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Preface

The violence and cruelties by Buddhists in Myanmar against the Muslim minority has a long history and reports in this regard had been released from time to time. Recently after the expansion of violence in the Rakhine province of Myanmar in the past two weeks, more than 100 thousand of Muslims have fled the country. Moreover, it is said that more than hundreds of Muslim children and women are violently killed in the past month in Burma, and according to the report of a British media outlet, the houses of more than ten thousand Muslims are ruined. The recent violence has sparked the anger of Muslims around the world.

Although the Burmese government denies killing civilians and burning their houses, the human rights watchdogs and Rohingya people say that the Burmese military wants to oust Muslims from their homelands.

What is going on in Burma? When did the clashes between Muslims and Buddhists start? What are the factors behind the ongoing violence? What will be the impacts of this violence? These are the questions that are answered in the first part of the Weekly Analysis of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS).

In the second part of the analysis, you would read about the economic situation after the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG). Following the establishment of the NUG, besides deterioration of the security and political situation, the economic situation also worsened. The economic growth dropped, the value of Afghani depreciated, and hundreds of thousands of Afghans were forced to leave their country and took dangerous paths to Europe.

In the last part, you would read about the second session of the youth of Shanghai Cooperation Conference, recently held in Shanghai and Beijing cities of China, where one of the researchers of CSRS had also participated.

The Burma Tragedy and the Situation of Rohingya Muslims



Since the past two weeks, the Muslim population of Burma is under the cruelties of Buddhists in this country; that is why since the past two weeks; more than 120 thousand Rohingya Muslims have taken refuge in Bangladesh.

According to the reports, the war has begun between the government troops and Aracken Rohingya Salvation Army, which is an Islamist Rohingya armed group and according to the reports of the UN in Burma, 14 or 15 Burmese soldiers are killed in clashes between the government forces and Muslim militants.

On the other hand, the Burmese government says that it has killed 370 of the armed group of Rohingya Muslims. According to the reports of the UN, in the recent clashes between the Muslims and Buddhists, more than one thousand Muslims are killed.

The ongoing tragedy in Myanmar is raised as an important issue for Muslims. The cruelties in Burma was condemned by Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, etc. international organization such as Human Rights Watch and United Nations have also condemned the ongoing cruelties in Burma.

What is the situation in Burma? When did the violence between the Rohingya Muslims and Buddhists begun? What are the factors behind the ongoing violence? These and other similar issues are analyzed here.

Myanmar of Yesterday and Today

Myanmar is an Asian country and a member of ASEAN and is bordered by India and Bangladesh to its west, Thailand and Laos to its east, China to its north and the Bengal Gulf to its south.

The country's 2014 census counted the population of the country to be 51 million people, most of whom are from the Bamar ethnicity group (68%), Karin (9%), Rakhine (4%), Mon (2%) and other groups (10%).

87.9% of the population are the followers of the Theravada Buddhism, 6.2% are Christians and 4.3% Muslims.

Historically Myanmar was a prestigious country, but between 1824 and 1885 it lost its independence after three wars with the British and became part of the British colony. The British captured the entire Burma on the first January 1886 and made it part of the British India. However, on 1 April 1937, Burma was announced as a separate colony of British which also had its separate government.

After the ousting of the British from the Indian subcontinent, Myanmar gained its independence on 4 January 1948. The current borders of Myanmar was also defined based on the policies of British.

Although at the beginning a democratic government was established in Burma, between 1962 and 2011, Burma was ruled by the military.

The condition of Muslims in Myanmar

The ongoing tragedy against Muslims in Burma is not a new phenomenon, but it is rooted back in the past several decades. The Muslims live in Burma for a long time, but the Burmese government consider them as aliens and sometimes as Bengalis.

When Burma gained its independence, a law of citizenship was approved, which defined Burmese citizens. In this law, the Rohingya Muslims were not included. After the 1962 coup d'état in Burma, the Burmese government distributed ID cards to the Rohingya Muslims identifying them as foreigners. This approach affected the economy and the education of these Muslims.

In 1982, a new citizenship law was approved in Myanmar, which officially announced the Rohingya Muslims as stateless citizens. Even if the Rohingya Muslims want to gain citizenship, they must have the following two conditions; first, they must prove that their family lived in Myanmar before 1948 and second, they must be able to communicate in one of the national languages of Burma fluently. The Rohingya Muslims cannot fulfill these conditions, and as a result, they are deprived of work, education, travel, health services, and other human rights.

