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Preface

Last week, Taliban's assault on Afghan Parliament was the top story of national and international media. The assault took place exactly on the first day of parliament's expiration and its extension by presidential order. It was scheduled to introduce the defense minister for vote of confidence.

Simultaneously, Taliban captured two districts of north-eastern Kunduz Province. The clashes in northern Afghanistan have been deteriorating with the passage of each day. With the intensification of conflicts in the north, the governor of Balkh Atta Mohammad Noor and first vice president General Dostum formed an alliance against the Taliban. The question arises, what is the need for making such militias when there are 350 thousand Afghan security forces? And the increasing attacks of Taliban will head Afghanistan to where?

Internationally, the neo-cold war between Russia and the west attracted the international attentions last week. The fresh statements of Putin caused Carter's visit to Europe and had shadow on NATO defense minister's meeting in Belgium. Putin's statements and the western reactions have been considered as the continuation of cold war. The Ukraine crisis is being called as "neo cold war". What repercussions this neo cold war will have?

Analysts in Center for Strategic & Regional studies have discussed the aforesaid topics in this week's "Weekly Analysis".

Afghanistan: The Fresh Wave of Insecurities



Taliban's attack on Afghan parliament on the last Sunday, June 21, was widely broadcasted at national and international media, without answering the serious questions regarding the incident by Afghan security officials. The US-supporter media outlets in Afghanistan were busy in discussions on legitimacy and illegitimacy of parliament and suddenly turned into staunch supporters of parliament and considering it "crushing the dignity of nation's home by the enemies of the nation". They, in order to, flee from the serious questions that required answers, started propagation for the army soldier that claimed the killing of six attackers on parliament without wasting any bullet.

Simultaneously, the first vice president and former militia commander, General Abdul Rashid Dostum and Balkh's acting governor; Atta Mohammad Noor formed a military alliance aiming to contain Taliban's expansion in the northern Afghanistan. When vice president, instead of mobilizing the national army, resorting to making militias, where is the country heading to?

Why Symbolic Attacks?

The selective and symbolic attacks have value to the Taliban. Such attacks are usually taking place when all the media outlets are focusing on the particular event.

Such attacks may not have any high profile casualties and sometimes it may look that the Taliban has failed and the attack has no achievement, but it is not important for Taliban. What is important is the impact of such attacks on mentalities outside and inside the country which is reflected by the media outlets that clearly depicts the weakness of the government.

Such attacks are like the cinema theater where the actors are trying to influence more and more audience.

Few years back Taliban attacked the anniversary event of Mujahidin's Independence Day and dispersed it. The scenes of dispersing the military personal which were in their stylish uniform was broadcasted internationally and since then the government avoided convening such events. Avoiding such celebration in open area was a triumph for Taliban. Because in the past such celebration with public participation was an expression of good relations between the government and the people.

The attack on parliament was more symbolic than the one on Mujahidin's Independence Day. In this the second vice president was introducing the nominated defense minister for the vote of confidence. Just before it's entering to the house explosion was suddenly heard and the house becomes full of dust. And thus the event was postponed.

When Taliban attacked the Mujahidin Independence Day (8 Sawr, 1387, April 27 2008), later on they published a video record of the attack. The video clips were showing people from the so called center of command of the attacker where they were watching the event through TV. When the national anthem was played and the audience stand for honor, one of the people calls the attackers and gives the command by saying Allah O Akbar (God is great).

Behind the Scene of Parliament Attack

When Taliban attacked the 8 Sawr event, their armed persons were placed in a building near to parade area, therefore they could understand when to start assault, but in this attack the story is more complicated. As the video from inside the house shows, the car-

bomb was exactly exploded when vice president and the defense ministry nominee intended to enter the house. Therefore, those who had the command of the operation were watching the moments through TVs. When the speaker announces that the vice president and the defense ministry nominee are entering the house the explosion takes place, which shows its symbolism. The accuracy of explosion's time can show who are behind the scene.

