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Preface

China has good relations with both Afghanistan and Pakistan; that is why this country has undertaken efforts to improve relations between these two countries since the past several months. The foreign ministers of the three countries came together in Beijing last week and discussed about the common regional cooperation and the existing challenges between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The second meeting of this series is to be held in the first three months of 2018 in Kabul.

Three years back, on 9 February 2015, when tensions in the Pak-Afghan ties escalated due to non-cooperation of Pakistan in the Afghan peace process, the three countries held a trilateral meeting in Kabul. The representatives of the US and China were present in the quadrilateral talks as well, but these meetings produced no tangible outcomes. How much this series of trilateral meetings will be effective in Kabul-Islamabad relations is a question analyzed 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 internal division of the Jamiat-e-Islami party. After the acceptance of the resignation of Balkh's Governor Atta Mohammad Noor, which he had made during his direct negotiations with the Presidential Palace, Balkh's governor used harsh rhetoric against the Afghan Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. This situation revealed the deep differences between the members of Jamiat-e-Islami party and some members of the party supported Mr. Atta Mohammad Noor while some other backed Abdullah Abdullah. How serious is these internal divisions of Jamiat party? What will be its impact on the future of this party? These are the questions that are answered in the second part of the analysis.

Chinese mediation in the Afghan-Pak relations



A trilateral meeting between the foreign ministers of Afghanistan, Pakistan and China was held in Beijing on 26 December 2017. The Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs Sallahuddin Rabbani, the Pakistani Minister of Foreign Affairs Khawaja Mohammad Asif and the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi had participated in this gathering. This meeting was highly welcomed in the region, particularly by the media.

This meeting is organized at a time that tensions in Kabul-Islamabad relations have escalated the Pakistan-China economic zone is moving towards implementation, and insecurity in Afghanistan is increasing on a daily basis.

The trilateral meetings between the three countries have started since several years ago. However, at first, these meetings were between the think tanks of these countries, then the deputy foreign ministers of these countries met and now for the first time the foreign ministers of the three countries are meeting.

The question is how is the Chinese mediation seen in this issue and what will be the impact of China's this role?

The need for Chinese mediation

Currently, due the following points, the Chinese mediation in Kabul-Islamabad ties is necessary:

First; since the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG), the Chinese-Afghan relations have been prospering compared to the past. In his first foreign trip, President Ghani left for China and valued this country's role in the Afghan peace issue. During this time, officials of both countries frequently visited each other's countries and Chinese aids to Afghanistan increased and then China started military contributions as well.

Second; compared to the first year of the NUG, the Pak-Afghan relations have now become more tenuous. However, this deterioration of relations between the two countries is not an issue of the NUG's period and the Kabul-Islamabad relations have experienced ups and downs since the formation of Pakistan.

Third; China has strategic relations with Pakistan since the past six decades and the Chinese see Pakistan as their "Israel".¹ On the other hand, not only China have good relations with the Afghan government but also Afghans have good feelings for Chinese role.

Why Kabul wants Beijing's mediation?

Kabul values these trilateral meetings because considering China's position in the region, Kabul is convinced that such meetings will have an impact on its security. The fact that China wants good Kabul-Islamabad relations for the security of its two projects, the Silk Road and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Projects, Kabul's hopes increase. Beijing has offered mediation between Kabul and Islamabad since the past several months as the Chinese said in the trilateral meeting: "Both parties [Pakistan and Afghanistan] wowed to improve mutual relations between them and promised not to allow anyone to use the soil of one against the other."

¹ Andrew Small, a British writer, has quoted this point from a Chinese diplomat in his book "The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics".

An important point here is that China emphasized on Afghanistan's integration in the CPEC project more than Pakistan. In this regard, the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs said that Beijing and Islamabad think about how to make Afghanistan part of CPEC. Therefore, Afghanistan sees China's mediation not from a political prospect but also from an economic and security angle.

