

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



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## 60 Years of Sino-Afghan Relations

After the withdrawal of US and NATO from Afghanistan, one of the countries that can play the most important supportive role is People's Republic of China. China, being the strongest of the countries in Asia, can lead Afghanistan to reconstruction, development and peace. And, China at the moment seems ready to take up this role.

It has been 60 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and China. China formally established diplomatic relations with Afghanistan on January 20, 1955, which was then followed by Premier Zhou Enlai and Vice Premier He Long's visit to Afghanistan, wherein they met King Zahir Shah and the foundations for mutual understanding between the two countries were laid.

The year 2015 is being celebrated as the year of Friendship and Cooperation between China and Afghanistan and both the countries have already celebrated the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. The celebrations took place during the last week in Afghanistan by Presidential Palace and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Chinese Ambassador to Afghanistan - Deng Xijun, while participating in the ceremony held in the Afghan Foreign Ministry emphasized that both China and Afghanistan will continue to work in cooperation for a better future of bilateral relations. He also mentioned that China has actively supported the Afghan peaceful reconstruction process within its own capacity, and that China has built important projects such as Jamhoriyat (Republic) hospital, the teaching building of the Chinese Language Department and the Guest House of Kabul University in the country. He further added that both countries have conducted good cooperation in security and counter-terrorism and China-Afghanistan relationship is standing at a new historical starting point and facing new opportunities for further development.

There is no doubt in the fact that Sino-Afghan relations are at a historical starting point as China could be in the leading role in the post withdrawal Afghanistan. It can definitely play a constructive role in the peace process in Afghanistan and China has already given the indication that it is ready to support Afghanistan in this regard. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani also believes that China could be really supportive for Afghanistan in the upcoming challenges. Talking during a ceremony at Arg last week, he expressed hope that Beijing could play proactive role in Afghan peace process, adding lasting peace in Afghanistan would benefit Afghanistan, China and the whole region.

On the other hand, China can also have an immense role to play in the economic stability of Afghanistan and promoting the business and financial self sufficiency of the country. In this regard, China has already given the willingness that it will not leave Afghanistan's hand. During President Ghani's visit to China, China reiterated that it would keep economic support continue for Afghanistan. It announced a non-reimbursable grant of around USD 81.4 million for 2014 and another grant of USD 244 million for 2015-2017. Moreover, the announcement of around USD 3.5 billion by Metallurgic Corporation of China for the development of Aynak Copper mines is another important contribution that can have a lasting impact on the overall economy of Afghanistan.

Another important factor that can uplift the economic position of Afghanistan is the initiation of the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road commonly known as 'One Road - One Belt'. It is gaining support and acceptance in the Eurasian and Southeast Asian nations and it is believed that it can be a vital route for growing businesses in the region. As Afghanistan is a conduit connecting Central Asia and South Asia, it has a vital role in the project and at the same time can benefit to a great extent from it. During President Ghani's visit to China, Chinese President Xi Jinping told clearly, "China will enhance its support for Afghanistan's peaceful reconstruction, help Afghanistan frame a plan on national economic and social development, train professionals and develop agriculture, hydroelectricity and infrastructure."

Therefore, it was for the first time that China held an international conference on Afghanistan. As a host of the 'Heart of Asia Conference,' China seems completely prepared to shoulder its regional initiatives and responsibilities for promotion of peace and development in Afghanistan. Ashraf Ghani's first state visit to China provided an opportunity for an in depth exchange of views between the Chinese and Afghan leadership. During the visit, President Ghani was told by the Chinese President Xi Jinping that "China will enhance its support for Afghanistan's peaceful reconstruction, help Afghanistan frame a plan on national economic and social development, train professionals and develop agriculture, hydroelectricity and infrastructure." Apart from economic and political support, China has always continued support for Afghanistan in different other sectors as well. Education and capacity building have been among the most important ones. China, during President Ghani's visit, also promised to provide 500 scholarships to students and train 3,000 Afghan professionals in various fields in the next five years. President Ashraf Ghani had said earlier, "Afghanistan views China as a reliable strategic partner and believes that China can help it speed up its development and is ready for a long-term strategic cooperative partnership with China." And, currently it seems very evident that China is ready to take up that role.



