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Preface

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) has pointed out 2015 as the bloodiest year for civilians in the past one and a half decade. However the internal and international institutions can not present the real statistics of the civilian casualties in Afghanistan but still these statistics show a high number of the civilian casualties. Civilians are a great portion of the victims in the past wars in Afghanistan and the engaged parties in the war do not pay necessary attention to their lives. In this issue of our analysis, you would read about the civilian casualties in Afghanistan since 2001.

In the second part of the weekly analysis you would read on the quadrilateral peace talks. The fourth quadrilateral meeting between Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States of America and China is expected to be held on 23 February in Kabul. However the past three meetings of the quadrilateral talks had not any specific outcomes but after its third meeting the hopes to the initiation of the face to face talks with the Taliban have increased. The question is whether after the fourth meeting of this series will the face to face talks with the Taliban initiate? And which factors are necessary for these talks to succeed?

You would read the analysis and researches of the Editorial Board of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies on these subjects in this issue of weekly analysis.

The factors and outcomes behind record high civilian casualties



United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) released its ninth annual report about the civilian casualties in Afghanistan on 14 February 2016, which stirred reactions across Afghanistan. After the collapse of the Taliban in Afghanistan, 2015 was the bloodiest year for civilians. According to the report, UNAMA documented 11002 casualties in 2015. It was also a bloody year for women and children compared to the past nine years, where 2829 children casualties and 1246 women casualties were calculated this year.

Civilian casualties in the past years, attribution of the responsibility of civilian casualties, ISIS's role in the civilian casualties and the reasons behind increase in civilian casualties are the issues that will be discuss here.

The background of civilian casualties in Afghanistan

Following the communist coup d'état and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan civilian casualties increased in the country. The Soviet War in Afghanistan left 0.85 to 1.5 million of civilians' deaths and around 3 million wounded.

However there are no reliable statistics about civilian casualties during Afghan Civil War, but according to United Nations (UN) calculations only between May and August of the 1992, around 1800 civilian were killed in Kabul city from rockets and mortars; based on another estimation of the UN in 1994 around 25 thousands of people were killed only in Kabul and most of them were civilians.

Civilian casualties (2001-2015)

In 2001, when the US and Coalition forces attacked Afghanistan the number of civilian casualties increased and had reached around 2375 casualties. Later from 2002 to 2006 a total of 2422 civilians were killed. It should be noted that this statistic was not put together by any official administration or organ and is only a result of individual efforts by researchers.

UNAMA began documenting civilian casualties in 2007 but its annual reports in 2007 and 2008 are different than its reports in 2009 and the years after that from a methodological point of view.

If one study UNAMA's annual report on civilian casualties in Afghanistan, the statistics of the civilian casualties provided by this institution would lead one to conclude that whenever insecurity has increased or the war has intensified between the Taliban on one side and the Afghan Government and foreign force on the other side, the civilian casualties has also increased. After 2007, every year (except 2012) the civilian casualties have increased (see the Chart-1 for further information). In 2007 there were 1523 civilian casualties while in 2015 this number increased to 11002.

Since 2009, the number of civilian casualties has increased annually but the number of civilian deaths decreased in 2012 and 2015 (see the Chart-1 for further info).

It should be noted that in this statistics UNAMA has not included those incidents of civilian casualties which were not verified or were out of the reach of UNAMA; and neither the casualties caused by drone attacks and the foreign forces are included in these statistics.

Chart-1: Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan (2007-2015)

year	Injuries	deaths	total
2007	-	-	1523
2008	-	-	2118
2009	3556	2412	5968
2010	4368	2792	7160
2011	4709	3133	7842
2012	4821	2769	7590
2013	5669	2969	8638
2014	6833	3701	10534
2015	7457	3545	11002

Source: UNAMA's annual report on civilian casualties in Afghanistan (2007-2015)

Attribution of responsibility for civilian casualties

The annual report of UNAMA demonstrates that in 2015 the civilian casualties have unprecedentedly increased. In this year, 3545 civilians are death and 7457 civilians are injured. UNAMA attributes 62% of the civilian casualties to Anti-Government Elements and 17% to Pro-Government forces. The report further says that from 2007 to 2014 more civilian are harmed annually in the attacks of the government's armed oppositions. 700 civilians in 2007 and 7643 civilians in 2014 were the victims of the attacks carried out by the armed oppositions. But according to the UNAMA's annual report in 2015 the numbers of the civilian casualties by the armed oppositions has decreased and has declined to 6859 civilians.

According to UNAMA the term “Anti-Government Elements” encompass all individuals and groups involved in war against the Government of Afghanistan including the Taliban, Hezb-e-Islami, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Jihad Union, Lashkari Tayyiba, Jaysh Mohammad, ISIS and other armed oppositions.

On the other hand the number of civilians attributed to the Pro-Government forces show decrease and increase in different times. This number has decreased in 2010 and 2012 but has begun to increase after 2012. In 2015 the civilian casualties caused by the Pro-Government forces has reached maximum levels compared to the past years, in this year the Pro-Government forces were responsible for 1854 civilian casualties (see the Chart-2 for further info).