Kabul sees China's mediation with optimism also because this country can play an important role in the Afghan government's reconciliation with the Taliban. Although the Afghan Taliban have rejected China's mediation in the peace process, still there are hopes of Beijing playing such a role. Beijing also uses the term "facilitator" rather than mediator regarding itself and that is why China called on the Afghan Taliban in the recent meeting to sit around a table with the Afghan government.

Beijing's mediation and regional politics

China's mediation between Pakistan and Afghanistan and also between the Taliban and the Afghan government also triggers some regional rivalries. For instance, the US will not be concerned to a large scale about China's mediation between Pakistan and Afghanistan; however, when it comes to the mediation between the Afghan government and the Taliban, this is an issue of concern for the Americans and, in this regard, China will move carefully as well.

On the other hand, Pakistanis favors China's increasing role in Afghanistan because this is the only way, in their belief, to reduce India's role in this country. However, if China made peace between the Afghan government and the Taliban and if this happens with the marginalization of Pakistan and without the consent of this country, it will never be acceptable for Pakistan. Nevertheless, the probability of China playing such a role is scarce and it will be rather hard for China to play such a role.

India, on the other hand, will be one of the countries that will closely monitor the recent events because this country has invested its role in Afghanistan since 2001. Although among the four players (Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, and the Taliban), India is concerned about the increase in role of the three in Afghanistan, India is not "hasty" because its security interests are mostly inline with that of the Afghan government.

Internal divisions and the future of the Jamiat-e-Islami Afghanistan



The internal divisions and bargaining for power with the Presidential Palace was something that the Jamiat party had undertaken since the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG); however, recently, these internal disputes have escalated.

After the announcement of the acceptance of the former governor of Balkh's resignation by the Afghan President and the appointment of Engineer Mohammad Dauod as the new governor of Balkh, Jamiat-e-Islami and Atta Mohammad Noor harshly reacted against this decision and said that this resignation was unacceptable and previously canceled.

Speaking in a gathering of his supporters, Atta Mohammad Noor fiercely criticized Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and even said that he was a "snake of the sleeve". According to Atta, Dr. Abdullah played 80% role in his dismissal and said: "I will break his teeth."

Speaking at a meeting of the ministers' council, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah ridiculing the remarks of Atta said: "after this I will take care of my teeth." Dr. Abdullah added that he did not have anything to do with the resignation of Atta because, he said, Atta himself was negotiating with the Presidential Palace; however, he

said that the acceptance of Atta's resignation was done with the agreement of him and other Jamiat leaders.

These exchange of words between the two Jamiat leaders have sparked the reactions of the other Jamiat members as well, which indicates the division between the fractions of the Jamiat party. The leader of "Rawand-e-Sabz" Amrullah Saleh and Adib Fahim, the deputy director of National Directorate of Security, have backed Dr. Abdullah but Ismael Khan, a member of Jamiat's leadership council, has supported Atta and has said that Dr. Abdullah has failed to represent Jamiat-e-Islami.

Here you would read about the divisions in Jamiat-e-Islami, confrontation between Jamiat and the NUG, and the future of this party.

The internal differences in Jamiat-e-Islami

Jamiat-e-Islami was found in 1370s by Burhanuddin Rabbani and until his death in 2011, he was the leader of the party. After Ustad Rabbani, his son Salahuddin Rabbani was elected as the new leader of the party and Atta Mohammad Noor was announced as the Chief Executive of the party. During the Afghan Jihad against the Soviet Union, this party was one of the significant Jihadi groups and after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from the country, it played a key role in the Afghan civil war. After the overthrow of the Taliban regime until now, this party is present in the structure of the Afghan government.

The internal differences in this party is not a new issue, from time to time, as all other parties and groups, this party has also experienced internal divisions. After 2001, the main leaders of the party such as Dr. Abdullah, Marshal Mohammad Qaseem Fahim, and Mohammad Yunis Qanoni were trying to marginalize Ustad Rabbani, as explained by a member of Jamiat, Mohammad Akram Andishmand, in his book "The US in Afghanistan".

