

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



October 26, 2015

## More Achievements by Afghan Women

In a pleasant news item, it has been revealed that two Afghan women - Maryam Durrani and Hasina Nekzad have won the N-Peace Awards for their contribution in peace building and making efforts to transform their communities.

N-Peace awards are given by N-Peace Network, which is a network of peace advocates of different countries in Asia (Pakistan, Nepal, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Philippines) that advance women's and peace issues. It is coordinated by UNDP's Bangkok Regional Hub and supports women's leadership in conflict prevention, recovery, peace-building and more.

Maryam Durrani has been awarded because of her efforts she has made as the founder of the Khadija Kubra socio-cultural organisation and Radio Mirman in Kandahar province and Hasina Nekzad is among civil society and women's rights activists in Herat province. The awards were given to the two activists on Friday at a special ceremony in New York City.

The achievement is really huge, considering the status of women in the Afghanistan and the attitude of society towards them. Nonetheless, it remains a fact that Afghanistan, like any other country, has many talented women who can play their role in earning a reputable name for the country and introducing the necessary positive changes within the society.

Unfortunately, Afghan society has a history of discriminatory behavior towards women and it can be easily observed that even now the incidents violating women rights have not been stopped though there have been many claims of developments. In fact the changes are prevalent only on the exterior while from within the Afghan society still lacks the modernity and development it needs in order to reach to a respectable position. The support and assistance of the international community has only been able to provide clean and beautiful attire not a praiseworthy soul to Afghan society and this attire is going to get dirty very soon. The Afghan social structure has been vehemently dominated by religious extremism and tribal nepotism. Though these factors have affected almost everyone, women have been intensely influenced as they belong to the weaker strata of the society. Most of the self-designed religious doctrines and tribal norms are against the women and discriminate their basic rights. Unfortunately, these norms and doctrines have even gone to the extent of violence and have tortured women physically - mostly in the public. They, in the name of dignity of women, have in fact degraded them. The concept of so-called tribal honor and dignity has not been able to provide safety and respect to Afghan women.

In accordance to parochial tribal norms and extremist religious beliefs women are not meant to get education. Their duties are bound to be inside the boundaries of their houses, which they do not have the right to leave in any condition except after the permission of an authoritative male member. Though there have been some improvements made to counter the traditional beliefs regarding the female education, they are mostly limited to only a couple of large cities, while most of the small cities and villages do not have proper or any arrangement for the education of women. Moreover, the efforts that are carried out in some way or the other are not without opposition - most of the times the opposition comes in the form of ruthless violence. There have been many incidents when the lunatic culprits have thrown acids on the faces of the girls who go to schools. Parents, who are interested to let their girls get education, have to think thousand times because for them the lives of their children are dearer than their education.

It is unfortunate to note that Afghan authorities and many important personalities themselves have favored the recommendations and suggestions to limit the participation of women in social and political lives. As most of these authorities are themselves nourished in an extremist patriarchal society and do not have much consideration regarding the role and empowerment of women and consider it against their tribal values that they come out of their houses, they would never follow a movement to save women from violence and make them achieve their due place in Afghan society.

It is really important that government must not support the discriminatory ideas against the women. Afghan society is a society that has been dominated by male chauvinism and its history has been filled with various incidents of ruthless violence against women. There are different sorts of such incidents every now and then in different parts of country even in today's Afghanistan. Government can prove to be a hope for the women. If it itself encourages the intentions that may undermine the rights of women, it would be very difficult to expect the same from common people. Moreover, the international community in this regard can also play an important role. Though it has mentioned on almost all the important occasions that human rights, especially women rights, have to be given top priority by the Afghan government if it wills to have the support of major countries, it has not been able to make Afghan government pursue a really practical and comprehensive strategy regarding the issue, which is the only solution for preserving the women rights and dignity to a certain extent in Afghan society.

If given their due rights, Afghan women have all the potential and prudence to inspire the world with their abilities and prove that they are not inferior to men at all.



