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Preface

Last week, PUGWASH Conference convened a two-day conference on Afghan issue in Doha, the Capital of Qatar. The Taliban officially participated at the conference and various entities from Afghanistan and other countries had also participated in it. In this conference, the Taliban put some preconditions to the beginning of the peace talks.

The conference was organized at such time that the second quadrilateral meeting between Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the US was held on 18 January 2016 in Kabul and the third quadrilateral meeting is expected to be held on 6 May this year in Islamabad; that is the reason why the Afghan government opposed the PUGWASH Conference and did not send any official representatives to it.

In the second part of the analysis, you will read about the recent report of the Transparency International. In "Corruption Perception Index 2015" of the Transparency International, North Korea, Somalia and Afghanistan are shown as the most corrupt countries among 168 countries in the world. And, Afghanistan is listed as the second most corrupt country of the world. Although, the Afghan government took some immediate measures to eliminate corruption but due to the lack of coordination in its efforts, the country was known as one of the most corrupt countries.

You would read more about the detailed analysis on these subjects in this issue of weekly analysis, which is put together by the Editorial Board of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies.

The PUGWASH Conference and Taliban's Tendency to initiate Peace Talks



After the second meeting of the quadrilateral talks, the PUGWASH International Organization hosted a two-day conference in Doha, the Capital of Qatar on 23-24 January 2016 in order to find a solution for the Afghan crisis. The conference was attended by 55 participants including the representatives of the Taliban. In this conference, the Afghan Taliban declared their position about the peace talks.

It is not the first time that Afghanistan's issue is being discussed in the PUGWASH Conference; PUGWASH had also held similar conferences in the past years. PUGWASH, from convening such conferences, aims to build trust between the sides of the conflict.

The question is whether a change is occurred in the Taliban's position regarding the peace talks? And what are the key points of the PUGWASH Conference?

PUGWASH Conferences on Afghanistan

Several conferences in order to find a solution to the Afghan crisis are held in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Japan, and France and are attended by the representatives of the Taliban and entities from Afghanistan and other countries. PUGWASH is a nongovernmental organization which has held such conferences; the organization has won the Nobel Prize for its efforts in 1995. This organization has held four conferences on “peace in Afghanistan” in Dubai and Doha.

The Dubai Conference: the first PUGWASH Conference was held in Dubai on 22 and 23 September 2012 and was attended by various entities from the United Nations, Afghanistan and other countries where all of the participants agreed upon on the vital importance of peace not only to Afghanistan but to the region as well.

In the Dubai Conference, the Articles of the Constitution of Afghanistan were subjected to be discussed in order to maintain peace in the country, and withdrawal of foreign troops, ceasefire and some other issues were also discussed; all of the participants had shared the opinion that peace was in the interest of all Afghans.

The problem in the first PUGWASH Conference was that the official representatives of the Taliban had not participated and people like Mullah Mutaseem Agha Jan who had left Taliban's ranks participated in the meeting.

The Second Dubai Conference: the second PUGWASH Conference was held on 15 and 17 January 2013 in Dubai in which besides renewing former decisions, some new issues were also discussed.

In the second Dubai Conference, releasing Taliban prisoners were deemed as the first step toward building trust. Preventing civilian casualties were agreed upon, and the participants reached a consensus that in a peaceful Afghanistan, there is no place for foreigners and thus Al Qaida shall leave the country.

In order to build trust, removing the names of the Taliban from UN’s blacklist, opening an official office for the Taliban in Doha, participation of all groups and

parties in the peace process was considered as the initial steps toward the peace process.

The Qatar Conference: the third PUGWASH Conference on the Afghan issue was convened in Qatar on 2-3 May 2015, in this conference, the important points of the former decisions and declarations were emphasized upon and some new issues were also raised. In this conference, corruption and cultivation of narcotics were mentioned as the major problems in the country. All parties emphasized on the importance of the women rights and their education; ISIS was considered as an alien with Afghan culture and traditions. The conference was attended by the members of the Taliban political office in Qatar.

