



Center for Strategic & Regional Studies

Kabul

Weekly Analysis-Issue Number 279 (Dec 8-15, 2018)

Weekly Analysis is one of CSRS' publications, which significantly analyses weekly economic and political events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them to design best policies. Weekly Analysis is published in local languages (Pashto and Dari) and international languages (English and Arabic).

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Preface

Diversification of transit trade ways is considered as one of the achievements of the Afghan government during the term of the National Unity Government (NUG). Last Thursday, a step was taken in this regard following the inauguration of the Lapis-Lazuli route in Herat which connects the South Asia with Europe.

In the inauguration ceremony of the Lapis-Lazuli route, where the representatives of Turkey, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and some other countries had also participated in, President Ghani said that Afghanistan has been get rid of the one and a half decade of seclusion when it comes to its transit and trade. First part of the CSRS Weekly Analysis had discussed the importance of Lapis-Lazuli route in the field of transit and trade for Afghanistan and the region as well as the challenges ahead.

Second part of the Analysis is allocated for internal displacement and the situation of the internally displaced persons (IDPs). Security and economic problems have caused thousands of Afghans to leave their houses in different parts of Afghanistan on a daily basis. The recent report of United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) indicates that half of Afghan population is living in the areas that are exposed to high level armed conflicts and insecurity, and besides natural disasters and poverty, the situation has also significantly increased the need for humanitarian assistance. The Analysis has focused on the number of internally displaced persons, their situation and the reasons behind as well as other related matters.

Lapis Lazuli Route and its Importance for Afghanistan and Region



Last week (12-13-2018), President Ghani officially inaugurated the Lapis Lazuli trade and transit route in Herat province of Afghanistan. Following a long interval, it was for the first time that Afghan goods loaded to 9 Lorries moved toward Turkey through the Lapis Lazuli route, which originally was a part of the ancient Silk Road.

The Lapis Lazuli is an Afghan initiative and the agreement was signed between representatives of five countries, Afghanistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia, in RECCA VII Conference of 2017.

Afghanistan is a landlocked country and, thus, it must get rid of being in need of one or two neighboring countries for its trade and transit; hence, there are hopes regarding the inauguration of the Lapis Lazuli route.

Background of Lapis Lazuli route, its importance for Afghanistan and the region and the challenges and opportunities ahead are discussed here.

Lapis Lazuli Route

Based on independent institutions' studies, the Lapis Lazuli route is one the Asia-Europe transit routes which has got a history of two thousand years and it, originally, was one of the important routes of the Silk Road. At that epoch, the Afghan valuable stones, including Lapis Lazuli of Badakhshan mines, were exported to Europe, Balkans and Mediterranean countries and, then, the route is given the name of Lapis Lazuli route.

The Lapis Lazuli route plan was shared by Afghanistan with the relevant countries (Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey) in 2014, which was warmly welcomed by the said regional countries. The Lapis Lazuli route which is started from the Aqina Port of Faryab province and Torghondi Port of Herat Province is passing through Turkmenbashi Port of Turkmenistan, Baku City of Azerbaijan and Tbilisi City of Georgia to the Black Sea and, then, to Turkey and, in this point, where it connects Afghanistan to open waters and Europe.

The Lapis Lazuli transit and trade route that connect Afghanistan and South Asian countries with Europe through road and railway is considered to be one of the shortest and most reliable transit route for a landlocked country like Afghanistan in order to get connected to Europe and, it can be counted as one of important achievements of Afghan government in regards with diversification of Afghan transit and trade routes with different countries in the region and the globe.

Importance of Lapis Lazuli Route for Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a landlocked country and, thus, it needs to find better routes to waters for its transit and trade. Political and security challenges as well as other transit-related problems alongside the Indian Sea have made Afghanistan to seek alternatives for reaching the sea and connecting to the industrialized countries as well as other countries in the globe. In this regard, the Lapis Lazuli route is counted as one of the important alternatives for Afghanistan. Hence, the importance of Lapis Lazuli route can be framed in the following points:

First; Lapis Lazuli is the shortest, cheapest and most reliable route for Afghanistan in order to get connected to Europe, because there are railways from Afghanistan to Turkmenbashi Port as well as from Azerbaijan's Baku to Turkey.

