

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



February 22, 2018

Insecurity Threatens the Lives of Children

Children, without any doubt, are the builders of a nation. Educated, healthy and motivated children guarantee a prosperous future. Therefore, it is advisable and many countries practically strive to protect the children from all sorts of evils and promise them better living standards. It is essential that all the people in the world and all the governments realize that they have a special responsibility towards the children which they have to fulfill in every condition.

Moreover, special attention should be given to the children who are living in instable societies, like Afghanistan, among myriads of economic and social problems and who have to undergo violence and discrimination, as well. There are various ways in which children are influenced, but one of the most direct ways is that they are directly dragged or pushed in the war. There have been various cases, in Afghanistan, when children have been recruited by the insurgents and they have been made to fight the wars in different parts of the country. The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has, on many occasions, voiced out concerns in this regard and has condemned any sort of situation wherein children are used to fight a war. At the same time, the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoI) has also admitted to the existence of child soldiers, saying Taliban bring these children from Madrassas to the battle field.

There have been many incidents of suicide attacks in different parts of the country, wherein the attacker were below 16 years of age. Apart from that the children are also welcomed by the militant groups with the intention to have a cadre that they can train in accordance to their own will, within their training camps.

There have been certain cases, as well, when security forces have used children for the war; however, such incidents are very scarce. And, for the last few years, there have been improvements in this regard and steps are being taken to eliminate the trend. Moreover, the lawmakers and decision makers as a whole must stand against this trend so that tangible measures can be taken. There are hopes that if the commitments are pursued with complete determination, its practical implication would be made possible by all means.

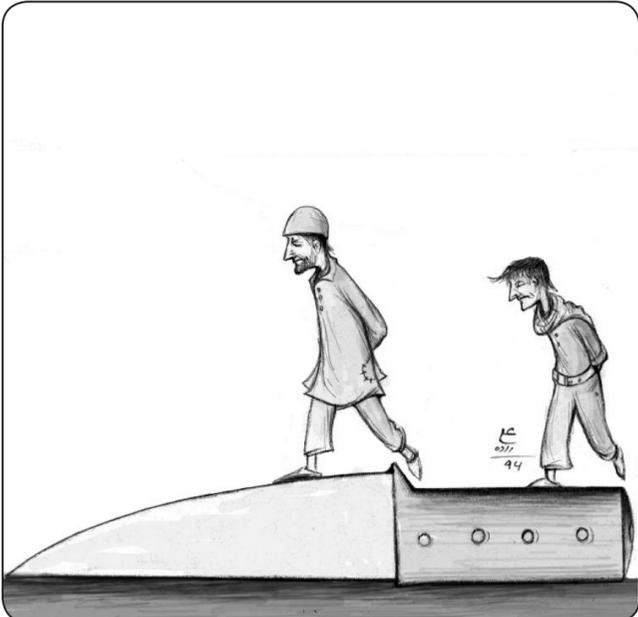
Recruitment of the children both by Taliban militants and security forces will definitely result in violence against children and their abuse. The attitude of a trained militant clearly depicts the fact that the training sessions in their training camps do involve severe kind of violence and maltreatment. Another type of violence includes the killing and maiming of the children because of the conflict-related violence. This also includes accidental killings or injuries by the national and international security forces, which, though relatively are much lower than the ones committed by the terrorists. Unfortunately, most of the deaths or injuries in this regard have been the result of the violent attacks of the terrorists on schools and hospitals. Such attacks do not only take precious lives but tend to inflict fear among parents and children regarding attending schools.

There are many other ways in which insecurity and indifference influence children. Many children, because of improper birth or because of lack of health facilities and insufficient nutrition either die in the very beginning of their lives or able to drag on their lives with certain physical deformities and serious diseases. Most of the children of the society are not able to have access to education, either because of the financial problems or the traditional hatred of the parents for modern schooling system.

The girls in this regard suffer even to more extreme levels. Moreover, the children who do not get a chance to be admitted in school are then sent out for labor so that they can prove to be a helping hand for their parents and in the process they are left at the mercy of the social evils. Child labors are exposed to crimes and maltreatment to a risky extent, especially the ones who are employed by shop-owners, mechanics and small firms. They are even put to violent treatment by their employers on pity matters. Further, another concerning factor regarding the plight of the children in Afghanistan is the growing number of child beggars.

Families, stricken with intense poverty, do not hesitate even to send their children for begging. Apart from that, there are professional beggars who utilize the helpless children for the begging purposes.

The security of the children against all sort of violence, their proper nourishment and their character development are the most important considerations to contemplate on, if the government is really serious to safeguard the rights of the children. The same children are going to be the builders of future; their proper care should be ascertained through every possible means. Apart from the government the members of the society can also play a tremendous role in diminishing violence against the children and uplifting their morale.



