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Preface

After the formation of the NUG, the Pak-Afghan relations have reached its most tenuous phase. Although the Kabul-Islamabad ties have experienced many ups and downs in the past one and half year; but recently Kabul has taken a harsh stance against Pakistan and has changed its Pakistan policy.

Recently, tensions between the two countries are due to the failure of Quadrilateral Peace talks to bring Taliban to negotiation table despite Islamabad's continuous promises. The ups and down of Kabul-Islamabad relations, the direction of these ties and the direction of Quadrilateral peace talks are the issues that you will read in this analyses.

In the second part of the analyses, you will read about fight against narcotics in Afghanistan. Although, Ministry of Counter Narcotics existed in the structure of the new Afghan government to fight against corruption and once a while talks about its achievements; but still narcotics is a main challenge to the Afghan government. A few days ago, Ministry of Counter Narcotics said that they have arrested thousands of drug smugglers and seized hundreds tons of drugs; but according to International Institutions the government's fight against corruption has not reduced the amount cultivation and deal of narcotics.

In this issue of weekly analyses of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies you will read analyses about the above two subjects.

The rising tensions between Kabul-Islamabad and the future of QCG



Following the ups and downs of bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, once again these relations have reached its most tenuous phase.

After the bloody explosion in Kabul, the Afghan President said that he does not expect Pakistan to bring the Taliban to the negotiation table. He also added that in Quadrilateral Talks, Pakistan had pledged in writing to go after those Taliban who refused to join the Peace Process.

Before this, the Kabul-Islamabad relations were deteriorated when a similar explosion occurred in Shah-Shaheed, Kabul. At that time too, Ghani accused Pakistan of supporting the Taliban and said that he does not trust Pakistan. But the question is what the direction of bilateral Pak-Afghan relations is?

The NUG and ups and downs in Kabul-Islamabad ties

After the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG), unlike his predecessor Hamid Karzai, the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani adopted a policy of rapprochement towards Pakistan. He granted privileges to Pakistan and tried to reduce Pakistani concerns, and hence distance itself from India.

The main issue in new Kabul-Islamabad relations was “peace in Afghanistan”. In this regard Pakistan made many promises to Afghanistan; the senior officials of the two countries paid mutual visits to both countries and thus the hopes for peace in Afghanistan increased. But after several months of warm relations between the two countries, when security situation in Afghanistan was deteriorated and, moreover, Pakistan did not fulfill its promises to bring Taliban to the negotiation table in March 2015, and for the first time the Pak-Afghan relations started to change since the formation of the NUG.

Hence, after March 2015, the NUG changed its policy towards Pakistan, and tried to improve its relations with India. In March and April 2015, Abdullah and Ghani visited India one after another. Thus, Pakistan came under more pressure than before. Therefore, with the initiative of Pakistan and at the presence of Pakistani intelligence a meeting was held between Masoom Stanekzai Chairman of the High Peace Council Secretariat and some members of the Taliban in Urumqi, China; but the Taliban denied their participation in this meeting.

In July 2015, Pakistan for the first time became able to bring the Taliban to face to face talks with the Afghan government in Murree; but these talks became stalled with the disclosure of the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar. Later, a new wave of insecurity and instability began in Afghanistan. Kunduz came under Taliban control for two weeks and Kabul ¹and some other provinces witnessed many deadly explosions. Thus bilateral Pak-Afghan relations were deteriorated after one year of the NUG's formation.

¹ For instance on August 9, 2015, an explosion happened in Shah Shaheed area of Kabul which had vast financial damages and casualties. Although nobody claimed responsibility for the explosion but it highly impacted Kabul-Islamabad relations.

After the efforts made by China, United States and United Nations to improve bilateral relations between the two countries and the visit of Pakistani Pashtun parties' leaders, the Afghan President met Nawaz Sharif Pakistani Prime Minister at the sideline of the Climate Change Conference in Paris. In this meeting, Nawaz Sharif proposed quadrilateral peace talks between Afghanistan-Pakistan-China-US, which Ghani accepted.

In December 2015, Ashraf Ghani traveled to Islamabad to participate in the Heart of Asia Conference and at the sidelines of this conference quadrilateral meeting between Afghanistan- Pakistan-China-US was also held. In this meeting the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) was formed to facilitate the negotiations.

