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Preface

Turkish premier heading a senior Turkish delegation arrived in Kabul on a one-day official visit and discussed various topics with Afghan authorities. Besides supporting the peace proposal of the Afghan government, he, during a press conference with Afghan Chief Executive, asked the Taliban to get benefited from this historical opportunity. Also, Turkish primer and Afghan authorities discussed about security, economic and other types of cooperation, Afghan-Turk schools and other related issues. You will read the analysis of Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) on the future of overall relations between Turkey and Afghanistan.

On the second part of the Analysis, you will read about the condition of health sector in Afghanistan and people's access to health services. The World Health Day became celebrated in Kabul last week and the responsible Afghan officials made remarks about existed problems and achieved improvements. The present condition of Afghan health sector and the problems there are discussed here.

The Course of Afghan-Turk Friendship



By **Hekmatullah Zaland** / CSRS

The best description of Afghanistan and Turkey ties was given by prominent Turkish politician Ahmet Davutoğlu who called it “Exemplary” and said that even if the two countries do not “border”, but are close.

Turkey and Afghanistan have a long history of bilateral relations that are remained friendly during the history. As Turkey is considered a powerful country not among Islamic countries but on global level and as it has good ties with regional countries besides Afghanistan, it has given special importance to these bilateral relations.

The importance of these bilateral relations is obvious from the visits of officials of both countries of which we can name the latest visit of Turkish premier, Binyali Yildirm to Kabul. He travel to Kabul last week (April 8, 2018) and met President Ghani, Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah and other Afghan officials and held a joint press conference with the Chief Executive.

The background of Kabul-Ankara historical ties, the political, economic and cultural relations of both countries and the future of these bilateral relations are analyzed here.

Kabul-Ankara Ties

The diplomatic relations of Turkey and Afghanistan starts after signature of Turkey-Afghanistan [Union Agreement](#) in 1921; but from the historical perspective, it would be enough to say that some great personalities had traveled from Afghanistan to Turkey and/or from Turkey to Afghanistan, but mentioning Mevlana Jalaluddin Balkhi Rumi would be of value.

In the modern history, Afghanistan was among the first countries which officially recognized Turkey and it was during Amanullah Khan's era where the first embassy of Afghanistan became inaugurated in Turkey. On the other side, Turkey supported the Afghan Jihad and remained impartial during the Civil Wars.

Turkey sent 400 soldiers to Afghanistan in NATO structure after 2001 who became involved in reconstruction activities and training Afghan military personnel; however, they never have had engaged in military operations and thus, Turks have not got any casualties in Afghan war and so Afghan Taliban have also got soft position and treatment toward Turks.

Turkey played role in reconstructing bilateral ties of Afghanistan and Pakistan during Hamid Karzai's term and held 8 trilateral meetings from 2007 to 2013. As this process, however, could not eliminate the long-last mistrust between Kabul-Islamabad, but it was beneficial to some extent and besides that, it was showing the great eagerness and friendship of Turkey towards Afghanistan.

The National Unity Government and Turkey

After the formation of National Unity Government (NUG), the relations between Afghanistan and Turkey entered a new phase which became inaugurated by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan by his [historical visit](#) to Afghanistan. Erdoğan arrived in Kabul almost one month after the formation of NUG on October 18, 2014. It was the visit of first Turkish President to Afghanistan since approximately five decades and on the other side, Erdoğan was the first senior foreign official who paid visit to Kabul after the formation of NUG. The Strategic

Agreement of Friendship and Cooperation also became signed between Afghanistan and Turkey as a result of this visit.

Turkey, considering the geo-political location of Afghanistan, wants to have long-term presence in Afghanistan and that's why it did not decrease the number of its troops after 2014 and as Erdoğan said in his [speech](#), Turkey seeks for long-term presence in the country which located in neighborhood of China, Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia.

Nevertheless, some grounds of mistrust have also become created in relations between both countries since last year; because, from one side, First-Vice-President of Afghanistan, Gen. Dostum, spent a life of exile in Turkey and from the other hand, an opposition became declared by a number of Afghan politicians including Dostum in Turkey which initially operates against the National Unity Government.

The Visit of Erdoğan to Kabul after formation of NUG was somehow interlinked to Gen. Dostum who had took power as the First-Vice-President and thus, the deteriorated relations of Gen. Dostum and his exile to Turkey have had its impact on these bilateral ties. Afghan government took some measurements in order to eliminate this mistrust, and among them, we can refer the management issue of Fethullah-Gulen-related Afghan-Turk [Schools](#).