Chart-2: attribution of the responsibility of the civilian casualties (2007-2015)

year	Casualties caused by the anti-governmental forces	Casualties caused by the pro-governmental forces	other
2007	700	629	194
2008	1160	828	130
2009	4124	1035	809
2010	5428	824	910
2011	5817	1106	919
2012	6669	603	318
2013	7255	982	401
2014	7643	1453	1438
2015	6859	1854	2289

Source: UNAMA’s annual report on civilian casualties in Afghanistan (2007-2015)

The casualties of women and children (2007-2014)

Along with the deterioration of the security situation in the country the number of civilian casualties has also increased; meanwhile the number of women and children casualties have also increased annually which is the ugliest aspect of the current war in the country.

According to the Statistics of UNAMA in 2007, 217 children and 57 women were either killed or injured while these numbers increased to 2829 children and 1246 women in 2015. Thus both deaths and injuries of children and women are increasing every year. (See the Chart-3 for more info)

Chart-3: women and children casualties in Afghanistan (2007-2015)

year	Children injuries	Children deaths	total	Women injuries	Women deaths	total
2007	-	-	217	-	-	57
2008	-	-	-	-	-	-
2009	423	307	730	152	133	285
2010	799	378	1177	202	167	369
2011	804	557	1361	247	203	450
2012	821	492	1313	352	196	548
2013	1200	564	1764	514	236	750
2014	1761	715	2476	611	298	909
2015	2096	733	2829	913	333	1246

Source: UNAMA's annual report on civilian casualties in Afghanistan (2007-2015)

The Reasons behind increased civilian casualties

- **War:** whenever the war has intensified in various regions of the country; civilian casualties have also increased.
- **Explosions:** another important factor that increased civilian casualties last year was the bloody explosions in Kabul and other cities of the country. For example in the explosion of Shah Shaheed in Kabul dozens of civilians were killed and dozens others were injured to which no entity has claimed responsibility.
- **ISIS:** the head of UNAMA's Human Rights unit in a press conference said: "according to the findings of UNAMA ISIS is responsible for 83 incident of civilian casualties 82 of which had occurred in Kaut, Achin, and Spinghar areas of the Nangerhar province and as a result, 39 civilians were killed, 43 injured and 82 were abducted.

- **Military operation of the government:** the annual report of UNAMA shows that Pro- Government forces are responsible for 17% of the civilian casualties in the country. The reason behind this is aggressive offensives carried out by the Afghan security forces.
- **The fall of Kunduz and recent events in Baghlan:** with the expansion of war in the Northern provinces particularly during the collapse of Kunduz many civilians were killed and many others were wounded, but no exact survey was conducted to collect specific statistics. On the other hand, UNAMA has documented around 20 incidents in Baghlan province most of which have occurred in Paul-e-khumri, Dushi and New Baghlan. This administration also confirms 27 civilian casualties while 7 civilians were killed and 20 civilians were injured including two women and 13 children.

The Taliban and the Afghan government's response

The Taliban and the Afghan Government has responded to the recent report of UNAMA on civilian casualties. The Presidential Office and Afghan Chief Executive Office rejected some parts of the report. UNAMA has declared in part of its report that civilian casualties caused by the ground operations of the Taliban has decreased. Releasing a newsletter the Presidential Office has said that they are not agreed to the 42% decrease in the ground operations of the Taliban.

Presidential Office has also questioned the report due to the non distribution of 13% of the civilian casualties to a specific group. This newsletter has also added that the Taliban has always violated international laws and thus the presidential Office has criticized that part of the report that has declared that civilian casualties by Anti-government Elements have decreased.

Some civil society activists have also declared the report as unilateral and against Afghan security forces. But United Nations special representative of the Secretary General in Afghanistan, Nicholas Haysom while releasing the report had said that they have used developed systems in order to collect these figures and that they have shared the report with engaged parties before it was released.

On the other hand the Taliban has also declared that the report was unilateral. In a statement Zabi-ullah Mujahed the Taliban's spokesman said: "the report is unilateral, promotional and in favor of the occupying forces".

Quadrilateral Peace Talks: Factors for success and Prospects for direct talks



The fourth meeting of quadrilateral talks will be held on 23 February 2016 in Kabul. After the third meeting of the quadrilateral meetings, direct talks with the Taliban are expected to occur at the end of this month.

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif left on two-day visit to Qatar on Wednesday 10 February; on the other hand, Pakistani media released news that regarding Taliban's Political Office members visit to Pakistan during the third quadrilateral meeting which was held in Islamabad on 6th February. Thus some people in Kabul and Islamabad are optimistic about the initiation of face-to-face talks with the Taliban.

What are the differences between the Murree talks and the quadrilateral meetings? Which factors are necessary for its success? And whether the face-to-face talks with the Taliban will initiate? These are the questions which will be analyzed here.