Second; the concerned countries do not impose any kind of tariff or put limit on Afghani goods and Afghan vehicles can enter each of these countries for the purpose of loading and unloading goods without being subject to custom barriers.

Third; Lapis Lazuli road will result in diminution of Afghanistan dependent on Pakistan and Iran for transferring its goods through these countries, and transferring the goods through this itinerary is economical in compare to that of Pakistan.

Fourth; Lapis Lazuli route is one of important regional initiatives and Afghanistan, through its active economic diplomacy, will profit more from its benefits, and meanwhile, it is considered as an important achievement of the National Unity Government (NUG) regarding the economic policies when it comes to economic integration in the region.

Importance of Lapis Lazuli Route for Regional Countries

Despite the lack of security and stability in Afghanistan and the region, lack of surety of cooperation of some countries (Iran and Russia) in implementation of the scheme and lack of facilities for transferring goods and other services to the countries that wish to get benefited from the scheme are challenges towards the Lapis Lazuli route; however, China's commitment to invest 40 billion US dollars in the field is a good opportunity for implementation of the Lapis Lazuli scheme. Moreover, it is a great chance for Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia to shrinkage their dependence on Russia and it is a good opportunity for these countries to enter into a fecund partnership with Europe in this regard.

Turkmenistan, being a country concerned in the Lapis Lazuli route, is the fourth largest producer of gas in the world and, hence, it needs to seek for alternative means for the sake of its economic growth. For example, the Turkmen gas could find its way to the markets of China, Russian and Iran so far; in the case, these

markets are continually encountered with problems. Therefore, getting use of the Lapis Lazuli route will result in Turkmen goods to reach to the markets of Europe. Hence, Turkmenistan intends to turn itself into an international trade transit route through the Caspian Sea and Black Sea water routes; and since then it invests in constructing roads.

Azerbaijan is another country located on the Lapis Lazuli route. The country, which was once a colony of the former Soviet Union, now, tries to avoid establishing closer ties with Russia and makes efforts to get connected to Western countries; therefore, the implementation of the Lapis Lazuli route scheme is also in a position of special prominence to Azerbaijan.

Another country on the route is Georgia. The country is connected to Azerbaijan, Russia and, through Black Sea, to Turkey and is counted as a good transit route for transferring the Azeri gas to Turkey. The Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey have created a consortium of gas and oil transfer lines and railways for the purpose of connection between each other and, thus, the Lapis Lazuli route is considered as one of the important routes for the country in order to expand these ties.

Despite these countries, the fifth or bottommost country of the Lapis Lazuli route is Turkey. The country, which seeks to turn into an energy transfer point to Europe, the Lapis Lazuli route is, then, considered as one of the most important catalyst steps for achieving its goal. For the purpose, Turkey will try its best for the Lapis Lazuli project to become implemented and for the goods to become transferred to Europe through this route. Last but not least, the efforts made on activation and application of the Lapis Lazuli route by each of mentioned countries carry the hopes and optimisms regarding the future of the route. End

Situation and Needs of Internal Migrants in Afghanistan



The recent report of United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) indicates that almost half a million Afghans have been displaced from their areas due to wars and drought in Afghanistan. The [report](#) also points out that overall 6.3 million Afghans are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance, including 3.7 million Afghans in severe needs of the assistance.

Since last 17 years, hundreds of thousands of Afghans are forced to leave their homes due to wars and natural disasters in Afghanistan every year. The displaced Afghans are mainly migrating to the cities and/or rather secure areas, where they also have been faced with lack of several humanitarian needs.

The situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan, the reasons behind and the solution ways are discussed here.

Internal Migrants

Displacing and moving to other areas due to wars and natural disasters in Afghanistan is a major challenge that Afghans are dealing with since last few decades.

In 2001, the number of internally displaced Afghans reached to 1.2 million due to war after the US campaign on Afghanistan; however, the number fell to 650 thousands after the security got maintained in the country and trend was on decrease due to improved security situation in the country till 2006.

After 2007, following the upsurge of insecurity in some provinces, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) begun to rise whose number reached to (916,435) till the end of May, 2015.

As the security situation got deteriorated in Afghanistan after 2015, a form of political instability emerged in the country which was followed by the poor economic situation as well as unemployment. Simultaneously, the number of IDPs in Afghanistan also got increased.

