

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



May 09, 2019

Democratic Achievements "Red-line" for Afghans

In the post-Taliban administration, Afghanistan has made great strides in democracy and human rights discourse. But Afghan people are concerned about having their achievements jeopardized with the return of Islamic Emirate in the frame of reconciliation.

Following the downfall of the Taliban's regime, Afghan Constitution was approved on the basis of democratic principles recognizing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and UN Charter. Based on the current constitution, Afghan citizens have equal rights and freedoms regardless of their caste, color or creed. That is, racial or sexual discrimination has no room in the constitution. Accordingly, Afghan women are holding high political posts in the current administration.

To view the UDHR, supported by Afghan Constitution, "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion" and has the freedom "to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance," stated in Article 18 of the UDHR. Meanwhile, it is said in UDHR that "everyone has the right to education", "everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community", "everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country" and "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression".

Considering the rights and liberties recognized in the UDHR and the "principle of nondiscrimination" and equal rights and freedoms for both men and women will not be acceptable to the Taliban. Although the Taliban have reportedly said earlier that they would return, in case of signing peace agreement with Afghan government or their US interlocutors, with flexible and updated ideology, they still persist on amendment to Afghan Constitution at the negotiating table.

In their dominated areas, the Taliban have imposed their narrow mindset restricting freedoms of women and their rights to education, which suggests that they still do not entitle men and women equally. That is to say, gender discrimination is still practiced by the Taliban. The Taliban, however, claimed that they would not impede women's participation in social, political, cultural, and economic activities and would observe women's rights bestowed by Islam. Nonetheless, it is self-evident that Taliban's interpretation of Islamic tenets are based on their patriarchal worldview, which is irreconcilable with democratic principles and civil rights recognized in Afghan Constitution and UDHR. If the Taliban are genuine in their claim, they have to prove it in their daily practices.

Afghan people fear that peace agreement with the Taliban may put Afghanistan's democratic achievements at stake. Bearing the brunt of violence during the Taliban's regime, Afghan women are more concerned in this regard. Since the Taliban have violated national and international laws through trampling upon the rights and freedom of civilians in their fight against Afghan government and its international allies, it is hard for Afghan people to trust them. After all, the Taliban's daily practices such as restricting women's rights and freedoms in their dominated areas have increased public distrust. Thus, Afghan people call for international monitors to oversee peace talks as well as international guarantee for peace agreement, in case of being signed between the Taliban and their interlocutors.

Expecting the Taliban to exercise updated worldview seems naïve, but it is believed that expecting equal rights and freedoms for men and women with the Taliban's presence in the government's body is all right. For example, notwithstanding the fact that many hardline groups are active across Pakistan, women are not generally discriminated on the basis of their gender, mainly in large cities, and they may encounter no challenges in holding high political positions. But gender discrimination still rules Pakistan's tribal belts similar to that of Afghanistan. Thus, if the Taliban are integrated in Afghanistan's government body, they will not be able to impose their radical mindset the way they did during their regime.

Afghanistan's traditional culture suggests that the Taliban will be able to impose some restrictions to the extent that is acceptable to traditional culture and social norms, but seeking to foist their radical mindset on people will backfire since Afghanistan has transitioned to democracy.

Therefore, Afghan government says that protecting Afghan Constitution and equal rights and freedoms of citizens are its "red-line". Indeed, resorting to harsh mindset will no more respond positively in Afghanistan. To earn the public satisfaction and rule the country well, Afghan government, whether or not with the Taliban's presence, has to respect democratic values, safeguard the rights, freedoms, and dignity of each citizen and leave no room for racial, sexual, or religious discrimination. Since Afghans have paid heavy sacrifices for the democratic achievements - including post-Taliban constitution - and equal rights and freedoms, Afghan government has the responsibility to safeguard all the achievements.



