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Preface

The 13th session of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) ended on Friday. In this two-day summit which was held in Istanbul, Turkey, where leaders and senior officials from 30 countries had participated including Afghanistan. In this summit the situation in Palestine Yemen, Iraq and throughout the Islamic world was discussed, and at the end, the participants issued a 200 point statement. What happened in recent session of OIC? What is the background of the organization? And what relations does it have with Afghanistan? These are the questions that are analyzed here.

In the second part of the analysis you would read about the recent visit of US Secretary of State John Kerry to Afghanistan. Since few months there were vast discussions about the NUG political agreement and it was assumed that September will be the end of legal term of the Afghan Executive Office; but US Secretary of State visited Kabul in an unannounced trip and after hours of discussion with the NUG leaders appeared in a press conference with Ashraf Ghani and said that the NUG agreement is valid not for two years but for five years and the NUG will last until its fifth year.

2016 was declared to be the year of political breakdown for the NUG and now the NUG is the subject of vast criticism. What were the failures and achievement of the NUG in the past one and a half year? And what would be upcoming scenario in the aftermath of the extension of NUG?

In this issue of weekly analysis you would read analysis of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies regarding the above two subjects.

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Afghanistan



The 13th session of OIC was held in Istanbul, Turkey and leaders from more than 30 countries had participated including the Afghan Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and the Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani.

Generally, in this summit, terrorism, Palestine, Syria and cooperation among Islamic countries were discussed.

The background of OIC, the reasons for the failure of OIC and the relation of Afghanistan with OIC are issues that are analyzed here.

The Background of OIC

In 20th century Sayed Jamaluddin Afghan made efforts for awakening the Islamic world which was followed by various reactions. In this century, on one hand, Islamic movements, Scholars and elites were born and on the other hand numerous efforts were made to prevent Islamic unity.

During the Cold War and after the occupation of Islamic territories by Israel, in 1969 Al-Aqsa mosque was burned by an Israeli Jewish. In response to this and due to the efforts of some individuals especially Al Faisal the Organization of Islamic Cooperation was established by 25 Islamic countries on September 25 1969 in Morocco. Afghanistan was also one of the 25 countries that put the foundation of this organization.

The first session of this organization was held among the Foreign ministers of the member states in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in 1970; and its second session was held in Lahore in 1974.

OIC is the second largest organization after the United Nations and including Afghanistan it has 57 member states from four continents. The organization aims at unity and cooperation between its member states and works to improve economic, cultural, scientific and other cooperation among them. In case of wars and armed conflicts that one of OIC members is involved in, OIC will cooperate with UN and provide consultation to it¹.

The organization was first named “Organization of Islamic Conference” but in June 2011 in 38th session of the organization’s Foreign Ministers in Astana, Kazakhstan, its name was changed into Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The reasons behind the failures of OIC

OIC has failed to achieve the objectives that it has been established for in 1969. OIC was hit severely when due to ideological and sectarian reasons, some Islamic countries engaged in cold and even hot wars among themselves. For example: Iran-Saudi cold war, Iran-Iraq war and coup d’état regimes in Egypt and some other countries.

Whether despite of having 22% of the world’s population and 70% of world’s energy resources, why OIC could not achieve its objective? The following can be the reasons:

- **The issue of Shiite and Sunnite:** after victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran, Shiites had a government which was established on the basis of Shiite

¹ Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), History:
http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv3/page/?p_id=52&p_ref=26&lan=en

principles and teachings. Therefore, as other ideological sectarians, Iranian Islamic revolution began to export its ideology and religion; in this regard Iranian influences in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq are noteworthy.

With the triumph of Islamic revolution in Iran, Islamic world was divided in Shiite and Sunnite blocks and cold war began between Iran-Saudi, Iran-Egypt, Iran-Turkey. It should be noted that except Iran-Saudi in other relations there were improvements at least for a few times.

- **Unsettled conflicts between Islamic countries:** ever since the period of imperialist colonization there are unsettled conflicts among Islamic countries which affect their foreign policy then OIC. Besides that there are other unsettled conflicts such as: border issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan, issues with regard to water division in Central Asia and conflicts among Islamic countries.
- **Leadership competition:** ever since the Second World War rivalry for leadership of Islamic world is an issue that Islamic World has to deal with. Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt and Pakistan are the countries that each of them assumes that they deserve the leadership of Islamic world.
- **The OIC members' ties with world super powers:** division of Islamic countries into three blocks is another reason behind the failure of OIC during the Cold War. Some Islamic countries were on the side of capitalist block, some others were on communist block and several others had formed non-alignment movement. Thus they were unable to act unified.
- **Political structure of Islamic countries:** experience has proved that same political structures bring the states close as for instance the European Union, but Islamic countries have had different political structures which are on its own turn another reason for the failure of OIC.

