



Center for Strategic & Regional Studies

Kabul

Weekly Analysis- Issue Number 90 (October 25-November 01, 2014)

Weekly Analysis is one of the CSRS' publications analyzing significant weekly political and economic events of Afghanistan and region to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to help decision-maker institutions and individuals design better policies. Weekly Analysis is published in local languages Pashto and Dari, English and Arabic languages.

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Preface

In this volume of the weekly analysis of the CSRS read about; the first state visit of President Ahmadzai to China, the future of the relationship between the two countries, the values and advantages of this visit, his trip to Saudi that took place before this one (trip to China), the new attempts for the peace process in the trip to Saudi, which is analyzed by the board of the CSRS.

Though China and Afghanistan already has good relationship with each other, but the president's trip to China has many positive aspects. Afghan President wants to grant value to the rule of China in the economic development and the peace process of the country, in the future. Meanwhile he wants to keep balance in the relationship with super power countries of the world like China, India, and the U.S.

Before the trip to China, the president, with high ranking governmental officials, has gone to Saudi for Umrah, and he met with the Saudi officials about various issues, which the main one of them was the peace process. It seems that President Ahmadzai is going succeed in the inter-Afghani peace process through Turkey, China, and Saudi which has strong strategic relations with Pakistan, so those countries will put pressure over Pakistan to cooperate with the Afghan Peace Process.

Overall, peace and economic development are related to each other, and either the economic development will succeed in the lack of peace, are the topics which you will read its analytical details here.

China and Afghanistan in the Process of Deep Relationships



In his foreign policy President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, on his first state visit abroad, gave priority to the strategic relationships with Beijing.

While Afghanistan signed strategic agreements with the China's main competitors (the U.S. and India), what does President Ahmadzai want to prove by giving priority to the strategic relationships with China? Overall, selecting China for the president's first foreign trip has special goals.

President Ahmadzai, in his four-day trip to China, signed various agreements with China, and he also gave a speech in the fourth Heart of Asia conference.

Background

Since last 60 years Afghanistan and China have formal diplomatic relations with each other. The Afghan-Chinese relations expanded while China's relations with Russia entered dark stages; though by the coup d'etat of Sardar Dawood Khan both the countries did not trust each other, but the diplomatic forces led by Dawood Khan recovered those relationships.

Up to some extent, China remained neutral during the Afghan Civil War; but after the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001 China got interest to expand its relationships with Afghanistan, and its interest to Afghanistan was expressed in 2007, while China won the bid of the Ainak Copper Mine with 3 billion dollars.

The New Phase of Afghan-Chinese Relations

President Ahmadzai's trip to China will open the new phase of Afghan-Chinese relations. The new phase of the relationship is in such a situation that NATO and the U.S. withdraw their forces, except a few numbers of them that will stay in their bases, from Afghanistan, which will, to some extent, cause lack of forces in the country. China sees the lack of forces as an opportunity to take its primary steps for further involvement in Afghanistan.

As President Xi Jinping came to the airport for welcoming President Ahmadzai, it expresses its value for Afghanistan in the upcoming years. Though since 2001 China donated 200 million dollars to Afghanistan, but in this trip China promised 330 million dollar aid to Afghanistan in the upcoming years.

Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai in this trip, on one hand, opened a new phase for the bilateral relations; on the other hand, he attempted to create a concrete foundation for the long term relations between the two countries. President Ahmadzai expressed to President Xi Jinping that Afghanistan will have short term, midterm and long term relations with China. So the Chinese President also expressed that Afghanistan is a historical friend of China.

Badakhshan Province has 85km border with Sinkiang of China. As currently insecurity in Badakhshan decreased, so China is afraid of cooperating Chinese freedom fighter Muslims through Badakhshan, therefore it is enthusiastic for expansion of relations and cooperation with Kabul.

Currently the strategic relations will increase and will have long term influence on both the countries.

Relations with China from International and Regional Dimension

Since last few years China is working on its Western Policy, in which he also paid attention to the Silk Way. This way is built on the old ideology and wants to connect China with Eurasia and Europe. The new way will be through ocean and land, though Afghanistan does not have direct role in this way, either by land or by ocean, still Chinese President mentioned it many times that Afghanistan will also take advantages from this way.

