

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



April 15, 2015

Efforts to Discourage Modern Education

Taliban insurgents have always opposed the modern education system and in various ways they have tried to bring harm to schools and students and teachers in different parts of the country.

In an incident on Tuesday, April 14, Taliban insurgents blew up a school in Sherin Tagab district of northern Faryab province. According to the reports some armed men in Sahraee-Qala locality of the district placed explosive under the facility and blew the school up. However, the teachers and school staff were not in the school at the time of explosion.

This incident clearly shows the intentions of Taliban and their hatred for modern education. They, in all the possible ways, strive to discourage the modern schools, colleges and universities as they consider them non-Islamic. They believe that their syllabi are based on western education and would ultimately lead the students astray. However, they fail to understand that it is through modern education that the most powerful countries of the world rule the contemporary socio-political and economic scenario.

Ill-fatedly, Afghanistan is one of the countries that are highly influenced by such people who intend to block all the ways to advancement and modernization. Blinded by religious extremism and obsolete tribal values, they are always ready to oppose any sort of efforts that are dedicated to disseminate education to the people of Afghanistan, as they know that the modern education that has been spread in the country to a certain level may encourage evolution and modern changes.

Taliban are among the same kind of people. They have been trying to eliminate all the efforts that are targeted at spreading modern education in Afghanistan. They, still, live in the era that is ancient and obsolete, but they are not capable of realizing this fact. They, as a matter of fact, strive to obstruct the rising sun, which is impossible, as sun has to rise some day and show its light to the people. And, the people have to follow the light of the sun as walking in dark would never help them and show them their destination.

With the rise of Taliban in 1996, the decline of modern education system, which was already in a pathetic condition, started. Taliban banned the female education and promulgated the madrasah system of education. In almost all the madrasahs the curriculum contained the Arabic recitation, without translation and further elaboration of different perspectives. The students were confined to a single approach towards education and that was the Clergy approach, which depended on an extremist elucidation of Islam and Islamic concepts. Investigation and research were banned strictly, and students called as Talibs were not allowed to question their teachers. Rather, they were asked to blindly follow what the Clergy approach had to offer them. The basic purpose of education was thus non-existent in the so called education systems of Taliban. They were more like training camps for generating cadre for terrorist groups.

Taliban, today as well, have been making different sorts of efforts to discourage the growth of modern education in Afghanistan in some way or the other. There have been incidents when they have bombed schools, killed the guiltless students and teachers, poisoned the students and even thrown acid on the faces of innocents girls who go to school.

Such a scenario is really tragic and the government must make efforts to launch practical measures to curb the situation. Condemning the incident alone would not be sufficient to discourage such ruthless activities and would in the long run deprive the people of Afghanistan from better opportunities to get education. It is important that the government must inculcate within our people the worth and importance of modern education and must encourage it as much as possible.

It is an undeniable fact that the nations that have opposed education have, in fact, blocked their own way to success. They are the ones who themselves have tied their feet and hands with the ropes and are not able to move ahead even though they need to do so. At the same time, they are the ones who have blindfolded themselves and think that there isn't anything around them to see. They are, in short, in the process of fooling their own selves.

Ultimately, they are the ones who would be greatly influenced by the negative impacts of all such behavior. Though they think that they are performing some great service to their nations by keeping it unpolluted and unaffected by the germs of education, in reality, they are bounding and isolating themselves and letting themselves decay instead of being active part of the real world that demands progress, growth and modern education.

At present time, nothing is so urgently required for our nation as modern education - Education that should be based on up to date information, analysis and developments in different fields of knowledge and must be aided with modern technology; education that can give the coming generation of Afghanistan an outlook other than extremism. And all these have to be provided to the people of Afghanistan without charging them much, as majority of the people are already suffering severely under the reign of deteriorated socio-economic situation.

Accelerating Building of the Belt and Road, Forging China-Afghanistan Community of Common Destiny

By Deng Xijun

In September and October of 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the initiatives of jointly building a Silk Road Economic Belt and a 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (hereinafter referred to as the Belt and Road), which has attracted close attention from all over the world. Up to now, more than 60 countries including Afghanistan along the routes and international organizations have shown great interest in taking part in the development of the Belt and Road. In order to promote the implementation of the Initiative, instill vigor and vitality into the ancient Silk Road, the Chinese Government has drafted and published the Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road in recent days. With the nature of white paper, the main contents of this document are as follows:

First, the objectives are more definite. Promoting the initiative to jointly build the Belt and Road, will not only meet the need of China to further expand and deepen its opening-up, but also serve the common interests of countries along the routes, and answer the call of our time for global cooperation. The Belt and Road is designed to uphold the global free trade regime and the open world economy, to carry out broader and more in-depth regional cooperation of higher standards; and to promote the connectivity of Asian, European and African continents and their adjacent seas, thus realizing diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these countries. It will help align the development strategies of the countries along the Belt and Road, and enable peoples of the relevant countries to understand, trust and respect each other and live in harmony, peace and prosperity.