Although four meeting of QCG is held in Kabul and Islamabad, but the Taliban has refused to participate in these talks. Refusal of participation in these talks by the Taliban made Afghanistan suspicious to the intentions of Pakistan. But after recent explosion in Kabul, the relations are more tenuous than ever.

Kabul's recent stance against Islamabad

Since the beginning of the Quadrilateral Peace Talks, Pakistan has frequently failed to fulfill its promises to bring the Taliban to negotiation table. At the beginning of 1395, after the intensification of war by the Taliban, the Afghan government lost hope in Quadrilateral Peace Talks. It is why, a day before the explosion in Kabul, Ashraf Ghani had stated that he has boycotted quadrilateral peace talks².

On April 19, 2016, a massive explosion occurred in Kabul and Taliban claimed responsibility for that. According to the statistics of the Afghan government this explosion left 64 dead and 347 injured. In response to this explosion Ashraf Ghani adopted a harsh position against Pakistan and said that he no longer trusts Pakistan. 'We do not expect Pakistan to bring the Taliban to the negotiation table, but we want Pakistan to honor its commitments based on the four nation's

² <http://csrskabul.com/pa/?p=2402>

agreement', said Ashraf Ghani in a joint session of both houses of the National Assembly on April 25. He further added, 'Pakistan should no longer continue the good and bad terrorist policy, and have to act as a responsible state and in this regard, the world is with us'. He warned that if Pakistan did not change its policy, the Afghan government will complain to the Security Council of the United Nations, International Institution and international community³.

On the other hand, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah postponed his trip to Pakistan after the Kabul explosion and thus somehow blamed Pakistan for it⁴. Postponement of this trip deteriorated the bilateral relations even more. This trip was the only opportunity that could decrease the mistrust in the relations between the both countries.

Pakistan's stance

Pakistani Foreign Ministry rejected recent remarks of Ashraf Ghani about Pakistan and in response to the new stance of Afghanistan it has announced that bringing Taliban to the negotiation table is not solely the responsibility of Pakistan.

On the other hand, following the intensification of Kabul-Islamabad relations, military of Pakistan has once again began their rocket attacks on Lalpoor and Goshta districts of Nangarhar province. The Afghan Foreign Ministry summoned Pakistani Ambassador for clarification⁵. According to reports, in these rocket attacks, one Afghan border police is dead and two other are injured.

³ <http://president.gov.af/ps/news/76964>

⁴ <http://ceo.gov.af/fa/news/59339>

⁵ <http://www.darivoa.com/content/pakistani-ambassador-summoned-to-afghan-foreign-ministry/3303086.html>

The future of Peace and Quadrilateral Talks

After deterioration of relations between the two countries, now the future of peace seems dark. Although failure in the Quadrilateral negotiation is the main reason behind the deterioration of relations between the two countries, but Pakistani officials are still talking about the initiation of these talks in near future.

On April 25, the Afghan Refugees and Repatriation Minister visited Pakistan as a result of an official invitation by Pakistan; the main reason of his trip was to register unregistered Afghan migrants and to extend the validation date of migration IDs of registered Afghan migrants⁶. According to the Refugees and Repatriation Minister, Sartaj Aziz the Advisor to Pakistani Prime Minister has assured him of reinitiating peace talks.

On the other hand, Sartaj Aziz Pakistani National Security Advisor met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. In this meeting the both sides agreed to establish close cooperation to maintain peace and security in Afghanistan to expand the activities of the QCG⁷.

The Afghan National Security Advisor also visited China on April 17, 2016, although expansion of military and economic ties are said to be the main purpose of this visit but it seems that Afghanistan is trying to pressurize Pakistan through China for one last time.

On the other hand, the sixth session of Senior Officials Meeting of Heart of Asia conference was held under Istanbul Process on April 26, 2016, in New Delhi where the Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai and Pakistani Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Ahmad Chaudhari had also participated.

