

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



June 04, 2018

“Innocent Children Victims of Aggression”

Today, i.e. June 4 is celebrated as International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression. The purpose of the day is to highlight the sufferings of the children throughout the world; particularly, those who are the victims of any sort of physical mental and emotional abuse. Its ambitions are guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The day has its roots in the event on August 19, 1982, when United Nations General Assembly, at its emergency session on the question of Palestine, appalled at the great number of innocent Palestinians and Lebanese children victims of Israel's acts of aggression, and decided to commemorate June 4 of each year as the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression.

Aggression and violence have influenced children throughout the world; particularly, in those parts of the world that suffer from instability and terrorism. The case of Afghanistan in this regard is one of the most prominent ones. Aggression and violence have influenced children in various ways in the country for the last few decades now. A recent report by the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) – Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children – revealed that about 3.7 million Afghan children are out of school due to the on-going conflict, grinding poverty and discrimination against girls. The report further reveals that almost half of Afghan children aged between seven and 17 were not going to school. For the first time since 2002, the out-of-school rate has gone up, while girls make up 60 percent of those being denied an education, putting them at a particular disadvantage; and up to 85 per cent of girls are not going to school in Kandahar, Helmand, Wardak, Paktika, Zabul and Uruzgan. The report further revealed that displacement, child marriage, a lack of female teachers, poor school facilities, poverty and insecurity were the main factors behind children, especially girls, not going to school.

The facts highlighted by the report point at a threatening situation. Children are the builders of a nation; and educated, healthy and motivated children guarantee a prosperous future. Therefore, it is advisable to protect the children from all sorts of evils and promise them better living standards. However, because of persistent insecurity and various other problems, there are many ways in which children are influenced, but one of the most direct ways is that they are directly dragged or pushed in the war. There have been various cases, in Afghanistan, when children have been recruited by the insurgents and they have been made to fight the wars in different parts of the country.

There have been many incidents of suicide attacks in different parts of the country, wherein the attacker were below 16 years of age. Apart from that the children are also welcomed by the militant groups with the intention to have a cadre that they can train in accordance to their own will, within their training camps. There have been certain cases, as well, when security forces have used children for the war; however, such incidents are very scarce.

Recruitment of the children both by Taliban militants result in violence against children and their abuse. The attitude of a trained militant clearly depicts the fact that the training sessions in their training camps do involve severe kind of violence and maltreatment.

Another type of violence includes the killing and maiming of the children because of the conflict-related violence. This also includes accidental killings or injuries by the national and international security forces, which, though relatively are much lower than the ones committed by the terrorists. Unfortunately, most of the deaths or injuries in this regard have been the result of the violent attacks of the terrorists on schools and hospitals. Such attacks do not only take precious lives but tend to inflict fear among parents and children regarding attending schools.

The girls in this regard suffer even to more extreme levels. Moreover, the children who do not get a chance to be admitted in school are then sent out for labor so that they can prove to be a helping hand for their parents and, in the process, they are left at the mercy of the social evils.

Child labors are exposed to crimes and maltreatment to a risky extent, especially the ones who are employed by shop-owners, mechanics and small firms. They are even put to violent treatment by their employers on pity matters. Further, another concerning factor regarding the plight of the children in Afghanistan is the growing number of child beggars.

Families, stricken with intense poverty, do not hesitate even to send their children for begging. Apart from that, there are professional beggars who utilize the helpless children for the begging purposes.

The security of the children against all sort of violence, their proper nourishment and their character development are the most important considerations to contemplate on, if the government is really serious to safeguard the rights of the children. The same children are going to be the builders of future; their proper care should be ascertained through every possible means. Apart from the government the members of the society can also play a tremendous role in diminishing violence against the children and uplifting their morale.

China's Role in Building Trust between Afghanistan and Pakistan

By Hujjatullah Zia

Beijing hosted trilateral strategic dialogue last week to strengthen China-Pakistan-Afghanistan ties and support peace and stability. The three sides reviewed preparation for the second foreign ministerial-level meeting to be held in Kabul in the current year. The issues of peace, counter-terrorism and economic development will be discussed in the upcoming trilateral meeting.

