

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



October 17, 2018

The Role of Women in Peace Process in Afghanistan

In a typical Afghan setting, peace is equated with 'freshness', health, wellbeing, harmony, calm and tranquility. The absence of such qualities is seen as the sign of conflicts, which could be either latent or overt. It is that harmony and freshness which provided farmers with good crops, the politicians peace of mind and the people welfare. When there was enough food for everyone, peace would reign in homes and families, clans and tribes. As nobody had any reason to be envious of others, neighboring communities could live in peace, visit one another during the off seasons and attend weddings and funerals. However, armed conflict and the presence of weapons legitimize new levels of brutality and even greater levels of impunity. Often this escalating violence becomes a new 'norm', which continues into the post-conflict period, where chaos adds to the many frustrations that were not solved by war. Violence has been used as a tool to compel and keep women in their place. Women are exposed to more brutal forms of violence in these wars and are often ridiculed. This is seen in the various roles women are capable of doing during peace time, in conflict and after conflict.

Afghan Women as Mothers

Despite having important roles and responsibilities in their cultures, women have struggled to participate in the formal peace process, which has been dominated by men. In situations of armed conflict, women play both an active and a passive role in the restoration of peace in Afghanistan.

In the Afghan tradition, women have been wives and mothers, and few worked outside the home. Women taught their daughters and sons, proper behavior and the ethos of society. As such, women have always been active promoters of harmony in the community, which can be referred to as a "culture of peace".

Afghan Women as educators

Women also acted the role of "peace builders"; they taught boys and girls the rules of the game. These observations and trends clearly demonstrate that an essential contribution of women in traditional Afghan society is their role as school for the young. Therefore, through their important mothering role, the culture of peace is entrenched in children as a foundation for peaceful living in families, the community and the clan.

Afghan Women as Mediators

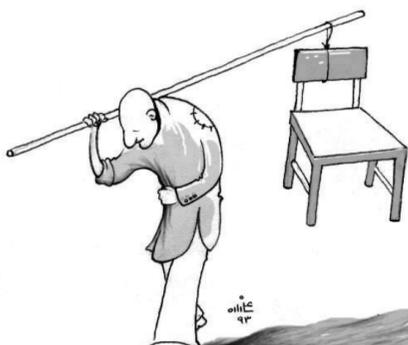
Given the extent and significance of women's peace activism it is surprising how uniformly women have been excluded from formal peace processes. In traditional Afghanistan, women played both an active and a passive role in the restoration of peace. For example within the framework of passive peacemaking by women in Afghanistan, a girl could also be offered to the family of the victim as a form of reparation.

Today, though women have not been fully engaged in the peace making initiatives in the society, due to cultural stereo types, and political favoritism and hegemony, in some aspects of conflicts, women have played vital and selfless roles.

Afghan Women as Peace Activists

It is not easy to translate women's activism into a presence at the peace table. Certainly, not all Afghan women groups want to be at the table if it involves negotiating with the warlords or tyrants who helped create the conflict, but most peace activists feel that women's presence is essential. Afghan women are rarely included in formal negotiations, whether as members of political parties, civil society or special interest groups. Many women's rights groups argue that, women establish their credibility as peacemakers at the grass roots level but are marginalized from official negotiations. Making it from the grass mat to the peace table has nothing to do with their qualifications as peacemakers. Once the foreign mediators come and the official negotiations start, you have to be able to sit at the table, and speak their language. Often women are not trained or given the chance." Women's concerns come not merely out of their own experiences, but out of their rootedness in their communities.

It is high time that Afghan society starts to treat women as change agents in the peace process and not merely as victims who are vulnerable. Afghan Women are not merely passive victims, but also are important agents and actors in the peace building processes in the country. As agents or actors, women have played significant roles in terms of being mothers, educators, mediators, peace activists and community leaders, coping and surviving actors, breadwinners and decision makers. As peace activists and community leaders, Afghan women have played a variety of roles and have been engaged in various activities, yet their role and participation tends to be 'invisible' in the context of the formal peace building processes. Most peace building activities conducted and initiated by women peace activists and community leaders have been carried out outside of the official and formal peace building processes. It is against this backdrop that I believe that there should be a change in attitudes and behaviour and individuals should learn that women are effective and they should be incorporated fully and equally into participation at every level of decision making in positions having to do with peace issues.