The Latest PUGWASH Conference

The latest PUGWASH Conference was organized in Doha, Qatar's capital on 23-24 January 2016 and Taliban's representatives had officially participated in the conference. In this conference, in the aftermath of two Quadrilateral meetings, the Afghan Taliban declared their position about the peace process.

Beside unofficial representative of Kabul, 15 representatives of the Taliban had participated in the conference. However, the meeting was an unofficial one but the Afghan government did not send its representative due to its opposition to the meeting; some circles in Kabul had said that this conference in Doha will weaken the innovation of the Afghan government (quadrilateral talks). But still Qayoum Kochi, Afghan President's uncle, senior officials of the former government, parliament members, civil activists and some individual from government's opposition had participated in this conference.

The following are the key points agreed upon in the conference:

- Military confrontation must end;
- Foreign forces eventually must leave the country;
- Some participants believed that the Constitution should be amended, while others believe that the Constitution should be substantially rewritten. Concrete proposals should be discussed in detail in future meetings.

- Outside forces should not control the politics of Afghanistan; instead, international technical, economic and cultural cooperation should be promoted.
- The freedom for all parties to discuss the path to peace needs to be ensured from now on. The highest priority in this regard is enabling all sides to sit together. Blacklists should be eliminated and freedom of movement should be guaranteed. Visas should be facilitated for those to attend such discussions. All agreed that the Taliban should have an office and an address;
- To foster dialogue among all parties, some participants invoked Afghanistan's long-established tradition of the Jirga;
- The protection of civilians and an end to civilian casualties are shared goals and high priorities;
- The role of civil society, freedom of expression, and education according to Islamic principles in achieving these goals was agreed;
- All emphasize the need to uphold the rights of women, and to end violence against women;
- Protection of public properties such as schools, medical facilities, and the country's infrastructure is essential. People who commit crimes against them should be prosecuted.

Taliban's Preconditions for peace talks

Taliban's representatives in the PUGWASH Conference issued a statement in which they mentioned the establishment of an official address, removal of UN's sanctions against the Taliban, removal of their names from the Black List, releasing prisoners and ending 'poisonous propaganda' against the group as their preconditions for peace talks.

The Taliban said that without preliminary steps, the peace process is not feasible. They have also added in their statement that they have commenced Jihad to achieve their rights and their high purposes and not for worldly issues. They have

also added that they will participate in a peace process that its objective should be ending the current invasion and establishment of an Independent Islamic regime.

However, they have shown conditional readiness for conducting peace talks with the Afghan government; and so it is a new and promising step.

Flexibility in Taliban's position

Before this, the Taliban have been emphasizing on the points that the Afghan government does not have the authority to carry on the peace talks and, therefore they were saying that the peace talks should be held with NATO and US. But in the recent PUGWASH Conference, they have changed their position and have divided Afghanistan's issues into two parts (the internal issues and the external issues; according to them, the issues relevant to foreigners particularly to the US should be discussed directly with the US). Foreign troops must leave Afghanistan and they should give the opportunity to Afghans to determine their own destiny but in the issues relevant to Afghans they believe that Afghans are ready and able to solve these issues. Reasons behind the fall in Taliban's position can be listed due to the following points:

The announcement of foreign troops' withdrawal: most of the NATO forces left the country in 2014, later a new, smaller non-combat mission (“Resolute Support”) was launched on to provide further training, advice and assistance to the Afghan security forces and institutions. And, this might have effected Taliban's position on the peace process.

Afghan Casualties: security was gradually transferred to Afghan security forces and in 2015, security was maintained by Afghan forces across the country and on both sides Afghans were being killed and even the Taliban are not now ready to accept it.

The ISIS: in early 2015, ISIS announced its emergence in Afghanistan and then in some occasions they were engaged in armed conflicts with the Taliban and, now, the Taliban are concerned about it.

Cost of War: all Afghans including the Taliban as well are devastated by war and thereby, they want to solve the current problems through negotiations.