Overall, approximately 500 thousands Afghans were displaced due to wars and natural disaster in 2016. The number reached to 600 thousand in 2017 and, according to the latest report of UNOCHA, more than 300 thousand Afghans have been moved from their homes to other areas due to wars in last 11 months of 2018 only. The report cites a 36.6 per cent decrease in IDPs on the same period in last year as 482,909 Afghans had been displaced for their areas in the period; however, the need for humanitarian assistance in increased by two folds now from one hand, from other hand, the IDPs are yet to be provided with facilities to return to their homes. Therefore, more IDPs are added to the recent IDPs which, as a result, create a new crisis in the cities.

Reasons behind Internal Displacements

The following points are considered to be the main reasons behind internal displacement in Afghanistan:

- **War:** the increasing insecurity and armed conflicts in the country is considered as one of the important reasons behind internal displacement. A large portion of internal displacement is originated from security situation in the country in last 17 years. For example, when the battleground was on fire in 2001, the internal displacement was also on the peak; however, it decreased in 2006 due to improved security situation. The number of IDPs has increased in recent years, particularly after the National Unity Government (NUG) came to power, because the war got intensified, the bombardment on homes and villages increased and the local strongmen and illegal armed men started to persecute the people.
- **Natural Disasters:** natural disasters are considered as major reason behind internal displacement in Afghanistan. A number of families in the country have been forced to internal displacement due to various natural disasters like, drought, flash floods or landslides. In its [report](#) published on late April 2018, UNOCHA said that the drought in Afghanistan has affected the two-third portion of Afghanistan or 20 of its provinces and that two million people are at risk of becoming severely food insecure and hunger due to on-going drought.
- **Poverty and Unemployment:** another reason behind internal displacement in Afghanistan is poverty and unemployment. People from different regions of Afghanistan move to cities of different provinces, especially the Capital Kabul, hoping that there are more employment opportunities in the urban areas; which, in return, cause the population to become increased in cities and, hence, to emerge new problems there.

Consequences of People Displacement

The displacement of Afghans from their home areas creates two kind of problems; one; that are related to the IDPs, itself, and, two; that are related to community and other people they are dealing with.

Moving from homes jettisons the agriculture and business of them from one hand; and from other hand, creates several mental and physical problems to their children. Because adopting with the circumstance of other areas takes time and, thus, they become deprived of education and other humanitarian needs. Meanwhile, unemployment and poverty of household leaders makes them to do hard labour and earn a living for their families in the cities. As for now, we see a lot of children in Kabul City that are busy with hard labour. They are mostly members of the families that have come to Kabul due to wars and other problems in their own provinces.

The increase in number of these migrants, however, emerges several problems in cities. The capacity of cities is low and the increase in population causes in deficiency of electricity and water as well as in intensification in healthiness problems.

What should be done regarding the Internal Migrants?

Several Afghans have lost access to basic living facilities due to ongoing wars and insurgency as well as drought, the access to humanitarian needs and services got limited, due to which they are faced numerous problems.

While the weather is getting colder day by day thanks to winter in Afghanistan, and if the needy people are not provided with assistance, perhaps, they will face a server situation and problems. Therefore, the Afghan government is needed to provide the livelihood facilities to the internally displaced persons (IDPs). Besides that, Afghan investors are needed to become encouraged to provide the IDPs with employment opportunities besides providing them with assistance.

Moreover, the Afghan government is supposed to make efforts to secure the home areas of the IDPs and provide them with facilities to return to their homes

and areas and live there peacefully. The intervention will not only solve the IDP problems, but it will also prevent quite a lot of problems in the cities.

Furthermore, the Afghan government is in possession of adequate budget as well as a handful of bodies to cooperate with and assist the IDPs in various fields; however, they are not clean of corruption as well as other governmental bodies which causes in the assistance to be not received by needy people.

End

Contact Us:

Email: info@csrskabul.com - csrskabul@gmail.com

Website: www.csrskabul.com - www.csrskabul.net

Office: **(+93) 202564049 - (+93) 784089590**



Researcher and Editor of Weekly Analysis: **Zia-ul-Islam Shirani**

Researcher and Distributor of Weekly Analysis: **Ahmad Shah Rashed**

Translated into English by **Abdullah Jawed**