According to witnesses, the exploded car was like the bulletproof land cruiser with black glasses. The armed attackers with national army uniform got off the car and then the car was crushed to the southern parliament check point and exploded. The attackers launched RPG fires on the house from the main road and then tried to enter the building which was under construction, but they were shot down by a guard related to a private security company.

Usually, in such attacks which are being carried out by the Taliban the first question being posed is how the attackers are able to enter the very secure and under intense security observation with heavy weapons. It has happened several times during the last ten years in Kabul. Every time the responsible authorities have promised of investigations, but the results have never been announced.

Weakness of Government & the New Alliance in the North

The attackers could not enter the parliament, but it has posed strong criticism of National Unity Government. In this attack, the strange point was that Taliban first acknowledged the responsibility of attack and later on, contrary to the usual, they have not published any details. Taliban web sites were full of the conflicts in Chahar Dara of northern Kunduz province. Though they have promised of publishing the details of the attack, nothing has been published yet.

Before the attack on parliament, Taliban captured two districts in Kunduz province in northern Afghanistan. The recent developments in north have caused concerns of leaders there. Atta Mohammad Noor, Balkh governor and CEO of Jamiat-e Islami party formed a coalition with Abdul Rashid Dostum leader of Junbish Melli party. The weakness of government to prevent attack on parliament can justify the formation of the alliance.

Dostum has expressed that if the government allows him, he would mobilize 20 thousand militias to fight against Taliban, either will kill them or make them surrender.

When Afghanistan has more than 350 thousand armed forces that came into being after thirteen years with high expenses of billions of dollar, even than Dostum insists on militias. It clearly shows that he is not taking the police and army serious and local powers should defeat Taliban.

Conclusion

Taliban has carried out some symbolic attacks paralleled with some organized attacks as a result they have succeeded to capture districts. Though Taliban has no major military achievement, the attacks have definitely created concerns among the security forces that a sort of fifth column is assisting them from within the government.

Though some media outlets have tried to propagate for a soldier for killing the six attackers, to show that the Afghan troops are ready for any Taliban assault. While the recent alliance between Dostum and Noor express the bitter realities that even the media cannot ignore it. Are the leaders in north concerned of Syria incidents in Afghanistan?

Though some consider the alliance in the north a positive step in tackling Taliban, it shows the weakness of central government and will take back Afghanistan to the feudalism and warlordism which the country has witnessed after Najibullah's defeat in late 90s.

The nation hoped that with the advent of democratic process, the ethnic tendencies will be removed and a strong central government will come into being. But now with the weakness of the central government, once again the local powers are standing.

Keeping in view the concerns of neighboring countries regarding the developments in Afghanistan, they will also try to find proxies in the local powers which will lead the county towards a proxy war.

The Ongoing “neo” Cold War & Its Impacts



With the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 most of the political analysts called it the beginning of “second” or “neo” Cold War. The crisis has not been handled yet and the relations between U.S. and Russia are still tense. The fresh statements of the Russian President Vladimir Putin and responses from western and NATO officials’ expresses that the problem will deepen more, and the so called “neo” cold war will be accelerated.

In spite of this, on June 24 and 25 the NATO defense ministers meeting held in Belgium where the situation in Europe, Afghanistan and Russia were discussed. Since the world is heading towards another “neo” cold war, what is the background of the “Cold War” and what will be the repercussions of the ongoing cold war on Afghanistan and the region.

Background of the Dispute

After the triumph of the Communists in Bolshevik revolution of 1917, the western capitalism faced a rival system. The “first” cold war started after the WWII, which had deep impacts on the world. U.S. and Europe formed NATO organization against USSR expansionism in 1949. The fifth article of the charter says: “attack on one is attack on all”.

In Addition to this, U.S. president Truman introduced his doctrine of USSR's containment. After that in Dwight D. Eisenhower era the U.S. government formed alliances with middle-east and south Asian countries. The alliances did not bear any impacts on the then USSR. But when it invaded Afghanistan most of the world countries supported the Afghan Mujahidin which finally defeated the red army.

