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Preface

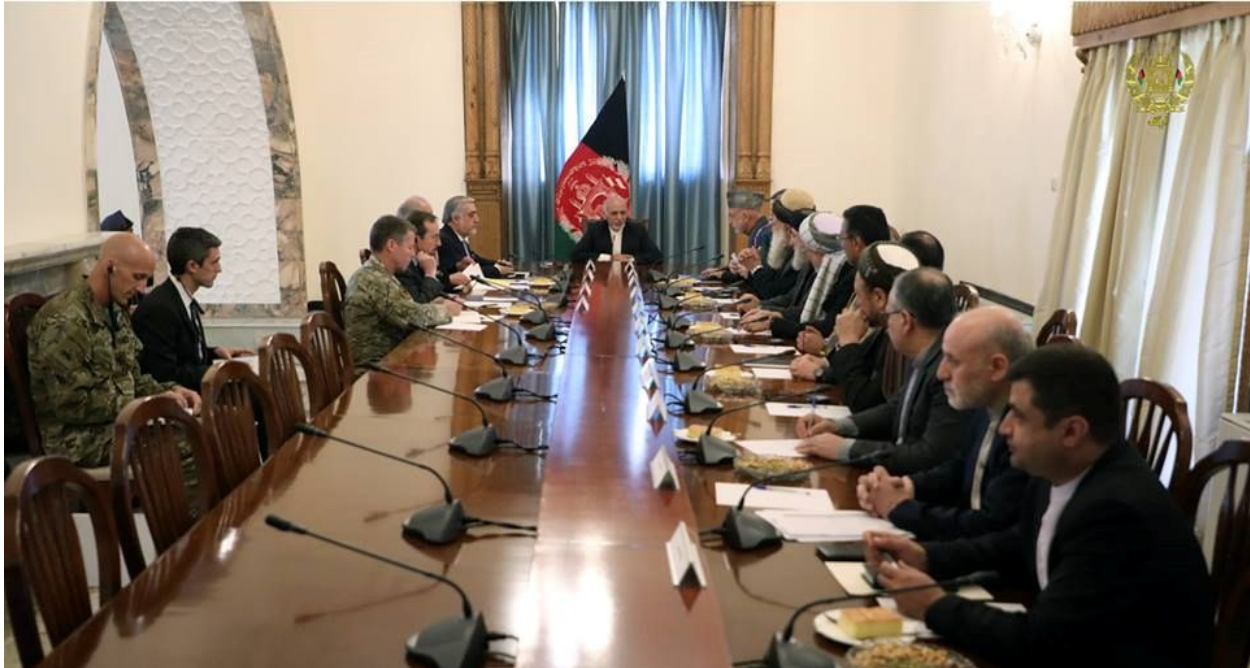
Face-to-face negotiation between the Taliban and the Afghan government is a vital and required aspect in the peace process. However, the standpoints of both sides are currently contradictory regarding one another. In order to eliminate these contradictions, Zalmay Khalilzad, special representative of the U.S. for Afghan peace travelled to Kabul in his 5th regional travels and has met with the Afghan president and some other Afghan politicians.

On the other hand, the next meeting between Afghan politicians and the Taliban will be conducted in Qatar, subsequent to Moscow meeting. Moreover, Khalilzad has met and discussed peace with some Afghan political figures along with government officials. Meanwhile, President Ghani has also started consultations with Afghan politicians and Jihadi leaders. These happenings have increased hopes for the initiation of intra-Afghan talks.

The first part of CSRS Weekly analysis discusses the standpoints of the United States, the Taliban and Afghan government and ways which will lead to the commencement of intra-Afghan talks.

The second part of the analysis has a discussion on the economic condition people and the poverty rate in Afghanistan. Central statistics department of Afghanistan has published a report which states that more than 50% of people in Afghanistan lives below the poverty line and this situation has created numerous difficulties for Afghans.

Need for Intra-Afghan Negotiations vis-à-vis the Afghan Peace



After the fifth meeting between the U.S. and the Taliban, Zalmay Khalilzad traveled to Kabul a few days ago in order to discuss peace with the government officials and Afghan politicians. He had meetings with a number of government officials, politicians, Jihadi leaders, Afghan women, youths and civil activists.

During his travel to Afghanistan, Khalilzad in his discussion with BBC said “The first five stages of ongoing peace negotiations for Afghan peace were related solely to the Taliban and the United States. However, any other issues will be discuss in presence of the Afghan government. A plan should be made, the involved sides should reach an agreement according that plan and announce ceasefire”

Zalmay Khalilzad emphasizes on intra-Afghan peace talks in a time when the second meeting between the Taliban and Afghan politicians will be held on 14th and 15th of April, 2019, subsequent to the Moscow meeting. On the other hand, President Ghani has also started discussions with some famous Afghan politicians and Jihadi leaders including the ex-Afghan president.

