



Center for Strategic & Regional Studies

Kabul

Weekly Analysis-Issue Number 165 (May 14-21, 2016)

Weekly Analysis is one of CSRS' publications, which significantly analyses weekly economic and political events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them to design best policies. Weekly Analysis is published in local languages (Pashto and Dari) and international languages (English and Arabic).

In this issue:

- Preface..... 2

From the fifth meeting of QCG to submission of peace draft to HI

- The repeated commitments of Pakistan..... 4
- Fifth meeting of QCG..... 4
- The future of Peace negotiations..... 5
- Peace talks with Hezb-e-Islami..... 6
- Afghan government's peace policy..... 7

Kabul-Beijing ties and the New Silk Road

- The NUG and Kabul-Beijing ties..... 9
- Afghan CEO visits China..... 10
- New Silk Road..... 10

Preface

The fifth meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) was held after a long delay in Islamabad. As usual, the representatives of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China had participated in this meeting. But this time Afghan President's Special Envoy and the Afghan Ambassador in Islamabad Omar Zakhilwal had attended the meeting on behalf of Afghanistan. What did occur in this meeting? How will it affect the Afghan government's peace negotiations with the Taliban? And what is the direction of the Afghan peace strategy?

Coincided with this meeting the peace agreement between Afghan government and Hezb-e-Islami (Hekmatyar) is finalized and its draft is submitted to Hezeb-e-Islami (HI) delegation. Whether this draft will be acceptable for both sides or not? And eventually how will peace talks with HI end up, are the question we will analyze here.

In the second part of the analysis, you would about the Kabul-Beijing ties and the "New Silk Road". An Afghan delegation headed by the Afghan Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah went to China for a three day trip last week and met Chinese President, Vice President and Prime Minister and some Chinese businessmen. In this trip both sides signed agreements in trade and technical fields and particularly New Silk Road.

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

From the fifth meeting of QCG to submission of peace draft to HI



The fifth meeting of Quadilateral Coordination Group of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China was held after three months break in Islamabad. Pakistan's Foreign Ministry in a statement declared that the objective of this meeting is the implementation of peace "roadmap" finalized in previous meetings¹.

This meeting comes at a time that the peace agreement between Afghan government and Hezb-e-Islami (Hekmatyar) is finalized and its draft had been submitted to Hezeb-e-Islami (HI) delegation.

After the Taliban refused to participate in Quadilateral Meetings and began their spring offenses under "Omari Operations" and after the bloody attack in Kabul, the Afghan government changed its peace strategy and prioritized fight against the Taliban. The question is after the fifth meeting of QCG how much is the initiation of peace talks with the Taliban possible? And how will be peace talks with HI Hekmatyar finalized?

¹ Read more in here: <http://www.darivoa.com/a/quadrilateral-meeting-will-discuss-peace-map-in-islamabad-today/3335207.html>

The repeated commitments of Pakistan

In the third meeting² of Quadrilateral Meetings on February 6, 2016, the QCG agreed that at the end of February, Pakistan would bring the Taliban to the negotiation table. Later in the fourth meeting³ of QCG on February 23, in Kabul, once again Pakistan agreed to bring the Taliban to negotiation table in the first week of March.

In the fourth meeting it was also agreed that the four countries particularly Pakistan will use force against those Taliban who do not join the Peace Process.

Releasing a statement⁴ on March 5, 2016, the Taliban boycotted the Peace Process, and Pakistan was unable to bring the Taliban to peace talks. The Afghan government claims that Pakistan has not fulfill its commitments and emphasizes that Pakistan must launch military operations against those who are not willing to talk. Thus the atmosphere of distrust was dominant in Pak-Afghan relations; but when the Afghan Department of Protection of Senior Officials was attacked in Kabul, the bilateral relation between the two countries was unprecedentedly deteriorated.

Fifth meeting of QCG

In the last one month and after the deterioration of Kabul-Islamabad relations, Pakistani officials spoke about reinitiating Quadrilateral talks. After the bloody Kabul attack, Pakistani National Security Advisor Sartaj Aziz in a meeting with Afghan Minister of Refugees and Repatriation in Islamabad and later in a meeting with Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi in the fifth Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) reiterated on continuation of QCG.

