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In this issue:

- Preface 2

The Death of Taliban's Leader and the future of Peaceful Talks

- The Death of Mullah Mohammad Omar 4
- Taliban and the Challenges ahead 4
- The Successor of Mullah Mohammad Omar 5
- The future of Peaceful Talks 6

The falls of districts and its impacts on the present situations

- Taliban: Seizing districts 7
- The reasons behind 'fall' of districts 8
- The Impacts of districts falling in Taliban Hands 10

Preface

Taliban have officially accepted that Mullah Muhammad Omar has died. However since few days the news of Mullah Omar's death was circulating in both local and international media outlets. Even though it was not the first time such news gets published but its importance was raised when Afghan presidential palace issued a statement regarding the death of Mullah Omar.

At the beginning, Taliban did rejected the news of Mullah Omar's death but later with a statement accepted the death of its leader and later on with another statement announced Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansor as their new leader. The question is what would be the future of peaceful talks after the death of Mullah Omar?

On the other hand, in the second part of our weekly analysis we would be discussing about the one-after-other fall of districts to Taliban; its causes and impacts on the present situation would also be discussed.

In this weekly analysis, we have tried to discuss the aforesaid topics.

The Death of Taliban's Leader and the future of Peaceful Talks



A few days ago, Pakistani media reported the death of Mullah Muhammad Omar and then the international news agencies publish the story. Meanwhile some of Afghan authorities have accepted that Mullah Muhammad Omar had died two years ago in one of Karachi's hospital.

After this announcement, Pakistani media commented on the topic, and claimed that talks on appointing successor of Mullah Mohammad Omar among the Taliban have been started; however, Mawlawi Yaaqoub son of Mullah Mohammad Omar is among the options, also.

The Taliban later also confirmed the death of Mullah Omar by issuing a statement; the question is, whether Mullah Muhammad Omar had died two years ago? If it is the case, then why it had happened in such a serious time when the peaceful talks between Afghan government and Taliban is being facilitated by Pakistan?

The Death of Mullah Mohammad Omar

For several times in the past, the media had raised some questions about the life and freedom of Taliban's supreme leader. In some cases, it was even told that Mullah Mohammad Omar is being kept as a hostage in a Pakistani prison; however, rumors on the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar were also being heard from time to time.

On Wednesday, July 29th, an afghan presidential [statement said](#) that "based on credible information" Mullah Mohammad Omar had died in April, 2013, in Pakistan. An Afghan authority has told the media that the information on the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar was received by the Afghan government from Pakistani officials.

On Wednesday, July 29th, the [White House called](#) the reports on the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar as "credible".

However, Taliban have officially confirmed the death of its leader in a [statement](#) later on Thursday, and without mentioning the exact date and time of the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar, said that he had died as a result of illness he was suffering from some time ago.

Taliban and the Challenges ahead

The Taliban's unity and especially their Leading Council would face a lot of challenges ahead. If he had really died two years ago, then from an Islamic perspective it was necessary that the movement should have selected the new leader. Because, according to Sharia (Islamic Law), whenever a leader passes away, his successor should be appointed immediately. Fighting in accordance with orders of a leader who has left the world, the decisions made by his name and especially the condition of his death, are the questions that would challenge Taliban's leadership.

Contemporary to negotiations in Murree-Islamabad, the Taliban's Leading Council has issued a statement that surprisingly was not rejecting those, who on behalf of the Taliban, were participating in these negotiations. Considering the soft position of the Taliban, it might be because of disagreements in their ranks or Pakistan's pressure.

The sources that are closed to Taliban reject the disagreements in their ranks; however, they believe Pakistan's pressures have been fruitful in changing Taliban's position. It is

told that Pakistan, while it was struggling to make the Taliban to have peace talks with the Afghan government, had put various pressures on the Taliban and, due to these pressures, Taliban's Leading Council was obligated to publish a statement, which didn't reject the Islamabad negotiations.

The Successor of Mullah Mohammad Omar

Immediately after confirming the death of its leader, Taliban have issued a [statement](#) regarding the appointment of its new leader. The declaration of the Taliban states: "After his passing away, the leading council of the Islamic Emirate, authentic scholars and venerable people of the country embarked on selecting the new leadership. Members of the leading council of the Islamic Emirate, saints and scholars, all of them discerning and influential people, in the wake of a prolonged discussion, decided in a meeting to appoint the intimate and trusted associate of Mullah Mohammad Umar Mujahid and the former deputy head of the Islamic Emirate, **Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor**, as the new leader of the Islamic Emirate."