China-Afghanistan Relations Continue to Deepen Development

By: Lin Youhong, Mei Yangting & Jiang Maoxia

On the afternoon of October 12, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with Afghanistani CEO Abdullah in Dushanbe. The two leaders exchanged views on further deepening bilateral relations and topics of common interests. Li Keqiang said that China hoped that the security situation in Afghanistan will be improved and create a peaceful and stable environment for Afghanistan development. And China is willing to further strengthen cooperation with Afghanistan in the fields of economy, trade, power generation, agricultural products and anti-terrorism. China is also willing to provide support and assistance on these fields. On these bases, China will promote the tripartite cooperation between China, Afghanistan and Pakistan and deepen cooperation between the two countries in regional affairs. The ancient Chinese civilization is located in the eastern part of the Eurasian continent, but the history of communication and exchanges with the central and western civilizations of the Eurasian continent has never ceased. The "Silk Road" has become a symbol of the eclectic and inclusive Chinese civilization. Among them, Afghanistan, located in the heart of the "Silk Road", witnessed friendly exchanges between China and Afghanistan. Nowadays, China and Afghanistan have steadily advanced their cooperation under the "One Belt and One Road" Initiative. Politically, China established a strategic partnership with Afghanistan in 2012. In 2014, China and Afghanistan decided to further deepen their strategic partnership. The two countries have frequent high-level interactions. And the leaders of the two countries have held consultations on multilateral and bilateral occasions and exchanged views on bilateral issues of mutual interests to support and understand each other's decisions on major issues. Economically, Afghanistan has formulated a comprehensive plan to link up the "One Belt and One Road" Initiative. And China supports powerful Chinese-funded enterprises to participate in infrastructure construction in Afghanistan and promote the interconnection and intercommunication between Afghanistan and other countries. In safety, Zhang Qian visited Afghanistan in order to unite the Great Moon to deal with the Huns in the north in ancient times, while China supports the Afghan National Unity Government to safeguard national security and stability, and promotes the political reconciliation process of "Afghanistan-led, A-

human-owned" and is willing to continue to play a constructive role in this regard nowadays.

The Community of Human Destiny aims to balance the legitimate interests of other countries in pursuing its own interests and promote the common development of all countries in the pursuit of national development. China and Afghanistan are neighbors. The proximity of the two countries mean that the fate of China and Afghanistan is closely linked. The community of human destiny is a community of destiny for China and Afghanistan. The "One Belt and One Road" Initiative demonstrates the vision of cooperation between Afghanistan and China, especially in the interconnection and construction of Urumqi-Kabul route, China-Africa freight direct train opening, etc., which has pushed China has become Afghanistan's largest source of investment and the third largest trading partner. Moreover, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor extends to Afghanistan and connects Afghanistan with the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor, making Afghanistan an important hub for the "One Belt and One Road" to connect South Asia, East Asia and West Asia. Closing economic and trading ties provide an opportunity for China and Afghanistan to deepen political mutual trust, strengthen security and cultural exchanges, and provide opportunities for two countries to build a community of human destiny.

China and Afghanistan actively use multilateral occasions to hold meetings of leaders, which is conducive to strengthening political exchanges, mutual political trust, and promoting the development of bilateral relations between the two countries. During this meeting, the leaders of the two countries reached an agreement on the realities of China and Afghanistan and reached consensus on the future development. China will actively assume its international responsibilities and will play a more active role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and promote the common interests of the two countries. And these strengthen the all-round, multi-disciplinary and in-depth construction and cooperation between China and Afghanistan.

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Successive Attacks on Election Campaign

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Aiming to disrupt the election process, a series of attacks have targeted the election process in different parts of the country. The latest attacks happened on Saturday evening when a suicide attack that targeted an Election Campaign Rally in Takhar province killing at least 22 people and dozen others wounded. Officials confirmed that the death toll at an election rally explosion has risen to 22 and 36 wounded. It happened as motorcycle bomb was detonated just before 2pm local time targeting the campaign rally of Nazifa Beg, a female candidate from Rustaq district of Takhar. She is one of 417 women contesting parliament seats across the country, more than ever before. As quoted from Takhar police said moments after the explosion at least 12 people were killed, and 32 others wounded, but later the local officials said the death toll is up to 22 with two security force members are also among those killed in the explosion. No militant group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