Referring to the recent incident in Kabul, Hekmat Khalil Karzai said in his speech that, peace efforts will not have specific conclusions unless the support for terrorism is stopped. About the quadrilateral negotiation he said the overarching goal of this process was face to face talks with the Taliban and according to the agreement of these talks if the Taliban were not prepared to negotiate then

⁶ <http://morr.gov.af/fa/news/60726>

⁷ <http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=MzY4MQ,,>

necessary measures will be taken against them. But Pakistani Deputy Foreign Minister stressed on shared commitments of all parties of quadrilateral peace talks in order to initiate peace talks⁸.

According to the reports, a delegation of senior officials of the Qatar Office of the Taliban has arrived to Pakistan. It is said that Shahabuddin Delawar, Jan Mohammad Madani and Mullah Abas Stanekzai are the members of this delegation. Media has quoted the Statement of the Taliban that the purpose of this trip is solving the problems of the Afghan Migrants in Pakistan, border issues and negotiations about releasing the Taliban prisoners from Pakistani prisons⁹; but some international and Pakistan Medias have released news that beside Pakistani Officials this delegation would also meet the representatives of China. If it is true, then in current situation China would be the last hope to initiate peace talks.

⁸ <http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=MzY4Mg,,>

⁹ <http://www.voanews.com/content/afghan-taliban-confirms-delegation-visiting-pakistan/3304525.html>

The Current Situation of fight against Narcotics in Afghanistan



Although in 1394, the cultivation and production of narcotics were decreased in Afghanistan; but it is still the largest producer of drugs in the world.

Although the Afghan government claims that it has had achievements in its fight against narcotics; but despite financial support of the international community, this struggle has not reached any noteworthy conclusion. According to the Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics, in 1394, they have seized 311 tons of drugs and arrested 2906 drug smugglers. Among them there were 10 international smugglers and also two outstanding international drug smugglers that US, Afghanistan and some other countries were after them for years.

According to Ministry of Counter Narcotics, the total income receives from Afghan Opium are estimated to be near \$70 billion, and the income share is mostly divided between armed groups and Mafia.

Narcotic is a main problem in Afghanistan; on the one hand, it has defamed the country and on the other hand, according to the various reports there are 1 to 3 million drug addict in Afghanistan which is really an alarming challenge.

What are the reasons behind decrease in poppy cultivation and production last year? And what has the Afghan government done to tackle narcotics? These are the questions which will be analyzed here.

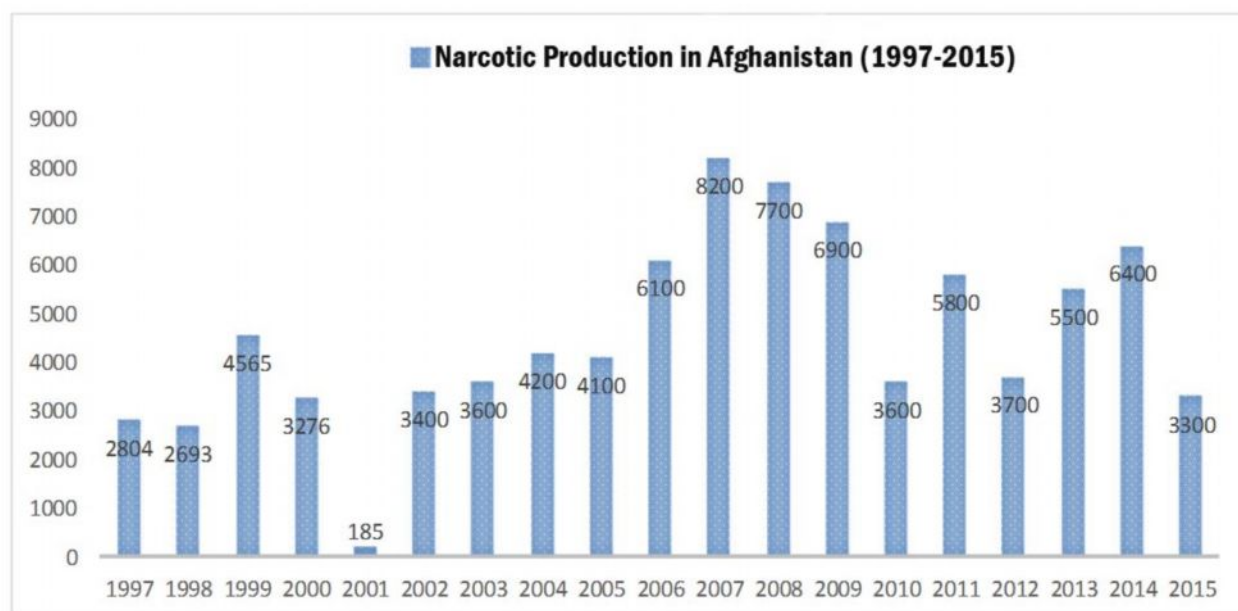
Cultivation and Production of Narcotics in Afghanistan