## The Horrible Corruption And Future Strategies

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

According to the independent media sources and government statistics, more than 1.4 trillion dollars have been spent in Afghanistan by US and its allies since the ouster of Taliban in 2001. This huge amount of money includes all the expenditure like military budget, infrastructure and spending for development and non-development projects. Of course, the majority of this amount went back to US in the form of salaries to the forces and large numbers of advisors and trainers and of course, giant US contractors and construction companies. The money given to the NGOs also makes a huge amount but majority of these funds were spent for the salaries of their heads who were from foreign countries like US and a number of European countries and in this way, the funds failed to achieve their objectives.

Without going into details of the money spent and wasted, the international spending on Afghanistan leaves behind a sad story. Even after spending of billions of dollars, nothing has much changed for the common public. The biggest problem still faced by Afghans is the absence of a firmly established and smoothly running factories and other organs of economy due to which the country is not able to generate its own revenue and its key institutions are still dependent on international donations even for their daily operations. As for 2014, the revenue of the government was slightly higher than 2 billion dollars while it needed about 9 billion dollars for its expenses which indicates that government is going to depend on international donations for many years to come. Due to the poorly-planned and uncontrolled spending in last 13 years of democracy, majority of the money was wasted in unnecessary projects and ended up in the pockets of a few. Due to this fact, the direct effects of it hardly reached to majority of the masses who are still living in the miserable conditions. As stated in a number of reports by international organizations, majority of Afghans are still living below the line of poverty. The system of roads is present only in major cities while majority of the highways have been destroyed by IEDs and heavy military convoys of foreign and national forces. Thousands of schools have been built in every corner of the country but dozens of schools are destroyed by Taliban and other anti-state elements every year. According to a UN report, more than 100 schools were destroyed in 2013 alone and the condition was not much different for 2014. In the same way, majority of public still has no access to clean drinking water while almost all the remote towns and villages are without electricity. The differences between some major cities and small towns and villages is a source of great frustration for the majority of masses and may be the reason for their overall disdain for this system that has benefitted a very few and left the majority deprived of its benefits.

The condition is really disturbing and surprising for many experts inside and outside the country. War-time spending or massive government spending has been found very effective in bringing economic change in an area on a vast scale. Americans came out of the painful pangs of the Great Depression by increased government spending in the beginning and then during and after the Second World War. In the same way, absolutely destroyed nations of Europe soon came out of their destruction

and built their countries in a short span of time by the huge aid of American government. According to this plan, called Marshall Plan, a total of 103 billion dollars were spent from 1948-52 in sixteen war-torn countries of Europe. This spending brought a wave of economic activities in these countries and soon these countries were able to recover from the effects of war and it didn't take long until these nations also got included among the developed nations of the world. However, in case of Afghanistan, all the plans and expectations have not worked accordingly and we are still many years far before we become a sustainable nation, without depending on foreign aid for meeting our budget requirements.

The major reason for this miserable condition is the wide-spread corruption which is verified by the annual reports of Transparency International according to which the country always acquires either of the first two positions among the most corrupt nations of the world. Practically, we are considered to be the most corrupt nation on earth. But it was the bad luck of the country that corruption started on all the different levels right from the first day when the international donations started flowing into the country. As claimed by Afghans during the reign of Hamid Karzai, the level of corruption rises as high to the generals of international forces, the owners and executive officers of US and European contractors who won the projects worth billions of dollars. The level of corruption is also high on the lower levels but they never had any access to the gigantic amount of money being brought and wasted in the country.

Due to this massive corruption, if the conditions of common public has not witnessed any visible change, there has emerged a small group that has accumulated unbelievable amount of money and with the help of this money, has bought unlimited power and approach in the country. From this perspective, the fate of the country is restricted in a few hands only and they have made a cartel in which their own relatives or class people get access to the power and all the resources of the country. It is due to this unequal distribution of money that some people in Kabul and other major cities can afford the most expensive luxury vehicles of the world and live in the unbelievably expensive villas and farm-houses. But the biggest blow of this corruption was to give birth to a system when corruption and bribe-acceptance has become the trend of the day and it is considered as something of routine, starting from a watchman to the important government officials. As this virus has penetrated deep into the society and its members, it would take many years before the people get rid of this habit. But if not, the resultant consequences might bring an end to already tattered country.

