



## Center for Strategic & Regional Studies Kabul

### **Weekly Analysis- Issue Number 108 (March 7-14, 2015)**

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## Preface

It is planned that on March 24<sup>th</sup> President Ashraf Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah will have a trip to the U.S. with a delegation of Afghan Government's high ranking officials. Ashraf Ghani will have a special meeting with Barak Obama, in addition to that he will give a speech to the senate of the U.S.

The trip of the Afghan Government leaders to U.S. will take place in such a condition that Afghanistan has faced many internal challenges. Though five months of the inauguration of the national unity government already passed, yet the cabinet of the country is not appointed and the main obstacle for it is the internal differences between leaders. On the other hand, the promises about struggle against corruption and other issues are also not implemented. These disputes are to the point that even on the trip to the U.S. both the leaders have dispute. If the trip take place on time, what will be the agenda and discussing issues of the trip? And what will be the impacts and achievements of the trip?

Moreover, in last few months Afghan refugees in Pakistan faced many challenges, and only during the two months of the ongoing winter more than 50,000 refugees are forced to return to the country. Therefore, the Refugees and Migration Minister Alemi Balkhi and an official delegation of the government have gone on a trip to Pakistan, and he spoke with the officials of Pakistan about this issue. What will be the important points of the agreements between Afghanistan and Pakistan during the trip of the Refugee and Migration's Minister? What are the policies of both sides about the return of Afghan Refugees? And what will be its influence on the relations of the two countries?

In this weekly analysis you will read the mentioned issues that are analyzed and discussed by the analytical board of CSRS:

## NUG Leaders Visit to US: What People Expect?



In late 2014 when a government under the title of “National Unity Government” or NUG formed in Afghanistan, the news of President Ashraf Ghani’s visit to US started to spread. It was also said that the trip would take place in January 2015.

But it seems that the time frame should not be taken serious for implementation of works in NUG. There was time specified for the establishment of the government, formation of the cabinet, president’s trip to the U.S. and some other important tasks to be done, but those tasks were postponed. Based on these facts we should not trust the timeframe of the government for implementation of specific tasks.

If we trust the sources that are so close to Ex-president Hamid Karzai, like the other issues, about the trip to the U.S. there was a difference between both the leaders of the NUG. From the capacity of the plane that will take the delegation to the U.S. up to the meeting of Obama, which is planned that only Ashraf Ghani will meet him, and the CEO warned that if he is not let to join the meeting he will boycott the trip.

So delaying trip is “natural”, as the trip of the Excellency to Iran, which was planned to take place in February, was also postponed because of the avalanche. So “Natural Disasters” also can influence the diplomacy and politics of Afghanistan.

## **The Afghanistan-US Relations:**

Since the US invasion of Afghanistan and oust of Taliban regime with the UN Security Council permission, the relations between Afghanistan and the US was of a dominant and a dominated country. When the Republicans were in white house, the relations were very cordial. But the US military practices, and not taking account of Pakistan interventions in Afghanistan gradually made Afghan government criticize US policy which finally deteriorated the relations.

Hamid Karzai was asking the U.S. to put pressure over Pakistan to stop supporting the Taliban. But the U.S. did not pay any attention to his demand. Due to the civilian casualties in the rural areas of the country, the criticism of the U.S. by Karzai has gradually became obvious, and the attempts of the then U.S. envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke for marginalizing Karzai in Presidential Election, faced extreme reactions of Karzai. The relations gradually reached up to the point that during his last days of his presidency Karzai refused to sign B.S.A. with the U.S.

Therefore, the main goal of the trip of the leaders of the NUG to the U.S. can be reconstruction of relations with the U.S., which was damaged during Karzai's regime.

At the second day of the new government, President Ashraf Ghani signed B.S.A. with the U.S. to get trust of the U.S.

## **Program of the Trip to the US:**

There is no doubt that the trip will take place in 2015, and the other point that no one should doubt is that Ashraf Ghani will not be alone in this trip. The CEO Abdullah Abdullah will accompany him, because he is the representative of half of the governmental power of the country. The success of the trip is subject to a well formed agenda and program.

Based on the demand of Ashraf Ghani, since coming to the power, about reviewing the date for the exit of the foreign forces from Afghanistan, we can say that one of the demands of Ashraf Ghani from the U.S. will be this one. Nevertheless, during the last two years we have seen propagations regarding the capacity of Afghan security forces. Even the foreigners expressed that they have full confidences. But in war fields there

have been a lot of problems faced by ANA. President believes that even the unarmed presence of foreigners in the country can boost the morale of Afghan Armed Forces.

On the other hand, with the start activities of Islamic State (Daesh) in Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani will ask the U.S. to take serious measures for strengthening and training Afghan Forces, especially to equip the Air Forces of Afghanistan with fighter planes.

Though President Ashraf Ghani signed B.S.A. with the U.S. but there are many ambiguities in it, in which the U.S. did not give any stable promise for cooperating Afghanistan. It is in such a condition that in last one year the casualty of the Afghan Forces increased, and escape of the forces also challenged these forces. Discussing these issues may be a part of the agenda of the negotiations.