## Increasing Role of Russia and China in International Politics!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

The increasing role of Russia and China in a number of international issues is an indication that miseries and crisis of world desperately wait for a change in the present system of international politics. Russia's intervention in Syrian war is taken by some as an attempt to save the regime of battling Syrian president Bashar-al-Assad and has become a target of criticism by a number of countries but at the same time, it gives hope to all the Syrians and peace-loving people of the world of an end to the bloody Syrian. The war, that has claimed more than 300,000 lives and resulted in the worst refugee influx of the history, is getting more complicated with every passing day. The war started with only two factions; Syrian government forces and their opposition rebels but it gave birth to so many other terrorist organizations that now discriminating between the good and bad has become impossible. There is notorious and barbarous group of ISIS, there are many self-controlled armed militias, there are Jihadi groups supported by US and its Allies and a number of other groups that are far dangerous from once most feared Al-Qaeda. The situation has made Syria a battleground for all these groups and the biggest loser are Syrians who are being killed and injured in between these groups. This war also provided a battleground for regional countries to promote their doctrines in the region. The flames of war have crossed the borders of Syria and Iraq and now the entire Middle East is in a turbulence of insecurity and militancy.

When USA and its allies started this war in 2010, they had not expected such bizarre and ominous situation and now, they seem to have lost control on the game that they planned and started according to their own benefits. In fact, they seem to be absolutely helpless and clueless in the current situation. Even after heavy casualties and destabilization of the whole region, the eventual fate of the war seems bleak and uncertain. In such circumstances, the present setup of the game does not seem to be working and all the countries and people of the region have lost hope from the current players of the game. It was needed that there should be any other power that should come up with some different strategy and put an end to the miseries of the people living in the region. In such circumstances, the Russian intervention appears to be a new hope in resolving this long-standing and brutal conflict. It is hoped that soon ISIS will be wiped out of the region and with this, so many small militant groups will annihilate and world would be able to witness peace and stability in the region. Similarly, Russian offer to Afghan government to tackle the menace of Taliban is of paramount importance for concluding the war that has continued for more than 14 years, even in the presence of international forces and has claimed the lives of tens and thousands of Afghans. Although Taliban disappeared for a couple of years in the beginning of the war in 2002-2003 but then they reappeared and gradually gained strength. After international forces announced to leave Afghanistan by December 2014, the activities of Taliban greatly increased. At present, they are busy in fighting the professional Afghan

Army of more than 350,000 personnel in a number of provinces in the country and every passing day witnesses an increase in their strength and control of areas. Kunduz fell into their hands, which was later recaptured by ANSF but still they maintain a strong hold in a number of towns and villages of the country. According to military analysts, a number of cities in Helmand, Badakhshan, Faryab, Kunduz, Jawzjan and many other provinces are in serious danger of falling to Taliban and once it happens, it will be difficult to contain them and stop them from controlling the throne of power in Kabul.

The mission of Afghanistan was taken to be very simple but it got complicated with involvement of large number of regional and international powers and it became a battleground for them. In such circumstances, people of Afghanistan have also lost and if the present deteriorating security conditions persisted, they might find no other option except to seek the Russian help to curb militancy.

In the same way, China's role in international politics is also increasing. The warm welcome of Chinese president in Britain shows that the balance of power in the world is changing. Both the countries also inked a number of agreements, most importantly those in which China will invest in Britain's nuclear power plants. China is the second largest economy of the world and its rapid economic progress has ensured the world that this country has potential to play an important role in international politics.

While talking of increasing influence of Russia and China in international politics, there is a clear difference between the strategies of the two countries. Russia enjoys a technological edge in the field of arms and weaponry and has maintained a strong army even after the cold war. These factors enable the country to play an effective role on military grounds. On the other hand, China's economic progress and financial stability has been its major weapon in playing an important role in world politics. With its constructive strategy, China has avoided getting into conflict with any country of the world and has invested billions of dollars around the world to leave its long-lasting imprints of economic contribution.

It is the reason why, present day analysts regard the strategy of China as most wise in which they have made large numbers of friends and has avoided making any enemy.

The biggest reason giving rise to the increasing influence of Russia and China in international politics is the failure of strategies adopted by US and its Allies. When US emerged as the sole superpower of the world after the collapse of Russian Federation, its strategy has been intimidation and invasion of different countries by armed invasion, spying and military and economic sanctions. However, this strategy gave birth to large numbers of wars in which US and its Allies were directly or indirectly involved. There is a long list of such countries that were destabilized by this irrational strategy. Iraq, Syria, Israel and Palestine, Cuba, Venezuela, North Korea, Iran, Ukraine, Libya and many other countries are on this list in which majority of them are against USA.