In the future, the main focus of our government and international powers should be to strengthen the economy and infrastructure of the country as majority of people have been found to be involved in corruption due to economic fears and uncertainties. In the same way, more funding would be needed to educate people for living a decent and dignified life, and to weed out the corruption from the roots of the society. This would be the prime agenda and objective of our present and future governments as well.

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## Freedom - The Citizens' Basic Rights

By Hujjatullah Zia

Man is born free and can enjoy this right as an integral element of a dignified life. In order to enjoy freedom, a person should be free from inhibitions of the social structure in carrying out their free will. Freedom is enhanced by the ability of citizens to participate in their government and have their voice, interests and concerns recognized as valid and acted upon. Isaiah Berlin recognized two main types of liberty. Berlin described a statement such as "I am slave to no man" as one of Negative Liberty, that is, freedom from another individual's direct interference. He contrasted this with a Positive Freedom statement such as "I am my own master", which lays claim to a freedom to choose one's own pursuits in life.

Charles Taylor's clarification may be even more useful. Taylor explains that Negative Freedom is an "opportunity-concept": one possesses Negative Freedom if one is not enslaved by external forces, and has equal access to a society's resources. Positive Freedom, says Taylor, is an "exercise-concept": possessing it might mean that one is not internally constrained; one must be able to act according to their highest self - according to reason. Put in the simplest terms, one might say that a democratic society is a free society because it is a self-determined society, and that a member of that society is free to the extent that he or she participates in its democratic process. But there are also individualist applications of the concept of positive freedom.

For example, it is sometimes said that a government should aim actively to create the conditions necessary for individuals to be self-sufficient or to achieve self-realization. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which was adopted on 16 December 1966 and ratified by Afghanistan on 24 January 1983, includes the basic and integral rights of a man to be observed by the state members. Those rights are:

- 1 - Physical integrity, in the form of the right to life and freedom from torture and slavery
- 2 - Liberty and security of the person, in the form of freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention.
- 3 - Procedural fairness in law, in the form of rights to due process, a fair and impartial trial, the presumption of innocence, and recognition as a person before the law.
- 4 - Individual liberty, in the form of the freedoms of movement, thought, conscience and religion, speech, association and assembly, family rights, the right to a nationality and the right to privacy.
- 5 - Prohibition of any propaganda for war as well as any advocacy of national or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence

by law.

6 - Political participation, including the right to vote.

7 - Non-discrimination, minority rights and equality before the law. The ICCPR states in article 9 as, "Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law." This article recognizes the rights to liberty and security of the person. It prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, requires any deprivation of liberty to be according to law, and obliges parties to allow those deprived of their liberty to challenge their imprisonment through the courts.

These provisions apply not just to those imprisoned as part of the criminal process, but also to those detained due to mental illness, drug addiction, or for educational or immigration purposes. Moreover, item 1 article 18 of ICCPR declares, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching." In item 2 and 3 it says, "No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others." Finally, in item 4 it adds, "The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions."

It is said in the permeable of the Constitution of Afghanistan, "... Form a civil society void of oppression, atrocity, discrimination as well as violence, based on rule of law, social justice, protecting integrity and human rights, and attaining peoples' freedoms and fundamental rights ...." Furthermore, article 7 says, "The state shall observe the United Nations Charter, inter-state agreements, as well as international treaties to which Afghanistan has joined, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights..."

Although the integral sources of the Afghanistan's law root in Islamic sharia which hold human and his rights, including the rights to freedom, in high esteem and also our country has ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and ICCPR, yet the human rights are violated to a large extent and people's freedoms are disturbed in one way or another. Hope the Executive Power act more seriously and protect the rights of the citizens that include freedom

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