Doctors' Benevolence Contributes to Peace

By: Liu Jinsong

President Chen Zhu arrived at Kabul in early morning yesterday. He is going to the airport in a little while for the next leg of his trip. In just over a day, Dr. Chen attended ten events, visiting children with congenital heart disease, seeking more understanding of the public health undertakings in Afghanistan and promoting medical cooperation between our two countries. Working day in and day out to screen the diseased, his team had not even the time for meal or sleep in the past few days. Let us express our high respect for them with a warm round of applause.

I would also like to sincerely thank the Afghan Red Crescent Society, Afghan leaders, the First Lady, the Afghan government and people from all walks of life for the high attention and considerate arrangement accorded to Dr. Chen's visit. Your hospitality is an expression of admiration and respect for President Chen and his team and embodies friendly sentiments towards China and the Chinese people. Friendship, which derives from close contact between the people, holds the key to sound state-to-state relations. China is a country the Afghans feel closest to and Afghanistan is a neighbor the Chinese are most concerned about. Our two peoples have always stood together in mutual help and will always have mutual affinity.

Mr. and Mrs. Chen are both renowned doctors in the world. President Chen went to serve the countryside as an 'educated urban youth' and taught himself to be a 'barefoot doctor'. He is a scientist, a management expert, a social activist and a national leader of China. The benevolent love others. On all those positions, Dr. Chen has remembered well his original inspiration, devoted himself to healing the wounded, rescuing the dying and caring for the vulnerable and always borne in mind health of the ordinary people in China and elsewhere in the world. Out of empathy with the Afghans, he's been really committed to promoting the joint assistance program between the Red Cross Society of China and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Let us express to him once again our deep respect and appreciation.

The RCSC has carried forwards the tradition of China-Afghanistan medical cooperation by assisting pediatric patients. As early as in the 1970s, when China was still very poor, we did all we can to build the 'Chinese Hospital' in Kandahar, which still serves local people in that and other provinces. The Kabul Republic Hospital, another landmark project built with Chinese assistance, treats and helps thousands of Afghans every day. China provides many training opportunities for Afghan health workers and medical devices for Afghan hospitals and clinics. Every year some best Afghan students go to study medical science in China with Chinese government scholarships. Several of them including Mr. Javid Safi, the CEO of Afghanistan Cancer Foundation,

are also attending today's reception. Now they are backbones of their organization in Afghanistan. They are planing to establish an Afghan Chinese Student Association. Wish them all good luck.

Let me introduce a Chinese doctor named Ji Peng, who is present today. He created in Kabul the first Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Afghanistan, receiving over twenty outpatients every day. Dr. Ji went to Mazar-e-Sharif by himself, helping many patients with rheumatic diseases. Two delicate Chinese ladies must also be recognized here: Ms. Zou Wei and Ms. An Nan. They joined the Doctors Without Borders and went into remote mountainous regions and war-torn areas in Khost Province to help people there. These two ladies work busily in places of conflicts. Let me quote them directly here: 'We are deeply moved by the simple and friendly local people. Our patients are gentle and polite. Our colleagues are enthusiastic and studious.' 'We are deeply distressed by the difficult situation ordinary Afghans are in. We try our best to help them enjoy health and happiness.'

Many Afghan friends praise highly traditional Chinese medicine, which embodies two core values. The first is benevolence, i.e., being selfless and fearless and treating patients with love, compassion and sincerity. The other is harmony, i.e., taking world peace and harmony as well as people's health and well-being as a person's greatest ideal and source of happiness and pursuing unity between man and nature, harmony between the self and the other, and balance between yin and yang. As such the therapeutic approach focuses very much on harmonization and moderation. This year will be critical for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. We sincerely hope that the spirit of benevolence and harmony carried forward by President Chen and other Chinese health workers will assist the Afghan people in realizing the dream of peace.

A week ago, the 2nd Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was successfully closed in Beijing. Afghanistan was also represented at the grand gathering devoted to developing a community of shared future for mankind. At the forum, Chinese President Xi stressed that the people-centered Belt and Road Initiative focuses on poverty alleviation, job creation and improvement of people's livelihood for people of all countries to benefit from the results. The 'Silk Road of Health' and medical and health cooperation constitute an important part of the China-Afghanistan BRI collaboration. With China's development and advancement of the BRI, the Afghan people will enjoy more attention and help from China and the rest of the international community in health. The Chinese Embassy stands ready to go for it with all our strength.