² The joint press release of QCG's third meeting:

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

³ The Joint press release of QCG's fourth meeting:

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

⁴ Read full text of the Taliban's statement here:

<http://alemara1.org/?p=43364>

Eventually, the fifth meeting of QCG was held on May 18, 2016, in Islamabad and Afghan President's Special Envoy and Ambassador of Afghanistan to Pakistan Omar Zakhilwal participated the meeting on behalf of Afghanistan. Other delegations were led by Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, the Special Representative of the United States to Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard G. Olson and China's Special Envoy for Afghan Affairs Deng Xijun.

The meeting ended with the call for peace in Afghanistan and the participants reiterated their commitments to support the negotiations and to find political solution to end the Afghan war. In this meeting the Kabul attack was condemned and representatives of the four countries reaffirmed their commitments to use their respective leverages and influences to achieve peace in Afghanistan. The joint press release of QCG has not stated anything about the date of talks with the Taliban but has stated that "the next meeting will be convened as mutually agreed"⁵. Also no indication was made about the implementation of commitments made in previous meetings.

Since the Afghan government did not send a delegation from Kabul it indicates that the meeting was held in an atmosphere of distrust and that the Afghan government gave no importance to it. Dawa Khan Minapal the deputy spokesperson of the Afghan President has said that the Afghan government demands from Pakistan to fulfill its previous commitments first.

The future of Peace negotiations

After the failure of Pakistan to bring the Taliban to the negotiation table and deadly explosion of Kabul, in a joint session of Parliament, the Afghan President said that he no longer trusts Pakistan and does not expect Pakistan to bring the Taliban to the negotiation table.⁶ Pakistani National Security Advisor Sartaj Aziz in response to Ghani's expressions said that to bring the Taliban to peace talks is not only the duty of Pakistan.

⁵ The joint press release of fifth QCG meeting: <http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/pr051816.html>

⁶ Read about Ghani's speech on this link:
<http://president.gov.af/ps/news/76964>

Therefore, reinitiating the QCG meetings (fifth meeting) is rather to improve relations between the two countries, because the bilateral relations between the two countries were deteriorated after the fourth meeting of QCG.

Since on the one hand, the Taliban have boycotted Quadrilateral Peace talks and since on the other hand Pakistani officials have stated that bringing the Taliban to negotiations is not only the duty of Pakistan; the future of Peace talks does not seem promising.

Peace talks with Hezb-e-Islami

Peace talks with HI were initiated right after refusal of the Taliban from participation in the quadrilateral peace talks and HI sent its delegation to Kabul. The draft of a peace agreement (in three chapters and 25 articles) between HI and Afghan government was submitted to HI delegations after two months of negotiations. The draft deal is signed by head of the Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) which does not mean it is finalized.

Besides that the text of the draft which is claimed to be sent as final draft on behalf of Afghan government is also released in Media⁷. Given the preconditions of Hezb-e-Islami, there is some confusion in this draft which means that agreement on this deal will take a while.

The fourth article of the draft states that both sides support withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan but an exact date is not specified to begin the withdrawal of foreign troops which was one of HI's preconditions. The fifth article of draft states that the Afghan government would demand the removal of Hekmatyar and HI members from UN and other countries' blacklists; but in this regard, no grantee is mentioned, while judicial immunity of the leader and members of HI is the core precondition of HI.

Although it is said that some circles are trying to create obstacles in the way of peace negotiations with HI but peace talks would be successful if the two sides agreed on the above mentioned two points.

⁷ text of possible agreement between HI and the Afghan government:
http://www.bbc.com/pashto/afghanistan/2016/05/160518_ns_afg_peace_agreement

Afghan government's peace policy

The Afghan government in its peace strategies rely on countries in the region particularly Pakistan. Although countries in the region can play a significant role in the Afghan peace process, but considering the quadrilateral talks, reliance on other countries would not be beneficial.

Reliance of the Afghan government on the other countries in its peace strategies is the main factor why the Taliban did not join the peace process despite the Afghan government's efforts. That is also the main reason why the Taliban refused to participate in quadrilateral peace talks with the mediation of Pakistan.

Given the experience from the past neither war nor reliance on other countries is the remedy of the Afghan issue. Since The Taliban insists that their Political Office in Qatar is the only address that can conduct peace talks; the Afghan government must conduct peace talks through this channel. Although initiation of peace talks with the Taliban does not seem possible in near future but the Afghan government must start direct peace talks with the Taliban through an Afghan impartial mediator.

Kabul-Beijing ties and the New Silk Road



The Afghan Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah went to China on an official invitation by Chinese Prime Minister. The trip occurs at a time that on the one hand, Pakistani Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif is also in China and on the other hand, the fifth meeting of QCG was held in Islamabad.

