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Preface

The Taliban-Iranian relations are occasionally discussed. However, Iranian government repeatedly refused to have any connection with the Taliban. Recently as the hopes for peace process in Afghanistan have risen, and the United States, with region countries are willing to end the Afghan war through negotiations, Iranian officials unveil their links with the Taliban.

The foreign minister of Iran has recently proclaimed to NDTV during an interview in Delhi that their government has secret relations with the Taliban, because they are compelled to secure their border under the Taliban's control.

The first part of CSRS weekly analysis explores Iran's objectives of their relationship with the Taliban.

The second part of CSRS weekly analysis covers a discussion on unprofessional, unauthorized mining and casualties caused to the workers. Afghanistan has plenty of mineral and natural resources and considered as one of the richest countries in the region. However, these resources have not utilized and remained unextracted, or extracted illegally and unprofessionally by warlords and Militants.

Iran-Taliban Relations: Iran's objectives



Afghanistan's Neighbor country; Iran is repeatedly reported by media to have relations with the Taliban. Although Iran in the past has always refused to have links with the Taliban. Recently Tehran has proclaimed that a delegation of Taliban has visited the country and had a discussion on how to end the current war in Afghanistan.

The representatives of Taliban visit the republic of Iran in a time when the negotiations of Peace Process between United States and Taliban have just ended, and Saudi Arabia was chosen as a next place for meeting. However, Taliban refused to meet in Saudi Arabia after their visit to Iran and the meeting place was chosen Qatar. The meeting is also postponed due to disagreement over the agenda.

The Taliban's political diplomacy appearance to regional and International level, the Iran-Taliban relation and Iran goals behind their links with Taliban are the issues that we will discuss here.

Taliban's Regional Relations

Building relations with countries in the region, especially with neighbor countries are immense and remarkable achievements of Taliban. These relations led them to meetings and conferences on regional and international levels, besides being an armed unit, they are also recognized as a strong political party in the region.

The political office of Taliban in Qatar which operates since 2010 and administered by political representatives of Taliban, has a main role in the expansion of their diplomatic relations. The Taliban developed their diplomacy and their relations with the world through this office. They exchanged one American soldier with five Guantanamo Bay prisoners, releasing soldiers of many countries such as, Tajikistan and Russia. Attending international conferences like Pugwash and recently in Moscow meeting made they have sent their message to the world. Through this office they have started connection with different countries like Russia, Iran, China, Uzbekistan and many others to reduce their concern regarding Taliban. The office attempted to meet with different Afghan officials, inviting to Qatar and to exchange ideas regarding Afghanistan and the region.

Beside all this it appears that Taliban have come out to be depended on a single country, their relationship has reach to the extend where they can fulfill their needs form various countries.

Tehran-Taliban Relations

At the beginning of the Taliban's emergence in Afghanistan, Iran did not have a specific view regarding Taliban. However, when Taliban captured Herat, Iran deemed Taliban's existence as a threat to their country and for the first time called them manufacture of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United States. In addition, the foreign minister of Iran called Taliban "Insurgents" when they entered Kabul and said, that "Taliban cannot create obstacle for the government of Burhanuddin Rabbani and the only legal regime in Afghanistan which Iran recognizes is the government of Burhanuddin Rabbani"

Later, Taliban closed Iranian embassy on 2nd January, 1997, and asked its employees to leave Afghanistan within 24 hours. After they Capture Mazar, on 8th August 1998. Taliban hanged ten Iranian diplomats and journalists on suspicion of spying.

Over all, Tehran- Taliban relations did not return to its normal condition during Taliban regime. During that time, Tehran continuously supported the oppositions of Taliban and did not officially recognize the Islamic emirates of Afghanistan until the end of the regime.

In 2001, Iran implicitly supported America's attack on Afghanistan. But after a few years when the contention of Iran increased against United States of America and considered them as a threat to their country, Iran has started building relation with the Taliban, with Russian coordination another rival county to the USA.