President Ashraf Ghani has also visited Turkey twice in last two years. His first visit took place in December 2015 where he participated in the Business Council of both countries, and his second visit took place in December 2017 where he took part in the Summit of Islamic Conference on Jerusalem.

Economic and Trade Relations

Afghanistan and Turkey have had a bilateral business of totally 1.6 Billion Dollars between 2010 and 2016 whose largest portion was consisted of imports from Turkey and a small portion of its was consisted of exports from Afghanistan. Turkey rank [fifth](#) in importing more Afghan goods after India, Pakistan, Iran and Iraq.

Turkey has had active role in all seven meeting of Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) and on the [latest conference](#) which became held in November 2017, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey signed Lapis Lazuli Transit and Transport Route.

127 companies [have realized](#) 627 projects between 2003 and 2016, amounting to approximately USD 6 billion; however, the most important step is about Double Taxation Prevention Agreement (DTPA) on which the first round of talks became held in Ankara on June, 2016.

Nonetheless, economic and trade relations between Afghanistan and turkey have composed the very important portion in bilateral ties, but, unfortunately, the trade between both countries are on decrease year by year. It was USD 265 million in 2010 but it [decreased](#) to USD 155 million in 2016. Due to this, the second meeting of Joint Economic Commission (JEC) of both countries will be held in Ankara next month where Dr. Abdullah from Afghanistan will [participate](#) in it. The first meeting of this commission was held in April, 2005.

Future of Afghan-Turk Ties

Turkey is a powerful country of Islamic World nowadays and thus its gives importance to its role in Afghanistan. Besides that, existence of Uzbeks and Turkmens in Afghanistan is also a reason that will impact the relations of both countries. Currently, Turkey follows the issue of Afghan government and Gen. Dostum closely and hence, this issue became discussed in [meeting](#) between Turkish Premier and Afghan Chief Executive and if this issue is not resolved, it, perhaps, would impact the relations of Turkey and Afghanistan.

Turkey, once again, will strain to play a role in construction of relations of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Because of that, the [trilateral meeting](#) of Afghanistan-Pakistan-Turkey in Ankara is planned. If the Qatar Office is not recognized as the negotiation ground between Taliban and Afghan government, it's likely to transfer it to Turkey instead of Saudi Arabia or other countries, as Turkey has

relative understanding with Taliban and good ties with Pakistan. Therefore, Turkey could play vital role in the Afghan Peace Process.

The future of Afghanistan and Turkey's relations, besides politics, is also based on culture and economy. The trade between two countries, however, had faced some challenges in last year, but considering the latest efforts, it looks like that economic and trade ties between both countries are on the expansion and improvement.

Rivalry on leadership of Islamic countries between Turkey and Saudi Arabia is continuing on one side, and on the other side, Afghanistan have special important to Turkey. Therefore, Turkey's involvement in the Middle East is on rise; but as Saudi Arabia loses its soft power in Islamic World gradually, Turkey's economic development increases besides the increase of its soft power; so, the ties of Turkey is strengthening with Afghanistan in all of the aspects.

The Condition of Health Sector and Access to HealthCare Services in Afghanistan



By **Zia-ul-Islam Shirani** / CSRS

After the World Health Organization (WHO) founded in 6 April, 1948, the April 7th is celebrated as the World Health Day in most of the countries in order to grab the global attention to health issues and thus, Afghanistan has also celebrated this day since many years.

The World Health Day became celebrated by the Afghan Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) under the theme of Universal Health Coverage (UHC): Everyone, Everywhere; however, there is 40% of Afghans that have been deprived from healthcare services due to several reasons, according to the statistics of WHO.

After 2001, however, the world donated billions of dollars to Afghanistan and hospital and public and private healthcare centers became established in Capital and provinces; but the Afghan people still encounter severe problems in the field of healthcare services and hence, most of them, by perforce, have to travel to other countries, especially Pakistan and India, for treatment.

The condition of health sector in Afghanistan, the increase in cases of various diseases and problems and challenges seen in the Afghan health sector are discussed in the analysis.

Healthcare Services in Afghanistan

95 years passes from establishment of first healthcare center in Afghanistan; however, after almost one century, Afghanistan still ranks among the countries where 91 per every 1000 newborn are died. The most important reason behind this backwardness is foreign campaigns on Afghanistan and continuation of war in the country.

