

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



June 10, 2017

## 17<sup>th</sup> SCO Summit

President Ashraf Ghani attended the 17th conference of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) that was held in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana on Friday June 09, 2017. SCO is a very important regional organization that is aimed at promulgating cooperation and support among the South Asian and Central Asian countries. SCO summit was basically founded in 2001 by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Afghanistan was given an observer status at the 2012 SCO summit in Beijing on June 6, 2012. Pakistan and India were, later on, granted full membership status as well, while Iran and Mongolia, like Afghanistan, have observer status in the organization.

Addressing the Conference, President Ashraf Ghani called for joint efforts against terrorism and said that the countries which differentiate between good terrorists and bad terrorists will pay the price for it. He also called for honest cooperation of regional countries and expansion of relations in regional level. He said in his statement, "Paving the way for connection of members and observer countries of Shanghai world organization is a vital step that must be taken.

Afghanistan's location at the heart of Asia and as a door to the south Asia has changed our country as a regional corridor." Meanwhile, other countries also emphasized on cooperation with Afghanistan to tackle the issue of terrorism.

There is no doubt in the fact that SCO can support Afghanistan in multiple ways particularly in facing security challenges. Currently, there has been an upsurge in insecurity in different parts of the country and there are fears that Afghan security forces would face a Herculean task to guarantee security. The enemy forces have multiplied since the rise of Daesh in some of the provinces.

The previously peaceful parts of the country have turned into battle fields and there does not seem to be any clear indications of restoration of peace or peace talks with Taliban. Afghanistan at this stance requires sincere support from the regional countries but particularly from China. Chinese support to Afghanistan has come in different forms. There are various assistance and support projects sponsored by China that are going on in Afghanistan. They are related to different sectors; like economic, infra-structure development, education and security.

However, China would have to continue their support or even enhance that as Afghanistan is trying to stand on its own. The most important sector would be security. Since most of the international forces have withdrawn from Afghanistan and Afghan security forces are shouldering the security responsibilities themselves, they would require tremendous support from China.

One of the most important support regarding security would be initiation of peace talks between Afghan government and Taliban. A serious negotiation between Afghan government and Taliban is really crucial at the moment. China can play its role in further streamlining this process and eliminate the differences between Afghanistan and Pakistan so that they are able to cooperate more closely for making negotiations possible. China can also play its dominating role in SCO to start a formal process for a lasting peace in Afghanistan. It can involve the regional countries in this regard so that they collectively design a comprehensive support strategy to deal with the threats of terrorism in Afghanistan.

Apart from assisting Afghan security forces to face the enemies they can also support Afghanistan in governance and development sectors so that they are able to pursue long-term strategies for establishing peace and tranquility. Support in the form of assistance for strengthening the weak political and social institutions in Afghanistan would also prove to be vital for solidifying Afghan government and its nascent democracy and make them capable enough to stand strong.

SCO, thus, requires to keep on its spirit and dedication for resolving the regional issues. It can best function if it follows the Chinese President Xi Jinping's five-point proposal in the times to come. These points suggest that SCO should remain open and transparent without targeting any third party, engage all like-minded international partners in wide-ranging cooperation and act as a constructive force for the healthy development of the international order.

Secondly, the SCO should continue to prioritize security and cement this foundation of the SCO development and it needs to beef up the institutional construction for cooperation on combating terrorism and drug trafficking. Thirdly, SCO should expand practical cooperation and find greater space for SCO development and there are hopes that the organization will play an active role in aligning the Belt and Road Initiative and the other members' development strategies. Fourthly, the SCO also needs to enhance culture and people-to-people foundation as the bridge for future development, and China is willing to support other member states in restoring historical sites and archaeology studies, as well as communication and cooperation in such fields as youth, health care and environmental protection.

Last but not the least, the SCO should continue to uphold openness and inclusiveness and get more parties on board for SCO cooperation.



## May China-Kazakhstan Relationship Fly High toward Our Shared Aspirations

By Xi Jinping

In this lovely mid-summer month of June when all living things are flourishing, I will be traveling to Kazakhstan at the invitation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. This will be my third visit to your country. I will attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) annual summit and the opening ceremony of Expo 2017 Astana. In this connection, I cannot but recall the fond memories of the magnificent Kazakh steppe, vibrant rivers, the phenomenal national development, and most of all, the warm-hearted and sincere Kazakh people. I very much look forward to returning to your beautiful land.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Kazakhstan. Over the past quarter of a century, our bilateral relations have withstood the test of time and the ever-changing international situation.

