

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



November 14, 2018

Developing Peace Through Science

In today's modern world, it is difficult to imagine the world and the life itself without science and technology. Science has penetrated deep within our social life, and we are not able to live without it. Nevertheless, there are questions about the actual worth of science in today's world, since even after so much advancement in science, human beings are not able to achieve a peaceful life. Though they know that war and conflicts are not going to give them a secure future, they have kept on pursuing them and, unfortunately, science and technology seem to be assisting them in this regard.

However, it is vital to understand that science is neutral in the sense that it does not promulgate any code of ethics, religious teachings or belief system. It is a method of enquiry and learning and a body of knowledge that is generated through that method. It is the way science is used that matters not science itself. If today human societies use scientific knowledge and inventions to promote war, terrorism and violence, science cannot be blamed for that. That has to do with human intentions and their desires or belief systems.

Science can be best used for peace and development. Throughout its history, science has proved that, and it can keep on doing that if human beings intend to do so, individually and collectively. However, the important point is to realize the fact that their survival and prosperity lie in the positive use of science and technology.

To emphasize the same fact, every year November 10 is celebrated as the World Science Day for Peace and Development around the world. The day was proclaimed by United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) General Conference (Resolution 31C/20) in 2001 to recall the commitment made at the UNESCO-ICSU World Conference on Science. The purpose of celebrating the day is to renew the national, as well as the international commitment to science for peace and development and to stress the responsible use of science for the benefit of society. The World Science Day for Peace and Development also aims at raising public awareness of the importance of science and to bridge the gap between science and societies.

There is no doubt in the fact that one of the most crucial requirements for a society to develop is peace and tranquility. Without sustainable peace, thinking of prosperity is nothing more than a figment of one's imagination. With peace, a society would be on the track of a healthy evolution and it would be able to concentrate on many other issues that are hurdle in the way to bliss and contentment. In the journey from the first human societies to today's modern world, wherein human beings call themselves civilized and the best of all the creatures, there have always been fluctuations between peace and war. Unfortunately, no peace has been forever and fortunately, no war has lasted long. Wars have always devastated human civilizations, killed millions of human beings, brought miseries and pains and yet they have not been rejected as unnecessary and this fact is very painful.

It is difficult to believe that knowing the horrors of wars, human beings have always considered them necessary and almost all the nations in the world are really ready for wars. There are many important requirements that are neglected in the society and science and technology are utilized to make a nation ready for launching war and strong militarily. It is weird to note that there are many countries on the face of earth that would not utilize blessings of science for improving the standard of the living of the people but would spend them magnanimously on acquiring modern weaponry. In fact, human beings are preparing for their own destruction and extinction consciously.

Just consider the amount and the characteristics of modern weaponry; they have the tendency to raze human beings from the surface of the earth completely. The magnitude of weapons of mass destruction at the disposal of world nations can even destroy the entire earth several times.

Unluckily, some of the human beings are of the view that peace can only be achieved through wars and therefore, wars are necessary in human societies. This is the biggest misconception human beings have ever had. War does not and cannot bring peace; it in its nature is destructive. Even if war brings peace that is only after the entire human civilization is erased. Would a peace, in a world without human beings, be required at all?

Some nations are, today, proud of their military achievements and their history of wars. And wars have become an educational subject that is taught within colleges, universities and military institutions. People get degrees and certificates in the science and art of killing one another. And, they malign science and art in this way. Human beings really need to reconsider so many aspects of their lives, start knowing the true worth of science and technology and start using it to generate peace and development not strengthen armies and launch wars.

Russia's Growing Clout in Asia Pacific Region

By: Yead Mirza

In their strategic calculus, the Asia Pacific major powers as well as other countries do not consider Russia a major military power for the region. Although these Asia Pacific countries understand Russia's military clout in Europe and Middle East, they somehow fail to see how overall Russian military might have an impact in the Asia Pacific region too.

Accordingly, the growing influence of Russia in the region finds less attention on the regional media outlets, the regional discussion platforms and the think tank papers produced across the region. This is a total contrast to Russian involvement in Europe and Middle East, something which receives huge coverage. Despite the low coverage of its engagement in the Asia Pacific, Russia's geopolitical presence is increasing in the region.

Although its military and economic involvements in the Asia Pacific reduced significantly after the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia has over the last decade improved and enhanced its military might significantly, making its military a potent power in the region.

Russia has been selling weapons and other advanced military technology to the Asia-Pacific countries in order to bring these countries into its geopolitical orbit. Besides its close military relations with both China and India, Russia is increasingly building good relations with Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand.

