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Preface

New hopes have been emerged on success of the Afghan peace process after the US agreed and realized direct peace talks with members of Taliban political office in Qatar. The hopes further increased after the US special envoy for Afghan peace, Zalmay Khalilzad, recently, made remarks in Kabul where he had hoped for success of the process.

Although Afghans have been hopeful for the success of the process following recent steps of US and development of talks with Taliban regarding putting an end to the 17-year long bloody war in Afghanistan through peaceful means, however, there are challenges that will face the peace process with delay and barrier, if not addressed. The latest developments in and barriers towards the Afghan peace process are analyzed in first part of the CSRS Weekly Analysis.

The internal disputes of National Unity Government (NUG) during the President Ghani term have been discussed in the second part of the Weekly Analysis. There were deep and incessant disagreements among NUG leaders and authorities that have been rooted from division of power and some other issues in last four years. These disputes have often confronted the country with the risk of political instability and have put deleterious shadow on other fields of the system as well. This part of the Analysis has looked at the important internal disputes in last four years of the Ghani administration as well as the important factors behind these disagreements.

Latest Developments and Hopes for Afghan Peace



The special envoy of US Department of State for Afghan peace, Zalmay Khalilzad concluded a second visit to the region, including Afghanistan, after the latest meeting on Afghan peace in Moscow. Zalmay had met the Taliban officials in Qatar during the visit as well.

After his Qatar visits, Zalmay arrived in Kabul last week where he told the reporters that he is convoluted in talks with entire involved parties including the Afghan government and the Taliban for the sake of bringing peace in Afghanistan; however, it is yet to declare any important development. He hoped a peace deal would be reached with Taliban.

The topics on Khalilzad's new mission for putting an end to the 17-year long ongoing war in Afghanistan, hopes for peace maintenance, and challenges towards the Afghan peace are discussed here.

The Khalilzad Mission

After 17 years of bloody war in Afghanistan, the United States has, ultimately, realized that the Afghan war could not be won through military pressure and their on-going war in Afghanistan had reached to an impasse. Thus, it has chosen the way of initiating direct talks with the Taliban since last few months.

For this purpose, two months ago, the United States appointed Zalmay Khalilzad to lead the Afghan peace process and make efforts for having peace talks with the Taliban and to reach an agreement in this regard. Khalilzad is an Afghan-American politician who had, meanwhile, got adequate information on the Afghan culture, social life, languages and politics as well as he has got a significant experience of working with and consulting the four US Presidents on Afghan issues.

In order to establish harmony on Afghan peace, Khalilzad started his new mission with having a 10-day visit to five important regional countries including Afghanistan (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar).

He started his visits from Afghanistan where he met Afghan President and Chief Executive, and number of Afghan politicians and Jihadi leaders sequentially. Moreover, he flew to Islamabad after Kabul where he held meetings with Pakistani officials on Afghan peace and asked for their cooperation in the Afghan peace. Besides Pakistan, Zalmay Khalilzad had visits to Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar as well.

As a result of these efforts, direct talks took place between Taliban authorities and US representatives which, in return, emerged new hopes on the Afghan peace. Hence, some of important Taliban officials were released from prison in Pakistan as fruit of these talks. Additionally, the five Taliban officials that had been released from the Guantanamo prison also joined the Taliban political office in Qatar in order to take part in the peace talks.

Later, Khalilzad realized his second visit to the region including Afghanistan where he, in Kabul, told reporters that he hopes for success of the peace talks with Taliban. Based on Western media reports, there are rumors that the Taliban have talked with Khalilzad on some issues like presence of foreign forces, timetable for withdrawal of Americans, release of Taliban officials from prison, armistice and establishment an interim government.

Hopes for Afghan Peace

For the first time, the United States expressed readiness for direct talks with Taliban in order to put an end to the Afghan on-going war after having fought for 17 years. The US has appointed an Afghanistan-born American politician to lead the mission, and thus, it is considered as the most important and hopeful action toward bringing peace and putting an end to the on-going war in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, the Taliban optimism regarding talks with US and demanding for continuation of the talks are the points that have brought hopes for success of peace talks with themselves. Likewise, meetings of political and jihadi parties with Khalilzad and the Taliban remarks mentioning that they want to talks with political parties instead of the Afghan government are also considered as themes that emerge hope for reaching to peace.