Afghanistan and OIC

Afghanistan was one of the countries that put the foundation of OIC. During the Arab-Israel war Afghanistan issued statements in support of the Arabs. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Afghan-OIC relation improved and besides

condemning Soviet aggression, OIC provided Afghan Mujahedeen and Migrants with numerous aids.

After withdrawal of the Soviet force from Afghanistan, OIC made efforts to resolve the Afghan issue (Civil War) but unfortunately was failed in its efforts. After the collapse of the Taliban regime, OIC could not do anything about US attacks on Afghanistan and in this regard it did not declare its stance.

After intensification of war and insecurity in Afghanistan OIC several times suggested peaceful settlement of the Afghan issue; therefore, it opened its office in Kabul in 2011, but it is yet to play a significant role in the Afghan issue.

OIC 13th session

13th session of OIC was held in Istanbul on April 14-15 under the leadership of Turkey and Afghan CEO Dr. Abdullah Abdullah was the Afghan representative in this session. Besides the leaders of the member countries the summit was also participated by heads of Parliament and Foreign Ministers of the member states.

The most important issue of the session was Syria, but no Syrian representative had attended the conference. Before the summit, Iyad Ameen Madani had said: “we have postponed the membership of Syria in OIC. We support peace talks. We do not see Basharul Asad in future of Syria and we do not think that Basharul Asad is part of the solution in Syria” but all of the OIC members are not agree with this stance. King Salman of Saudi Arabia and Hassan Ruhani Iranian President had participated in the summit. One of them is pro-Asad and the other is anti-Asad.

Disputes among Islamic countries had also influence the meeting. Beside Syria, Egyptian President Abdul Fattah Al Sisi was also absent and instead of him Egyptian Foreign Minister had participated in the summit. Turkey-Egypt relation is deteriorated after the coup d'état that overthrow the elected President of Egypt, and despite the mediation of Saudi Arabia these relations are not improved.

In this conference, efforts were made to settle the conflicts of the Islamic world. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called on Islamic countries to resolve the

issue of Shiite and Sunnite and hence said “my religion is neither Shiite nor Sunnite, my religion is Islam”.

In the closing statement of the meeting, Hezbollah was condemned for its terrorist activities in Syria, Bahrain, Kuwait and Yemen. And Iranian Policy was also criticized. In this meeting the (2016-2015) plan for Palestine was also prepared. According to the OIC Secretary General the closing statement includes 200 resolutions.

The future of OIC

It seems that the future of OIC is tied with economic issues because political conflicts will not be settled in a near future.

It is why, OIC needs to open borders among its members in scientific, technology, and other fields the same as European Union did.

Besides that, the statement of Dr. Mahateer Mohammad about the challenges of Islamic states (Political deadlock, economic backwardness, non- existence of democratic states) which he emphasized in 2003 summit still seems to be necessary to meet. In addition to the need for increasing transparency and accountability it is also necessary to bring reforms in some parts. That way real cooperation will be possible among the members of this organization.

The NUG: from John Kerry's power broker deal to extension of NUG



The US Secretary of States John Kerry came to Kabul in a surprise visit on April 9; his trip takes place at a time that dispute arose between the two leaders of NUG regarding the expiry date of the National Unity Government (NUG).

The NUG's political deal ends in September this year but most of its provisions are not yet implemented. On the one hand, the Chief Executive Office is not yet created in the constitution, and on the other hand, the reforms that the leaders of the NUG had agreed upon to bring are not yet implemented. This has fueled concerns in Kabul and has raised disputes within the government. Besides that, the circles outside government are also pressurizing government.

Apparently John Kerry's visit to Afghanistan was to support the Afghan government and Afghan Security forces; but it seems that in this trip he resolved disputes between the leaders of the NUG. During a press conference in Kabul,

John Kerry said that there is 'no end' to National Unity Government agreement, and that according to the agreement he brokered the NUG will last for 5 years.

However Kerry's recent visit reduced disputes within the government, but it has also raised severe criticism of Afghan politicians. The former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, the government oppositions and some Parliament members have termed Kerry's statement as against Afghanistan's national sovereignty.

The formation of the NUG

On April 5 2014, the first round of the Afghan Presidential Election was held but none of the candidates were able to win the majority of votes. After the second round of election, despite tensions over widespread fraud in the election, Ashraf Ghani was announced as the winner, but his rival Abdullah Abdullah refused to accept the election result. Due to the opposition of the Abdullah's electoral team the country faced a profound political crisis.