What is the Chinese Path? (Part 2)

By Liu Jinsong

Afghan friends often express their admiration after visiting Shanghai, Beijing and other Chinese cities. They believed that China has already been a developed country and a world leading power. But I told them very frankly that this perception is not accurate. If they visited the western part and countryside of China, they will surely have a more comprehensive understanding about my country. The report of the 19th National Congress of the CPC pointed out, China is still and will long remain in its primary stage of socialism. China is still the largest developing country in the world. At present, China's per capita GDP only ranks 70th in the world, even if reaching 12,000\$ per capita, it is still only around one quarter of the U.S and ranks 60th in the world. It is an arduous task for China to win the battle against poverty. China still have 30 million people, which is about the entire Afghan population, waiting to be lifted out of poverty in the next three years. Our development quality and efficiency are still not high enough. Our innovation ability is also not strong enough. Our people are still facing many difficulties in employment, education, health-care, housing, elderly care and etc. Social contradictions and problems are intertwined, and there is a long way to go in protecting the environment. We also have new developments in national security, and many uncertainties in external environment. Some people are still unfriendly or prejudicial to China, and even want to break down, mess up and split China.

For all these reasons, the Chinese Path has the fourth characteristic that it will not be a road running smoothly, but a road facing huge difficulties and challenges. China needs to forge ahead to overcome difficulties, stay focused and keep a clear mind, be itself in front of praise and blame. It's not realistic to assume China to take up the foreign aiding responsibility like those developed countries or do something beyond its national strength. As a big power, China has big responsibility; as a big country, China has its own challenge. There are so many things that China needs to do both at home and abroad. It is not easy for this developing country to offer limited resources to help other countries. This should be fully understood by friends in developing countries including Afghanistan.

China can not develop without a peaceful international environment and a stable international order. To this end, China has been actively exploring its global partnerships, promoting coordination and cooperation with other major countries and hoping to develop a healthy and stable Sino-US Relations, deepening relations with its neighbors including Afghanistan in accordance with the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness. China welcomes all parties to take the express train or free ride of China's development. In the next five years, China will import 10 trillion U.S. dollars goods and services, absorb 600 billion U.S. dollars foreign investments, and have a total foreign investment of 750 billion U.S. Dollars. Chinese tourists going abroad will also reach 700 million. All these will bring tremendous benefits to the world.

China is pursuing major-country diplomacy with its own features, actively struggling to be a world peace keeper, global development contributor, and international order defender. Instead of merely focusing on its own stability and development, China will continue to play its part as a major and responsible country, keep contributing Chinese wisdom, solution and strength to global governance, take an active part in reforming and developing the global governance system, and actively participate in diplomatic mediation and political settlement of international hot spot issues such as Afghan affairs.

China emphasizes pursuing a self-independent foreign policy of peace, upholding an open and win-win strategy, pursuing a defensive national defense policy and following the path of peaceful de-

velopment. China will never seek hegemony or engage in expansion, or impose its own will to others, and will never interfere in another countries' internal affairs, or pursue development at the expense of others' interests. These are effective principles, stemming from Chinese cultural traditions and internalized in Chinese blood, will only be consolidated and carried forward with the rising of China.

Thus, the fifth characteristic of the Chinese Path is that it is a road to forge a new type of international relations and a community of shared future for all mankind. It carries forward the spirit of mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win-win cooperation. It features the principles of communication instead of confrontation, partnership instead of alliance. It is a strong note of the cause of international peace and development and a gospel for all developing countries.

The Belt and Road Initiative has been written into the Constitution of the CPC. China is making every effort to promote the construction of the Initiative and strive to realize policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds, in the aim of building a new platform for international cooperation. The reason for the Initiative has become a most popular public good in the world today lies in its successful grasping of the principle international contradictions, such as deficit in development, governance and peace. It upholds development as the largest common denominator of the world, and activate relevant countries' dream to rejuvenate the Silk Road. The Belt and Road Initiative will expand effective supply and demand, promote the re-balance of the world economy, create access, business opportunities and employment for the least developed countries, especially those landlocked countries such as Afghanistan. It will benefit Afghanistan by improving its position in the global value chain.

Today, China has signed cooperation agreements on the Belt and Road Initiative with 80 countries and regions including Afghanistan, started institutionalized capacity cooperation with over 30 countries and promoted the building of 75 overseas economic and trade cooperation zones in 34 countries along the route. Chinese enterprises have invested over 50 billion U.S. dollars in countries along the route and increased tax revenues by more than 10 billion U.S. dollars and created nearly 200,000 employments for relevant countries, including nearly 1,000 jobs in Afghanistan. China supports Afghan efforts of promoting regional economic cooperation and connectivity. Chinese enterprises have already participated in some projects.