Our two countries are not only good neighbors but also comprehensive strategic partners. We are now working together to build a community of shared interests and shared future. Our bilateral relations have moved forward by leaps and bounds and become stronger and closer than ever before.

- China-Kazakhstan political mutual trust has grown stronger. Our two countries respect each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and choice of development path. We have firmly supported each other on issues vital to our respective core interests, and worked in close coordination and collaboration on international and regional issues.

- China-Kazakhstan practical cooperation has deepened continuously. China ranks among Kazakhstan's top trading partners and investors. Chinese investment in Kazakhstan amounted to over 42.8 billion U.S. dollars. China's lending to Kazakhstan has exceeded 50 billion U.S. dollars on an accumulative basis. Our two-way trade of the first four months of 2017 surged by 45.6 percent. Kazakhstan's exports to China are on the rise. Kazakh wheat flour, vegetable oil, soybean, meat products and honey have made their way to the dining table in more and more Chinese households. Our two countries have identified and agreed on 51 projects of industrial capacity cooperation which will help promote Kazakhstan's industrialization and create more jobs for the Kazakh people. Kazakhstan has exported 100 million tons of oil to China via the China-Kazakhstan crude oil pipeline, and 183 billion cubic meters of gas to my country through the natural gas pipelines. Our two countries are exploring opportunities for cooperation on new energy including nuclear, wind and photovoltaic power. There are over 50 flights between us every week. In 2016, more than 1,200 Europe-bound China Railway Express trains transited through Kazakhstan, and rail freight handled by our railways reached 8.2 million tons and the number of freight containers increased by more than two-fold. This February saw the first freight of Kazakh wheat exported to Southeast Asia via China.

- China-Kazakhstan people-to-people and cultural exchanges have grown closer. In 2016, nearly 500,000 mutual visits were made between our two countries, and 14,000 Kazakh students were studying in China. Five Confucius Institutes and seven Confucius Classrooms have been set up in Kazakhstan while four Kazakhstan Centers have been inaugurated in Chinese universities. The Kazakh singer Dimash Kudaibergen is now a household

name in China. Popular Chinese films or TV series, such as A Bite of China or Family On the Go, have captivated more and more Kazakh viewers.

It was during my first visit to Kazakhstan back in 2013 that I proposed the initiative of the Silk Road Economic Belt, which started the process of Belt and Road cooperation. Over the past four years, the Belt and Road Initiative has gradually developed from a proposal to actions, and from a concept to practice. The initiative offers an open and inclusive platform of cooperation and has become a global public good well received by the international community.

The international situation is undergoing profound and complex changes. The world economy is slowly recovering amid deep-going readjustment. Global development remains a daunting challenge. In this context, the building of the Belt and Road brings us unprecedented historic opportunities. Last month, the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was successfully held in Beijing. The countries represented at the forum agreed to work more closely together to synergize development strategies for greater complementarity and common development.

The primary task of my upcoming visit is to have in-depth discussions with President Nazarbayev on how best the two countries can advance China-Kazakhstan comprehensive strategic partnership under the new circumstances, accelerate our cooperation in all areas and come up with an overall action plan for that purpose. It is my sincere hope that China-Kazakhstan win-win cooperation for common development and prosperity will grow from strength to strength and have a brighter future.

- We need to promote cooperation in jointly building the Belt and Road. We need to synergize our development strategies in a faster pace and work together to implement the outcomes of the Belt and Road Forum. We need to further unlock the potentials for cooperation on ports, transportation and logistics, speed up the construction of such projects as the New Eurasian Land Bridge, the China-Central and Western Asia Economic Corridor and the Western Europe-Western China Road so as to promote connectivity and trade facilitation. We should also identify investment and financing models that are more flexible and effective, and expand trade settlements in local currencies in support of our bilateral cooperation projects.

- We need to make industrial capacity cooperation a new area of growth in China-Kazakhstan cooperation. We need to accelerate the implementation of the agreed early-harvest projects, continue to leverage the role of the existing mechanism of dialogue on investment and industrial cooperation and maintain close contact on information exchange and policy coordination in an effort to provide a sound business environment for our companies operating in each other's country.

