

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

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**Hazaras under Targeted Attacks:
An Issue Needed to be
Investigated independently**

Sarwar Danish, 2nd VP, met UNAMA head Yamamoto yesterday, and discussed the need to protect Afghanistan's minorities in wake of recent targeted attacks.

Throughout the 20th century, Hazaras have nearly always been targeted by different regimes in Afghanistan. Also Hazaras as a religious minority have been massacred and tortured repeatedly during the course of history of Afghanistan. The Uprisings of Hazaras have been viciously crushed. Their religious leaders have been jailed; their women have been abducted. And Most Hazaras languished in poverty and humiliation, forced to take menial jobs for tens of decades in Afghanistan.

When The Taliban came to power in 1996, they carried out mass executions of Hazaras and drove them from their lands and meager livelihoods. Tens of thousands of Hazaras sought refuge in frigid mountain hideouts. And many of them left the country to save their lives.

Since the Taliban regime collapsed in late 2001, however, the Hazaras have experienced a communal rebirth. Many Hazaras returned from Iran, Pakistan and other countries to forge a future in their homeland. A new generation joined schools and universities and later found jobs with the United Nations and international firms, aid agencies and Afghan public administration. Indeed, Economically, many flourished. And Politically, they gained more clout.

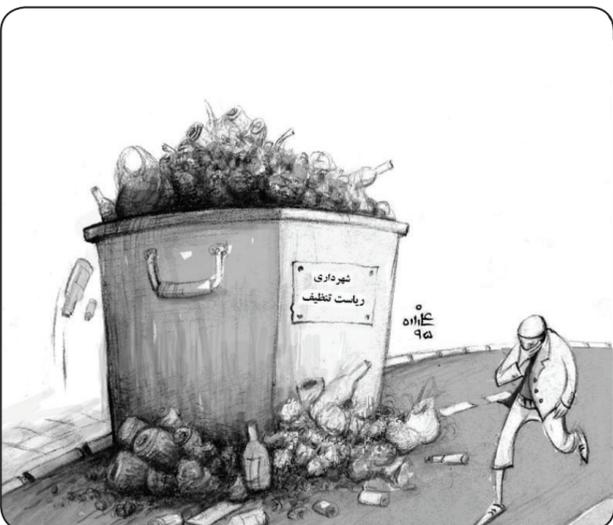
New round of Hazaras Target Killings

Development of Hazaras both ethnically and religiously is not in the favor of certain ethnic and religious groups in Afghanistan and even out of Afghanistan. As a result, they could not tolerate the progress of Hazaras anymore and attacks against them grown rare. In 2011, a suicide bomber in Kabul killed 56 Shiite worshippers, mostly Hazaras, on the holy day of Ashura in the bloodiest sectarian attack of the war. After this bloody incident, specific targeting of Hazaras has steadfastly continued. And in 2012, gunmen in central Ghownr province executed 15 Hazara civilians traveling in a minibus. In a new round of specific target attacks, on 15 August, 2018 ISIS targeted a building where high school graduates were preparing to sit university entrance exams in Shia area of Kabul. The suicide bombing killed 34 students and wounded 57 students. And On September 6, 2018, a double suicide bombing left at least 20 people dead and injured several others in the Dasht-e-Barchi area, located in the western part of Kabul.

Now, a familiar anxiety is boiling up again within the community. The dangerous spiral of sectarian bloodletting in Afghanistan has assumed alarming proportions since the advent of ISIS, also known by their Arabic acronym Daesh. ISIS has reportedly claimed that they attack Hazara Shias because of their involvement in the Syria war. However, the more plausible reason behind the unrelenting attacks on Hazara Shias is the fact that their religious beliefs clash with the radical Islamism propounded by ISIS ideologues.

Despite the target killings of the Hazaras by ISIS, Taliban and other terrorist groups, both the Afghan Government officials as well as the Afghan population, especially Hazaras elites, have not allowed these attacks to increase ethnic and religious tensions in the country. Furthermore, civil society groups, human rights organizations, victims' families and the Afghan security forces have reiterated that, the attackers want to create ethnic and religious conflict in the Afghanistan and we should not let that to happen. The leaders of the Afghan National Unity Government have similarly called upon the Afghan people to not allow these attacks further aggravate ethnic and religious tension in the country. While the National Unity Government has tried to provide security to religious events including for the Sunnis and Shia's events, still it has not been able to prevent the attacks against them completely. It is important to note that prior to the commencement of Shia religious ceremonies, the Afghan Government and the members of this group usually sit together and discuss better mechanisms on how to protect these ceremonies, yet these efforts have been inadequate at best and attacks take place against Shia and Hazaras ceremonies and education and other institutions.