Finally, in September 2014 John Kerry the US Secretary of State came to Afghanistan and brokered the NUG deal between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah according to which Ashraf Ghani became the Afghan President, Abdullah Abdullah the Afghan Chief Executive Officer and both agreed on 50-50 power sharing formula. Thus NUG was formed and hence put an end to election controversies.

Failures of the NUG

- **Disputes within the government:** the NUG was formed of two teams that had far greater differences. The least impact of these differences is the failure of the NUG to appoint officials for some key government offices which are now under the control of acting ministers and acting governors.
- **Lack of coordination:** Ever since the formation of the NUG, it lacked coordination in its policies for fighting against corruption, foreign policy, migration and etc.
- **Failure in peace efforts:** The efforts of the NUG to bring peace have not had desired results and the armed oppositions of the government have also refused to participate in the Quadrilateral Peace Talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States.
- **Failing to maintain security:** In the past one and a half year the NUG has failed to ensure security in Afghanistan and security situation in the country is now more deteriorated than compared to the past 14 years. Last year, one major city and many districts fell into the hands of the Taliban².
- **Worsened economic situation:** in the past one and a half year no step was held to provide economic environment in the country and thus due to capital flight, unemployment and deteriorated economic situation thousands of Afghans migrated to Europe.
- **Failure to meet commitments:** according to the statistics of a private organ, the NUG has achieved 7% of its commitments, work on 31% of its commitment is in progress, and 60% of its commitments are inactive (there is no recorded progress about them) and it has failed to achieve 2% of its commitments³.

² Center for Strategic and Regional Studies, Weekly analysis, issue 136: <http://csrskabul.com/pa/?p=2365>

³ For further info click on this link: <http://govmeter.tolonews.com/>

Achievements

The achievements of the NUG can be listed as follows:

- **To light the predicament the country was facing:** after disputes about the results of the presidential elections the situation in the country was critical. Political settlement between the two candidates brought the country out of the crisis and this was the first achievement of the NUG. Before 2014 there were vast concerns and publicities about the worsening situation in the country after 2014 and in this year the NUG was also formed and unlike the predictions it has still survived.
- **Long term economic projects:** since its formation the NUG has started practical work on two key economic projects for Afghanistan, TAPI and CASA-1000.
- **Attracting region's countries in Afghan issues:** after the formation of NUG, Central Asian countries and China have played active role in the Afghan issue. For example China played a basic role in the Afghan Peace Process⁴ and Central Asian countries took part in the Afghan economic projects.
- **Fight against corruption:** although the NUG lacked a coordinated policy in fight against corruption but it had some achievements in this field, for example, it has gained lots of money through National Procurement Commission and also acquired some loans of Kabul Bank Scandal.
- **Migrants:** The first strategic plan for migrants was built and the NUG came to an agreement with Iran and Pakistan to register unregistered Afghan migrants.
- **Foreign policy:** Afghanistan-US relations were improved and with a number of countries in the region such as Pakistan, China and Saudi Arabia relations were in a better situation than in the past.

⁴ Edward Wong and David Jolly, China considers larger role in Afghanistan Peace Process, New York Times, 2016-Jan- 24.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/25/world/asia/china-considers-larger-role-in-afghanistan-peace-process.html? r=0>

The Challenges ahead

Although NUG has large list of challenges but the most important of them can be outlined as follows:

- **Legitimacy:** NUG is formed on the basis of a power sharing agreement between the two rivals of Presidential Election and according to most of the experts it is formed in violation of the Afghan constitution. Therefore legitimacy is the main challenge of the NUG that it needs to deal with. The NUG could fill the gap created by illegitimacy through showing itself useful in action, but it proved weak in the field of action too.
- **Critical situation:** according to the political agreement between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah, the NUG was supposed to provide the way to Loya Jirga (Great Assembly) in order to create the post of Prime Minister in the constitution, but in this regard the government failed and its failure has fueled disputes within the government and has also tensed the country's political atmosphere.
- **Corruption:** In 2015, Afghanistan was the second most corrupt country on the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International. It indicates that corruption is still a challenge that seriously needs to be addressed by the Afghan government⁵.
- **Security and economic issues:** Security situation is getting worse day by day and has also hit economy by forcing the capital to flee from the country and thus unemployment had increased and faced the country with a new challenge.

⁵ Corruption Perception Index 2015, Transparency International, <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015>

The future of the NUG

The most important provision of the NUG political agreement was to invite Loya Jirga to create the post of Prime Minister in the constitution. Holding district council election was pre-requirement of Loya Jirga and electoral reform was pre-requirement of district council elections but the government has failed in all of them.

Generally, disputes within the government and illegitimacy of the NUG had brought the it at the verge of collapse but John Kerry's trip partially resolved the this problem and it seems that the National Unity Government will continue this way, at least for a while.

The end

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