- We need to vigorously promote high-tech and innovation cooperation. We need to deepen cooperation in frontier areas such as aerospace and aviation, digital economy and new energy. We also need to advance the development of big data, cloud computing and smart city, and speed up cooperation in IT industries and e-commerce. We will endeavor to bring about an innovation-driven development so as to upgrade China-Kazakhstan cooperation to a new level. (To Be Continued)

President of the People's Republic of China

## The Consequence of Riyadh-Doha Tension

By Hujjatullah Zia

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt severed diplomatic ties and transport links with Qatar on Monday, accusing it of supporting "extremism". The dispute between Qatar and the Arab countries escalated after an alleged statement by the emir of Qatar on regional politics, which triggered a backlash from Saudi and Emirati media outlets. The Qatari government denied the statement, claiming their national news agency was hacked.

On Tuesday, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir told reporters in Paris that Qatar must end its support for the Palestinian group Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood before ties with other Gulf Arab states could be restored.

Subsequently, Hamas said in a statement that Al-Jubeir's remarks "constitute a shock for our Palestinian people and the Arab and Islamic nations".

The dispute comes less than a month after the US President Donald Trump visited Saudi Arabia and called for Muslim nations to unite against "extremism". Therefore, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel accused Trump of stirring up conflicts in the Middle East and risking a new arms race.

Six Middle Eastern countries - Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Oman are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The unified economic agreement between the countries of the GCC was signed on November 11, 1981 in Abu Dhabi. The purpose of the GCC is to achieve unity among its members based on their common objectives and their similar political and cultural identities, which are rooted in Islamic beliefs.

By and large, Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and radical Islamists in Libya has led to increasing tensions with other Arab states of the Persian Gulf. These tensions came to a head during a March 2014 meeting of the GCC, after which the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain announced the recall of their ambassadors to Qatar.

On June 5th 2017, the tension prompted Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt to officially cut diplomatic ties with Qatar. Saudi Arabia said it took the decision to cut diplomatic ties due to Qatar's "embrace of various terrorist and sectarian groups aimed at destabilizing the region", including the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaida, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and groups supported by Iran in the kingdom's eastern province of Qatif.

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt by Islamic scholar and schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna in 1928 and gained supporters throughout the Arab world.

The Muslim Brotherhood was a movement, not a political party, but its members have created political parties in several coun-

tries, such as the Islamic Action Front in Jordan and Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank and the now disbanded Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt. These parties are staffed by Brotherhood members but they are kept independent from the Muslim Brotherhood to some degree.

Following the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 and fall of Hosni Mubarak, the Brotherhood was legalized, but it has suffered severe reversals in 2013. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was legalized in 2011 and won several elections, including the 2012 presidential election when its candidate Mohamed Morsi became Egypt's first elected president.

However, it faced periodic government crackdowns for alleged terrorist activities, as in 2015 it was considered a terrorist organization by the governments of Bahrain, Egypt, Russia, Syria, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.

Although Qatar is the home of the largest US military base in the region and served as the US Central Command headquarters and one of the main launching sites of the invasion of Iraq, Trump supported Riyadh's policy regarding Qatar.

Trump's supportive stance is not surprising, since he seeks to adopt a strong counterinsurgent strategy. In his inaugural speech, Trump pledged to root out extremism "from the face of the Earth". In the meantime, Saudi Arabia and the US shares a strong political and commercial ties, and Saudi certainly prefers America's relationship to Qatar.

On the other hand, the Muslim Brotherhood was declared as a terrorist group by Saudi and some other countries but not by Qatar. Therefore, Qatar - a traditionally religious country where flogging and stoning are rife - will make no bones about supporting the Brotherhood party or its branch Hamas.

It is believed that since Hamas is a legal party for Iran - although their relations have been soured over Syria's conflict - Qatar's support to Hamas will bring Doha and Tehran closer. Subsequently, Saudi would have drawn this conclusion that Iran and Qatar work in tandem.

Two days after the Riyadh-Doha's diplomatic cutoff, a twin terrorist attack occurred in Iran, for which the ISIL claimed responsibility. This incident is believed to raise Iran's suspicion against Saudi and a blame game will surface. Earlier, Saudi and the US blamed Iran for its involvement in Syria's conflict.

The blame game and Riyadh-Doha's deteriorating relations are believed to compound the tension in the Middle East.

Qatar denied supporting extremism saying that there was "no legitimate justification" for several nations severing diplomatic ties and the decision was in "violation of its sovereignty". Which one do you think is right Saudi Arabia or Qatar?

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia\_hujjat@yahoo.com



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



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