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Introduction

In this issue you will read CSRS' Weekly Analysis Boards insights on role of media in presidential elections and potential crisis that might arise and objectives of Pakistan's cross-border attacks on Afghanistan's eastern region.

- * On June 14, 2014 the second round runoff of the presidential election was held, after assessing estimated partial results one of the candidates disagreed over the results. Though fear over election being ethnically divided existed from the beginning, but after runoff election publication of many media outlets have been provoking which increase tensions that media will play a major role in potential crisis and disorders.
- * Meanwhile Pakistan's cross-border attacks on Afghanistan's eastern region has continued for the last few years, even happening on the runoff presidential election day stepping up tensions about them. Officials of both countries are hiding the truth to a major extent showing that there are important objectives behind these attacks.

Media's role in elections and potential crisis



During emergency and critical times public try to seek information from various sources, to find what is going on and perceptions of what might happen next. It is the time when media outlets gain importance and it is possible that the media might publish false news, which the public might believe and affect the current affairs to a large extent.

In Afghanistan too, the situation is critical especially because of some significant events such as elections, peace process, withdrawal of foreign troops and BSA, narcotic, economic issues, ongoing conflict and tensions in relation with the neighboring countries and so on affecting Afghanistan situation in long-term.

Role of mass media in crisis

The natural and man-made crisis both can affect a nation and a state. Media can not only play a significant role in crisis and disaster management but in creation, direction and controlling of crisis and disasters too.

The role of the media is important in three stages; pre-disaster, during the disaster and post disaster. The concern about the negative role of media in Afghanistan's critical situation is serious also because of the behavior and the manner through which the media employees collect and share extravagant and deficient information, and mostly publishes and broadcasts information based on speculations or baseless.

That is clear that now the media plays a significant role in direction of the general public and the media which do not consider the protection of national interests in their priority might continue this manner of their work even in crisis and disasters as well.

Now most of the media harms the national interests under the slogan of freedom of speech. In the first step the managers of the media must pay attention to these issues and instead of creation of the disaster help to solve the problems. In the second step the government must prevent the media from broadcasting and publishing information which threatens the national interests; because the national interests are more important than the freedom of speech.

Media and the presidential elections

Naturally most of the local and international media outlets having Afghan audience have supported or opposed programs of a specific candidate, there were only few who were neutral to an extent, but also had a tendency towards one or another candidate. Especially in the run-off elections where the fears of ethnic division grew the media's negative and hurting role became more problematic. The media started propagation in the favor of one candidate and worst thing was that they were broadcasting negative programs against the rival.

However the Independent Elections Commission (IEC) media commission role was not visible thus the media kept broadcasting and publishing information in favor of one candidate and made the situation more dangerous with regards to ethnic divisions and language based discrimination.

In Afghan media a group which has more audience and was already claimed to be involved in ethnic and linguistic discrimination broadcasts and publishes information which decreases the credibility of the election.

Also the analysts are speaking in the favor of one and another candidate or denounce their opponent candidate, so that their analysis can prevent or limit the flow of the true information.

Afghan government, IEC and other relevant agencies for media could not introduce and enforce comprehensive rules and regulations, in order to coordinate the role of uncontrolled and uncoordinated media in managing the public opinions for protection of the national interests.

Whenever the democratic process which will peacefully transfer the rule from one elected president to another president, faces problems the social media adds fuel to the fire of disagreements. For solving the electoral related conflicts the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) intermediated, and the UN Special Representative and Head of the UNAMA Jan Kubiš had also showed his concerns over the negative information that two candidates team publishes and urged them to stop such negative propagandas.

Now the number of users and influence of social networks such as Facebook has increased in Afghanistan, most of Afghans shares their views over different issues which cause disputes in

some cases, therefore the Misharano Jirga or upper house of Afghanistan parliament suggested control of the social media over which NDS also showed concerns. However the Ministry of Information and Culture said that they will consider it if it gets serious but it seems that efficient management of the social media has failed as that of other media did.

Following presidential elections run-off the country is facing sensitive political condition due to some particular factors which if not properly managed might take the country towards disorders. Media can play constructive role in preventing disorder and potential crisis. If the media do not refrain from ethnic, linguistic and party favoritism in their discussions on presidential elections they might play major role in disordering situation in the country.

Behind the scene of the Pakistan's cross-border attacks on Kunar



Border tensions with Pakistan and Afghan elections

Pakistan cross-border rocket attacks on Kunar are still going on, Afghan authorities considered the Pakistani attacks aim to challenge the second round presidential election.