What are the standpoints of the United States, Afghan government and the Taliban about peace? How can the Afghans start to have a unified stand in order for intra-Afghan to begin? These issues are discussed here.

What Type of Peace Does Ghani Want?

Peace and the end for ongoing war were one of Ghani's key election slogans. The rumors were that Ghani has ensured the Taliban and people linked to them that he will even postpone the security agreement with the U.S. if possible. However, he signed the security agreement within the first 24 hours of his work at the presidential palace.

Although Ghani after signing the security agreement strived to encourage the Taliban to negotiate with the government, but all of his struggles were for a government-centered peace. Which means that the government wanted the Taliban to join the government just like Hizb-e-Islami did. However, the Taliban has always declined and called Ghani's government "illegitimate".

Meanwhile, the Afghan government's displeasure concerning the US-Taliban talks and Taliban's meeting with Afghan politicians, Jihadi leaders and civil activists indicates that Ghani's peace struggles are not for a true and sustainable peace, but an insight to his electoral politics will show that staying in power is first priority for Ghani, not peace.

Taliban's Standpoint about Peace

The Taliban has always refused to negotiate with Afghan government and has only stressed to negotiate with the United States. Although the U.S. did not show any curiosity to negotiate with the Taliban, but with extension of war, decided to negotiate with the group.

In the ongoing Afghan peace negotiations between the Taliban and the United States, the Taliban emphasize on agreement over the U.S. pullout first of all. Although both sides met five times yet, but media has published reports which stated that the Taliban and the U.S. along with pullout, has discussed intra-Afghan talks, ceasefire and interim government. However, the Taliban have always refused such reports.

The Taliban's stand regarding peace is that first they need to reach an agreement with the U.S. regarding pullout. Later, intra-Afghan government (negotiation with all political parties, not only with the Afghan government) will be discussed.

The Moscow meeting between the Taliban and Afghan politicians and Jihadi leaders was the first step toward intra-Afghan talks.

Washington and the Afghan Peace

The U.S. is a main and key side of the current war who decided to step out of the war after 18 years. Thus, started negotiations with the Taliban six months ago.

The first stage of face-to-face negotiations were to end the current war in Afghanistan. After the fifth meeting, it is being said that they both have generally agreed on and will sign the agreement during next meeting about two issues; the U.S. pullout and not using Afghan land against other.

During his recent travel to Afghanistan, Zalmi Khalilzad regarding the Afghan peace said that the issues discussed in previous US-Taliban meetings were only related to the Taliban and the United States. From now on however, the presence of Afghan government in the remaining discussions is vital. In addition, he said that the role of United States will reduce in the future and Afghan have to take more responsibilities.

Khalilzad's statements apparently indicates that the U.S. and the Taliban have reached a general agreement and the U.S. currently strive to pressure the Taliban to negotiate with the Afghan government.

Conclusion

Although standpoints of the Taliban and Afghan government regarding intra-Afghan talks are sufficiently divergent, but both sides need to consider the current negotiation process as a historic opportunity and take advantage of the opportunity to end the 40-year war and bring peace and better future for the country.

The Taliban and the Afghan government has enough experience of conditions after the USSR pullout. Based on the experience, it is inappropriate to lose the opportunity for the attainment of power and fulfilling their desires.

The question however is, what is the solution for this issue? Firstly, alike struggles of the U.S. and regional countries for the commencement and success of US-Taliban talks, struggles should be made for the success of intra-Afghan negotiations.

Additionally, it is necessary for the Taliban and Afghan government to incline regarding the intra-Afghan talks. They have to struggle for an honest nation-centered peace.

Overall, after the US-Taliban talks, it is would be upright to commence three-sided talks between Afghan government, Afghan politicians and Jihadi leaders, and the Taliban under the supervision of internationals. The international community honestly needs to strive for the success of the negotiations in order for the future regime to be a comprehensive and a joint government. The end

An Insight into Living Conditions in Afghanistan



Afghanistan is country where intense security condition, war and natural disasters have made people's lives difficult in different ways. Poverty and unemployment are among the causes of unstable political condition and insecurity in last four decades and its rate is currently higher compared to any other time.

According to the recent report of central statistics organization of Afghanistan, 51.7 percent of People in Afghanistan comprehensively lives in poverty. The organization published their findings in a report with the support of World Bank, Oxford University and United Nations children's funds box on 11th of Hamal, 1398[Solar].

Based on the report, poverty rate is 18% in cities and 61% in rural areas of Afghanistan. In addition, poverty among Kochi people is reported 89%. Overall, lowest multidimensional poverty rate belongs to Kabul which is 15% and the highest rate is 85% of Badghis province.

Living condition, poverty and unemployment rates and causes of growth in these rates during last few years are issues that are going to discuss here.

