghanistan and its international partners, but the situation has not dramatically change so far. Thus, violence in the following critical areas has remained as a major concern in the country: (a) violence that inhibits the participation of women in public life; and (b) sexual violence in the context of rape.

These two manifestations of violence is wide spread and confront Afghanistan seriously and call the government of Afghanistan, its international partners and all the organizations advocating for women rights to address them in proper manner by addressing their root causes. These two types of violence are reviewed in the context of the prevailing socio-political culture whereby the rights of women are bartered to advance specific interests or privileges of specific agendas.

In a traditional and conservative society women are physically or verbally abused. And Afghanistan is no exception from this point of the view as well. As a result, women and girls engage in self censorship, restrict their movements, or discontinue their work due to lack of practical safety mechanisms put in place by the government. Many women suffer psychologically of different forms of intimidation and attacks they experience on a daily basis here. The indirect effect of such violence is that it also inhibits the participation of other women in social, development, political or cultural processes in the society.

Violence against women is widespread in Afghanistan due to predominant traditional society norms and values and it has been exacerbated by several decades of conflicts here. Violence is a major obstacle to women participation in various spheres and it calls the government and the international community to put in place measures to build an enabling environment and cultural ethic that makes the perpetrators accountable and punish them indiscriminately. They also should promote "affirmative action" measures to redress gender imbalance in society and also in the public offices. The last but not the least, they should promote the participation of women in all decision-making processes and policy making processes that affect their lives.



North Korea: Surprising Retreat From Nuclear Programs

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Recently, the North Korean leader Kim Jon Un has showed unpredictable flexibility pertaining to his nuclear program and crucial willingness for a complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. North Korea has faced years of economic sanctions over its nuclear and missile programs since it conducted its first nuclear test in 2006. Since then, North Korea has tested dozens of missiles of various types in the past two years, including one launch of its largest-ever intercontinental ballistic missile, which is theoretically capable of hitting anywhere in the United States, on Nov. 29. The United States has struggled to prevent the isolated country's weapons programs, which have become a security priority for Washington given Pyongyang's promise to develop a nuclear-tipped missile capable of hitting the U.S. mainland.

The Americans concluded that international sanctions had brought North Korea to its knees, leaving Kim desperate to conclude a deal on US terms. Lately, the Vice President Mike Pence warned that if North Korea did not make a deal, it would indeed meet with Iraq and Libya's fate but the Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan delivered the North's furious response: "We do not hide our feeling of repugnance toward him." The North Korea was not interested in a dialogue aimed at a coerced "unilateral nuclear abandonment." "The world knows too well that our country is neither Libya nor Iraq, which have met miserable fates."

Accordingly, Mr. Trump abruptly canceled his summit, scheduled for June 12 in Singapore, with North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un, blaming "tremendous anger and open hostility" from the North Korea. It seems that two sides mirrored each other's misperception of the main motivation for the summit. Both thought the other had agreed to meet because of weakness and had made major concessions. Kim believed that his nuclear strength had forced Trump to the summit without preconditions, making him Trump's equal as a head of state. He could afford to explore possible avenues for a peace regime, he thought, because North Korea's nuclear sword provided immunity from US attacks. Following these ups and downs, Moon and Kim agreed at a surprise meeting on Saturday that the possible North Korea-US summit must be held, Moon told a news conference in Seoul. "Chairman Kim and I have agreed that the June 12 summit should be held successfully, and that our quest for the Korean peninsula's denuclearization and a perpetual peace regime should not be halted," Moon said. Mr Kim "again made clear his commitment to a complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," and told the South Korean leader that he is willing to cooperate. Thus, Mr Moon said he told Mr Kim that Mr Trump has a "firm resolve" to end hostile relations with North Korea and initiate economic cooperation if Kim implements "complete denuclearization". "What Kim is unclear about is that he has concerns about whether

his country can surely trust the United States over its promise to end hostile relations (with North Korea) and provide a security guarantee if they do denuclearization," Mr Moon said. Considering the recent US withdrawal from global deal with Iran, it is not easy for North Korea to come down from the horse of dilemma. However, "During the South Korea-US summit, President Trump repeated that the US is willing to clearly put an end to hostile relations (between the US and North Korea) and help (the North) achieve economic prosperity if North Korea conducts denuclearization."

On the other hand, American officials are too skeptical that Kim will ever fully abandon his nuclear arsenal. Moon said North Korea was not convinced it could trust security guarantees from the United States. "However, during the U.S.-South Korea summit, President Trump clearly emphasized that we may see not only the end of hostile relations but also economic cooperation if North Korea denuclearizes," Moon said. Moon met Trump in Washington on last Tuesday in an effort to keep the U.S.-North Korea summit on track.

Bye and large, no one is sure what might be the outcome of the dramatic retreat. However, Kim Jon Un has showed a sort of urgency for holding the summit and therefore, he showed great willingness to improve (North Korea)-US relations and establish (a) mechanism for permanent and durable peace." Mr Moon said North Korea and the United States will soon start working-level talks to prepare for the Kim-Trump summit. He said he expects the talks to go smoothly because Pyongyang and Washington both know what they want from each other. Mr Kim, in a telling line from a dispatch issued by the North's state-run news service earlier on Sunday, "expressed his fixed will on the historic (North Korea)-US summit talks."

