



## Center for Strategic & Regional Studies Kabul

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#### **In this issue:**

- Preface ..... 2

#### **The Recent Diplomatic Initiatives of Taliban**

- Taliban: From Military to Diplomacy! ..... 4
- Pugwash Conference in Qatar ..... 4
- Taliban's Visit to Tehran ..... 5
- Oslo Talks ..... 5
- Dubai Meeting ..... 5
- Conclusion..... 6

#### **The Drone Strikes and the BSA**

- The Silence of the Afghan Government .....8
- The drone strikes in Afghanistan ..... 8
- Afghan Public Opinion & Civilian Casualties ..... 9

#### **Turkish Parliamentary Elections: Will it change Foreign Policy?**

- The Background of Islamism in Turkey ..... 10
- AK Party: A Winner or Loser? ..... 11
- The Future Scenarios of Govt. Making in Turkey ..... 12
- Changing Foreign Policy?! ..... 13

## Preface

In the recent weeks, Taliban have been unprecedentedly active in diplomacy. Their delegations have met some Afghan government members and some civil society members. Taliban spokesman, who in the last 13 years has published statements of casualties, also published some statements on the peace-process and reconciliations.

The Taliban delegations have met with different figures in Qatar, Oslo and Dubai. Besides this, the head of Taliban's political office in Qatar had visited Tehran. They have also denied participation in Urumqi meeting, which is said to be initiated by Pakistan. Taliban's recent unique political activities convey what message?

Simultaneously, with the peace efforts, US drone targeted a funeral ceremony in Khost province, which caused in killing more than 30 civilians, on which Afghan government is still silent. On the other hand, former president Hamid Karzai denounced the tragic event in a press-statement. Drone attacks is one of the controversial issues on which BSA is silent too. What message is conveyed by NUG through its silence regarding drone attacks in Khost civilian casualties?

Turkish parliamentary election, in which AK Party got leading position, was one of the most crucial issues of the last week, circulated in media. Still AK Party did not win the majority, so they need a coalition partner. What impact it will have regionally and on Turkish politics?

In this week's online publication "Weekly Analysis" of CSRS the aforesaid topics have been discussed.

## The Recent Diplomatic Initiatives of Taliban



Recently, the Afghan Taliban has taken certain unprecedented steps, since the group was ousted by US and NATO invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The recent diplomatic initiatives of Taliban are the participation of the group in Pugwash Conference in Qatar, earlier in May, a visit of Taliban officials to Iran, talks with the Afghan civil society activists in Norway and an initial meeting in Dubai with Afghan political activists to prepare second Pugwash Conference later-on in Qatar. It marks a great change in the policy of the group (Taliban).

The political initiatives of Taliban are simultaneous with their unprecedented military operations in different parts of the country, from south to North. At the same time, Pakistan, which was considered as the main supporter of Taliban, promised President Ashraf Ghani that it would force Taliban to sit on negotiation Table.

Do the new political activities of the group indicate a change in its strategy? And the emergence of new group called Daesh "IS" and the pressures from Pakistan would have any impacts on them? These are questions which are answered in this analysis.

## **Taliban: From Military to Diplomacy!**

The public opinion regards the Taliban solely a militant group, which is militarily trying to grasp power and is not ready for any sort of power-sharing among the rest of groups. Now, the group is making endeavors to repel this charge against them.

When Taliban's delegation went to Qatar in 2012, it was considered a paradigm shift in the Group's stance since 2001. In the beginning, it was said that Qatar Office will only play a role in negotiations and it would be their Political address, but in the last few years the group has pursued its wider goals than it was initially said. They have established contacts with different countries and participated in certain meetings convened on war and peace in Afghanistan.

But the greater achievement of Qatar office is that Taliban's leadership blocked the ways of any fake peace talks through the ambiguous peoples under the guise of the group which could reveal bifurcation of the group into multi pieces. Therefore, Pakistan opposed this initiative.

The Qatar Office provided the group an opportunity to come out of isolation and make contacts with the world. The delegations of Taliban have participated in the meetings on Afghanistan in Japan and France.

## **Pugwash Conference in Qatar**

It was the second conference on Afghanistan convened by Pugwash. Earlier, the institution arranged a conference in late 2012 in Dubai, but the Taliban who were invited have links with Qatar Office.

In Doha meeting, the participants were invited personally, without representation of any organization or country. During the discourse, the participants agreed upon that peace is vital for Afghanistan and the region.