Thank you.

Wish all of you good health forever.

Liu Jinsong is the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Afghanistan

BRI - A Platform for Mutual Cooperation

By: Hujjatullah Zia

The member states of China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), consists of two primary components; the overland Silk Road Economic Belt and the sea-based 21st-century Maritime Silk Road, have extended rapidly and Beijing hosted the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in late April to support the initiative and cement commercial and cultural ties between member states. Official figures show that a total of 152 countries, including Afghanistan, and international organizations have signed cooperation documents with China on the initiative over the past six years.

The BRI makes the headlines in world newspapers in general and in Chinese media in particular. The initiative has its own proponents and opponents, but it is believed that since the BRI advocates trade, transit, and connectivity around the globe, it carries increasing significance in modern world.

Speaking in the sixth edition of Vision China, a series of talks organized by China Daily, Zhao Jianguo, director general of the International Communication Bureau of Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, is cited as saying that three points should be observed on BRI cooperation. First, BRI needed to build consensus while upholding the spirit of extensive consultation, joint contributions, and shared benefits. Second, it needed to engage think tanks from around the world, which has already been driving forces for the initiative. Third, it needed a youthful injection of will and spirit.

Building global consensus for the BRI is highly significant. China needs to remove doubt about the initiative and design its scope and roadmap to achieve regional and global consensus.

"We trust that with the strengthening of effective cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, China will provide new opportunities and serve as a powerful driving force for global development in the new era. And we trust that today's talks will help create consensus on the B&R Initiative as part of the efforts to build a global community of shared future," said Zhou Shuchun, publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily, in the edition of Vision China, themed "Belt and Road, Shared Future".

Afghanistan is one of the BRI's stakeholders and signed Memorandum of Understanding with China in 2016 to regain its historical position as an "Asian transit and trade roundabout" connecting South Asia to Central Asia and East Asia to West Asia. Commercial and cultural exchanges between China and Afghanistan have increased recently. Following the opening of Afghan-

istan-China Air Corridor in November 2018, trade volume between the two countries has surged up and it is estimated that the corridor will enable Afghanistan to export 23,000 tons of pine nuts to the Chinese market annually, while saffron and precious stones will be also routed to China through the newly opened link.

Afghanistan has great economic potential and untapped natural resources to be exploited. Earlier, Second Vice President Mohammad Sarwar Danish said, "Recent US research shows Afghanistan has natural resources worth trillions of dollars, the country is bestowed with 1400 types of minerals and the Hajigak natural reservoir contains 1.8 billion worth tons of iron". With this in mind, Afghanistan will be able to effectively exploit its natural resources and boost its trade through aligning its economic activities with the BRI.

Afghan province of Badakhshan shares border with China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where I, along with other media delegates, visited in late April on a media tour themed "The Core Zone (Xinjiang) of the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' Media Event". It is said that Badakhshan province had signed an agreement of intent to establish sister-province relationship with Xinjiang, which will promote cooperation at provincial level. On my recent trip, I have found that Badakhshan and Xinjiang have many things in common. For instance, I found the delicious food and fruit of not only Badakhshan but those of entire Afghanistan in Xinjiang. The residents of Xinjiang had the very hospitality of Afghans as they received us with open arms. I felt that the friendship between Afghanistan and China will go beyond the high mountains and limitless deserts that Xinjiang and Badakhshan carry in their hearts. The BRI will further enhance cultural exchanges and people-to-people contact and boost commercial ties between the two friendly nations.

It should be noted that China has also played a constructive role in Afghanistan's peace process since stability is of high importance for trade and transit. Afghanistan welcomes China's support in this regard and deems it very essential for economic development.

It is hoped that the BRI will provide a better platform for international cooperation as well as a platform for further commercial and cultural exchanges between Afghanistan and China.

Hujjatullah Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan and freelance writer based in Kabul. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.com



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

Vice Chairman / Exec. Editor: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.