Furthermore, Russia is on a spree of building certain infrastructures in several Asia Pacific countries which would make those countries dependent on Russia for the

proper functionality of those infrastructures. Take Bangladesh's nuclear plant for example. Russia is setting up a nuclear-powered power plant in Bangladesh, and this infrastructure would certainly make Bangladesh dependent on Russia for the technological aspects of the project. Bangladesh has also been purchasing heavy weapons and military vehicles from Russia.

Recently this year, many regional countries were alarmed by Russia's large scale war games. The fact that the war games was conducted in the eastern part of Russia – which forms part of the Asia Pacific region, unlike Russia's western part that forms part of Europe – makes it an alarming development for the Asia Pacific region.

According to an Australian news website, the war games, namely Vostok-2018 or East-2018, involved more than 300,000 troops, 36,000 tanks, 1000 aircraft, helicopters and drones and 80 warships and support vessels.

More alarming was the inclusion of the Chinese military into the war games alongside the Russians. Around 3500 Chinese troops were said to have taken part in the Russian war games. Troops from Mongolia too joined the drills.

Sergei Shoigu, Russian Defense Minister, boasted about the drills saying, "Imagine 36,000 military vehicles moving at the same time: tanks, armored personnel carriers, infantry fighting vehicles – and all of this, of course, in conditions as close to a combat situation as possible."

Condemning the drills, NATO said the war games "demonstrates Russia's focus on exercising large-scale conflict".

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Gender and The Arab City

By: Lina Abirafeh

One of the top priorities for the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda is to make cities "inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable." City leaders can take a simple step that would go long a way toward achieving this goal: putting the needs of women and girls at the center of the urban planning process.

By 2030, the majority of the world's population will live in urban areas. And yet, while increased urbanization – and the economic access, mobility, and greater autonomy that accompanies it – will generate new opportunities for women, ensuring gender equality will also become more difficult. This concern is especially relevant to the Arab world.

In many Arab communities, urban space is, by default, male space. Men act as if they "own" the street, which is reflected in how they walk and how they treat women in public. In many Arab cities, as is true elsewhere, men are also far more likely than women to litter, reinforcing the perception that men consider public spaces to be their personal property.

The irony is that the Arab "street" has long been a stage for feminist progress. Even before Arab women raised their voices during the 2011 Arab Spring, urban spaces played host to feminist protests and served as a political barometer for the rest of society.

But urban feminism is not widely studied by city planners in the Arab world. Awareness of how public space in Arab cities is gendered is rare, and little information has been collected on how women affect – or are affected by – planning decisions. Without a deeper understanding of the socio-spatial needs of Arab women, the region's streets will remain the domain of men.

While sexual harassment is common in Arab cities, attention to gendered urban space is not only about safety. Although many women in Arab cities do risk verbal and physical abuse when they are in public, they must also contend with issues like poor sanitation, limited access to toilets and clean water, and little privacy. Marginalized groups – like migrants, ethnic and religious minorities, young girls, elderly women, and the disabled – are particularly vulnerable to discrimination.

Solutions, therefore, must consider the full range of social and cultural challenges that prevent women and girls from moving freely in urban settings. To help cities in the Arab region progress toward greater inclusivity, governments should focus on four key reforms.

For starters, city planners should cooperate with wom-

en's groups to conduct safety audits and map high-risk areas. By analyzing crime data, for example, planners could determine where to focus improvements such as better lighting and additional policing. When women's organizations are involved in these types of decisions, cities become safer for women, which in turn improves their access to social, economic, cultural, and political opportunities.

Next, education systems must be reconfigured to encourage more women and girls to pursue careers in architecture, planning, and urban design. In most Arab cities, planning processes are inaccessible to much of the population; they are even less accessible to women. To change the patriarchal status quo, we must encourage more young women to enter these fields, and to design modern spaces that are sensitive to women's needs.

Third, cities need standardized methods for measuring women's rights in urban environments. One way to achieve this would be to establish scoring systems created by and for women; surveys could include questions about legal frameworks, engagement in urban planning decision-making, public transportation habits, and views on housing, recreation, and safety.

Finally, urban planners must rethink how they fill public spaces. Consider, for example, historic statues; in many cities, only men are lionized in bronze. Why not women? If gender equality was a criterion in commissioning public art, young women and men would grow up knowing that their city was a place where everyone is honored, protected, and respected.

Urban planning is never gender-neutral, and leaders in Arab cities, in particular, must work hard to account for all residents' views and desires. For women and girls, requirements include safe streets, well-maintained public facilities, and gender-specific amenities – such as nursing rooms for mothers. In a truly safe city, everyone's rights are considered, everyone can access public spaces, and everyone is involved in the planning process.

If planners consistently applied such principles to their work, the Arab city would naturally become a catalyst for female empowerment. And when cities become engines of opportunity for women, everyone benefits.

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