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[Analysis no.1](#)

[Analysis no.2](#)

The Latest Political Agreement And Its Effect Of The Peace Process



On 17th May, 2020, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and former CEO Abdullah Abdullah signed a political agreement to end a months-long political crisis in the country. According to the agreement, Abdullah Abdullah will lead the High Council of National Reconciliation and members of his team will be a part of the cabinet, through which, he will have authority over 50% of the cabinet. The deal is signed while the country is suffering from instability, increase in violence, economic and health crisis caused by the Coronavirus. Both leaders have agreed to sign the agreement in order to make efforts to overcome the current challenges of the country.

Here, we discuss the details of the agreement, its difference with the unity government agreement, and its effects on the peace process.

A Quick Rundown of the 2014's and 2020's Peace Agreements

In 2014, a similar controversy over the results of presidential elections arose between Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah, which persisted for months. The

disagreement back then ended with the arbitration of John Kerry, former US Secretary of State, due to which both leaders agreed to share power and establish a Unity Government.

The Unity government established Abdullah-Abdullah-led chief executive office, which apparently contradicted the constitution. In addition, both leaders had an agreement to appoint officials of various administrations. These agreements were among the causes which triggered many problems and challenges within the five years of political power.

On the other hand, 2020's agreement happened as result of arbitration by Afghan leaders. Instead of being Chief executive's officer, Abdullah Abdullah is now titled as the chairman of the High council of National Reconciliation. The chief executive office was abrogated earlier based on a decree of President Ashraf Ghani. Also, High Council of Government will be established which will be comprised of political figures and will carry out advisory works for the president.

Based on the new agreement, General Abdul Rasheed Dostum, a member of "Stability and Convergence" team will be made a marshal of the armed forces. A five-membered arbitral delegation, comprised of national and political figures, will be appointed to oversee the implementation of the agreement and eradicate any possible challenges.

Latest Political Agreement and its Effect on the Peace Process

The Power-sharing deal between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah was signed after numerous efforts of national and foreign political figures to end the controversy. Three months earlier, both leaders were unable to establish an all-inclusive government. Later, serious efforts were made by Former President Hamid Karzai, Jihadi leader Abdul Rab Rasool Sayyaf and other influential figures to end the disagreements. As the new agreement happened due to the efforts of national

political figures, the agreement should therefore be appreciated and respected. President Ghani also expressed his special gratitude for the efforts of political leaders.

According to the agreement, the chairman of High Council of National Reconciliation will have absolute authority in peace related affairs. Along with chairing of the reconciliation meetings, the chairman will also have the authority to appoint the members of the council and appoint staff of the government's ministry in peace affairs.

The Council, which will have an independent Budgetary Unit, will be responsible to establish a national, regional and international consensus regarding peace. Also, the council has the duty to attract foreign aids and funds for the progress of peace process.

Although after the attacks in Kabul, Nangarhar and some other provinces the president ordered the Special Forces to take aggressive stance, but his behavior was soft and peaceful after the deal. He called peace a priority and said the country needs consensus regarding peace. He expressed positivity for ceasefire and peace. The president also titled Abdullah Abdullah as a suitable and competent person for the peace process.

Such statements from the president shows that there is still hope for peace and both leaders are ready to bring peace. Similar positive statements can also encourage the opposition (The Taliban) to soften their stance regarding peace and ceasefire. Although Suhail Shaheen, spokesman of Qatar Office of the Taliban said that Afghanistan requires a lasting peace and the recent political deal cannot resolve problems, but as Abdullah Abdullah's slogan in the previous presidential elections was about bringing peace, therefore it can be hoped that peace process will hasten with the deal.

Since the last presidential elections, the country is facing political instability, massive economic challenges, and unemployment due to the lockdown of Covid-19. If both leaders honestly intend to, their agreement can be effective in overcoming the challenges. While the deal is signed, Amrullah Saleh, Vice President of Afghanistan denounces the Taliban in Nangarhar and marked the latest attacks as their doings. If the intention is to bring peace, any declarations harmful for peace should be prohibited by the government. And to begin intra-Afghan dialogue, an environment of trust should be established, propagandas and negative publicity should be avoided and warlike literature in media should be replaced with advertisements of peace. Moreover, any attacks of vengeance should be stopped in order to bring peace.

With the deal, Afghans hope for reduction in violence which will consequently unlock doors for a lasting ceasefire. It is also expected that the current obstacles for peace talks such as, prisoners release issue will be resolved and an environment of trust will be established on the road for a lasting peace.

Conclusion

The latest power-sharing deal between Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah was welcomed on national and international level. Now, both leaders should prioritize peace and unlock doors for the reconciliation council, which is expected to bring consensus for peace. The leaders should not repeat the failed experience of a unity government. They should respect the sacrifices of the Afghan nation and spend all of their energy to bring peace and stability to the country.

If the agreement is aimed to stay in power, the result will be disappointment and failure will show its face as it did in the last five years. However, if intention of the deal is to bring a lasting peace, then they have got a historic opportunity.

Hence, both leaders should to let go of their disagreements, work as a team and effectively take advantage of the opportunity created for peace.