### **Long term Economic Assistance:**

The success of NUG is bound to the foreign aids and cooperation. In last thirteen years the economy of the country is addicted to pumping money from abroad. The unemployment rate after 2014 is unprecedented in last thirteen years, it increased and the income of the country is being decreased, to the extent that in a few upcoming months the government will not be able to pay the salaries of its officials. It caused a big challenge to NUG.

The U.S. did not pay any attention to fundamental projects investments in Afghanistan in last thirteen years; so it is difficult for Ashraf Ghani to convince the U.S. to invest in this field in Afghanistan, because US is busy with challenges in other countries. But, if he is able to convince Washington to continue its half-done projects in Afghanistan, it will be more than enough for him. Though it is said that if Hamid Karzai kept close relationships with the U.S., still Afghanistan would be in the priorities list of the U.S., but the fact is that even if he kept close relationships with the U.S., because of the evolutions in the global politics still Afghanistan would not be in the priority list of the U.S.

But the U.S. can cooperate strengthening the economy of Afghanistan through other ways, those ways are putting political and economic pressure for speeding up some commercial and transit projects like; Lajaward Way, CASA1000, and TAPI, which pass through Afghanistan, even the implementation of these projects need peace and security.

## Peace Process

Another essential topic that would be discussed between the leaders of the NUG and the U.S. it will be peace process. Many times Ashraf Ghani said that without peace the development of the country is impossible.

Though Pakistan promised that it will bring the Taliban for peace negotiation, and Ashraf Ghani also declared that during last three decades Afghanistan never comes as close to peace as now, but gradually there are some events risen up that under questions the trust over Pakistan for cooperating the peace process.

If before the visits of Ashraf Ghani to the U.S., the peace process start seriously as promised by Pakistan and authoritative representatives of the Taliban from the office of Qatar participate in it, so the trip of Ashraf Ghani to Washington will be in a reasonable time and he may have great achievements during this trip.

But, if Pakistan does not want or is not able to bring the Taliban for peace negotiations, it will be a huge setback of the NUG of Afghanistan; because Afghanistan has already given privileges to Pakistan and did not get anything from the other side. In this condition, Ashraf Ghani's position in his trip to Washington will be so weak.

Although it is impossible that without the completion of the cabinet Ashraf Ghani will go to the U.S., but the completion of the cabinet is not the only demand of the U.S. The U.S. wants the Afghan Government to take serious measures against corruption. In the future none of the country will cooperate Afghanistan, which is famous for corruption, as they did earlier.

The experiences have proved that till Afghanistan does not have serious decisions for struggle against corruption, good governance, struggle against poverty and unemployment, struggle against narcotics, and peace and security, the international aids will not solve any problem of the country.

## Afghan Refugees and their return from Pakistan



Since 2002 approximately 5.7 million Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan<sup>1</sup>; but yet many Afghans live as refugees in various countries around the globe, especially in the neighbouring countries. Currently there are approximately 3 million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan from which 1.6 million are registered and the remaining are not.<sup>2</sup>

After attacking the military school in Peshawar of Pakistan in December 2014 the issue of Afghan refugees in Pakistan became serious, and Pakistan changed its policy toward Afghan refugees there. After the peace process this issue is also important for Afghan government, because the Pakistani police forced Afghan refugees and as the result a huge number of them returned back to the country. As the result, the Afghan Refugee and Immigration Minister Sayed Alemi Balkh has gone on a long trip to Pakistan, and CEO Abdullah Abdullah also want to go on a trip to Pakistan regarding this issue.

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<sup>1</sup> See online:

<http://www.unhcr.org/afghanistan/solutions-strategy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See online:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2015/03/150311\\_zs\\_afghan\\_refugees\\_pakistan](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2015/03/150311_zs_afghan_refugees_pakistan)

## The Process of Return of Afghan Refugees (January-March)

With the change of the condition, many Afghan refugees return back to the country, which most of them were unregistered refugees. According to the research done by IOM, up to the March 7<sup>th</sup> of the current year 47696 unregistered Afghan refugees returned back to the country, which most of them (53%) are located in Ningarhar, and then Kunar, Laghman, Kunduz, and Kabul<sup>3</sup>. (Look at the statistics in the first and second table).

Based on the researches done by UNHCR, in the first two months of the current year, there are approximately 7721 registered Afghan refugees returned to the country (3879 in January and 3842 in February). If we compare these statistics with the ones of 2014, that time only 612 registered Afghan refugees returned<sup>4</sup>.

**First Table: Unregistered Afghan Refugees Returned from Pakistan (Turkham)**

Date	By Self	Forced	Total
January 2015	22274	1472	23746
February 2015	18935	1575	20510
March 1 <sup>st</sup> - 7 <sup>th</sup>	3088	352	3440
<b>Total</b>	<b>44297</b>	<b>3399</b>	<b>47696</b>

Reference: The International Organization for Migration

**Second Table: Comparing the average of increase 92014-2015)**

Type	2014	2015	Comparing
self-exit	59 per day	671 per day	11 fold increase
By force exit	10 per day	52 per day	5 fold increase

Reference: International Organization for Migration

<sup>3</sup> International Organisation of Migrations, return of undocumented Afghans from Pakistan, update as of 7<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

<sup>4</sup>Christine Roehrs, The refugee dilemma: Afghans in Pakistan between expulsion and failing aid schemes, Afghanistan Analysts Network, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2015



## **The Policy of Islamabad:**

With the last attack in Peshawar, the life of Afghan refugees in Pakistan also became miserable. Pakistan called it 9/11 of Pakistan and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif changed its internal policy and summarized it in 21 points called “National Action Plan”. The return of Afghan refugee is also included in those 21 points.