In addition, the Chinese Prime Minister also told President Ahmadzai that China is working on its Western Policy, therefore it want to play an important role in the railways, highways, water and electricity projects in Afghanistan. Overall, the Western Policy of China plays an important role for paying its attention to Afghanistan.

While the Holbrooke Relations of Karzai and Obama entered to a darken stage, former president Hamid Karzai turned its face toward improving its relations with China. Therefore, accordingly Karzai started trips, and he was trying to involve China in the economy of Afghanistan. Though he did not succeed that much in his mission and was not able to involve China in the economy of the country; still, to some extent, he build political relations with China.

China is also interested to peace and security in Afghanistan and it think that a strong Afghanistan will be beneficial for its security and economy.

On the other hand, since 2001 India gained its diplomatic successions in Afghanistan, and caused failure of its opponent country (Pakistan) to some extent. Pakistan feels that the increasing activities of India in Afghanistan are a treat to Pakistan's security. Accordingly sometimes the high ranking officials of Pakistan expressed their ideas, and they are especially afraid of the Indian trained Afghan Army.

As India entered the economic sector of Afghanistan and it is training Afghan Army, so Pakistan will welcome the improvement of Afghan-Chinese relations, and it hopes that China will replace the activities of India. Related to that, on October 19th in Pakistan there was a two-day conference named (China-Pakistan-Afghanistan) held by Pak-China Institute. The conference was held by the Pakistani Upper House Member Mushahid Hussain in which the Pakistani National Security Advisor Sartaj Aziz, Chinese Ambassador in Pakistan, Afghan diplomats, Chinese analysts, and professors participated. And it was an important conference for the relations of the three mentioned countries.

On the other hand, since a long time the U.S. also want that China should enter to Afghanistan militarily, but, even, that time Chinese expressed their denial to the U.S.'s hope of China to militarily enter Afghanistan. As currently Beijing was the host of an important conference about Afghanistan; though the U.S. has many disputes with China about Iran and Eastern Asia, still the defense minister of the U.S. appreciated the mentioned attempts of China.

Same as the U.S., India also has complexity in its relations with China and it is one of the local competitors of China; but India is also, to some extent, agreed about Afghanistan, and their high ranking officials had many internal meetings related to this issue. On the other hand, Afghan President also tries to keep the balance of its relations with superpowers like China, India, and the U.S. in the upcoming years.

The 'Heart of Asia' Conference – Istanbul Process

The Istanbul Process has started in 2011, which its first conference was held in Istanbul of Turkey, second one was held in Kabul, third one in Kazakhstan, and the fourth one in the capital of China Beijing on October 31, 2014, and members of 14 countries including Iran, India, and Pakistan Participated in it.

The process was started for mutual interests, cooperating each other, and struggling against the mutual risks and challenges, in the conference President Ahmadzai gave priority to the peace in the country, and said that in the upcoming decade he will make Afghanistan the ground for Asian cooperation.

Afghan President also spoke with the Chines Officials about the Afghan Peace prior to the conference, and it seems that in addition to Turkey and Saudi, President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai also wants to force Pakistan by China, so it will pave the way for inter-Afghani peace process. The Chines President also promised for paving the way for trust between Afghanistan and Pakistan for the peace process.

Since the beginning of the Istanbul Process there are hopes arisen that those conferences will coordinate the peace and security of Afghanistan; because through those conferences, the interests of the neighboring countries will become mutual and same.

Afghan-Saudi Relations and New Attempt for Peace



President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, in his visit of Saudi Arabia and performance of Umrah, on the second day of his trip (26th October) met with the prince and the defense minister of that country Prince Suleiman Ibne Abdul Aziz al Saud in Riyadh.

In the meeting both the parties spoke about: agreement for strategic cooperation between the two countries, the ongoing conflicts in the Islamic states, the rule of Saudi in the peace and stability of Afghanistan, economic issues, and the challenges that Afghan tradesmen and Hajjis face in Saudi Arabia. In addition, they agreed that both the parties will appoint delegations for the details of the mentioned issues.