Since 1962, the Burmese army has conducted 19 operations against Rohingya Muslims. In these operations, the Rohingya Muslims had been the subject of inhuman behavior, genocide, and cruel tortures. That is why more than one million Rohingya Muslims are forced to migrate from this country since the 1970s. 6.52 hundred thousands of these Muslims have fled to Bangladesh, 3.5 hundred thousand to Pakistan, two hundred thousand in Saudi Arabia, 1.5 hundred thousand in Malaysia, 40 thousand in India, 10 thousand in the United Arab Emirates, 5 thousand in Thailand and one thousand in Indonesia.

The UN and the Human Right Watch organizations have recognized the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. That is why in 2016, officials in the UN have said that efforts are being made to eliminate Rohingya Muslims. The Human Rights Watch says that the Burmese government is trying to eradicate the Rohingya Muslims.

The future of Muslims in Burma

Given the past condition and the ongoing situation of Muslims in this country, we can say that the Rohingya Muslims will be victims and their future is unclear because:

First, they do not have the nationality of Myanmar.

Second, they are not the nationality of the neighboring countries, nor they are allowed to take refuge in these countries nor can they return to their homeland because according to the Burmese laws they are announced stateless. Due to the violence in the past two weeks, approximately 120 thousand Rohingya Muslims are migrated to Bangladesh and based on the estimated statistics of the UN; this number could rise to 300 thousand. In the meanwhile, the Burmese government has also begun the process of mining the border between Burma and Bangladesh. If the current situation continues the return of Burmese in Burma in the future and the process of their migration will be affected.

Third, the Burmese government is backed by some of the world powers such as China, Russia, and some western countries. For instance, in March this year, a resolution against the Burmese government in the Security Council of the UN was vetoed by China and Russia.

The only way to change the situation of Muslims in Burma is to give citizenship to Rohingya Muslims and give their fundamental human rights. This end can be served by undertaking the following measures:

First, internationalizing the issue through the international community and the media.

Second, bringing the Burmese government under pressure by other countries particularly by the countries on which the Burmese government rely or countries that claim to support human rights in the world.

A Critical Appraisal of Economic Situation of the Country under NUG



Promising to create employment opportunities, improve exports, increase the domestic and foreign investments, reform the taxing process, provide cheap houses and hundreds of other pledges, the leaders of the National Unity Government (NUG) gave hope to people about boosting their lives and improving their economies.

The NUG leadership has always reiterated that they are striving to utilize the strategic location of Afghanistan as the crossroad of Asia and a way of transiting commodities to Central Asian countries, employ the agricultural abilities of the country for economic prosperity, extract the mineral resources professionally and efficiently, and achieve a sustainable economy through regulating the taxing and spending processes.

However, three years after the formation of the NUG, still 39.1% of Afghans have to deal with poverty and unemployment. Although the World Bank has reported the fiscal situation and economic growth of Afghanistan in 1395 [solar year] to be better than that of the preceding years, the perpetuation of the war and

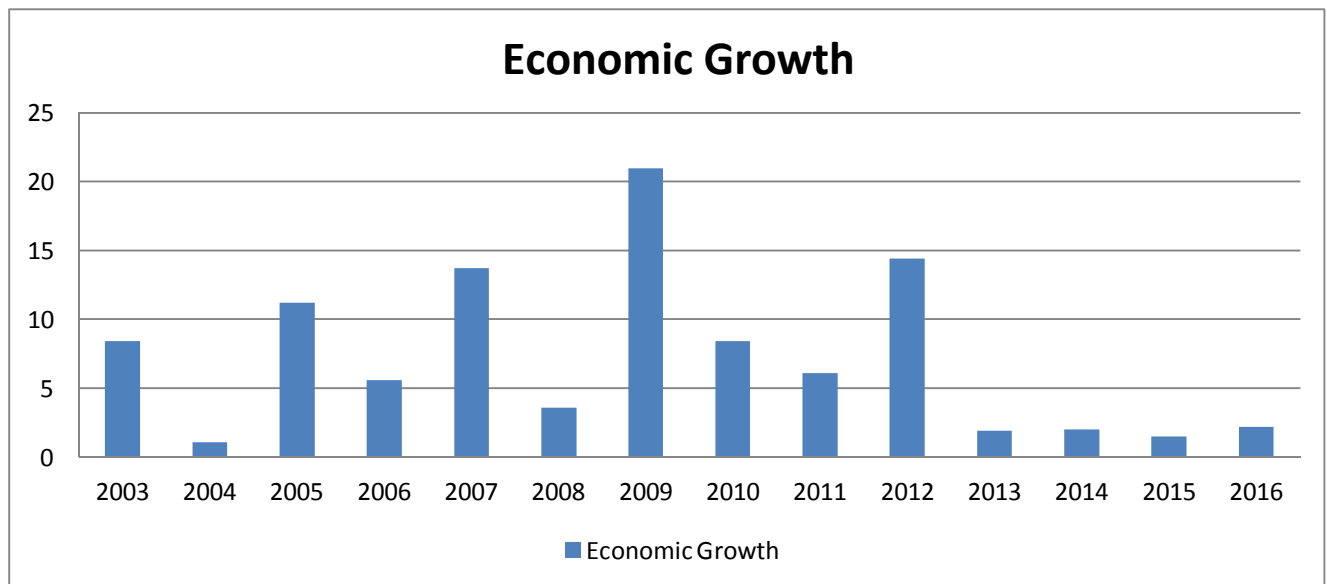
insecurity in the county have negatively affected the livelihood, trade, and business.