Nawaz Sharif did not answer the question that why are Afghan refugees involved in “National Action Plan” of Pakistan; but there are rumours that Pakistan believes that Afghans were involved in this incident. Some Pakistani media broadcasted news that two out of the six attackers were Afghans<sup>5</sup>. With all those claims the high ranking officials did not accept such news.

Currently the policy of Pakistan toward Afghan refugees is to return them to Afghanistan as soon as possible. Many times they declared that unregistered refugees in Pakistan are illegal, and they will take “legal action” about them; but for the registered refugees Pakistan want to show the world that 2015 will be the last year for Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

In the trilateral conference<sup>6</sup> held in Pakistan it is decided that unregistered Afghan refugees will be registered within upcoming four months; but they did not say anything about the extension of the Afghan Citizen cards of the registered refugees. The return of all registered and unregistered Afghan refugees to the country up to the end of 2015 seems to be challenging, and at the end of the year they will stay jobless, homeless and without any future (as the ones in 2012)<sup>7</sup>, or that time their cards dates may extend for a short term.

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<sup>5</sup> Express Tribune, 11 militants carried out Peshawar school attack: Police report, dec 23, 2014. See it online at: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/811044/11-militants-carried-out-peshawar-school-attack-police-report/>

<sup>6</sup> This decision was taken in the trilateral conference of Afghanistan, Pakistan and UNHCR, in which Sayed Hussain Alemi Balkhi participated.

<sup>7</sup> In 2012 while the cards of Afghan refugees were expire dated, there was not any decision taken up to 2014, so the Pakistani police were hurting Afghan refugees.

## The Policy of Kabul:

Ashraf Ghani, in his first speech to the Upper House, clearly said that Afghan refugees are an integral part of the Afghan Nation, and if those refugees do not return to the country, the nation will not be completed<sup>8</sup>. CEO Abdullah Abdullah also has a similar idea and he may have a relevant trip to Pakistan very soon.

As the result of the reports about the cruelty of Pakistani Police and the return of more than 50,000 Afghan refugees to the country in last two months, the Refugee and Migration Minister Alemi Balkhi has gone to Pakistan to solve this issue.

Afghan delegation has met with the prime minister, advisor of the foreign affairs and governor of Khaibar Pashtonkhwa of Pakistan, and it also participated in a trilateral conference regarding refugees. It is reported that the second phase of the conference between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and UNHCR will be held in Geneva.

As after the peace and security, the priority of Afghan government seems to be the priority of Afghan Government<sup>9</sup>; yet the government tries that the refugees should be returned gradually, and the forced return of unregistered refugees should be stopped.

If the return of refugees continue as of the last two months, it will put pressure on the Afghan government, regarding this issue Afghan government has taken reasonable actions and it has chosen such a strategy for the return of the refugees:

1. The honourable and by-will return of refugees to the country;
2. Gradual return of the refugees.<sup>10</sup>

Based on the request of Afghan Government for stopping by-force return of unregistered Afghan refugees and stop hurting refugees by Pakistani police, Pakistan accepted to register all unregistered Afghan refugees in the upcoming four months.

<sup>8</sup> See online:

<http://morr.gov.af/fa/news/41816>

<sup>9</sup> Many time the Refugee and Migration minister Alemi Balkhi said that return of refugees is one of the priorities of the National Unity Government. Read the interview of the minister with Farsinews:

<http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13931120001616#sthash.OTOz0nZi.dpuf>

Also read his views in the trilateral conference in Islamabad:

<http://pa.azadiradio.org/content/article/26895906.html>

<sup>10</sup> The views of Afghan Refugees and Migration Minister Alemi Balkhi in the trilateral conference of Islamabad:

For more information read the news of Azadi Radio, Balkhi: the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan should be by-self and honourable exit, read it in the below link:

<http://pa.azadiradio.org/content/article/26895906.html>

### **Impacts of the refugees issue on bilateral relations:**

The issue of Afghan refugees is not only a political, economic, and security issue, but also an issue of humanitarian dilemma. It is neither useful for Pakistan to force Afghan refugees to return to Pakistan, nor is it beneficial for Afghan government to welcome millions of refugees to return to the country at the same time.

It is beneficial for both the countries to solve this issue by cooperating each other; on one hand Pakistan will increase its soft power in Afghanistan, on the other hand, the Afghan government will not come under economic pressure, and Pakistan will also not suffer from economic loss.

In addition to that, hurting Afghan refugees by Pakistani police will not only have bad impacts on the relations of both the governments, but will also have bad impacts on the relationship of the nations of both the countries that have mutual cultures and other aspects.

The End

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