Considering the previous measures taken to reduce attacks on Afghan Minority groups, especially Hazra Shias, the National Unity government shall fulfill its pledges and treat Dasht-e Barchi as a green zone and provide it all the necessary security and intelligence supports it requires. Full cooperation of the community leaders with government shall be ensured. In addition to this, community volunteers to provide security service, shall be used very cautiously due to religious and political sensitivities. Further, investigating attacks of a specific ethnic group in Afghanistan requires to be done independently; in other words factors such as Afghanistan security and political problems should not be involved in the investigation. If doing so, not only the real causes of such attacks will be clarified that can ease the ethnic and religious tensions in the country but it also helps the Afghan government and the International community to tackle this critical issue from a new perspective.

**India Reshapes Surrounding Geopolitics**

By Jiao Nie, Dekai Huang & Hongxi Chen

The US and India held their first "2+2" dialogue in New Delhi on September 6th, attended by their foreign and defense ministers. Both countries agreed to strengthen bilateral defense and security cooperation, but it only mentioned the strengthening of the Indo-Pacific cooperation at the regional level. This indicates that India has limited efforts to strengthen bilateral cooperation with the US, especially to avoid smaller regional cooperation with the US. In contrast, India was more positive at the fourth summit of BIMSTEC (Member states of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) held at the end of August. Currently despite BIMSTEC has not made any substantial progress, India is trying to promote the organization to participate in multi-dimensional cooperation in a broader and wider field such as regional connectivity, coastal shipping, energy transport and tourism, implement more practical cooperation and deeper integration in the bay of Bengal, and further enhance the central position and important role of the organization in the contact with neighboring countries. Through these actions, India has increased its geopolitical layout to surrounding areas, especially trying to break through the traditional cage that India dominates in South Asia and open up the channel of regional cooperation between Southeast Asia and South Asia to reshape India's position in geopolitics on the basis of geo-economy. The fact that India is losing surrounding areas is a geopolitical conspiracy. After the "India-Pacific strategy" launched, the Trump administration of the US intensified its layout in the Indo-Pacific region and its offensive against China, provoking regional powers such as India to adopt hostile attitude and anti-china measures towards China. On the one hand, it ignores China's efforts to change the status quo of poverty and backwardness in the region and safeguard regional peace and stability through "The Belt and Road" initiative. On the other hand, new versions of the "China threat theory" have been constantly put forward, prompting India to form a confrontation with China in various fields and levels. China and India once fell into the shackle of the "zero sum game".

Of course, it's undeniable that Sino-Indian game has also been utilized by some other countries. For a long time, India has been an integral part of the foreign policy and domestic politics of the neighboring countries. However, India's status and role in the surrounding countries have gradually weakened and India has become the target of attacks by the nationalist forces in these countries in the Sino-Indian geopolitical game. In the meantime, they clearly realized that they had greatly reduced their dependence on India and had more choices in foreign relations, and they learned to seek profits in Sino-Indian game. Besides, they are wary of the great power rivalry between China and India and keen to avoid getting caught up in the intense geopolitical game.

Under this "zero-sum game", the interests of both China and India are damaged, which is far from conducive to the implementation of their foreign policies and the maintenance of their national interests. Therefore, a clear understanding of the changes in geopolitical forms in the region and timely adjustment of external strategies according to the concrete situation will contribute to regional stability and maintenance of national interests. China has promoted "The Belt and Road" initiative in South and Southeast Asia and adhered to the new concept of win-win cooperation in international relations. Its purpose is to eliminate barriers between countries, realizing regional peace and prosperity. But India misjudged China's behavior in the region, regarding it as a competitor and antagonist. Consequently, the tense border confrontation appears between China and India and India's relations with neighboring countries have also been strained. These countries have been seeking cooperation with China and India has always been in a passive state in the geopolitical game. In order to change the status quo, the adjustment made by India becomes the key to reduce the game of great powers and enhance the geo-economic cooperation.