Here we have analyzed the economic situation in Afghanistan after the formation of the NUG as well as issues such as the country's economic growth, the value of Afghani, imports and exports and the situation of poverty and unemployment.

Economic growth

Between 2001 and 2012 Afghanistan's economic growth was an average of 9%. During this time, in 2009 Afghanistan had the highest economic growth, 21%. Nonetheless, after 2009 until 2016, the country did not have a remarkable economic growth. In 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 Afghanistan's economic growth was respectively 8.4%, 6.1%, 14.4%, 1.9%, 2%, 1.5%, and 2.2%.¹

Chart-1: Afghanistan's economic growth 2003-2016



The reason behind a remarkable economic growth in 2009 is relatively favorable security and economic situation in Afghanistan in the years before it. On the other hand, before this year, the issue of foreign forces' withdrawal from the country was not raised either. Nevertheless, except for 2012 in which the economic growth was 14.4% and the reason behind which was an increase in the

¹ The statistics of Afghanistan's economic growth are taken from World Bank's website.

agricultural products, since 2009 the country's economic growth rate is dropping, the reasons behind it are as follows:

- In 2009 the US announced a date for the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan which increased distrust in trade and investment.
- After 2009, the security situation in the country worsened, and the war expanded into the relatively secure areas as well.
- In 2013, due to not signing the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the US, oppositions with the US within the country increased and, hence, the country faced political and security instability. The investment rate declined because the investors were concerned about the future of the country; that is why the economic growth dropped to 1.9% in this year.
- In 2014, the economic growth was 2%. The prime reasons behind the decrease in the economic growth in this year were again political and security instability, the delay in the formation of the new government, and, to some extent, the withdrawal of the foreign troops.
- In 2015, the security situation in the country, the internal disputes, and the return of Afghan refugees from the neighboring countries reduced the economic growth to 1.5%.
- In 2016, although the security and political situation were concerning more than ever, with the announcement of international aids in Brussels and Warsaw conferences, Afghanistan had a slight increase in its economic growth.

In its report, the World Bank has estimated that Afghanistan's economic growth in 2017 would increase to 2.6%, and until 2020 it will gradually reach 3.6%.

The value of Afghani

Before the formation of the NUG and during the electoral campaigns, the value of Afghani against the one US dollar was an average of 57.22 Afghanis on a monthly basis. However after the formation of the NUG until the end of 2014, the value of Afghani against one US dollar was 58.18 Afghanis. At the beginning of 2015, the value of Afghani against dollar improved as in January this year the value of

Afghani against one US dollar was 57.76 Afghanis and in February it was 57.4 Afghanis.

After the second month of 2015, Afghani lost its value against the US dollar. At the end of 2015, the value of Afghani against one US dollar was 67.25 Afghanis. Now in the second half of 2017, the value of Afghani against one US dollar is 68.5 Afghanis.

The followings are reasons behind the depreciation of Afghani:

- The appreciation of dollar in global markets;
- The worsened security, political and economic situation in the country;
- The artificial value of Afghan currency;
- The decrease in the demand for Afghani in the market.

Imports and exports

According to the statistics of the Central Statistics Organization (CSO), in 1395 [solar year], the value of registered exported goods was \$596.5m, while in 1394, its value was \$571.4m. Based on the most recent report of CSO, in the first quarter of 1396, the total value of Afghanistan's exports was \$124.1m, a significant part of which was the exports of carpet and fresh and dried fruits.