China has played a constructive role in bridging the gap between Kabul and Islamabad and consolidating trilateral relations mainly in recent years. Chinese officials have constantly pushed for mutual trust, peaceful coexistence and friendly relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan so as to pave the ground for face-to-face negotiation between Kabul and the Taliban. That is to say, Pakistan is believed to carry much weight in pressuring the Taliban to come to peace table and Afghan government must not downplay this role. Hence, with a friendly relation between the two countries, the reconciliation process will be more likely to bear the desired result – this is what China endeavors for.

To discuss security and development, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan held a trilateral dialogue of foreign minister for the first time on 26 December 2017, months after Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi travelled to Kabul and Islamabad. Beijing held out hope that the meeting could cement mutual ties between Kabul and Islamabad and contribute to regional peace, stability and development.

China and Afghanistan enjoy friendly relation and strong economic tie. The trade between China and Afghanistan increased from US\$53 million in 2002 to US\$700 million by 2010, when both countries also signed the “Comprehensive Cooperative Partnership Agreement” to extend trade.

China's interests go beyond economic cooperation and it has opened its door wider to Afghan people to boost heart-to-heart exchanges. The cultural contact and people-to-people exchanges have been enhanced to a great extent in recent years. The mutual understanding and China's goodwill and constructive role in trade and security gave ground for optimism as Afghan nation views China as a close neighbor.

In 2014, Chinese Minister of Public Security, Guo Shengkun, visited Kabul and revealed China's tendency to work in tandem with Afghanistan to enhance peace and security. Hence, China played an active part in forming the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG), which was set up in January 2016, to find a solu-

tion to the country's conflict.

It is self-evident that peace in Afghanistan will have a lasting impact on Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which is of great significance for the country. Having a discussion with South Asian and Asia Pacific journalists last week, Lan Jianxue, the vice research fellow of Department for Developing Countries Studies of CIIS, reiterated the key role of Afghanistan in BRI. According to him, Afghanistan plays an integral role in “trade route” and has “huge potential” for BRI. He maintained that the “accomplishment of peace process” will add to the significance of Afghanistan. Liu hoped that Afghanistan will be a member of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) – which is also part of BRI project – in the future. Indeed, if Afghanistan joins CPEC, the relation between Afghanistan and Pakistan will be cemented since both sides will do their best to protect their economic interests.

China seeks to play its role constructively through supporting peace and stability in the region – be it brokering talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan or the United State and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). That is, China is committed in the Five Principles of peaceful coexistence and is intent on resolving issues through communication rather than confrontation since non-violent mechanism is the only solution to political turmoil and tug-of-war between states.

It is hoped that the upcoming trilateral foreign ministers' meeting will strengthen the relations between the three neighboring countries and revive trust between Afghan-Pak officials. Unlike many regional and international conferences being held regarding counterterrorism and peace issue on Afghanistan without tangible result, the forthcoming meeting is further hoped to bring a positive change to Afghanistan's security situation.

It is time for Kabul and Islamabad to put aside their differences to fight a common enemy, i.e., the militant fighters, and play their role in the best possible way in bringing in peace and stability.

To sum up, China emerged as the most capable actor to push the peace process forward. In China's point of view, a stable and peaceful Afghanistan will not only benefit the region but also China. Therefore, China organized trilateral dialogue to foster friendly relation between Pakistan and Afghanistan that will put an end to trust deficit and contribute to peace and security in the country and region.

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A North Korean Opportunity for America and China

China and the US have a shared interest in making nuclear diplomacy work and ensuring that any US-North Korean summit succeeds. A US-North Korean summit that averted a crisis that would benefit neither the US nor China would remind people in both countries of the value of Sino-American cooperation.