Practice has proved that the Chinese Path and the Belt and Road Initiative support each other. Chinese Path is not only a path for the Chinese people to embark on prosperous life, but also a broad road of shared future and common prosperity for China and its neighboring countries. This is the sixth characteristic of the Chinese Path in the new era. I have repeatedly told my Afghan friends that China will not import foreign models nor export Chinese model. "Only the foot knows whether the shoe fits or not". We can never find a model that can be applied to all countries. Each country should find its development model that suitable to their national conditions based on its own strength. I just want to emphasize that the Chinese Path is not just the pride of China, because it not only expands the path for other developing countries to modernization, but also offers more new options for those nations who want to speed up their development while preserving their independence. We welcome more Afghan friends to go and look around in China, study and make comparison of the Chinese Path, and then provide pertinent suggestions for China and Afghan's development.

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A glance at peace process in Afghanistan

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

In spite of long time struggles for peace in Afghanistan, they have frequently failed in the country. However, there is no more beautiful word than peace for bereaved Afghan people. Each and every Afghan citizen wishes a day that their children go to educations without fear of dead and explosions while eagerly dreaming to revive their lost dignity beside other prosperous world countries. So everyone needs peace and wholeheartedly wants to reach it here.

Peace building needs certain social institutions to be built or improved to create a conducive condition for a peaceful life in any society. Thus, the government shall develop a comprehensive policy for peace building in the concerned society. The first peace component is being inclusive otherwise it may cause dissatisfactions and ultimately extension to armed conflicts. So, peace program neither could be confined to mere negotiations with a certain armed party and nor could be designed or decided by certain circles. As the armed conflicts are watered by various social and political motives, they must be thoroughly analyzed and taken to consideration.

In the other words, to get pervasive tranquility and trust it requires to pave the way for all its necessary social, cultural and political ground. As Afghanistan is a country with background of autocratic political systems, one of the main factors for intensification of internal crises has been the social and political inequality against certain racial and religious groups. Eliminations of these issues are not feasible except through establishment of genuine justice system, civil rights guarantee and elimination of all forms of discriminations. Hence, any peace programs which do not have its origin in multitudes and social justice will not led to integration of armed groups and national coexistence.

The second component of peace building is having equal economic development programs so that all citizens benefit from opportunities and believe in new political chapter. It is highly important that new generation of Afghanistan deeply believe that social justice and meritocracy are an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous life within and among nations. We uphold the principles of real peace when we promote rights of minority groups, gender equality, children and other vulnerable people. Accordingly, we cannot become one unless we remove all barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability. People should also play role in electing good leaders by voting on the basis of ones' patriotic commitment, meritocracy and past profile. they have to be aware to vote for leaders who believe in peace, unity and democratic values.

Meanwhile, peace building is a national process and will have an impact on the fate of all citizens; therefore, it needs national legitimacy. National legitimacy will come about when there is a consensus on

the peace agenda and strategies to reach it. The general consensus can be obtained through national dialogue while letting people know the criteria and conditions of negotiations. What is the purpose of the peace plan? Will this program have a political future for the citizens? What makes the program good for every citizen? When this awareness among people is institutionalized through information tools and social audiences, people will be able to shape their views. Peacemakers are then required to launch surveys and examine the views, perceptions and concerns of citizens in their national affairs. Clearly, these programs should be designed in a step-by-step peace plan and then presented to people. In such a case, the peace plan will receive widespread supports and cooperation from the people. In the context of Afghanistan, we also need regional and trans-regional consensus. Identifying the deterrent regional and international peace factors and paying respect to their legitimate interests will make a better road to peace process.

The other important component of suitable peace building is protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens - especially the vulnerable. Peace without justice and political and civil liberties leads to tyranny and autocracy. Security in its broadest sense is not only subject to physical security but also includes personal, social and economic security. Therefore, the most important challenge to the Afghan peace plan is to protect the civil and political rights and freedoms of Afghan citizens who have paid a great price to achieve these rights and freedoms and are not willing to put these values into bargains. On the other hand, reconciling the victims of the disputed conflicts is an integral part of any peace and reconciliation agenda. Restoring war victims and creating a common understanding of the plagues and tragedies of various social groups and groups will weaken the spirit of retaliation and reversely strengthen the culture of tolerance and interdependence. Finally, there some other tools and components which are essential for generalization peace culture and the development of the spirit of peace in the community; these can include the establishment of beneficial educational programs, the extension of the rule of law, elimination of administrative corruptions and impartial investigations on important warfare cases that take longer time.

National ownership of the peace process is one the most important building blocks of a peace building process in any country. Also, the peace building process shall ensure the rights of all the citizens. More importantly, the government shall make effort efforts to develop an enabling environment for shaping the culture of peaceful life in the society. Only, such a culture can ensure the sustainable peace and prosperity in our country.

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