In the past three elections in the country, the members of Jamiat did not have a united stand. Although this situation was explained as the party's effort to be present in all of the leading electoral camps, it also indicated the differences

among its members. In addition to the elections, the members of this party was divided over some other issues as well.

One of the main members of the party, Ahmad Zia Masood was Karzai's Vice President in the 2004 Presidential elections and stood against the other member of the party Yunus Qanooni.

In the 2009 Presidential elections, Mohammad Qaseem Fahim stood as the First Vice President of Karzai and his other colleague Dr. Abdullah Abdullah as the Presidential Candidate. In 2010, Abdul Hafiz Mansoor stood against Yunus Qanooni in the elections inside the parliament to elect the speaker of Wolesi Jirga.

In 2014, Ahmad Zia Masood stood beside Ashraf Ghani against Abdullah Abdullah. Atta Mohammad Noor, who was supporting Abdullah in the elections, entered in negotiations with the Presidential Palace last year, opposing Dr. Abdullah Abdullah in his deals with the government. These oppositions escalated to a scale that once Noor said he no longer had any relation with the Chief Executive Office and that he had separated his way from that of this office.

In the follow up of these disagreements, the recent remarks of Mr. Noor against Dr. Abdullah and accusing him of betraying the Jamiat party is unprecedented.

On the other hand, while Jamiat-e-Islami fiercely reacted against this decision of the government, Dr. Abdullah said that the Jamiat leaders agreed the acceptance of Atta's resignation.

The confrontation of the NUG and Jamiat party

The NUG has faced the opposition of Jamiat over power sharing since its formation. These oppositions reached a phase that Dr. Abdullah publicly showed his dissatisfaction with the decisions of the President and accused him of monopolizing the power. That is why the International Crisis Group has written in its report on 10 April 2017 that there was serious division in the NUG and that the main reason behind it was the differences between the President and the Chief Executive.

After the relative settlement of the differences between the President and the Chief Executive, Atta Mohammad Noor said that he was not happy with the performance of Abdullah Abdullah and entered negotiations with the government to gain Jamiat's share of power from the government and during these negotiations, Atta Mohammad Noor submitted an undated letter or his resignation to the Presidential Palace.

In addition, Ahmad Zia Masood, Jamiat's leadership member and the former representative of the President in reforms and governance, was continually criticizing the President and the performance of the government, despite being a senior government official himself. When he was dismissed by the President, he spoke of political instability and the beginning of a civil war in the country and thus opposed the government.

The Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sallahuddin Rabbani, is also one of the peoples who formed the Coalition of Afghanistan's Salvation in Turkey along with some other senior government officials.

The continuing confrontation of Jamiat party with the Afghan government over the issue of power shows that this party is concerned about the presence and power of the party in the government.

The future of Jamiat-e-Islami

Given the current divisions among the senior officials of Jamiat party, the opposition of the "Besiege Council of Jamiat" with the leadership of the party and the existence of other political circles led by the main members of Jamiat shows that this party is experiencing division and disagreements among its members.

Currently, Amrullah Saleh has a trend "Rwawand-e-Sabz", Yunus Qanooni has a trend "Afghanistan-e-Nawin", Ahmad Zia Masood had "Jabha-e-Mili" movement, Ahmad Wali Masood has a foundation "The Ahmad Shah Masood Foundation", and Ismael Khan leads the "The Mujahidin Council" in Herat. The very existence of these political groups shows that the members of this party are making individual

efforts to gain political privileges. These efforts can result in more political power for these members at the cost of the party's unity.

It seems that the dismissal of Atta Mohammad Noor will further weaken Jamiat party and reduce its role in the Afghan political scene. Therefore, Jamiat-e-Islami may resist against this decision of the government to the end. In the meanwhile, the presidential palace may not step back from its decision. It seems that this issue will gradually challenge the political stability of the country and if a group or circle tried to challenge the stability of the country, the present foreign forces will most probably intervene in the support of the government, as expressed by Atta Mohammad Noor for several times.

The End

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