Taliban's Policy

Taliban, in their statement in the PUGWASH Conference, announced that they are committed to civil activities, freedom of speech and women rights according to Islamic principles and also to National Interests and Islamic Values. In their statement, they also expressed their support for providing education for Afghans, preserving national facilities and assets of public interests, all the projects that ensure public interests including TAPI, and prosperity of people.

Since countries of the Middle East, Russia, China and Iran are concerned about the situation in Afghanistan, Afghan Taliban announced that they will not intervene in other countries' affairs and they also added that they expect the same from others.

The Taliban once again emphasized that the only responsible address to conduct peace talks is their political office in Doha, Qatar.

Reaction of the Afghan government

However, the PUGWASH Conference was unofficial but it is said that Ashraf Ghani had sent a message to the conference; in his message, he had said that the Afghan government considers the Taliban as its 'political opposition' and it is ready to have face-to-face talks with them.

Speaking in a press conference, Zafar Hashemi, the spokesman of the Afghan President said that some of the Taliban's preconditions are under the authority of the International Community; he also added that the Afghan government will negotiate with those groups who stop violence.

He said that the Afghan government's position about peace talks is clear and that the achievements of the past one and a half decade and the constitution of Afghanistan are not open to negotiations.

On the other hand, Shahzada Shahid, spokesman of the High Peace Council said that some of the Taliban's preconditions are acceptable.

The PUGWASH Conference and the Quadrilateral Meetings

"Whether the PUGWASH Conference will impact the Quadrilateral peace talks?" is a question that answer to which will be cleared in a stage of the quadrilateral talks that the Afghan government and the Taliban start face-to-face talks with each other.

Although, the Taliban had sent their official representatives to the PUGWASH Conference; the Afghan government had not sent its official representatives to the conference. Thus, we can conclude that the quadrilateral talks are more important to the government.

On the other hand, from the statement of Taliban in PUGWASH and their notes on their official website, one can conclude that the quadrilateral peace talks are not promising to the Taliban and that is the reason they showed willingness to start face-to-face talks in the PUGWASH Conference. However, the Afghan government realized it and sent its message on the second day of the conference. But from the expressions of the government, we cannot expect face-to-face talks to happen very soon.

Considering the positions of the Afghan government and the Taliban in the past two weeks, one can conclude that the Afghan government is more optimistic about the quadrilateral talks while the Taliban are more interested in the PUGWASH Conference and other similar conferences, where they can talk face-to-face with the Afghan government and in which other countries' roles are limited to cooperation and guarantee.

The Way Forward

When Ashraf Ghani became Afghan President, like all other Afghans, the Afghan Taliban had also expectations from him in the Peace Process, but now after one and a half years, the situation is become worsened and the atmosphere of mistrust is increased between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

In such a situation a mediation group acceptable to both the Afghan government and the Taliban is essential to decrease mistrust between Afghan government and Taliban. This is what the participants of the PUGWASH Conference also emphasized on.

Afghanistan: The Second Corrupt Country



"North Korea, Somalia and Afghanistan are the most corrupt countries among 168 countries in the 'Corruption Perceptions Index 2015', and Afghanistan is the second most corrupt country." according to a recent report released by Transparency International (TI), an international watchdog.

Along with the Transparency International, the Integrity Watch of Afghanistan (IWA), the Asia Foundation and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) are also another organizations which conducted researches on corruption in Afghanistan and, in this regards, they have also released some reports.

What do these surveys tells us about corruption in Afghanistan? Why is corruption growing in Afghanistan? And what steps are taken by the government to tackle corruption? These are the issues that are analyzed here.