In this trip, six agreements were signed between the two countries in the fields of transit, trade, economy, and cultivation, the most important of which was the agreement of the New Silk Road.

What will be the impacts of this trip on China-Afghanistan relations and the reinitiating of the Afghan peace process and will this trip make Afghanistan really part of “One Belt, One Road” economic belt of China, are the questions which will be analyzed here.

The NUG and Kabul-Beijing ties

After the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG) in Afghanistan, the China-Afghanistan relations became much closer compared to the past years, because the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani began his foreign trips from China and also approached China for its peace strategy.

In 1394, the Afghan and Chinese officials increasingly visited each other's countries and some Chinese Ministers, Chinese Vice President Li Yuanchao, and Chinese Chief of Military Staff came to Kabul. Besides that, Chinese Senior Officials also met Afghan Senior officials at the sidelines of some International Conferences (such as Shanghai Conference). The Chinese Officials also attended international conferences and meetings about Afghanistan (for instance, the Heart of Asia Conference-Islamabad, Quadrilateral Meetings between Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China and Afghanistan, Pakistan and China Trilateral Meeting).

On the other hand, the Afghan CEO Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, the Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani and Afghan National Security Advisor Hanif Atmar also visited China.

In 1394, the China-Afghanistan bilateral relations were improving month after month and Kabul-Beijing relations were the only relations which was stable in the past one decade. Besides that, the Afghan-Chinese military cooperation also expanded and the Afghan National Security Advisor Hanif Atmar and Afghan Minister of Interior Noorulhaq Olomi visited China and signed four agreements in the fields of security according to one of which, China will plant security doors in the four gates of Kabul.

On the other hand, Chinese Chief of Army Staff General Fang Fenghui in an undeclared trip on February 29, 2016, came to Kabul and met Afghan Senior Officials. Besides promising 73 million dollars of financial aid to Afghanistan the Chinese military chief presented Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and Tajikistan Anti-terrorism scheme and said that China will hold an international conference on

Afghan President's anti-terrorism plan in the upcoming summer. The Chinese military chief visited Afghanistan at a time that China's two economic projects "One Belt, One Road" and "China-Pakistan economic corridor" were in the process of implementation.

Afghan CEO visits China

Due to official invitation by Chinese Prime Minister the Afghan CEO went on his second official trip to China on May 15. The three-day visit of Afghan CEO to China came at a time that Pakistani Chief of Army Staff Raheel Sharif also visited China and discussed the security of Pakistan-China Economic Zone.

The Afghan CEO once again demanded from Chinese Officials to reinstate peace talks in China and put pressures on Pakistan. In response to a question in this regard the Afghan CEO said "we expect all leverages and influence to be used in order to security and peace to be maintained in Afghanistan"

In this trip the Afghan side cleared its position regarding China and expressed their support from China's position in the South China Sea and signing six agreements in the areas of cultivation, trade and transit was an effort aimed at bringing the two nations closer.

According to these agreements, China will construct a building in the Kabul University; the saffron trade to China will start, Afghanistan will be provided with 500 million yuan technical and 50 million yuan human support, and also Afghanistan will become part of the "One Belt, One Road" economic belt.

New Silk Road

In 2013, when power in China was transferred from fourth generation to fifth generation; Xi Jinping became Chinese President. While China's economic development was devastating, Xi Jinping came with major economic schemes and took measures to implement them. One of these schemes was the revival of Silk Road (New Silk Road).

New Silk Road will go through two paths, one, through land and second through sea.

The land-based “New Silk Road” will begin from China, and it will reach to Europe and Middle East through Central Asia and Iran. Afghanistan was trying to be part of this road since ever the beginning and now has inked the agreement of “One Belt, One Road” with China.

This agreement which includes Afghanistan in “New Silk Road” can have positive impacts on Afghanistan. Because, based on this agreement, Afghanistan will change to regional trade and transit way and investments will be made on Afghanistan’s infrastructures (roads and railways) which will put multiple positive impacts on Afghanistan’s economy.

The end

Contact Us:

Email: info@csrskabul.com - csrskabul@gmail.com

Website: www.csrskabul.com - www.csrskabul.net

Office: (+93) 784089590

Contact with Officials:

Dr. AbdulBaqi Amin, General Director of CSRS: (+93) 789316120 abdulbaqi123@hotmail.com

Hekmatullah Zaland, Senior Manager: (+93) 775454048 hekmat.zaland@gmail.com



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