Neo Cold War

When the USSR withdrew from Afghanistan in early 1989, most of the central Asian nations stood for their independence which finally dissolved USSR. After the dissolution of former USSR some countries got independence in central Asia and Eastern Europe. The newly emerged countries attracted international attention.

Though some of the post-independence period leaders of these countries were the former USSR loyal communists. In some countries with their removal the tensions increased between west and Russia.

In 2003 and 2004, people stood up against the Russian loyalist leaders of Georgia and Ukraine. The demonstrations made the Russia loyalist leaders to stay aside. The Russia loyalist leaders' removal deteriorated the relations between Russia and the West. In 2003 a west loyalist government came into power in Georgia. The tensions emerged on Abkhazia and southern Ossetia. In 2008 the dispute reached to its highest level and Russia invaded Georgia. Resultantly, Abkhazia declared independence.

In 2004, Russian loyalist leader, Victor Yanukovych won election. Later on people started a series of protests, known as orange revolution. The Supreme Court ordered a re-run of the second ballot. In the second round of election the west loyalist leader, Victor Yushchenko won, which worsened the already deteriorated relations between West and Russia, because President Putin accused west for provoking public demonstrations against Victor Yanukovych.

In 2010 run off, the Putin backed Victor Yanukovych won. He announced the foreign policy of the country based on neutralism. The government enjoyed cordial relations with European Union and Russia. When Yanukovych, as a result of Russia's pressure, refused to sign the finalized treaty with European Union people came to streets and the demonstrations started. The uprising turned to a revolution in 2014.

In 2014 election, a Western loyalist took over and signed the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement. But, due to this, the uprisings started in eastern Ukraine and paved the way for Russian invasion. The Russian finally annexed the Russian ethnic Crimea.

Russia's Warning & Western Reaction

US Defense Minister's Visit to Europe: The US defense minister visited European countries after Putin's harsh statements. The crucial outcome of the visit was that the US will again send weapons to European after two years. In this regard Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania and Poland have agreed to host the American weapons.

Emerging Cold War and its Impacts on the Region

US government endeavors to prevent the emerging cold war. As US president Obama said, it's not a neo cold war, its opposition of Russia to the will of Ukraine. US defense minister, in his visit to Europe said the same. Still, in one or other form, a neo cold war is emerging between west and Russia.

Now, a neo cold war has started between west and Russia, practically. This cold war is fought in Syria, Iran, Ukraine, and Eastern Europe and even in central Asia. Russia vetoed decisions against Bashar ul Asad's regime in UNSC. It also declared its intention to sell antey-2500 air-defense system to Iran. Russia also annexed Crimea to its territorial jurisdiction and commenced an indirect war against NATO in Eastern Europe.

The emerging cold war, in one hand would enhance sophistication of weapons in the region and, on the other hand, if the world is divided into two blocs, civil wars would increase in different countries. That's why Putin said, Russia would create 40 inter-continental missiles to their defense bases, which provoked new concerns in the west. As a reactionary measure, US sent its artilleries and other equipment to Europe. NATO also increased its Reactionary Force from 13000 to 40000 and endeavors to renew its nuclear capabilities. Other measures are also taken. Generally, weapon's companies would be vastly increased, which threatens world's security.

If the emerging cold war would continue between Europe and Russia, it would influence European economy. For instance, due to crisis in Ukraine, its economy declined 10 percent.

According to a research of the economist, till the end of the cold war, 18 percent of world population lived in civil wars. Both blocs supported on side in a civil war, which caused its continuation. When cold war ends, civil wars decrease.

The emerging cold war also increased in friendship between China and Russia. If Russia wants china to be in his “bloc” it should support Beijing in South China Sea.

Despite of some disagreement, Russia remained an ally and friend of US government in some issue, including Afghan war of America. But the emerging cold war would put an end these friendships as well. That’s why Russia closed the roads of equipment of NATO.

The End

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