After the collapse of the Taliban regime, the Afghan government received billions of dollar of aid from international community and besides other field, the health sector also became taken care. As there were 143 main healthcare centers, 2504 doctors and 557 pharmacists in the country in 1369 (solar year); however, this number increased by several times after 1381, during last one and a half decade.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), there were 170 public and 388 private hospitals operating in Afghanistan in 1395. Also, there were 417 complex healthcare centers, 923 main healthcare centers and 833 secondary healthcare centers active in the country.

The Afghan Minister of Public Health, Dr. Ferozuddin Feroz emphasized that despite the lack of funding, the health sector has had significant improvements in the delivery of health services. He also stated that in 2002, about 9 percent of the population had access to health services, but with the increase in number of health facilities, the figure has increased by 60 percent by an hour and by 90 percent by a two-hour walk from the health faculties in 2015. The Maternal mortality rate which decreased from 1600 per 100000 live births in 2002 reached to 396 in 2015. Between the aforementioned years, the death of children under the age of five had declined from 257 to 55 per 1000 live births.

Considering these statistics, the condition of health sector after 2001 is not acceptable at all, as besides passing of one and a half decade, the Afghan health sector is located in a low-level in compare to global standards, the hospitals and laboratories of Afghanistan still cannot fulfill the demands of the people, and thus ten thousands of Afghan people travel to other countries for finding cure to their illnesses.

Increase in the Cases of Various Diseases

Afghans, from one hand, are faced the diseases that have been easily treated in other countries but are turned into mortal disease for Afghan people and, from the other hand, the cases of dangerous and deadly diseases like AIDS and Cancer are in increase. Thousands of people have lost their lives due to these diseases as they have not got ability to go to foreign countries for treatment.

Tuberculosis: Tuberculosis is an infectious treatable disease and as the MOHP says, there are 2355 Tuberculosis treatment health center in all 34 provinces of the country; however, thousands of men and women lost their lives due to Tuberculosis every year.

According to [statistics](#) of WHO, 61 thousand men and women became affected by this treatable diseases in Afghanistan every year of which 12 thousand of them lost their lives due to lack of standard health services.

HIV/ AIDS: HIV/ AIDS disease is also among the dangerous diseases that the number of affected people with it is increase in increase in Afghanistan. According to the [information](#) of MOPH, approximately 7500 persons are registered to be infected by this virus; however, they are treated well due to lack health services and thus, the number of these patients increases every year.

Cancer: Cancer is a non-infectious disease and as the MOPH says, its cases are in increase. On 12 Hamal, 1397, Afghan Minister of Public Health, Dr. Ferozuddin Feroz, in the second general assembly of anti-cancer foundation has said that 60 cancer-hit patients have been treated in the Cancer Control Center every day and there were 1300 cancer-hit patients became treated in last year only.

The [statistics](#) of WHO, however, states that nearly 20000 cases of cancer have been recognized in Afghanistan of which 15000 of them have lost their lives due to lack of facilities and health services. Though, the officials of MOPH do not talk about the exact number of people infected by cancer; however, they emphasize that the number of people infected with cancer will increased by 50 percent in the upcoming 10 years.

Problems existed in Health Sector

- **Lack of Budget:** Lack of sufficient budget is one of the main problems in the Afghan health sector as the Afghan Minister of Public Health, Dr. Ferozuddin Feroz, during the celebration of World Health Day on April 7, 2018, also said that the health sector needs more funding to meet this demand and added that currently there are \$5 per person for health services, which is a very low compared to other countries in the world, therefore, the health sector needs more funding to improve health services in the country.
- **Health Services Low Quality:** After 2001, however, the Afghan health sector significantly improved when it comes to quantity, but inversely, the low quality in this field has been a big challenge for Afghan people. Lack of professional doctors, lack of medical equipment and use of low-quality medicines are considered as main problems in Afghan healthcare centers.
- **Corruption:** Corruption has affected the Afghan health sector as well as other sectors which causes import of low-quality drugs into the country that are again sold by even unauthorized pharmacists who get use of fake licenses. This is the cases, particularly, in rural and remote areas. Totally, corruption has directly impacted the operations of pharmacies and private sectors as well as the observation process in the related field negatively.

- **Lack of Female Doctors:** The issue of female doctors is also another serious challenge in the Afghan health sector. Among all the 34 provinces, there are still [provinces](#) existed that have not got even one female doctor. The Afghan Minister of Public Health, Dr. Ferozuddin Feroz, in the Health Council Conference, said that there is no female doctor in Nuristan, Paktika, Zabul and Uruzgan provinces. Because of this, in most cases, the mothers and/or newborns lose their lives in remote areas of the country.

The End

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