Meanwhile, The Korean leaders agreed to have their top officials meet again on June 1. Mr Moon said military generals and Red Cross officials from the Koreas will also meet separately to discuss how to ease military tensions and resume reunions of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War. South Korea's President Moon Jae-in speaks during a news conference at the presidential Blue House in Seoul on Sunday.

Eventually, it is also agreed by the U.S. to prepare for the proposed summit by the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, which Trump pulled out of last week; Washington sent a team to pave the way the meeting. "I truly believe North Korea has brilliant potential and will be a great economic and financial Nation one day. Kim Jong Un agrees with me on this. It will happen!" Trump added.

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Chinese Language is the Key to Treasure House

By Liu Jingsong

There is an often-quoted and widely loved story named Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves in Arabic folk tales collection One Thousand and One Nights. As we know, Ali Baba has a magic phrase "Open, sesame!" which could open the door of the treasure cave. But at present, many people joke the magic phrase can only work in Chinese language.

In last month, I attended "Chinese Bridge"---Chinese Proficiency Competition for Foreign Students in Afghanistan, organized by the Confucius Institute at Kabul University (CIKU). Afghan students from college and high school impressed me a lot for their passion of learning Chinese and proficiency in practicing. I think they are getting close to open the door of treasure house.

Chinese language is spoken by largest population and one of the six official languages of United Nations. It's also one of the language that is most efficient in computer typing as well as striking the heart and love-sentiment-igniting. Moreover, Chinese language has a long history, rich connotations and fantastic poetry. It's worthy to learn and enjoy for a life-long time. As the reform and opening up deepening, China's global influence and contribution increasing, and more Chinese cuisine and enterprises sprouting around the world, the Chinese language is becoming a career promoter for young talents in plenty of countries.

CIKU is the only official Chinese education and culture exchange institute in Afghanistan. Since its first enrollment in 2008, CIKU has applied for 284 Hanban scholarships for Afghan students to study in China, cultivated 133 bachelors and 16 local Chinese language teachers. These achievements are miracles, while security situation around is so tough.

The miracles didn't fall down from the sky, but came from everyone's arduous efforts. In 2010, Mr. Mohammad Yousuf Rahnaward, the incumbent Executive Director of CIKU, was then a college student, and frequently went to the Visa Department of the Ministry of Interior to help with the Chinese teachers' visa applications. While there was a big explosion one day and caused mass casualties, he was just lucky enough to escape it. Later at the very beginning of his teaching career, Mr. Rahnaward had to teach 2 classes at the same time, 10 minutes in one classroom and then rush in the other. But he finally made it.

Last year, the Chinese professor Gulinisha's husband passed away in Afghanistan due to disease. When she went back to China to arrange funeral affairs with sorrow, many friends persuaded her not return to Afghanistan any more. But she insisted on returning to Kabul just one week later, because she couldn't leave aside the responsibility and students here, and hoped to condole her husband with teaching achievements. Her story spreads wildly among the teachers and students in Kabul and encouraged every student learning Chinese language.

Mr. Abdul Razaq and his younger brother graduated together from CIKU in 2013. His brother started a business in China, and promised

him a salary of 1500\$ per month to join in. However, Mr. Razaq chose to be an intern teacher in CIKU with a salary of only 50\$ per month, which was just enough for his transportation to and from the university. But he persisted anyway, because he thought teaching Chinese language can help more Afghan people change their destiny and this is his highest dream.

I spoke to the teachers and students of Kabul University that, Chinese language, especially its characters, are very charming. For example, the character of military or force in Chinese language means "stop the war", indicating that the military power is not used for bullying the small or the weak, but for stopping violence. "Afghanistan" in Chinese is translated both in pronunciation and meaning, implying that this is a rich mountainous country, built by work and sweat. This reflects Chinese people's good affection towards Afghanistan. The students from CIKU and Marefat School told me that they also have a deep affection to China and Chinese culture. Their favorite Confucius' phrases are "You can always find something to learn from the people who keep you company", "Harmony in diversity".

They love eating dumplings and roasted duck, and appreciate Chinese people's characters of peace loving, respecting each other, being honest and keeping time. They adore Chinese superstars, such as Jackie Chan, Stephen Chow, and Teresa Teng, and love singing The Moon Represents My Heart and Great China.

When I visited Kabul University and Bamyán University, I found that the most interested question of teachers and students is how can Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative benefit Afghanistan, and the largest expectation is to get more scholarships to study in China, and wish to know how could China realize moderate prosperity from poverty in only 40 years.

I told them that the most beautiful construction in the world is bridge, and the "Chinese Bridge" and the Confucius Institute are such bridges that connect China and Afghanistan as well the heart of our two peoples. The most powerful tool in the world is the wing, and the Belt and Road Initiative could give Afghanistan who love China wings to fly their dreams. In recent years, the students, who are learning Chinese language in Afghan neighboring countries, are very excited about better career and income. The Belt and Road Initiative brings them projects and employment. However, opportunities can only be caught by those who are well prepared. Learning Chinese language is indeed not easy, but this also shows the value of perseverance. One of the experiences for China's achievements in the past 40 years is that we should remain true to our original aspiration, and always struggle arduously. Youths are dream pursuers. Dream pursuing needs passion while realizing needs perseverance. Wish everyone have resolve and perseverance. May Chinese language a life-long partner, and open the treasure house of knowledge as well as happiness!

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