On one hand, it was President Ahmadzai's first trip; on the other hand, his meeting with the defense minister of Saudi expresses the value of his trip.

Review of Afghan-Saudi Relations

Since long time ago, there were cultural and political relations among Afghan and Saudi nations; but Saudi entered the politics of Afghanistan after the entrance of Russian forces to Afghanistan, and while Sardar Mohammad Dawood Khan changed its foreign policy that was turning around Russia and went toward the West and Islamic World, since that time the relationship of Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia expanded.

The relationship became valuable for Saudi while Russia invaded Afghanistan and the security of Saudi and Gulf was at risk. Therefore Saudi supported the Afghan Mujahidin and it was the first country for extreme support of the Mujahidin.

After the Jihad era of Afghanistan, Saudi was supporting Afghan Mujahidin, most of Salafists, and the Taliban for its strategic depth against Iran, which their and other neighboring countries such activities not only blamed the state for the proxy war in the country, but still its influence is visible in every aspect.

Selection of Saudi for the first foreign Trip

President clarified the main points of his policy, and he mentioned five groups in his foreign policy orderly: the neighboring countries, Muslim countries, the Western countries like the U.S., the NATO member countries and Japan, Asian countries, and international organizations like United Nations and the World Bank. Mentioning the neighboring countries at the first priorities of foreign policy expresses the value of those countries.

Now the question raises that why the president started his state visits from the second group of countries? Was the president's first trip to Saudi for the fulfilment of his promise during the electoral campaign, in which he told that his first trip will be to Saudi, or he had other goals? Though the president's promise of travel to Saudi was for changing the ideas of the public about him, as he spent most of his life in the West and the public had a negative idea about him; in addition to that, it expresses the value of Saudi in his foreign policy.

The rule of Saudi in the Peace Process

There are two dimensions of value in the president's trip to Saudi; first, the trip of the high-ranking Afghan Officials, led by President Ahmadzai, will strengthen the relationship of both the countries, secondly, it might be the beginning of influencing the rule of Saudi in the Afghan Peace Process. On one hand, Saudi is the cradle of Islamic values; on the other hand, it has close strategic relationships, and strong influence over Pakistan. Therefore, there are rumors that the trip was the attempt for opening inter-Afghani peace process.

According to Afghan Officials, President Ashraf Ghani prepared a great plan for attracting Saudi's cooperation for the Afghan Peace Process, and took it with himself to Saudi. Most of analysts believe that in addition to its influence over Pakistan, Saudi has direct influence over the Taliban and can have direct agreement with this group; therefore, it can play a major role in the peace process. Because Saudi is one of those countries that recognized the government of the Taliban during their regime, and it had friendly relationship with them.

At all, it seems that at the first stage the trip will be the first step of strengthening the relationship with Saudi and its continuity, and it will be about the negotiation about the rule of

Saudi in the Afghan Peace Process. About the role of Saudi in Afghan Peace Process, in response to the president's question, the defense minister of Saudi said that his country will do its best for the peace process in Afghanistan.

The Value of Relations with Saudi, China, and Turkey

It seems that President Ghani wants to strengthen and expand its relations with China, Saudi, and Turkey; and on the other hand, he wants to strengthen and expand its relations with the Western world led by the U.S. Those are the countries that they not only play a major role in the peace process of the country, but also can play a major role in the economic development of the country.

As Saudi, Turkey, and China are the three strategic friends of Pakistan, so President Ahmadzai want to put pressure over Pakistan, by those three countries, to be truthful in the Afghan Peace Process and direct negotiation with the Taliban.

Due to looking to the current geopolitical environment of those countries and the world, China and Saudi will also feel good to put pressure over Pakistan for the Afghan Peace Process, because both of those countries are currently afraid of fundamentalist groups, the best example of it can be the declaration of Al Qaida's war against China in these days, and Saudi also joined the U.S. in the battle against ISIS in the Middle East and it also want to improve its religious and political role in the regional strategic countries.