The discussions about Taliban-Iran relation heated up when Media reported Taib Agha led delegation of Taliban travel to Iran on 17th April, 2015. However, Iran's ministry of foreign affairs called the reports inaccurate. Moreover, the death of Mulla Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor in Pakistan near Iranian border and discovery of Iranian documents with him exposed Iran's relations with Taliban.

In addition, the Afghan government some officials mainly in the west reported Iran Military and financial assistance of Iran to Taliban, but the Iranian officials as always, refuses such claims. The Afghan government also did not seriously investigate the issue. Lately, the special representative of Unites states ministry of foreign affairs for Iran; Brayn Hook showed some light and heavy arms as claimed to be given by Iranian to Taliban. Mr. Hook said that Iran has been supporting Taliban since 2017.

Besides all this, Iran officially accepted that a delegation of Taliban has visited on 30th December 2018 and met with assistant of Iran's ministry of foreign affairs. However, Iran says that these relations are only for peace in Afghanistan.

Why Tehran Keeping Relations with the Taliban?

An opposing country of Taliban regime who had hostile view about Taliban has now ties with them, a few points should be considered.

Protecting Iran's National Security: The appearance and development of ISIS in Afghanistan has been concern of many countries including Iran. This group is suspected to be a project of Unites States and its allies to bring chaos and insecurity in the region. Looking at this, Iran is uncertain about Afghanistan attempt to prevent ISIS activity, therefore they contact Taliban to reduce the threat for their national security.

Pressure on United States and Afghan Government: United States is a strong opposition of the current regime in Iran and trying to pressurize Iran by applying different sanctions. Therefore, by supporting Taliban in Afghanistan and jeopardizing United States interests, they are trying to build counter coercion.

On the other hand, Iran strives to pressure Afghan government through this way. The Afghan- Iran water division is a critical issue and Afghan government is trying to control the water. However, Iran is concerned about its damages on their side.

Participating in Afghan Peace Process: Afghan peace talks has reached to sensitive situation and it is presumed that the United States wants to end the Afghan war through negotiations. As the neighboring countries have an important role in peace talks, Iran also, by uncovering their relations with Taliban, wants to participate in peace negotiations to ameliorate their future relation for their own interest. End

Arbitrary and Unprofessional Mining in Afghanistan



Last week, At least 30 workers were killed, and 15 others injured when a gold mine collapsed in the Shapu village in Badakhshan. According to local officials, the victims were illegally and in unprofessional manner searching for gold and had dug 20m deep in a riverbed in the Kohistan district of Badakhshan province when the walls caved in.

Insecurity and poor management of Afghan government has made the people, especially the strongmen and irresponsible armed men, exploiting the poverty and unemployment, to explore and extract mines arbitrarily and unprofessionally in different parts of the country. These extractions happen arbitrarily without considering any safety measures and security of the workers, which have always resulted in such deadly incidents.

After the formation of new government in 2001, people expected the government to focus more on this sector but after 18 years and spending hundreds of millions of dollars, still, there are reports that the Afghan mines are extracted illegally and unprofessionally.

Afghan mines, the means of extraction, lack of safety measures during extraction of mines and what interventions should the government have in this regard are discussed here.

Mines in Afghanistan

Despite Afghanistan is one of the region's wealthiest lands that is full of natural resources and fortunes, its people are among the world's poorest nations where tens of the citizens are the victims of poverty and unemployment, in search of a piece of bread inside and outside the country.

Based on the studies conducted by British geologists in 1890 and thereafter by Russians, Americans, Germans, and French regarding the Afghan mines, they revealed significant reserves of oil, gas, coal, silver, copper, lapis lazuli gemstones, and other valuable materials, most of which are untouched yet.

The 5-year survey (2006-2010) conducted by America's Bureau of geology showed that the total value of the mineral resources in Afghanistan is one trillion dollars, while the Afghan government has estimated its value to be three trillion dollars. Overall, 1400 mineral fields have been detected so far in the country.