But Pakistanis had a different analysis from these attacks, the Pakistani media reported according to the military officials of Pakistan that a vast attack from Afghan border has targeted a Pakistani check post in Bajaur Agency and killed a Pakistani police, after that the Pakistani soldiers reacted and targeted the attackers. The gunships helicopters were also accompanying the operation. After some days the Pakistani officials announced that four Pakistani soldiers have been killed and if the attacks do not stop they will increase the rocket attacks on Afghan soil.

Afghanistan's foreign ministry in a latest reaction said: these attacks are a clear aggression on Afghanistan and for defending it they mulled over military options. But Syed Ibrar Husain, Pakistan's Ambassador to Kabul claimed these incidents are in response to acts of aggression and militants coming from the Afghan soil.

He claimed that Afghanistan does not have any check post in the center of Kunar and while the Pakistani soldiers come under attack they are reacting and targets these areas, while the Afghan Interior Ministry rejects these claims and say that in the border areas Afghan Border Police (ABP) are on duty.

Was the real aim of rocket attacks to challenge elections? The three years old background of the border conflicts shows that the attacks were not exactly related to the elections, the Defense Minister also not rejected the presumably attacks of unknown militants from the Afghan side of the border.

Failure of peace talks in Pakistan

The rocket attacks before Afghan elections can be related mostly to the failure of peace negotiation with Taliban in Pakistan. In the fact after victory of Pakistan Muslim League (N) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf of Imran Khan in Pakistani election the peace negotiation began with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Hakimullah Mehsud has been killed during the negotiations by a US drone attack.

Later Mullah Fazlullah has been chosen as the leader of TTP who now lives in the tribal area between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Khan Sayed Sajna known as Khalid Mehsud was another candidate for the leadership, but his will for peace with Pakistani government caused that the high level members of TTP voted for Fazlullah to become the leader.

Following the failure of peace talks between Pakistani government and TTP, the Pakistan Army launched operation in North Waziristan. The aim of this operation is said to bringing peace to Pakistan but the fact is that Pakistani intelligence wanted to create a new leadership in Taliban by Sajna and then enter to peace negotiation with them.

Pakistan's fear from Indian influence

As the insecurity and instability in Afghanistan is being linked with Pakistani intelligence, the insurgency in Pakistan by Baloch or Taliban is claimed to be linked with Indian intelligence and implemented by Afghanistan.

Pakistan Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) wants to deepen the rule of the Taliban in Waziristan who have understanding with the government; besides, are more concerned about the Taliban leadership command located outside the Pakistan, especially while the Fazlullah is already suspicious that during his existence in Swat he had relations with some foreign parties and even ran an FM radio station.

After failure of peace negotiation and during the preparation of Pakistan Army for military operation in North Waziristan, Taliban stormed the Karachi International Airport with a well-planned attack. This attack challenged Pakistan's discipline forces. However it was said that the aircrafts and the passengers were not harmed but the image and prestige of Pakistani government was affected globally.

In another incident one of the aircrafts of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) was attacked while landing in the Peshawar International Airport showing that Taliban can harm the Pakistan's economy.

Pakistani officials first claimed India's involvement in the attacks, and after sometime it was said that the attackers were Uzbek from Uzbekistan Islamic Movement. In a recent incident Pakistan, without any document, claimed that Afghanistan National Directorate of Security (NDS) involvement in the attack. It shows the ISI's attempts to show the attackers from outside the Pakistan.

Unheeding of foreign troops in Afghanistan

The foreign troops in Afghanistan stayed neutral against the rocket attacks from over the Pakistan border. US Ambassador to Kabul said that US troops will not have any military interventions in tensions between Afghanistan and its neighbor. Meanwhile, supporters of the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) were arguing that Afghanistan will be protected from neighbor's intervention by signing the BSA.

Conclusion:

The fact is that Pakistan ISI does not tolerate the leadership of Taliban outside the Pakistan because they are concerned of foreign, especially Indian influence, on Taliban and therefore the attacks can be a pressure on the Afghan government to eventually expel Mullah Fazlullah from Kunar, however Pakistan has been trying this itself too.

ISI assigned agents within Afghanistan to find the exact location of TTP leaders including Mullah Fazlullah. Pakistani Taliban found this after drone attacks targeted Afghan Taliban and some close militants to Mullah Fazlullah were killed. Considering the preciseness of the attacks, TTP and Afghan Taliban understood that these attacks are impossible without inner intelligence. In the result they sent a group of veiled militants to identify and execute alleged agents. The group hanged a number of militants who were considered to be spying.

In conclusion, we can say that there are numerous reasons behind Pakistani cross-border attacks on Afghan border areas which Pakistan prefers not to reveal. Afghanistan, also not preferring to admit Pakistan's armed opposition presence in its soil, wants to link these attacks with disturbing Afghan election process by Pakistan. It is clear that attacks on Kunar border areas could not result in preventing people from participation in elections even in Kunar let alone the process in entire country.

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