This is the third deadly attack against the election campaign process this month. The last attack comes after an attack at a campaign office in Helmand province which claimed the lives of eight people including the election candidate, Saleh Mohammad Achakzai. On October 3, an explosion targeted an election rally in Nangarhar, killing 14 people killed. At least eight candidates have been killed in insurgent attacks since the beginning of July, soon after the candidate registration process was finalized. On September 25, Nasir Mubarez, a candidate for the Kochis, from Kandahar, was killed by unknown armed men in a shooting in Kandahar City. On September 2, Anwar Niazi, a Parwan candidate, was killed and two others wounded when a magnetic IED was detonated against the vehicle they were traveling in. The incident took place in Kabul city center, in Shirpoor, in PD10, at about 7pm local time.

In August, Jalal Salehi, a candidate from Kabul, was killed during a security forces operation in Kabul's Shakar Dara district. Another candidate, former member of Ghazni provincial council, Sayed Obaidullah Sadat, was killed in Ghazni on July 14 by unknown armed men. On July 1, the Afghan Sikh and Hindu community leader, Ottar Singh Khalsa, who was running for parliamentary elections, was killed in a suicide attack in Jalalabad city in Nangarhar province. And on July 30, another Nangarhar candidate, Hayatullah Khan Rahmani, was killed when a suicide bomber targeted him in Rodat district in the province. Overall, more than 2,500 candidates are running for 249 parliamentary seats in the October 20 elections.

Many countries and organization strongly condemn the brutal attacks on the election; President Ashraf Ghani condemned the attack in a statement, saying that the enemies of Afghans cannot weaken the will of the nation for the success of the democratic process of elections. US Ambassador to Kabul John Bass also condemned the attack and called on the Taliban to do the same. He said if the group is serious about the peace process it will do the same and punish those responsible.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also condemned and blasted targeted the election campaign gathering in Tukhar. They also re-

ject such subversive and terrorist acts, declares taking the side of the sisterly Islamic Republic of Afghanistan against terrorism and extremism, offering condolences and consolation to the victims as well as the government and people of fraternal Afghanistan, and wishing the injured, speedy recovery.

Anyway, the attack on Takhar election rally comes after the recent Taliban Warning! They had warned that they would pull no punches to disrupt the fake process. They also warned the candidates that their actions are only empowering the American-led conspiracy. The Taliban tells candidates that "our creed, country" and "people" cannot "be served under the shadow of foreign occupying forces." "Instead, your nomination and success directly supports the vicious objectives of American invaders by legitimizing their bogus procedures and conspiracies, which is indeed supporting them in killing the pious Muslims and destroying the country by extending the ongoing war," the Taliban says. "Therefore you should refrain from participating in this process due to your Afghan identity and perception."

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said they are concerned about elections-related violence in Afghanistan. "United Nations remains deeply concerned about ongoing elections-related violence in Afghanistan, including today's Herat and Takhar attacks that initial reports indicate killed & injured scores of civilians at campaign events," UNAMA tweeted. According to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), nearly 2,800 civilians were killed and over 5,200 sustained injuries in military action in Afghanistan in the period from January to September 2018.

In response to the series of events, the Afghan Military forces inform of deploying thousands of security forces and severe operation to protect the election process throughout the country. Recently, the deputy spokesman for the Ministry of Interior, Nusrat Rahimi, told reporters last week that "54 thousand defense and security forces are assigned to secure 5,100 polling centers which included 21,000 polling stations on Election Day." Based on their latest reports Oct 13, they launched 22 joint in various parts of the country with support of ANA forces, in which 76 armed terrorists were killed and 40 others have been injured. According to national defense ministry press office to BNA, the operations were conducted in Khost, Ghazni, Helmand, Nangarhar, Logar, Paktia, Kandhar, Faryab, Baghlan, Herat, Badghis, Badakhshan, Sar-e-Pul, Balkh and Nimroz provinces.

The Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoI) accepts that 11 districts are under control of Taliban and 19 other districts are under high-security threats. The MoI Spokesman Najib Danish on Saturday said that these 11 districts are located in northern and southeastern provinces including Dahan-e-Ghori in Baghlan, Nawa in Ghazni, Wardoj-Yamgan in Badakhshan, Kohistanat in Sar-e-Pul, Kakar in Zabul, Nawzad, Musaqla, Khanshin, and Baghran-Deshu in Helmand. The official, however, assured of maintaining the security of the elections across the country.

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