Mining in Afghanistan

While in other countries, the mines and subterranean and untapped mineral resources are considered to eliminate poverty and brings comfort and national welfare as well as regional stability of the nation. Despite Afghanistan has got several untapped mines and natural resources; due prolonged insecurity and inclusive political instability has resulted the improper usage of the resources and mines. Vice versa the process of illegal and unprofessional mining is continually running for decades. Most of the time these illegal activities turned into cluster graves of mine workers

According to the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, "the mining sector has become a challenge rather than an opportunity in Afghanistan, because it has direct relation to narcotics and

insurgency.” The Committee has classified the illegal mining in Afghanistan into [eight](#) categories:

1. The Mines extraction in areas that are outside the Government’s control. Despite proper contract been issued by the MOMP but still requires payments to illegal armed groups in control of the area or routes which their workers or their products transported.
2. Mines in areas that are outside the Government’s control. Mines that are under the control of illegal armed groups and do not have a contract with MOMP.
3. Mining where high profiles personal like Politicians including parliament’s members are involved. Who is either the owner or the controller?
4. Mining extraction not taken in mind the conditions of contracts or legal requirements. Including extraction under an exploration contract or not following Occupational Health and Safety, environmental or community development requirements.
5. Contractors continuing to work deposits their contracts have expired.
6. Companies involved in an infrastructure projects of mining, extracting minerals and other construction materials for their own projects without contracts.
7. Mining activities that began without approval after the contract moratorium was imposed.
8. Unprofessional and small-scale mining without license or a contract.

Mining without Safety Measures

Lack of safety measures are one of the controversial issues in extraction of mines in Afghanistan. Most of Afghan mines are extracted arbitrary and through very basic and substandard methods that have taken lives of workers in these mines.

The recent incident happened in Badakhshan province due to arbitrary and unprofessional extraction which took the lives of 30 mine workers is not the first one. Prior to this, there have been incidences where tens of mine workers have lost their lives.

For example:

- September 2013, at least 27 miners died at Abkhorak area in Roy Wa Du Ab district of Samangan province, some 30 others became wounded in a [collapse](#) in a coal mine.
- April 30, 2018, at least 16 people were killed following a blast in a [coal mine](#) in in Dahan-e-Tor area of Dara-e Souf district of the northern Afghan province of Samangan.

Lack of practical plan for professional mining as well as lack of mining-related safety measures have annually lead to the death and injury of tens of mine workers. In 2015, a civil society group called the Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium (HRRAC) had a survey on almost 60 mines in different provinces has released a [report](#) exposing details which are as follows:

Harsh working conditions, Illegal labor practices, Low payments to labors, Lack of warring alarms, Improper safety clothes, Absence of rescue groups, Lack of healthy food, Lack of adequate transportation, Air pollution, Existence of toxic gases, Lack of oxygen, Cruelty by the owners. These are the points which made the condition of workers in Afghanistan catastrophic.

The Obligations of Government on Mining

The Afghan government is needed to consider the following points on mining sector and extraction in Afghanistan:

Prevention of Illegal Extraction of Mines: Illegal extraction of mines by strongmen and illegal armed groups are among the reasons behind negligence towards occupational health and security of mines workers. Perhaps one of the main reasons behind illegal extraction of mines is lack of security. however, Afghan government is required to prevent or at least seriously monitor the illegal and unprofessional extraction of mines, by local strongmen, political figures and other governmental officials.

Corruption: Corruption and lack of monitoring on mining work in Afghanistan has resulted in abuse of workers by their employers. Workers also deprived from their given rights one can have. Lack of transparency in concluding contracts and lack of proper mentoring on practical works of extraction has always been an issue of concern. Nevertheless, in order to eliminate the phenomenon of corruption in the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MOMP), the government should work on an effective and practical strategy to be able to prevent corruption in this sector.

Lack of Capacity: Although 18 years have been passed from the establishment of Afghan government; but there are still many problems on how to manage the natural resources and how to make contracts on extraction from the country's mines. Meaning that lack of capacity in management and extract mines professionally in MOMP is one of the main reasons behind deprivation of the people from economic welfare and development through usage of its untapped subterranean resources. Meanwhile, it has paved the road for arbitrary and unprofessional mining. Thus, the MOMP needs to work on capacity-building in the sector in accordance with international standards.

End

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