Taliban, in the Moscow meeting, said that they will not have any problems with Afghans if foreigners withdraw the country and they will solve the entire problems through talks. Such remarks emerge hopes for inter-Afghan dialogue and thus, it is anticipated that the Taliban will, then, reach an agreement with other domestic Afghan parties through talks.

Despite all what have been said, Zalmay Kahlilzad's remarks with reporters in Kabul where he said the he hopes for success of peace talks with the Taliban is, in person, a green light which escalates the hopes of Afghans for having peace in their country. In the meantime, the Trump presidential term is getting closer to come to the end; and thus, there are analyses that, for the sake of reaching victory in the upcoming Presidential Election, he will try to put an end to the US war in Afghanistan, which is considered as the longest war of US in its history.

Challenges towards Probable Peace Deal

Although efforts on Afghan peace are folded in recent months; however, there is a lot of hope that the peace talks with Taliban will reach a positive conclusion; but there are some challenges towards the process, and important of them are listed as following:

First; peace talks with the Taliban is the important mission of Zalmay Khalilzad for nowadays. Khalilzad's triumph in this mission is the victory of Afghan peace. The point to be concerned about is how the US will accept the most important demand of the Taliban (withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan), whether the foreign forces will withdraw from Afghanistan or the Taliban will reach an agreement with America regarding presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan? However, there are rumors that the Taliban might have talked to US about their bases in Afghanistan and thus, they might reach an agreement with US in this regard.

Second; the position and stand of the Afghan government in these talks is also another challenge in the issue. The condition of the Taliban is that they will not talk to the Afghan government and hence, the United States stepped in. But on the other hand, the Afghan government has always emphasized on inter-Afghan dialogue and does not want to be marginalized. Therefore, the Afghan Presidential Palace (ARG) has started struggles to create a group under the banner of "Peace Consultation Group" on the Afghan peace process which will be comprised of representatives of political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs), women's organizations and local councils of entire 34 provinces. The establishment of the board brings the existence of the Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) from one hand; and from the other hand, establishment of such boards can be called nothing except the repetition of unsuccessful experiences of HPC and creating delays in and barriers in front of the on-going talks.

Third; the establishment of an interim government and, then, the form of the government after the probable peace agreement is another problem that might challenge the possible peace deal. Because the Taliban always demand for an Islamic Emirate, and some circles inside the Afghan government counts the

democratic system and some other changes as their achievements and, thus, they do not want to lose those “achievements”. However, those who challenge the peace process under the banner of achievements are the people that directly ask for continuation of the current bloody situation and it is needed to raise voice against these circles. End

A Glance at Internal Disputes during Ghani's Presidential Term



Ashraf Ghani took the office after the most controversial Presidential Elections in the Afghan history. In the 2014 Presidential Elections, the disputes were as deep as they brought the US Secretary of State to Afghanistan to mediate between Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani's electoral teams which, then, resulted in establishment of the National Unity Government (NUG).

The NUG was involved in disputes from the very beginning; however, they got intensified every year and, as a result, impacted the various fields in the country. Therefore, the government's internal disputes have even caused the country to experience the risk of political instability in the term as well.

How the internal disputes began, disputes among leaders, disputes between government and parliament and the main reasons behind internal disputes in the Ghani administration are discussed in this Analysis.

NUG Leaders Disputes

Existence of internal disputes is a normal practice in entire world countries; however, the internal disputes in the Ghani term, who were positioned at the head of coalition government (National Unity Government), were as palpable as it had, in some cases, even directed the country to the risk of facing a political instability.

The NUG Version, which divided the power (50-50) between Abdullah and Ghani team, in person, was the initiator of internal disputes among Afghan politicians; because the NUG was established against the provisions of the Constitution based on a political agreement, and thus, there were criticisms regarding the government formation from the very beginning.

At first, the Ghani and Abdullah teams had quarrels among themselves but later they started to have internal disputes even inside their own teams as well. At first, the NUG leaders had disputes over government-building and division of power, but later, they continued to have disagreements over introducing the minister of the cabinet as well as appointing senior officials especially the ambassadors for overseas diplomatic mission. The confrontations, once, reached the level where the Chief Executive of Afghanistan made public complaints against the President, his two-year work and lack of fulfilling the promises enshrined in the political agreement of formation of the National Unity Government.