"Similarly, after due consultation and approval in this meeting, each one, the former judiciary chief of the Islamic Emirate, religious scholar, **Moulavi Haibatullah Akhunzada** and the son of the renowned Jihadi and scholarly figure Moulavi Jalauddin Haqqani (may Allah safeguard him), a well-known Jihadi commander **Mullah Sirajuddin Haqqani**, as the deputy heads of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan", the declaration added.

However, the Taliban stated in their declaration that "In this meeting of leadership appointment, scholars, saints and dignitaries of the Islamic Emirate pledged their allegiance with Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor as Amir-ul-Momineen in accordance with the principal of listening and obedience. He, as a legal Amir, pledged his commitment to the Sharia Law too", however earlier it was thought that the new leader may not be successful in retaining the position of Amir-ul-Momineen.

Moreover, Taliban may also want to get the pledges of allegiance from Al-Qaeda, such as Ayman-Al-Zawahiri, and legitimate its authority and prevent its members from joining the ranks of ISIS.

The future of Peaceful Talks

Due to Pakistani pressures, Taliban are in a serious situation, and now when the death reports of Mullah Mohammad Omar have been broadcasted, reinitiating the peace talks is impossible up to an uncertain time period. Hence, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry in its [statement](#) has said that the peace talks that were supposed to be started in Islamabad on Friday are being postponed as a result of the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar.

Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansor is also interested in Peaceful talks, however he does points out the importance of Qatar's office and he too would be interested in peaceful talks through Qatar's political office.

Releasing foreign citizens including Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl in exchange for five senior Taliban commanders held at the US military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, releasing of some Turkish citizens, a Kirgiz citizen and a Russian pilot that had been arrested by the Taliban after they had an emergency landing in Logar province; all of them took place as a result of negotiations between the Qatar Office and the representatives of these countries. If the Qatar Office did not have authority, so how could it be possible to have an agreement in Qatar and for the captives to be released in Afghanistan?

The falls of districts and its impacts on the present situations



Since few months, the anti-government insurgent groups have sieged control of many districts in different provinces and as compared to the past years the insurgency and insecurity in the country has not only increased, but also spread from southern to northern provinces and [according](#) to the Afghan minister of interior affairs 19 provinces is faced with the serious threat to falls in Taliban's hand.

Moreover, some of National Unity Government's (NUG) policies, for instance forming militias, mismanagement, the internal disputes of government, the improper aid to Afghan security forces and the bad behavior of local police are the reasons which have paved the way for the insecurity in the country.

In this article, we have discussed the causes and consequences of the falling downs of districts in detail.

Taliban: Seizing districts

Compared to the last fourteen years, there are more stories now about Taliban taking over the control of districts in Afghanistan. Precisely speaking, in the last few months, the Chardarah and Dasht-e-Archi of Kunduz, Kohistanat of Sar-e-pul, Jawand of

Badgheez, Nawa of Ghazni, Yamgan of Badakhshan, Nawzad of Helmand, Wand Waygal and other districts have falls to the hands of Taliban and the Pasapand, Taywrah and Charsadah of Ghor, Sangeen, Kachkee and Musa Qala of Helmand, Samkanyo of Paktia, few districts of Kunar, Nangrahar and Nuristan, the Azra, Sarkh and Kharwar of Logar, the Dahna Ghor of Baghlan, the daymerdad of Maidan-Wardag, the Khas Uruzgan of Uruzgan and other districts are faced with serious threat to be sieged by Taliban.

The reasons behind 'fall' of districts

Precisely speaking, there are numerous factors behind the falls of districts to Taliban, which are as follows:

1. The political disputes of NUG

The internal political disputes in NUG have affected the insecurity in the country. There were disputes due to results of election, and later, when the NUG was announced there were serious political differences between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah's teams even to now. At the start, the disputes were basically over nomination of ministers but as the time passed these differences are slowly moving towards governmental policies.

The minister of Defense is yet to take vote of confidence from Parliament and moreover the government is not on the same page about issues. Keep apart the differences of Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, the President and the first vice president is having contradictory remarks.

It is hereby that the deputy of Mashrano Jargah (upper house) [says](#): 'unfortunately, the government didn't have a clear vision, precise policies, and therefore the government is having differences of opinions.