By Richard N. Haass

It is not obvious, but North Korea could be the best thing for the relationship between the United States and China since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Whether or not that potential is realized, it is not difficult to understand why it exists.

The contemporary Sino-American relationship was born nearly a half-century ago on a foundation of shared concern about the threat posed to both countries by the Soviet Union. It was a textbook case of the old adage, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.”

Such a relationship could survive just about anything – except the disappearance of the common enemy. And this is of course precisely what happened with the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the demise of the USSR at the beginning of 1992.

The US-China relationship, however, showed surprising resilience, finding a new rationale: economic interdependence. Americans were happy to buy vast quantities of relatively inexpensive Chinese manufactured goods, demand for which provided jobs for the tens of millions of Chinese who moved from poor agricultural areas to new or rapidly expanding cities.

For its part, the United States was mesmerized by the potential for exporting to the vast Chinese market, which was hungry for the more advanced products it wanted but could not yet produce. Many in the US also believed that trade would give China an increased stake in preserving the existing international order, increasing the odds that its rise as a major power would be peaceful. The related hope was that political reform would follow economic growth. Calculations such as these led to the US decision to support China's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001.

Now, years later, the economic ties that had become the foundation of the Sino-American relationship have increasingly become a source of friction that threaten it. China exports far more to the US than it imports, contributing to the disappearance of millions of American jobs, and has not opened up its market as expected or delivered on promised reforms. Moreover, China's government continues to subsidize state-owned enterprises, and either steals intellectual property or requires its transfer to Chinese partners as a condition of foreign companies' access to the domestic market.

This critique of China is widely embraced by US Republicans and Democrats alike, even if they disagree with many of the remedies proposed by the Trump administration. And the criticism is not limited to economic affairs. There is growing concern in the US about China's increasing assertiveness beyond its borders. The Belt and Road Initiative appears to be less a development program than a geo-economic tool to expand Chinese influence. China's broad claims to the South China Sea and its creation of military bases there are viewed throughout the re-

gion as a provocation.

China's domestic political development has also disappointed observers. The abolition of the presidential term limit and President Xi Jinping's concentration of power have come as an unwelcome surprise to many. There are also concerns about the suppression of dissent (often cloaked in the guise of Xi's anti-corruption drive), the clampdown on civil society, and the repression of western China's Uighur and Tibetan minorities. The net result is that it is now commonplace for official US government documents to pair China with Russia and to speak of it as a strategic rival.

All of which brings us back to North Korea, whose nuclear weapons and long-range missiles are viewed by China as a genuine threat – not to itself, but to its regional interests. China does not want a conflict that would disrupt regional trade and lead to millions of refugees streaming across its border. It fears that such a war would end with a unified Korea firmly in America's strategic orbit. Nor does it want Japan and other neighbors to rethink their long-standing aversion to developing nuclear weapons of their own. The Chinese government also opposes South Korea's missile defense system (acquired from the US in response to North Korea's missile deployments), which China sees as a threat to its own nuclear deterrent.

The US does not want to live under the shadow of a North Korea that possesses long-range missiles capable of delivering nuclear payloads to American cities. At the same time, the US has no appetite for a war that would prove costly by every measure.

China and the US thus have a shared interest in making diplomacy work and ensuring that any US-North Korean summit succeeds. The question for China is whether it is prepared to put enough pressure on North Korea so that it accepts meaningful constraints on its nuclear and missile programs. The question for the US is whether it is willing to embrace a diplomatic outcome that stabilizes the nuclear situation on the Korean Peninsula but does not resolve it for the foreseeable future. A US-North Korean summit that averted a crisis that would benefit neither the US nor China would remind people in both countries of the value of Sino-American cooperation. And the precedent of the world's two major powers working together to resolve a problem with regional and global implications might provide a foundation for the next era of a bilateral relationship that, more than any other, will define international politics in this century.

Richard N. Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations, previously served as Director of Policy Planning for the US State Department (2001-2003), and was President George W. Bush's special envoy to Northern Ireland and Coordinator for the Future of Afghanistan.



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