A look into corruption in Afghanistan

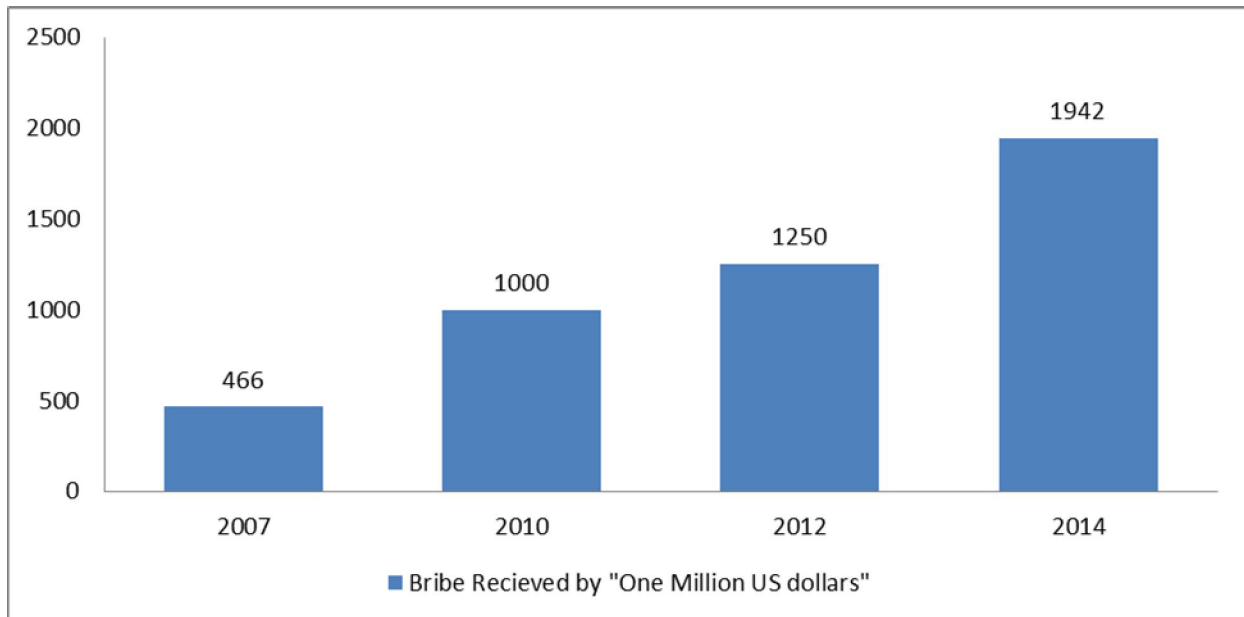
IWA is an internal while “Transparency International” and UNODC are foreign institutions which have released reports on corruption in Afghanistan. Thus, in this regards, both internal and external institutions have released their reports.

Although, all the organizations mentioned above have conducted researches on corruption in the country, here we will talk about reports released by IWA, Asia Foundation, and Transparency International.

“From 2006 to 2014, corruption raised as a major issue in daily life of the people” says the annual survey 2014 conducted by the Asia Foundation. According to the survey, in 2006, 42% of the people believed that corruption was a major problem in their daily life but in 2014, this percentage was 62%.

In its surveys from 2006 to 2014, the Asia Foundation had also asked people through its questionnaires about their opinions about corrupt officials and corruption at provincial administrations level across Afghanistan; one would find out that in people's opinion, corruption is growing and its percentage in 2014 had risen more than ever.

IWA has also released four surveys on corruption in Afghanistan. These surveys show that corruption is growing in Afghanistan with each passing year. In 2007, people had paid \$477 Million as a bribe and in 2010, 2012 and 2014; they have paid \$1000, \$1250 and \$ 1942 Million as bribe respectively. For further information, see the following figure:

Figure A: Corruption in Afghanistan

Source: HOOAC's surveys in 2007, 2010, and 2014

Transparency International's reports on corruption

Transparency International is a global civil society organization leading the fight against corruption. This organization conducts its surveys in more than 100 countries of the world every year and according to the scores gained by countries, asserts these countries in its corruption perceptions index and then publishes the report in its annual reports.