Second, the ideas are much clearer. The Silk Road Economic Belt focuses on bringing together China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe; linking China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea through Central Asia and West Asia; and connecting China with Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean. The 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road is designed to go from China's coast to Europe through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean in one route, and from China's coast through the South China Sea to the South Pacific in the other. On land, the Initiative will focus on jointly building a new Eurasian Land Bridge and developing economic corridors by taking advantage of international transport routes, relying on core cities along the Belt and Road and using key economic industrial parks as cooperation platforms. At sea, the Initiative will focus on jointly building smooth, secure and efficient transport routes connecting major sea ports along the Belt and Road.

Third, the contents are more substantial. Strengthening policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bond are major contents of the Belt and Road. For the building of the Belt and Road, enhancing policy coordination is an important guarantee. We should promote intergovernmental cooperation, expand shared interests, and reach new cooperation consensus. Facilities connectivity is a priority area. We should focus on the key passageways, junctions and projects of transportation, energy and communications, forming an infrastructure network connecting all sub-regions in Asia, and between Asia, Europe and Africa step by step. Investment and trade cooperation is a major task. We should strive to improve investment and trade facilitation, and remove investment and trade barriers, so as to unleash the potential for expanded cooperation. Financial integration is an important underpinning. We should expand the scope and scale of bilateral currency swap and settlement with other countries along the Belt and Road, make joint efforts to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and strengthen financial regulation cooperation. People-to-people bond provides the public support. We should promote extensive cultural and academic ex-

changes, media cooperation, so as to win public support for deepening bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Fourth, the mechanisms are more pluralistic. In promoting this initiative, China will follow the principle of wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. The programs of development will be open and inclusive, not exclusive. It will be a real chorus comprising all countries along the routes, not a solo for China itself. To develop the Belt and Road is not to replace existing mechanisms or initiatives for regional cooperation. Much to the contrary, we will build on the existing basis to help countries align their development strategies and form complementarities. It respects the paths and modes of development chosen by different countries, abides by market rules and international norms, and accommodates the interests and concerns of all parties involved. It advocates peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. It promotes practical cooperation in all fields, and works to build a community of shared interests, destiny and responsibility featuring mutual political trust, economic integration and cultural inclusiveness.

Fifth, the measures are more pragmatic. For more than a year, Chinese leaders have met with leaders of relevant countries, reaching a broad consensus on the Belt and Road Initiative. China has signed MOUs of cooperation on the joint development of the Belt and Road with some countries, and has promoted a number of key cooperation projects in the fields of infrastructure connectivity, industrial investment, trade and financial cooperation, cultural exchanges and so forth, where the conditions are right. A number of international summits, seminars and expos on the theme of the Belt and Road Initiative have been held. Thanks to the concerted efforts of relevant parties, substantive progress has been made in the establishment of the AIIB, the Silk Road Fund has been launched, and constructions of a number of infrastructure connectivity projects are moving forward. The Belt and Road is bringing and will continue to bring real benefits to the countries along the routes.

Sixth, the prospects are much broader. Belt and Road Initiative is not a private undertaking for China itself, but a common desire and common cause for all the relevant countries. China is willing to carry out joint research, forums and fairs, personnel training, exchanges and visits under the framework of existing bilateral, multilateral, regional and sub-regional cooperation mechanisms, so that all the relevant countries will gain a better understanding and recognition of the contents, objectives and tasks of the Belt and Road Initiative. China will join other countries along the Belt and Road to substantiate and improve the content and mode of the Belt and Road cooperation, work out relevant timetables and roadmaps, and align national development programs and regional cooperation plans. China will work with countries along the Belt and Road to steadily advance demonstration projects, jointly identify programs that accommodate bilateral and multilateral interests, and accelerate the launching of programs that are agreed upon by parties and ready for implementation, so as to ensure early harvest. Afghanistan is not only one of the important countries along the ancient Silk Road, but also among the first regional countries actively echoed the Belt and Road strategic concept, which have been highly valued by President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and former President Hamid Karzai. As an important neighboring country to the west of China, Afghanistan used to be the traffic hub connecting central Asia, south Asia and west Asia, and has tremendous geographical potentiality. China wishes to take the opportunity to work together with the Afghan side, to inherit and carry forward the Silk Road Spirit, to write a new chapter of the Silk Road and build the China-Afghanistan community of common destiny, so as to create a happy life for all of us.