From Murree talks to the Quadrilateral meetings

Ashraf Ghani's efforts for peace began from the Murree talks and continued with the quadrilateral meetings. Murree talks started after Ashraf Ghani's risky outreach to Pakistan and his total reliance on Pakistan for peace talks, but it came to a halt after the disclosure of the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar.

Six months later, due to the international and regional efforts, the quadrilateral meetings were started. Unlike the Murree talks, the commitments of the two sides in the quadrilateral meetings are guaranteed by the two super powers of the world (the United States of America and China).

Quadrilateral peace talks

The first quadrilateral meeting was held in December 2015 where the Quadrilateral Cooperation Group (QCG) was formed, later the group held its first quadrilateral meeting on 11 January 2016 in Islamabad, the second on 18 January in Kabul and the third on 6 February in Islamabad and its fourth meeting is expected to be held on 23 February in Kabul.

In the first quadrilateral meeting all sides reached a consensus to end the war and referred the war as it is inflicting "senseless violence" on the Afghan people and breeding "insecurity in the region". In this meeting the face-to-face talk between the Afghan government and the Taliban was reiterated and the strategies for peace talks were also decided upon.¹

The second quadrilateral meeting was mostly focused on building a road map to start face-to-face Talks with the Taliban. However the detailed information about the road map is not shared with the media.²

¹ Read the joint press release of the QCG on the webpage of the Afghan Foreign Ministry: <http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/joint-press-release-quadrilateral-coordination-group-meeting-of-afghanistan-china-pakistan-and-the-united-states>

² the joint press release of the second quadrilateral meeting states:

In the third quadrilateral meeting, the QCG agreed that Afghans would lead the peace process and the peace process would be Afghan owned process while the other countries' role is solely limited to facilitate the process.

The Taliban and the quadrilateral peace talks

After the second quadrilateral meeting, the Taliban declared their position about the peace process in the Pugwash Conference and presented their preconditions as follows:

- 1.** The establishment of an official address for them.
- 2.** Releasing the prisoners.
- 3.** Removing the travel bans from their leaders.
- 4.** Ending “poisonous propaganda” against them.

Although Ashraf Ghani showed green light to the Taliban in the Pugwash Conference but his government is yet to take feasible steps to start face to face talks with the Taliban.

The place where the face to face talk with the Taliban occurs is also of a great importance, but it seems that the Afghan Taliban would not agree to hold such talks neither in Afghanistan nor in Pakistan. If these talks are going to be held in China then the issue of the Taliban’s travel bans come forward to which the Afghan government and the United States should consider a solution. There is also the possibility of such talks to be held in Qatar but this option may not be accepted by the Afghan government.

The Afghan Taliban may show willingness for face to face talks with the Afghan government only if the QCG contact their Political Office in Qatar. Although the

The roadmap aims to set specific measures that are necessary for creating a conducive environment for the commencement of Afghan led, Afghan owned peace talks between representatives of the Government of Afghanistan and representatives of Taliban groups aimed at reduction of violence and establishing lasting peace in Afghanistan and the region

to read full text of the press release click the link below:

<http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/joint-press-release-the-second-meeting-of-the-quadrilateral-coordination-group-qcg-of-afghanistan-pakistan-the-united-states-and-china>

place where the face to face talks with the Taliban occurs is yet to be decided; but if the Taliban's representatives in Qatar are to participate in these talks there is a strong probability of these talks to be held in Qatar or somewhere other than Afghanistan and Pakistan. For the Taliban the advantage of holding such talks in places other than these places is the removal of the travel bans of their leaders.

The factors for the success of the quadrilateral meetings

The following are the factors, which are necessary for the success of the quadrilateral meetings:

- **The issue of the Taliban's representatives:** The success of quadrilateral talks depends on who do represent Taliban. If Taliban's representatives in Qatar or main members of the its Leadership Council do not participate in the talks and since according to ground realities, Taliban's Mansoor group is the most powerful and the only group that can represent the Taliban as a whole, if this group do not participate in the talks, then the outcomes of the talks would be fruitless as it happened during Karzai's presidency.
- **The talks should not take place under pressures:** it is the second important factor for the success of the peace talks because the talks which occur under pressures will only have temporary outcomes and will be useless in the long run. As in the Murree talks which despite the participation of the senior officials of the Taliban did not draw specific conclusions and ended with the intensified war in the country and the collapse of Kunduz because the talks had occurred under pressures and as the Taliban referred to it on the basis of "fraud".
- **The talks should not aim at dividing the Taliban into groups:** if the quadrilateral meetings aimed at talking with those who are willing to talk and then placing them in the governmental offices in order to suppress and isolate the remaining portion of the Taliban this strategy will also have temporary results because the Afghan government has implemented this strategy several times in the past which have not had promising outcomes yet.

- **Afghan interests must be secured more than others:** beside the two afghan sides (the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban) three non-Afghan sides are also participating the talks; so if the interests of other sides were more secured than the Afghans it will negatively affect the long term peace in the country.
- **The parties must reach a "win-win" solution:** it is also important that all sides feel as they have won in the negotiations. Neither should consider that they are on a losing ground.

The end

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