Considering these disputes, some senior governmental officials were criticizing the government work at the first year of the NUG, or were leaving their [positions](#). Among them, we can mentioned the names and positions of the following authorities; Jailani Popal, director of Independent Directorate of Local Government (IDLG), Rahmatullah Nabil, director of the National Directorate of Security (NDS), Noorulhaq Olumi, Interior Minister, Yousuf Nooristani, director of Independent Elections Commission (IEC), Daoud Shah Saba, Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Mirza Khan Rahimi, Governor of Helmand Province, Omar Safi, Governor of Kunduz Province.

On the other hand, disputes and tensions between President Ghani and his First Vice-President, Gen. Dostum was another wave deep internal dispute. At early 2016, Gen. Dostum harshly criticized President Ghani for not providing him of adequate share in the governance. He, even, accused the President of sectarianism and said that he is yet to be given the duties and responsibilities of the Vice Presidency.

During the disagreements, the Ahmad Ishchi case came to ground and folded the present disagreements. Being accused of sexual harassment of Ahmad Ishchi, Gen. Dostum formed a coalition under the name of “Salvation of Afghanistan” along with Jamiat Party and Wahat Party of Afghanistan in Ankara of Turkey. The coalition, however, begun to weaken especially after the airplane carrying Gen. Dostum was banned from landing at the Balkh Airport. However, after a commander of Gen. Dostum got arrested in north of the country and followed by widespread public demonstration, Dostum, then, returned to the country.

Moreover, local government authorities had also got disputes with the Central Government, i.e. former Balkh governor, Atta Mohammad Noor was not leaving his position and, meanwhile, was considering himself as the sharer of the NUG, who, later, became expelled from his position after a long range of negotiations with ARG, the presidential palace.

Lastly, there were internal disputes among the government officials during the 4-year life of NUG; however, they were being settled shortly through mediation of national figures and foreign officials.

National Assembly Disputes with Government

Another slice of the NUG internal disputes were confrontation of the Legislative and Executive powers. Among them, continuation of work of acting-ministers in the NUG Cabinet was an important case of disputes between the government and the National Assembly as it has insistently asked the government to introduce new minister-designates to it in order to provide them with the vote of confidence; however, it took months for the government to introduce new minister to it. In return, the National Assembly has voted eleven of them till now, but there are still a number of officials who work as acting-ministers yet.

Another theme that resulted in severe disputes among government and the national assembly as well as the members of it was the demand to convene Loya Jirga (the Grand Council) and bring changes in the Constitution. Moreover, distribution and form of electronic ID card was another controversial issue. The National Assembly rejected the Presidential Decree on the matter; however, the Meshrano Jirga (Upper House of the Parliament) recognized it, which, eventually, received approval from the joint commission of the both houses of the national assembly.

There were also times that prominent members of national assembly were in absolute disagreement with the government that were continually criticizing the NUG work.

Main Factors behind Internal Disputes

- **Formation of Coalition Government:** the National Unity Government became established following the electoral quarrels and based on a political agreement between two electoral teams; in the case, the organizational structure of both teams were grounded on personal interests and, meanwhile, had a unnatural form which resulted in confrontation among each other and inside each other, i.e. those of Atta Mohammad Noor and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah inside the Abdullah team.
- **Confrontation of Personal Interests:** one of the major factors behind internal disputes in the NUG during the Ghani term were confrontation of personal interests of government senior officials that they were pro-government elements while being at position; however, they were going rogue after being expelled from their jobs. They were criticizing the government, and have, recently, even formed anti-government coalitions or joint a coalition of such kind.
- **Not fulfilling the commitments:** one of the major factors behind internal disputes in the NUG during the Ghani term were not fulfilling the commitments that were stressed on many times. At the beginning, both of the teams had given promises to their members specifically during the

electoral campaign; however, they were unable to fulfill these promises and the practice, thus, lead to internal disputes. Secondly, lack of fulfillment of commitments enshrined in the NUG agreements between two teams was another major factor behind the disputes and lack of trust among both sides.

At the end, it is worth mentioning that these disputes have also impacted the public opinion. During last four years, the Afghan people have stood against each other as a result of the matters that the NUG leaders also had disagreements on, i.e. E-IDs, convention of Loya Jirga and amendments in the Constitution. The trend give rise to prejudice and discrimination and coldness among the people day by day.

End

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