The imports of the officially registered goods in 1395 was \$6534.1m, which compared to \$7722.8m in 1394 marks a 15.4% decrease. The statistics of CSO show that the total value of imports in the first quarter of 1396 was \$2089.9m. Moreover, the imports of oil, machinery, transport equipment, metal and metal products, wheat and flour are decreased by 15.4% compared to 1394. Therefore, the total value of trade in 1395 was \$7131m, 91.6% of which was the imports while only 8.4% was exports.

Also, between 1387 and 1395, there was a significant trade balance deficit; it had reached from \$2475m in 1387 to \$5938m in 1395.

Poverty and unemployment

In 2007 and 2008, 36.3% of the Afghan population was living below the poverty line; however, based on the statistics of the World Bank, in 2011 and 2012, this percentage has dropped to 35.8%. Nevertheless, according to a joint report by the World Bank and the Afghan government, prepared in 2013 and 2014, 39.1% of Afghans are shown to be below the poverty line.²

According to this report, the reasons behind the increase in the poverty rate are the reduced international community's aids, unemployment, internal crisis and the expansion of the war. It comes at a time that since 2014, the war is getting intensified in various part of the country, the number of internally displaced peoples (IDPs) has unprecedentedly increased, hundred thousands of Afghan refugees are returning from other countries, and tens of thousands of Afghan youth are leaving the country due to the lack of employment opportunities. Therefore, although there is no exact statistics in hand about the poverty rate in the country, it seems that it has increased compared to 2013 and 2014.

Besides that, in 2014, the Afghan Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and Disabled announced that from the 10m people who are capable of working, 800 thousand are unemployed.³ However, the statistics of the World Bank show that in 2013 and 2014, approximately two million Afghans were unemployed, most of them youth.

In the meanwhile, the Afghan Ministry of Economy has announced that the poverty rate has decreased in years after 2014 and that with the economic growth of the country in 2015 and 2016, the unemployment and poverty rate is also decreasing. However, in its report, the World Bank writes that 400 thousand people are annually added to the labor force in Afghanistan. On the other hand, since 2014, the war is intensified. According to a report of SIGAR, 40% of the

² The world bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/05/08/poverty-afghanistan-rose-amidst-troop-withdrawal-poverty-update-2017>

³ BBC, http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2014/05/140502_k05_afghan_worker_day_law [A glimpse to the work and workers status in Afghanistan]:

Afghan soil is under the control of the armed opposition of the government and, in the meanwhile, the economic downturn in Afghanistan has also increased concerns about unemployment in the country.

The Second Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Youth Camp



The second SCO Youth camp was held in Shanghai and Beijing from 21st to 29th August 2017, where more than 160 participants of SCO member and observers participated in it.

Afghanistan, which is one of the observers in SCO, also took part in it. One of the researchers of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) Ahmad Bilal Khalil was part of the Afghan delegation.

Compared to other regional organizations, the SCO region is less connected in youth and cultural aspects; that is why while speaking in the Ufa city of Russia, the Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated on starting the youth camps under the SCO. At that time Beijing also took the responsibility of convening the first five camps.

The first SCO youth camp was held in the Xinjiang and Chinese Magnolia and the second was organized in Shanghai and Beijing.

The participant of the meeting and the researcher of CSRS Ahmad Bilal Khalil believes that the meeting had three fundamental objectives; first, reconnecting SCO region culturally. Second, gathering the youth of SCO countries in a network. Third, giving a cultural aspect to the SCO, which until now has largely been a security and economic bloc because culture plays a significant role when it comes to economic integration.

The issue of economic cooperation between the countries, the expansion and implementation of the Silk Road and cultural relations were discussed in this meeting.

This meeting had three aspects; first, academic meetings and conferences. Second, tourism, Sinology, and the expansion of relations between the SCO youth. Third, the expansion of relations between the traders and entrepreneurs.

In the first part, two lectures regarding the “One belt, one road” was delivered. Then a cultural forum and a roundtable of young entrepreneurs were organized. In the second aspect, meetings between the delegations of the member countries and visiting the Chinese historical Great Wall was included. In the third aspect, a meeting was held between the entrepreneurs of SCO, and at the end, a statement was also released. The statement included recommendations regarding increasing the capacity of young entrepreneurs and the expansion of relations between the youth of SCO.

The End

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