If we look at the TI's published reports from 2005 on, we will notice that year after year Afghanistan scores less points than before in fighting corruption and is among the last countries in its index. In 2005, Afghanistan had scored 2.5 out of a possible 10 points and ranked 117th among 159 countries in the world; it means that it was less corrupt than it is today but in the following years, it dropped down in the ranks and thus became one of the most corrupt countries in the world.

Afghanistan's scores decreased from 2007 to 2009 (Afghanistan scored 1.8 points in 2007, 1.5 points in 2008 and 1.3 points in 2009); however, Afghanistan's points in fighting against corruption gradually increased from 2010 to 2011; it can be the result of the law for implementing the strategy to fight corruption was passed by

parliament and based on this law "the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption (HOOAC)" was formed (the country scored 1.4 points in 2010 and 1.5 points in 2011).

According to the reports, from 2012 to 2013 Afghanistan's score was once again dropped in fight against corruption (in both 2012 and 2013 Afghanistan scored 0.8 points in CPI index); however, when Ashraf Ghani came to power, due to the reopening of Kabul Bank's scandal, forming National Procurement Commission, and announcing those accused of corruption as subject to travel ban and presenting them to Attorney General Office, the country's scores improved and raised from 0.8 points to 1.2 points in 2014.

In 2015, since the country's anti-corruption strategies were contrary to each other, Afghanistan scored 1.1 out of 10 and became the second most corrupt country in the world. See the figure below:

Figure-1: Afghanistan's position of corruption on International Level (2005-2015)

Its rank among world's countries	Afghanistan's scores out of a possible 10 points	Year
117/159	2.5	2005
172/180	1.8	2007
176/180	1.5	2008
179/180	1.3	2009
176/178	1.4	2010
180/183	1.5	2011
174/176	0.8	2012
175/177	0.8	2013
172/175	1.2	2014
166/167	1.1	2015

Source: (Transparency International)'s reports from 2005 to 2015

The government's response to TI Corruption Report

However, the Afghan government has not criticized Transparency International's report on corruption, but has declared that it is determined to fight against corruption and that they are fighting it sincerely. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Afghanistan Dr. Abdullah Abdullah has stated that undoubtedly, the National

Unity Government (NUG) is seriously determined to fight against corruption. But, there are some issues relevant to the law which we are working on"

On the other hand, the President's spokesman Zafar Hashemi, in response to the report of the Transparency International said: "Afghan government has taken major steps to fight against corruption; as a result of forming the National Procurement Commission, we have prevented corruption in many contracts and for the first time the government has published (Ministry of Defense)'s oil contract. Ministry of Justice which was the source of corruption is now passing through reforms; 130 judges are dismissed within the past two months including some judges from the appellate Court." He further added: "The second element in government's anti-corruption strategy is accountability; the government has arrested at least 10 corrupt government officials and thereby the government has done a lot to fight corruption."

On the other hand, people have played a negative role in exposing corrupt officials and have bribed them vastly.

The Uncoordinated anti-Corruption Strategy

Since the last year, the government has taken some steps in fighting against corruption and has considered it as its priority; however, neither the reforms promised in London Conference (2014) are brought and nor the Afghan government is on one-page on fighting against corruption.

For instance, the government had arrested the main culprit of Kabul Bank's scandal Khalilullah Ferozi, and sentenced him to be imprisoned, but then he was released by the legal consultant of the president Mohammad Ali Mohammadi and Ministry of Urban Development affaires signed a construction contract "Smart City" with him. At the place where Ferozi signed the contract some senior government officials were also present including Special Representative of the president in political reforms Ahmad Zia Masood and Minister of the Urban Development Affairs. This questioned the government's determination in fight against corruption by the people.

Besides this, internal differences in the government have also shadowed the anti-corruption struggles and thus it is a major obstacle toward reforms and tackling corruption.

In order to eliminate corruption, the government is supposed to consider seriously fighting against corruption as its priority, and thus, the government's actions should be coordinated, laws must be put to action and the government should establish an anti-corruption administration with full authority.

The end

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