

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



June 18, 2017

## Widening Gap between Generations

There is nothing as permanent as change. And, this phenomenon is true for the entire universe. Wherever there is matter, there is change. The changes in the physical environment are so evident that we can see them any time we want. However, in certain cases we become so used to them that we do not feel them unless they are extreme or unexpected. Meanwhile, there are changes within human beings themselves too. This is true not only for their physiology but their psychology and their ideology as well. Consequently, these changes result in the differences with the overall society and ultimately, between the two consecutive periods within a society and the people living during those periods; thus, generating a generation gap.

Generation gap is basically the result of changes at a larger level. When two consecutive generations differ each other in their ways of thinking and ways of living, generation gap exists. Within a society, it is very natural and is bound to happen. In fact, it is as per the requirements of evolution. However, the important factor to under in today's societies is that the generation gap is very wide as the changes are very quick and mostly drastic and thus results in differences so wide that it becomes too difficult to manage.

It is also imperative to understand that changes are not always positive. Though a modern generation may always claim to be more educated and advanced but it may not claim to be better in so many aspects. When there is a discussion about human society, it is not only advancement that matters; there are many ethical and spiritual aspects as well that needs to be considered.

There is no doubt in the fact that generation gap is natural but it can turn into a serious problem in so many ways. When there are drastic differences within two generations, there are influences on entire families and social interactions. Parents, who nourish their children for years, at some point of life may become strangers for their children and sometimes children consider their parents as their enemies instead of guardians and caretakers.

Therefore, in such cases, the gap keeps on widening and the parents and children keep on moving away from each other.

The important thing at such a point is to understand the basic theory of life and that is, "things change". Everybody needs to understand this basic philosophy of life. Though it seems very simple to understand, it is the most difficult to adjust to. People agree and accept this phenomenon theoretically but practically they never adopt it and that is where the problem arises. Parents need to understand that their children and their way of thinking and behaving will definitely be different.

That is bound to happen. Children cannot be similar to their parents. Unfortunately, most of the parents want that their children to be their carbon copy.

They abhor the differences in them and keep on giving their own examples and the examples of their own times and in most of the cases these examples are obsolete and they are no more applicable in a different society.

When the children do not do what the parents expect, which are basically unnatural the parents are frustrated and gap starts getting wider.

It is not necessary that all the changes that are there in new generation should be accepted by the parents as some of them may be very much awkward and even alien. With the penetration of globalization in the different cultures, it is not difficult to find many aspects of the life in the new generation quite unfit for their society.

Such aspects should be dealt with masterly. It is not to say that all the parents should be sociologists but they can be wise and for wisdom there is no need of great deal of education but experience is what counts the most. As the children become youngsters, they are full of energy and they are easily influenced by the changes as those changes influence their learning process; therefore, they are more open to the social changes. They, in certain cases, get carried away by the tides of changes and when they become conscious they find themselves nowhere.

Then the time to mend has already passed and they have no way to return; therefore, the parents need to understand them and help them get to a better destination.

Parents cannot stop changes; all they can do is to guide the changes properly and channel them towards positivity. Two consecutive generations may always differ from each other in attitude, behavior and thinking but they can always have emotional attachment and can have a sense of respect for one another.

There can be affection between them, but for emotions and affection to tie them tightly it is necessary that they have to rise above the differences in cloths, thinking and tastes. They have to raise their humanity to a level higher and start perceiving each other on the basis of their beings not the different manifestations of their beings.



## The Constructive Role of the Belt and Road

By Hujjatullah Zia

More than two thousand years ago, China's Han Dynasty launched the Silk Road, a sprawling network of commerce that linked South and Central Asia with the Middle East and Europe. Lately, the Belt and Road initiative (B&R) was raised by Chinese President Xi Jinping in September and October 2013. The B&R will extend from the Chinese mainland to Europe and includes about 65 per cent of the world's population living in more than 60 countries across Asia, Europe and Africa. This will cover 30 per cent of the world's GDP and about a quarter of all the goods and services the world moves.

The Belt and Road has two parts: the "belt" is the physical road. Essentially, the "belt" includes countries situated on the original Silk Road through Central Asia, West Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. However, "road" is actually the maritime Silk Road, also known which is highly ambitious. So, the Belt and Road refers to the land-based "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the ocean-based "21st Century Maritime Silk Road".

The initiative calls for the integration of the region into a cohesive economic area through policy coordination, infrastructure development, investment and trade facilitation, financial integration, and cultural and social exchange.

To talk about funding side, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a China-led international financial institution, came into being to offer finance to infrastructure projects as part of China's Silk Road initiative, with a focus on bolstering links across Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. Chinese President announced its creation during a tour of Southeast Asia in October 2013. The AIIB's subscribed capital of \$100 billion could support lending operations of between \$200-500 billion, depending on how the institution raises funding and operates its lending business. It is worth saying that this year, the AIIB added 13 new members, bringing its total membership up to 70. Afghanistan, Belgium, Ireland, Peru, Fiji, Hungary, Armenia, Ethiopia, the Republic of Sudan, and Venezuela are included among the 13 applicants to the bank who received approval.

The creation of the AIIB follows other, similar Chinese-led initiatives to influence the global multilateral financial architecture. For instance, in July 2014, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - known as the BRICS countries - announced plans to create both a new multilateral development bank and a shared currency reserve pool. This body, dubbed the New Development Bank (NDB),

will have a capital of \$50 billion, with 20% contributed by China. Headquartered in Shanghai, the NDB has a similar mandate to the AIIB, namely to support infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS countries and other emerging markets (EMs).