Doha talks paved the way for Taliban to sit face-to-face with Afghan women who went there from Kabul. *Malali Shinwari*, a former member of Parliament, participated in Pugwash Conference, Talked to Talibans regarding women's rights.

## Taliban's Visit to Tehran

After Doha meeting, the head of Taliban's Qatar office, Sayed Mohammad Taib Agha, led a delegation of the group to Tehran. Although, Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic has expressed ignorance regarding this visit, But, Tasnim News Agency which is close to *Sepah Pasdaran* have confirmed that the visit took place due to Iranian invitation.

## Oslo Talks

Norway plays a silent role in Afghan peace process and its contacts were established with the Taliban when the Norwegian diplomat, *Kai Eide*, was appointed as special representative of UN for Afghanistan. The first contacts were established in 2009 and was continued after the groups' delegations' visit to Qatar.

In Oslo talks, the representatives of civil societies of Afghanistan were invited. But, the crucial point in the talks was that Taliban sat with the harsh critics of the group who have always opposed them. *Shukria Barakzai*, who has always supported war against Taliban, participated in Oslo talks with Taliban and talked regarding womens' rights in the future of Afghanistan. Taliban too, clearly expressed their stance regarding the right of education and work for women which was considered a change in the stance of the group by the opposite side.

## Dubai Meeting

The participants of Dubai meeting include Dr. *Qayoom Kochaj*, President Ghani's uncle, *Qutbuddin Helal* former official of *Hizb-e-Islami* of *Hekmatyar* and *Sayed Ishaq Gilani* close ally of Dr. *Abdullah Abdullah*, the CEO of NUG. Taliban's selection of participants was also interesting. *Sayed Ishaq Gilani* is linked with *Gilani's* spiritual family and can be represented as a Jihadi leader. *Helal* was supported by *Hekmatyar* in the last presidential elections. *Helal* and *Gilani* both have good ties with Pakistan.

Qatar II meeting is scheduled to be held after Ramadan. In Dubai meeting the list of participants and the agenda was discussed.

## Conclusion

The recent unprecedented diplomatic initiatives of Taliban can be linked with the pressures exerted on the group by Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban have accepted a big challenge of Pakistan by such moves.

The experience of Jihad (Afghans' liberation war against ex USSR, 1979-1989) that Pakistan leaves the Afghan groups free in military area, but when it comes to Peace talks and negotiation then it wants to keep its monopoly. A very clear example is Geneva talks (1989) between former USSR and US, where Pakistan represented the Afghan *Mujahiddin*.

But it looks that Taliban with their political initiatives have isolated Pakistan and they themselves talk with the world regarding their country's political fate. Now, the Afghans and Pakistani governments are trying to isolate the group, but they (Taliban) instead of being defensive, have had some preemptive diplomatic initiatives which made Pakistan's efforts ineffective.

The Taliban have smashed the Pakistani plots which it has undertaken by people like *Mullah Jalil* and *Mullah Abdul Razaq*. The participation of these people in Urumqi meeting did not bear any fruit for Pakistan. Taliban, too, expressed that they cannot represent them.

In eastern Afghanistan, Pakistan has pressurized Taliban under the guise of Daesh or IS. The pressures may oblige Taliban to be defensive, because the group does not want to clash with Pakistan. But the situation may not remain the same, because the so-called Daesh plans to enter *Kunar* where *Mullah Fazlullah's* sanctuary is. Pakistan considers *Mullah Fazlullah* the tool in hand of Indian intelligence agency "RAW".

Pakistan has promised the Afghan government of presenting Taliban to the Table of negotiation, although it has not happened yet. The ongoing pressures are one of the reasons behind the recent political moves of the group.

On the other hand, the meetings of Taliban with those who call them tools of Pakistan and their recent visits especially to Iran indicate that the relations between Taliban and Pakistan are not that much close and the group tries to make a balance in neighboring countries. These activities show a sort of counter pressure on Pakistan from Taliban. But the problem with Taliban is that the Afghan government also supports Pakistan in the ongoing game.

## The Drone Strikes and the BSA



The National Unity Government (NUG) of Afghanistan had signed the controversial Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the United States on the very first day it took over. *Ashraf Ghani's* predecessor, *Hamid Karzai* denied doing so. The Afghan negotiating team advised the government not to sign the agreement on that manner. They said the US government is not ready to accept what we want. Despite cultural *Loya Jirga's* advice, Hamid Karzai denied to sign the BSA.