In light of the changing geopolitical situation, India is actively adjusting its external strategy. Chinese and Indian leaders held an informal meeting in Wuhan in May 2018, which not only became the first step in improving Sino-Indian relations, but also launched India's adjustment to neighboring relations. In this regard, India changed its attitude to China's enhanced influence in its surrounding areas and began to accept China's strengthening of relations with India's neighboring countries, regarding China as an important participating force in India's regional cooperation. At the same time, India recognizes that the intervention of extraterritorial forces is an important source of political complications in the region. It is not conducive to safeguarding national interests and promoting regional cooperation. On the contrary, it is easy to fall into the "zero-sum game" of geopolitics. Therefore, limited participation in bilateral cooperation with the US and more emphasis on strengthening cooperation with surrounding countries or regions are important measures taken by India to reshape the geopolitical situation in surrounding countries.

The adjustment of surrounding diplomatic strategies made by India is not only to the benefit of maintaining national interests of India and surrounding areas, but also to the benefit of regional peace and stability as well as smooth promotion of regional cooperation. Given this, China and surrounding countries should continue to actively promote joint between regional cooperation protocols so as to realize prosperity and development of regional cooperation.

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Africa's Women Belong at the Top

By Joyce Banda

When I was eight years old, a family friend told my father that he thought I was destined for leadership. My dad never let me forget that heady observation, and as a result of his constant encouragement, I took every opportunity I had to pursue our friend's prophecy. Today, I owe much of my success to my late father, whose belief in me was unwavering.

Unfortunately, most African girls are not as lucky as I was. While many girls possess leadership qualities, social, political, and economic barriers stymie their potential. This is especially true for girls in rural parts of Africa, where poverty, abuse, and tradition conspire to limit opportunity.

The heartbreaking story of my childhood friend, Chrissie, is illustrative. Chrissie was the star student in the village in Malawi where I grew up. But she dropped out of secondary school because her family could not afford the \$6 in monthly fees. Before Chrissie was 18, she was married with a child; she has never left the village where we were born.

Chrissie's experience is repeated millions of times over in my country, across Africa, and around the world. Today, more than 130 million girls worldwide are out of school through no fault of their own. By the time many African girls turn ten, their fate is already determined. Some are victims of harmful cultural practices, like female genital mutilation and child marriage, while others are unable to escape the poverty that grips their families and communities.

Economic bias is especially damaging to girls. When resources are limited, poor families must choose which children to send to school, and in many regions, boys are viewed as "safer" investments. Girls, meanwhile, are married off, or sent to work in the fields or as domestic helpers. These decisions about the allocation of educational opportunity severely stunt female leadership potential.

One of the objectives of the Joyce Banda Foundation is to strengthen the financial independence of Malawian women, and thereby create the conditions for the development and emergence of young girls as future leaders. Evidence shows that when women work, they invest 90% of their income

back into their families, compared with 35% for men. Furthermore, once women have their own sources of income, they are better able to participate in the political process.

Changing endemic cultural norms about gender and identity - and developing more female leaders - begins in the classroom. School-age girls must be taught to value themselves and one another, and that it is their right to be educated, healthy, and empowered. At the Joyce Banda Foundation School in Blantyre, Malawi, educators have adopted a curriculum based on four building blocks: universal values, global understanding, service to humanity, and excellence. Parts of Africa are moving in the right direction. Today, nearly a quarter of Sub-Saharan Africa's lawmakers are women, up from just 10% in 1997. Rwanda, meanwhile, has the highest percentage of female legislators in the world. And throughout Africa, women have been elected to leadership roles at all levels of government.

Still, much work remains. As the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will make clear in its annual Goalkeepers report later this month, governments must recommit to supporting female leaders' development by investing in the health and education of women and girls. Delivering services to girls under ten years of age, especially in rural areas, is essential if Africa is ever to achieve lasting gender equality.

Over the course of my career in Malawi - first in civil society, then as a Member of Parliament, and finally, as president - I became convinced that the only way to change Africa's misogynistic narrative is by helping more women reach the highest levels of power. Research from India shows that when governments increase the percentage of women in their ranks, social issues like health care, education, and food security receive higher priority. Having more women in leadership is thus good for everyone.

Leaders are born as well as made, but when they are born in Africa, they are not always recognized. To give more young women the opportunity to develop their talents and put their skills to work, today's leaders must clear a path for the female leaders of tomorrow.

Joyce Banda, a former president of the Republic of Malawi, is the founder of the Joyce Banda Foundation.

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