Moreover, the Silk Road Fund also came into being to foster increased investment in countries along the One Belt, One Road. Hosting the Belt and Road Forum in May, Chinese President Xi pledged a major funding boost to the new Silk Road, including an extra 100 billion yuan (\$14.50 billion) into the existing Silk Road Fund, 380 billion yuan in loans from two policy banks and 60 billion yuan in aid to developing countries and international bodies in countries along the new trade routes.

"China is willing to share its development experience with all countries. We will not interfere in other countries' internal affairs. We will not export our system of society and development model, and even more will not impose our views on others," Xi is cited as saying.

In the past decade and a half, Kabul has pushed for regional integration. In the period since 1980, it has tried to get full membership or observer status in regional economic, security and political organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Central Asia Regional Cooperation Program (CAREC), Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and most recently in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

"The Belt and Road Initiative has five major roles, to promote policy coordination, facilitate connectivity, promote unimpeded trade and promote financial inauguration and more people-to-people advance in these areas." No doubt, Afghanistan will be one of the beneficiaries of the B&R and similar activities. China is Afghanistan's supportive neighbor which seeks to cooperate not only in financial activities but also regarding peace and stability. The Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) reveal this fact.

Afghanistan needs to extend its relationship with neighboring countries economically and politically. The B&R provides the best opportunity for the country to promote its relationship and strengthen the country's economy and trade.

Afghan officials will have to utilize these opportunities in the best possible way in this critical time so as to reduce the economic and political vulnerability.

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## Urbanization 2.0

By Carl Bildt

We are now in the final days of the industrial age. Just as the second generation of steam engines propelled the Industrial Revolution forward, so, too, are new technologies advancing today's digital revolution. But as technology races ahead of us, it is difficult to anticipate what the future holds.

One thing we do know is that the future will be shaped by two key trends: digitization and urbanization. And the possibilities introduced by the former will likely help us overcome the problems associated with the latter.

When the Industrial Revolution was first gaining momentum at the beginning of the nineteenth century, only a small percentage of the global population lived in cities. The world was still predominantly rural and agricultural, as it had been for thousands of years. But as industrialization accelerated, so did urbanization, as impoverished farmworkers flocked to factories.

We are now in another period of epochal change, and urbanization is accelerating again. In 1950, approximately one-third of the planet's 2.5 billion people lived in cities, whereas today, just over half of the world's 7.5 billion people do. And by 2050, when the global population is expected to reach nine billion, an estimated two-thirds of all people will live in cities.

Urban areas are magnets for young people and entrepreneurs, because they provide a wide range of opportunities and dense professional and social networks. It is no coincidence that 80% of economic output originates in cities: urbanization is the engine of economic growth.

But while it is easy to focus on success stories such as Singapore and Dubai, or on the impressive features of cosmopolitan centers such as New York or London, urbanization is not without its challenges.

By 2050, some 600 million people will live in the world's 25 largest cities, none of which are in the European Union. Most are in Asia, followed by Africa, including Karachi, Pakistan; Kabul, Afghanistan; Khartoum, Sudan; and Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. And some believe that by 2100, Lagos, Nigeria, will be the world's largest city - showing how quickly Africa is catching up. At the recent Chicago Forum on Global Cities, policy thinkers and practitioners - including past and current mayors from Amman, Chicago, Prague, Lahore, Rio de Janeiro, and Toronto - met for a couple of days to discuss common challenges on the road ahead.

They all agreed that many solutions to future problems will come not from national governments, but from municipal and regional-level policymakers.

Many cities and states in the United States are already bringing this point home, by ignoring US President Donald Trump's renunciation of the Paris climate agreement, and doubling down on their own efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and achieve energy sustainability. Indeed, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto and Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo have now joined forces to combat climate change, giving the lie to Trump's claim that he was elected to "represent Pittsburgh, not Paris."

Climate change is one of three major challenges that will confront us in this new period of hyper-urbanization. Because all cities depend on energy, more needs to be done to improve sustainability and efficiency. Municipal and regional governments will need to step up their efforts to curb energy use, and introduce new green technologies, particularly in more rural areas.

The second challenge will be to address the effects of new digital technologies that are generally associated with the so-called sharing economy. Hardware and software applications that provide on-demand transportation, delivery, hospitality, and other services will revolutionize how cities operate and are organized; but adapting to these changes will require innovative new policies.

The third challenge relates to migration and its attendant security concerns. Global migration will likely continue to increase in the coming decades, with the very rich and the very poor alike flocking to megacities. Without the policies and infrastructure in place to absorb these new arrivals, megacities could fail, and degenerate into urban jungles that pose a security threat to surrounding regions and the world beyond.

Addressing these challenges will require deeper dialogue among global cities themselves. In the recent discussions in Chicago, there was a general sense that national governments, while important, do not approach most of these issues practically, or with the urgency they require. The Chicago dialogues, on the other hand, epitomized practicality, by finding common ground across wide geographic and cultural boundaries.

This implies that we should be careful not to exaggerate the differences between the most and the least advanced global cities. Security solutions in Toronto might very well be applicable in Karachi; and digital services in Singapore could eventually take root in Kabul.

Just as industrialism ushered in a new age for cities and countries, so, too, will digitization. To see the future that is taking shape, one need only look to the cities that are already shaping it. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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