One of the controversial issues was granting judicial immunity to the American soldiers In Afghanistan. The US government seriously stressed on it. But president Karzai, who truly understood American security forces, was convinced that they will continue to kill civilians and use this immunity as a shelter. So it was one of the most controversial issues between the US government and Hamid Karzai. He once said we will even call American soldiers as “occupiers” if they targeted civilians.

Last week, US drone attacked a funeral ceremony in south eastern *Khost* province, in which 34 Afghan civilians were killed. It is said that civilians participated in a funeral ceremony of a tribal elder, when they were targeted by US drone. In the attack, six members of a single family were killed. But, Still the National Unity Government has not criticized the blind American bombardment. In this regard, the former afghan president, Hamid Karzai, has strongly condemned the massacre in a statement.

## **The Silence of the Afghan Government**

Despite the requests of cultural *Loya Jirga* for omission of judicial immunity to US troops, National Unity Government of president *Ghani* has signed BSA with judicial immunity for American soldiers.

The book “Academic and Legal Assessment of BSA”, which was published by CSRS, contained scores debates of researchers and political analysts on BSA. Some analysts expressed their concerns on giving judicial immunity to American soldiers. This immunity, they expressed, would legalize killings of civilians and none would have the right to complain. On the other hand, in the initial days of NUG, American commander, in an interview with New York Times, has said that Ashraf *Ghani* is more cooperative than Hamid Karzai. Ashraf Ghani and Karzai, he added, are different as night and day.

The Silence of NUG after this massacre seems to prove what American general has said earlier. In the American revolutionary war against British colonialism, British soldiers killed seven Americans in Boston. Still the US calls it Boston massacre. But, here, by massacre of 34 Afghans no one in Afghan government raises their concerns and no one calls Americans to take steps cautiously.

## **The drone strikes in Afghanistan**

The Bilateral Security Agreement between Afghanistan and US government is silent regarding the drone attacks, which American generals’ seriously stressed on. It is not mentioned in BSA that how, where and for what purpose US army can use drone technology, which is widely used by US troops against their enemies, in recent years. The Cross border usage of the mentioned technology from Afghan soil against the US government enemies –like in Waziristan- is also not mentioned.

CIA manages drone technology in Afghanistan and nowadays they manage it not from Pakistani Shamsi air base, but inside of Afghanistan. Generally, some crucial issues –like CIA operations and usage of drone technology- is deliberately not mentioned in the BSA.

Additionally, some leaked documents from Afghan embassy in USA disclose that the American negotiating team wanted more freedom in this regard, than that of mentioned in the BSA draft. The leaked documents also disclose that American negotiating team was requesting immunity regarding CIA operations and usage of drone technology.



## **Afghan Public Opinion & Civilian Casualties**

These days, while US-Taliban diplomatic ties are escalated, American soldiers killed Afghan civilian population.

American massacre of Afghan civilian population and on the other hand, Taliban's unique diplomatic activities may make a trouble for Afghan National Unity government. Taliban through recent diplomatic activities, to a large extent, changed public opinion regarding them.

US government in the last thirteen years has promised Afghans with good governance, but the governance is worsening daily. The Massacre of Afghan civilians and not fulfilling their promises have doubled the hatred of Afghans towards Americans.

## Turkish Parliamentary Elections: Will it change Foreign Policy?



The Turkish Parliamentary elections took place on June 7, 2015 in order to elect 550 members to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. The Justice & Development Party, which is in short known as AK Party, won more seats of Parliament compared to any other contesters. Even though, the AK party has won the largest share of votes, but it has lost its majority in the Parliament. Therefore, AK party cannot single-handedly rule the country anymore; it needs the support of other parties to form a coalition government.

Now, the questions arise, what are the different future scenarios of govt. making in Turkey? Whether the AK Party and Erdogan has really failed and lost the elections? And what would be the regional impacts of next coalition government in Turkey?

### The Background of Islamism in Turkey

When the Umayyad dynasty was destroyed in Spain, the Ottoman Empire was on the rise in Turkey and until First World War, the Ottoman Empire was the last symbol of Islamic Caliphate which could include a large number of Muslims and their concerned territories. But, After the World War One and with the victory of allied powers, not only

the Arabs, but most of the Muslims relinquished the empire. The center of Caliphate (Turkey) was replaced with *Mustafa Kamal Atatürk's* secular autocratic government, which later-on becomes against the Islamic identity of the country. For instance, he changed the Ottoman Turkish alphabet from Arabic to Greek alphabet, *Azan* was banned, and no one could wear a cap and so on and so forth.