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## Fruitless Struggles and Investments

By Hujjatullah Zia

The deteriorating security situation prompted US President Barack Obama last week to delay plans to pull American forces out of the country next year, with at least 5,500 troops now due to remain after 2017. Heavy sacrifices were rendered by Afghan soldiers and US-led NATO forces within the past fourteen years to bring in peace and security; however the war continues unabated and both Afghan security personal and civilians suffer strongly.

Additionally, the Equality for Peace and Democracy (EPD) has released that the Afghanistan's protracted war and the fight against extremism cost the country a staggering \$9 billion USD last year. "During the fiscal year of 2014 just over \$9 billion was spent on war and fighting extremism." EPD deputy chief Idris Omarzad is cited as saying. This report was released in cooperation with the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), which says this tally, of \$9 billion USD, is a shocking figure and has warned this amount is set to increase this year.

"It is very clear that this year the cost of war and fundamentalism is too high because of ongoing conflict," a Women's Right Activist has said. Similarly, analysts speculate that this year's cost of war will far exceed that of 2014.

A US Congresswoman, Barbara Lee writes, "This war has already cost our nation so much: 2,350 of our brave servicemen and women have made the ultimate sacrifice, more than 20,000 have been wounded and thousands more bear invisible scars. This war has also taken the lives of thousands of Afghans and soldiers from our coalition partners and NATO allies."

She says that while Afghanistan and the region still face significant challenges, history has shown that there is no effective military solution. As John Isaacs, a senior fellow at Council for a Livable World, wrote: "More troops, more time, more money, more casualties will simply not bring the war to a close." According to Lee, only an inclusive political solution can bring peace, stability and prosperity to Afghanistan and the region. The future of Afghanistan must be in the hands of the Afghan people. It's time to bring America's longest war to a close.

After fourteen years of financial and human sacrifices, there is still neither a proper solution for peace and reconciliation nor an effective strategy to end terrorism. The High Peace Council made no achievements and negotiation failed constantly to bear the desired result. After all, Afghanistan should have already stood up on its own feet financially and militarily. Lee aptly points out that the future of Afghanistan must be decided by Afghans not by foreign soldiers. Afghan officials must either find a key to open the door of negotiation or empower the armed forces to end the war militarily.

I believe that resuming peace negotiation will be tantamount to initiation of the previous game - which may continue for a long time and will end without a positive result. One of the reasons behind this nonstop scenario is the Taliban's splinter groups. A rift is going to appear among the Taliban's armed insurgents. Analysts say the recent brief occupation of the northern city of Kunduz has cemented Mansoor's power, boosting his reputation among foot soldiers and causing the US government and NATO to slow plans for withdrawing their troops.

But a leadership battle within the Taliban could create space for militants loyal to the self-styled Islamic State (IS) to expand their foothold in the region, and could discourage Mansoor from resuming Pakistan-backed peace talks with the Afghan government.

Mullah Abdul Manan Niazi, a spokesman for the anti-Mansoor faction, said a new leader would be chosen within days. "There is one agenda, and that's to choose the new emir (leader) unanimously and get rid of Mullah Mansoor," he said.

Niazi said the dissident commanders would not accept Mansour despite the Taliban's brief occupation of Kunduz earlier this month, their most important military success since the US-led invasion toppled the Taliban government in 2001.

Just weeks after the peace talks, Mansoor was hastily appointed head of the Afghan Taliban when Kabul's intelligence agency leaked news that Mullah Omar, the reclusive one-eyed founder of the Taliban, had been dead for more than two years.

During that time, Mansoor issued statements in Omar's name, a subterfuge he said was necessary to unify the insurgency. But many commanders were furious over the deception and refused to accept him. The dissident Taliban faction includes Niazi, a former Taliban provincial governor close to Mullah Omar; Zakir; Mullah Hasan Rahmani and Mohammad Rasool, two Taliban leaders with substantial power bases; and Mullah Abdul Razaq, a former Taliban interior minister. The dissidents say they also have the support of Tayyab Agha, the former head of the political office in Qatar. The Taliban's shaky harmony and frequent rift which lead to splinter groups narrow the chance of a successful negotiation. In other words, the warring parties do not operate under a single leadership and therefore the agreement of one group to cease militancy will not prevent other parties from fighting. So, political instability will not come to end through negotiation. In spite of this fact, the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani gives the green light for "intra-Afghan negotiation", but Pakistan pushes to be involved in the negotiation as a facilitator. However, the main question is that why the heavy sacrifices made within more than a decade remains fruitless? It is the government to answer.

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