Peace and Economic Development



President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, in one of his speeches, said that peace will be one of the first priorities of his work; and, if there is not peace brought to the country, economic development will be impossible. While, by signing the Bilateral Security Agreement between Afghanistan and the U.S. himself challenged peace process in the country.

Before signing the agreement, Afghan media that is influenced by the U.S. was propagating that solutions for all the challenges and obstacles in the country are pending to signing the B.S.A. While the value of Afghani currency was decreased against dollar, Karzai was blamed for it. If the finance ministry was complaining about lack of financial resources, Karzai was claimed to be responsible. If Pakistan was firing rockets on Afghan soil, again Karzai was blamed for it. And the media was raising its voice that not signing the B.S.A. Karzai has oppressed Afghanistan, and if the B.S.A. is not signed those challenges and obstacles will not be solved.

No one was willing to answer the question that in which article of the B.S.A. is mentioned that the U.S. will develop the economy of Afghanistan, and in which article of the B.S.A. it was written that the U.S. will support Afghanistan against Pakistani attacks?

Finally the B.S.A. was signed on the second working-day of the new government, but still the value of Afghan currency is decreasing against dollar, still the ministry of finance is complaining about the lack of half a billion dollar budget, and the Pakistani rocket shelling on Afghan territory is still kept up, but the Afghan media that is influenced by the U.S. have gone to deathly silence.

Mining

Afghanistan is a landlocked country with limited economic resources. It is neither a self-sufficient agricultural country, nor has tourism, which will be a source of income for its internal basic necessities. The only option of being hopeful for the country is extraction of mines and minerals that will support its economy.

Mining in a country needs infrastructure, which needs prior investments. Mining is impossible without a nation-wide railway network, through which the raw materials will be brought to factories to be processed. In a country that does not have reasonable roads for basic traveling, the hope of having railway all around the country seems to be impossible.

Required Capacity

For the extraction of mines to be economic, there should be required capacity created in the country before mining. Same as other foundational sectors, in last thirteen years this sector was also out of attention. Maybe the involved ones were thinking that the outflow of dollar from other countries to Afghanistan will continue for long time.

One of the most important capacity building in this field is training professional units, otherwise Afghanistan needs to hire foreign engineers with high salaries. But, unfortunately in last few years there were not professional units, in the field of mining, trained in last few years. Though there are hundreds of private universities and colleges around the country, but none of them offered the faculty of mining and geology in the country.

Impacts of peace in the extraction of natural resources of the country

Security has a vital impact on the economic development, which the obvious example of it is Afghanistan that gained billions of foreign aid from international community, but still faces economic challenges. The main reason of it is lack of development, continuous war, and insecurity in Afghanistan.

The mines of Afghanistan are located in rural areas, where security is extremely challenging. Therefore, if a foreign company win the bidding of the extraction of a mine, without agreement with the opponents of the Afghan Government the company will not be able to starts its extraction. On the other hand, the Taliban recently created a new frame in their structure by the name of Mines, and they extract mines by volunteer mining companies. Even, if a mine is in an area that is not controlled by the Taliban, the company needs agreement with the Taliban for transferring the raw materials.

For example, most of the lapis lazuli that is extracted in Badakhshan Province is transferred through Topkhana, a place on the Badakhshan-Pakistan way, to Pakistan, and that way is controlled by Taliban.

Due to the mentioned reasons, in war and insecurity there is no hope for extraction of mines, and if there is, the Taliban will take their share, and that share to them means the continuation of war in the country.

Continuation of war in the country weaken the power of the government, and it will pave the way for the local powers, so those power holders will also have their share from the extraction of mines. It is even possible that war over mines will influence the ideological wars in the country. As some of the African countries experienced it, and it caused casualties and tribal conflicts in those countries.

Therefore, we can say that President Ghani was right in his speech that the priority of duties will be to bring peace to the country. But, as he took his first step and signed the B.S.A. with the U.S., he has chosen the way against his speech and has given the chance to the U.S. either it brings peace to the country, or not.

Currently the future of peace and war in the country is related to the negotiation between the U.S. and the Taliban, but the U.S. policy in Afghanistan is same as its policies in other Islamic states. Therefore, prediction of peace in the country seems extremely difficult for now.

The End

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