Life in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a landlocked country with poor economy where most of its people are busy in agricultural activities and obtain income from their agricultural products. However, war, insecurity and natural disasters have shaded the agricultural sector.

After the USSR transgression and continuity of war for four decades, besides deaths and injuries of millions of Afghans, millions were forced to abandon their country. They lost their wealth and their agricultural lands turned into deserts. Overall, these conditions quickly increased the unemployment and poverty rates in Afghanistan.

A new government was established with the attack of the U.S. and the fall of the Taliban's regime. Although millions of dollars were spent after the establishment of new government and development was witnessed in some sectors, but during the last 18 years overall, steps weren't taken to improve the condition of Afghanistan by permanently enhancing economy and employment level for the people of Afghanistan.

As the World Bank has reported, the poverty and unemployment rates during last 18 years in Afghanistan have not only reduced compared to the world, but has increased, considering the living conditions of the people.

Multidimensional Poverty

The recent report regarding multidimensional poverty of Afghanistan published by the central statistics organization is the first report ever published since 18 years. Report which were previously published regarding poverty were reported by considering only the income rate of individuals in the community. However, the latest report has considered various dimensions and has discovered many causes of poverty in Afghanistan.

The report by the central Statistics organization has evaluated the living condition of Afghans considering five dimensions (Health, education, living standards, occupation and effect of security on life) and 18 indicators (food safety, birth

with the help of skilled medical professionals, existence of school, education for girls, education for boys, access to water, access to sewage system, access to electricity, access to burnable materials for cooking, residence, ownership of wealth and agriculture, relationship, unemployment, lack of employment, inability of inclusion in workforce, higher education and training, production, income and security).

Based on the recent findings of Central statistics organization, more than half of Afghanistan's population is facing multidimensional poverty, considering the mentioned indicators. In addition, the report states that 24% of workforce in Afghanistan is unemployed. 41.3% of the people consumes solid inflammable resources which carries risks of respiratory diseases. Moreover, among 32.2% of families, only one person works who is responsible for 6 family members.

Additionally, the report states that among 39.1% families, children do not go to school when they have age of school. 47.9 of families does not have educated women above 10 year. Moreover, the report says that 24.8% of people have experience security shocks and have not yet ameliorated.

Causes of the Grievous Condition of Afghans

War: insecurity and ongoing war are among the main causes which has affected the lives of people and has triggered poverty and unemployment crisis. Currently, around half of Afghanistan's land is under militants' controls. The geography of war has expanded. Civilian casualties in airstrikes have increased as the Afghan war had 10993 civilian casualty solely 2018. In addition, thousands of families abandoned their hometowns due to war and insecurity, lost their wealth and occupations and currently lives in bitter conditions.

Besides escape of investors from Afghanistan due to war and intense insecurity, ways to spend ministries budgets have also been restricted. Therefore, absence of investment on infrastructure has led incapability to absorb workforce and has caused unemployment and poverty crisis.

Natural disasters: Besides war, natural disasters such as aridity, floods and avalanches are among the factors of unemployment and poverty rates and have caused plenty of financial and thousands of human losses for the people of Afghanistan.

In 2018, around 2 million of people lacked food and 250 thousand people abandoned their hometowns due to aridity. Although this year's winter had plenty of rainfalls and snowfalls and had a good news as aridity will be eliminated, but heavy rainfalls and snowfalls severely harmed people's lives in property

According the statistics published in April, 2019 by UN's office of coordination of humanitarian affairs (OCHA), around 80 people were killed and 42 thousands became homeless due to recent floods in Afghanistan. In addition, people of southern areas of the country bore financial and human losses because of floods in March of the current year and based on reports of state minister for disaster management, around 50 were killed and 140 were injured due to floods. In addition, 926 houses were demolished completely and two thousand were devastated partially by the floods.

Political instability: Political instability and conflicts between politicians and people have caused inability to reach out to people's problems and plans to combat poverty and unemployment were thus not implemented. Such conditions have opened to doors to corruption and weak management in governmental offices. Additionally, political instability made the government incompetent to efficiently consume its resources

Conclusion

Considering the geographical position of Afghanistan and its mineral resources and capacity, plans and policies can be made for creating job opportunities and reduction of poverty and unemployment.

In addition, improvement and living condition and rise of employment opportunities have direct relationship with the development of manufacturing sector. Manufacturing sector is considered to be the main factor of the economies of countries and has a key role in economic development and reduction of unemployment and poverty. However, the government does not have any remarkable achievements in this sector and continuity of war is considered be its cause.

The war has been preventing economic development of Afghan since 18 years and has attracted government's attention. Considering the condition, it can be said that combat with poverty and unemployment alike other issues is related to peace and security of the country. This means that, until true peace happens and an authoritative regime establishes, the economic problems will keep growing.

The end.

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