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Badakhshan Tragedy Demands Serious Follow-up!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

The tragic incident of Badakhshan finally unveiled so many sensitive issues that were kept forbidden and out of the reach of public discussion. The nation as a whole admires the efforts, professionalism, sacrifices and dedication of our security forces in which the most honored group is of National Army but I think it is still not much late to raise some of the unsolved questions and get their answers. If today, we sleep comfortably in our houses and walk with safety in our cities and towns, the credit goes to the efforts and dedication of our security forces. It is a sad fact that corruption has gone deep into the roots of our country and all the walks of life and it is no surprise if it is the case with our security forces but the case of security forces cannot be compared to any walk of life. Corruption of civil servants, ministers, traders and other people might harm the country but corruption in security forces is so injurious that it might bring an end to the existence of the country.

Badakhshan incident resulted in the martyrdom of more than 30 soldiers of National Army. There are also reports that some of the soldiers are still missing and they are feared to be kidnapped by the militants. Militants not only inflicted heavy losses on the soldiers but they also burnt their equipments and looted the weapons. The fact shows a drastic picture when the forces were left with no option except to kill or die and in the end, they preferred the death of honor on the shameful arrest and torture. According to media reports, our brave soldiers bravely fought and resisted the heavy attack of militants for more than six hours and they kept requesting for reinforcement but no help arrived and in the end, they were left on the mercy of militants. The reports also reveal that our forces could have retreated and saved their lives but there was no enough fuel left in the tanks as the fuel was sold by their corrupt officers. In the end, they sacrificed their lives for their country and the countrymen.

The sad incident raises many questions about the corruption, the criminal negligence and lack of coordination in our forces and the way officers left the helpless soldiers on the mercy of militants and did nothing to save their lives. As it gets clear, the worthy lives of these soldiers could have been saved had their officers taken a little interest in the issue.

As media reported, the soldiers kept resisting for six hours until their ammunition and resistance got exhausted. These six hours are more than enough to send reinforcement from the neighboring provinces but also from the capital Kabul. Alas, nothing was done and the forces were left on their own.

In the same way, they could have easily retreated but in the final moments, it was discovered that the fuel was not enough in the depots and the fuel was sold by the corrupt officers. Having a look at the great loss that the nation and bereaved families experienced, this discovery of corruption is shocking and disappointing.

Once again, the officers and the concerned ministry came with the repeated excuses. Once again, the foreign hands were blamed for this attack, which is not a new discovery. We have been hearing about the foreign hands responsible for sabotaging the security of the country since the inception of democratic government in the country but it is a fact that no

serious efforts have been made to identify and chop down these foreign hands. Once again, the lack of cooperation by the foreign forces was given as an excuse but now, this excuse carries no weight. As the foreign forces have handed over the authority to our forces, they can no more be held responsible for our laziness and negligence. In the same way, there are also reports that a single helicopter could have changed the scenario of the war but no helicopter arrived. On the other hand, it is a general observation that these helicopters are extensively used for the transportation of so-called corrupt ministers and Generals. Why not a helicopter was spared to save the lives of those whose lives make more difference than those of corrupt ministers and Generals?

The media also reports that the responsible officer was in Kabul on the day of incident and there was no proper high command to direct the soldiers. I am sure the work of these officers was not more important than the lives of our soldiers.

As usual, the parliament has summoned the responsible officers of military into the parliament to explain their position in this regard. As a nation, we have no hopes from this often-repeated drama. As mentioned earlier, same old excuses would be given and the incident would be forgotten until we are awakened by another similar incident in future. It is also strange that a parliament is summoning the officers for their corruption and negligence at a time when the entire house is under severe criticism for their bribe-acceptance and corruption in case of accepting or rejecting the candidates for ministries being introduced by the government. It is due to this monkey business that our ministries are still functioning without ministers even after six months of the formation of a government.

The incident had the biggest blow on the morale of our soldiers in National Army who are working with all the dangers. They are not only angry and sad on the loss of their fellow compatriots but also angrier on the laziness, corruption and lack of concern of their officers. The incident conveyed a message to them that their lives carry no meaning for their officers and they can be left on their own without any help from those who could have easily saved the lost lives. Such a perception can be both viral and lethal. If this feeling penetrated into the lines of soldiers, they might not take proper interest in their duties and responsibilities and may not exhibit the required dedication. If this feeling and perception persisted, it may be very dangerous for the mere existence of the country as after All, our hopes are pinned with our security forces for the protection of the country.

This incident has also given us all an opportunity to look into the issues that were kept forbidden. A proper investigation should be carried out and all the responsible officers should be tried and properly punished. It is the call of masses that the President and the Chief Executive should take exclusive interest in this issue. All the findings of this investigation should be made public and responsible officers should be dealt with harshly.

Just like the said area of Badakhshan, many areas of the country have fallen into the hands of militants. Wide-scale military operation should be conducted to clear these areas and bring them under the control of government forces.

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