2. Local and irresponsible Police

Local and irresponsible Police is one of the reasons which caused the districts to fall to Taliban. It was basically due to their bad behavior with common people and compromise with Taliban. Therefore, the people were forced to take side with Taliban and hence the districts were fallen.

For instance, the peoples of Aqtash has said in different [reports](#) that they becomes tired of local police, helped the Taliban and they came and controlled the area.

Moreover, apart from the bad behavior of local police, some of its members has also entered the ranks of Taliban or indirectly had helped Taliban in capturing districts.

3. Pakistan's Operation 'Zarb-e-Azb'

Before June, 2014, the northern tribal areas and Waziristan were the safe houses of foreign militants in Pakistan. However, when the Pakistan Army launched operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan in the wake of a June 8 attack on Jinnah International Airport in Karachi and at the end of 2014, when the teen students were killed by insurgents in attack on an army Public School in Peshawar, Pakistan's anti-terrorism policy becomes hardened and it did started many other operations in FATA region. It must be noted that with the launching of Pakistani military's Operation 'Zarb-e-Azb', only anti-Pakistani insurgents were targeted but when the incident of Army Public School happened in December, 2014, it affected Pakistan's anti-terrorism policy and it thus targeted all the foreign militants in Pakistan.

Therefore, due to Zarb-e-Azb fallout, many foreign militants seek refuge in Afghanistan, and the foreign militants also want to be nearer to their native lands. Consequently, the insurgency in Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz, Jozjan, Faryab, and Sar-e-Pul is day by day increasing mostly due to their joining hands with Taliban. The Afghan minister of interior affairs [also accepts](#) the presence of foreign militants in northern Afghanistan and says they want to find safe houses and build a bridge between Northern and Southern Afghanistan.

The presence of foreign militants in northern Afghanistan and its joining hands with the Taliban has also been responsible for the fall of districts.

4. Strategic Agreement with the USA

Another reason behind Taliban's capturing districts is that Kabul has signed strategic agreement with Washington. At the times of Presidential elections (2014), Ashraf Ghani had ensured Taliban that he would delay the signing of strategic agreement with the USA, However within 24 hours of its inaugural he has signed the mentioned agreement and therefore closed all the doors before Peace and in retaliation Taliban started their spring operation, Azam.

5. The Pakistani Card against Taliban

While just becoming afghan President, Ashraf Ghani warmed its relations with Pakistan, because he thought the key to peace in Afghanistan is Pakistan. Therefore, he gives privileges to Pakistan and curb down the Indian influence with the hope that Pakistan might help in the reconciliation and peaceful process.

On the other hand, Taliban are not happy with the current foreign policy of Ashraf Ghani because it would really damage their political survival and would show them as the stooges of Pakistan. Therefore, it is hereby they are forcing one point that only the Qatar office has the legitimacy to talk and the Taliban in Pakistan also avoids talks with Afghan government because it would perceive them in the minds of Afghans as the puppets of Pakistan.

6. Mismanagement

Numerous leaders of upper house (Mashrano Jarga) have [said](#) that due to mismanagement of afghan government districts have been fall to Taliban.

Not sending ammunition and physical support to Afghan security forces is another factor behind Taliban's seizing control of districts.

7. The 'Air Force' missing factor

Another reason behind Taliban's capturing of districts in Afghanistan is that Afghan air force is faced with the shortage of aircrafts and combat training. Even though, many months have been passed over the signing of strategic agreement but still the USA hasn't equipped Afghan air force.

The Impacts of districts falling in Taliban Hands

The districts captured by Taliban have impacts on the present situation of the country and it would affect it as:

Firstly, it would damage the morale of afghan security forces and the people would lose confidence in Afghan Army.

Secondly, it would boost the chances for militia making in Afghanistan. Our history is full of such examples; whenever people have lost confidence in Afghan army the chances

have become greater to make militia in northern and southern Afghanistan. If like the 90s era, militia are made then it would have deep impacts on Afghanistan and would extend the war.

Thirdly, it would affect and boost the insurgent minds to continue their wars because they are not only successful in capturing districts but their morale is also day-by-day increasing.

Fourthly, the Taliban's capturing and re-capturing of districts by Taliban and Afghan government would affect and influence the day by day routine of the people.

Fifthly, the afghan government was expecting to get announcement of 'cease fire' in the upcoming second round of talks in Pakistan. But if the war continues as it is and Taliban seizes many districts, it would have negative impacts on the peaceful process.

The End

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