After the World War II, under the leadership of *Adnan Menderes* a movement emerged in Turkey whose goal was the revival of Islamic identity in the country. Therefore, he promised in 1950 elections that *Azan* will be changed back in Arabic. He ruled Turkey from 1950 to 60, but in May 27 of 1960 his government was toppled down as a result of a military coup by the secular army and finally was executed in September 17 of the next year. The allegation against him was that he used “religion” as a tool in politics and according to an allegation, he once said that members of parliament could bring back Caliphate if they so desired.

The movement was banned with the execution of *Adnan Menderes*. In 1969, *Necmettin Erbakan* started another movement which faced different problems. His party had been banned thrice. But, In the Parliamentary elections of 1995, his party won the election and formed a coalition government. However, in 1997, his government was ousted by military coup and many members of the movement were imprisoned.

In the 1990s, *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*, *Abullah Gul* and most of the AK party members were in *Erbakan's* party, but after the coup the differences emerged with *Erbakan* and finally *Erdoğan* founded the Justice & Development Party in 2002. They took part in 2003 Parliamentary elections and after winning it, they formed government. They won in the 2007 and 2011 parliamentary elections. The main reason behind the consecutive successes was the party's economic achievement.

### **AK Party: A Winner or Loser?**

After the June 7 Parliamentary elections' result announcement, the western media considered the AK party as a loser in elections, even though it has won more seats in the Parliament compared to other political parties. First of all calling the AK party as a “loser” is not correct. It is only a western propaganda and the emergence of yellow journalism in the news outlets.

In addition, some media outlets even reflected these election results as that the Turkish people have rejected the policies of Mr. *Erdoğan*! It is not only a fanatic calculation but is also a very superficial analysis.

Though no one can deny that the AK party has less seats in this elections compared to its earlier elections, but it has its own reasons. According to some analysts one reason was the internal differences among the AK party leadership. Another reason was difference with Muhammed Fethullah *Gülen*, a US-based-clergy who was previously an ally of *Erdoğan*.

If the Turkish people really rejected the so called “Dictatorial” policies of *Erdoğan*, than why they chose him in presidential election. Moreover, if the nation really wanted to refuse the policies of AK party then why it gave more votes in Municipal elections. Even if we keep in view the recent elections, the AK party won more seats than other parties. These instances clearly depict that people still support the policies of President *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*. That is why they are wining in great margins!

### **The Future Scenarios of Govt. Making in Turkey:**

The Justice & Development Party has won 258 out of 550 seats of Turkish parliament. Even then according to constitution it cannot form a single-party government. A ruling party must have 276 votes of parliament to make a single-party government. In this regards, AK party needs only 18 votes of confidence.

<b>Party</b>	<b>Won Seats</b>
Justice & Development	258
Republican People's Party (CHP)	132
Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)	80
Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)	80

There are seven possible scenarios of govt. making in Turkey, which are as follows:

Scenario 1: AK Party will make a minority government with the help of 18 votes;

Scenario 2: CHP, MHP will form a minority government, but HDP must support it ;

Scenario 3: AK Party, MHP form a coalition government;

Scenario 4: AK Party, CHP form a coalition government;

Scenario 5: AK Party, HDP form a coalition government;

Scenario 6: CHP, MHP, HDP form a coalition government;

Scenario 7: Early elections.

In aforesaid scenarios, the one which looks very possible is that the AK party will form a coalition government with any other party, but AK party will definitely compromise on some policies. Because, the two of the remaining parties cannot make a coalition government and a coalition of all the three political parties is not logically possible. At any case, AK party cannot be denied; it will form a govt. with the help of one political party.

### **Changing Foreign Policy?!**

It looks that the AK party will be influential part of a coalition government which will not affect the ongoing foreign policy of the country. Until the AK party rules Turkey, any fundamental change looks impossible in foreign policy of the country. The foreign policy priorities of Turkey will remain the same in Middle East as long as AK party is in rule. They will continue to ask free the ex-Egyptian President *Mohammad Mursi* and the resignation of *Bashr-Al-Asad* would be on the top of priority. But the AK party will not be as free as it was earlier.

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