Cultivation of narcotics has a long history in Afghanistan and is an old tradition in the country. Narcotics were also being cultivated in Afghanistan during the cold war but there is no precise statistics about the amount of it.

Also after the cold war and during civil war, Afghanistan was among the countries that produced large amount of narcotics. In 1997, 2804 tons of drugs were produced in Afghanistan, this number reached 4565 tons in 1999; but in 2001, according to the decree of Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar the production of narcotics decreased in Afghanistan and reached to 185 tons.

From 2002 to 2007, the production of narcotics was increasing annually, and reached from 3400 tons to 8200 tons. The main reason behind the rise in the production of narcotics was unprecedented cultivation of narcotics around the country. In 2002, around 74 thousand hectares of lands were used for cultivation of narcotics but in 2007 this number became increased to 193 thousand hectares.

But from 2007 to 2010, the production of narcotics decreased from 8200 to 3600 tons. But in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014, this number increased once again. From 2009 to 2014 the cultivation of narcotics increased in Afghanistan. In 2009, overall 123 thousand hectares of lands were used for narcotic cultivation in Afghanistan but in 2014, this number increased to 224 thousand hectares. (See graph-1)

Graph-1: narcotic production in Afghanistan (ton)

The Situation of Opium Production in 2015

In 2015, for the first time the amount of land used for cultivation of narcotics decreased. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), in 2015, 183000 hectares of land was used to cultivate narcotics in Afghanistan which shows 19% decrease compared to 2014.

And also the production of narcotics was 3300 tons in 2015, which show a 48% decrease compared to 2014. Generally, narcotics were cultivated in insecure areas particularly in Helmand, Farah, Kandahar and Badghis.

Last year only in 14 provinces there was no cultivation of narcotics, but in remaining 20 provinces people had vastly cultivated narcotics. The reduction of narcotic cultivation was not due to the efforts of the NUG, but as a survey by UN shows, the main reason was bad weather.

The Afghan government's policy to tackle narcotics

After the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the formation of a ministry under the name of Ministry of Counter Narcotics was announced in Bonn Conference. In 1383, the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai announced that the fight against narcotics is the priority of his government, and the cultivation, production and smuggling narcotics was also banned. Besides that, cooperation between Ministries of Counter Narcotics, Interior, Public Health and Agriculture Irrigation and livestock and the UNODC was increased to tackle narcotics in the country.

Later, Ministry of Counter Narcotics announced a strategy to tackle Narcotics. The followings were the main point of this strategy:

- Taking necessary measures against drug smuggling
- Improving economic condition of the people
- Decreasing demand for drugs and treating drug addicts
- Improving governmental administration in provinces and districts
- Increasing public awareness, attracting regional and international cooperation, destruction of poppy corps, implementation of the law and spreading the alternatives of opium

both leaders of the NUG had persisted on fight against narcotic during their election campaign; but in this regard they have done nothing except destroying some poppy corps and arresting a small number of drug smugglers; and maybe the main reason behind that is insecurity in the country, because the government was focused on security and was not able to prioritize fight against narcotics.

Counter narcotic strategy

After overthrow of the Taliban regime, governmental and international strategies were unable to tackle narcotics in Afghanistan; the main reason behind it was the presence of foreign troops in the country and the people affiliated with it, and the involvement of government officials and their relatives in drug smuggling.

On the other hand, improper implementation of the law, involvement of the government's armed oppositions in cultivation and production of narcotics in insecure areas, lack of alternatives and vast insecurity in the country were other factors that affected struggle against narcotics in Afghanistan.

Hence, approving counter narcotic laws will not eradicate it unless these laws are implemented, corruption is tackled, security is maintained, and alternatives are found.

The end

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Note: Please let us know your feedback and suggestions for the improvement of Weekly analysis.