With the agreement, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah has been put under difficult test because his slogan during the previous presidential elections was struggle for a lasting peace. Now, he will be tested whether he chooses the road for peace in his test and bring glory to his land, or chooses to remain on power under the name of peace, become a person who destroyed nation's hopes for peace and disgraced his position.

Hoping for a lasting and just peace in Afghanistan.

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MURDER OF AFGHANS IN BORDER AND ITS EFFECT ON IRAN-AFGHAN RELATIONS



According to reports, a number of Afghan migrants were arrested by Iranian guards after they crossed the Iranian border on 12th May, 2020. The migrants were tortured and drowned in Harirod River. The alleged inhumane act arose serious reactions on regional and international level. The Afghan government termed it as an unforgivable act and has appointed a delegation to investigate the case.

Afghan immigrations to Iran started with the invasion of Russian forces. Currently, around 1 million registered and nearly 2 million undocumented refugees are living in Iran. Afghan migrants have faced countless abuses, violence and harassment. Although hatred and animosity of Iranian towards Afghan has been condemned by local and internationals previously, but the Afghan government, Iran and international community were unable appropriately defend the Afghan refugees and attain their basic human rights. The Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) analyzes the drowning incident and its effect on the relations of Afghanistan and Iran.

Iran and Afghan Refugees

Throughout decades of emigration, Afghan refugees have been harassed and discriminated by Iranian officials. According to the Human Rights Watch, Afghan refugees are only allowed to earn from extremely difficult and poorly paid jobs. The Iranian government has restricted refugees' access to education, marriage rights and the right to defend their human rights. Thousands of Afghans who are in Iranian prisons for crimes like theft, trafficking, and murder are regularly denied the right to access lawyers.

According to The Guardian, in order to reduce the number of illegal emigrations to the country, Iranian government abuses children, splits families and forces adults to work without pay. In process of being deported, refugees are charged unreasonable fees, forced to work without pay and deported without adequate amount of food.

According to some Afghans who have been deported from Iran, living in Iran as an Afghan is like living as a criminal. Danish Institute of International Studies have interviewed some Afghans who have said "Iranians used to call us (dirty Afghan) and (Afghan trash). Humiliation of Afghans was something really normal. According to them, Afghans are bad and dirty people. They were thinking that we are not even humans at all. Animals were treated better than Afghans in Iran. Any Iranian is allowed to do anything to Afghans. There are many violence cases that are not being registered and Iranian officials keep silent about it". Additionally, many other statements and interviews of violence towards Afghan refugees have been reported.

Based on the report of Khaama press, Iranian hospitals started refusing Afghan infected patients after the Coronavirus outbreak. Consequently, Afghan refugees, along with infected ones, started to return to Afghanistan.

The Drowning Incident

On 9th May, 2020, around 50 Afghans who tried to cross the Iranian border with intention to work were caught by the Iranian guards. They were tortured and then drowned in Harirod River. A survivor of the incident told the France24 Observer: “We were around 50. We crossed the river while being tied together with ropes. There were old men and children among us. After we crossed the river and entered Iran, an Iranian patrol arrested us. They kept us overnight at the post. The next day they started insulting us. They made us strip naked. They kicked us and beat us with their rifle butts and a whip. Then they loaded us onto a minibuses and drove us a few minutes from the post. They told us to cross the river or they will shoot us. They fired some warning shots to frighten us. We decided to cross the river because we thought they would kill us. The border guards were laughing as we drowned”.

The world backlashed about the horrifying act of the Iranian border guards. Mohammad Hanif Atmar, acting foreign minister of Afghan expressed his condolences and promised to pursue the issue using all diplomatic means. Mike Pompeo, US Secretary of State has also reacted to the incident and said “I will encourage Afghan officials to conduct full investigation and hold the perpetrators accountable”.

The US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Alice Wells has also reacted to the incident on twitter and Said “Iran's cruel treatment and abuse of Afghan migrants alleged in these reports is horrifying, we support calls for a thorough investigation.”

Via proclamation, the Taliban have also condemned the latest act of cruelty by the Iran and has requested the Iranian government to deal with refugees through patience, Islamic brotherhood, and rules neighborhood. In addition, many

nationwide political and social parties, national and political figures and the Iranian official condemned the act and termed it unbelievable.

The Afghan government has appointed a delegation to probe the incident, which has begun its investigation in the area on 13th May, 2020. The government has said that the issue will be pursued until justice is brought to the families of victims.

Causes and Consequences

There are two sides involved in discrimination towards Afghans in Iran. First, The Iranian government who forces the refugees to leave the country by creating restrictions in access to parks, education and by insulting and harassing them. Second, the people who trouble the Afghans on streets and roads, refuse to pay their wages and insult their race and nationality.

According to some analysts, Rivalry, racism and nationalism are among causes due to which the Iranians express hatred towards Afghans and which have affected the social relations between both countries. Considering the deteriorating condition of Afghanistan, Iranian are trying show their greatness and make the Afghans feel Inferior by harassment, abuse and violence.

The plummeting economy of Iran can be considered as another reason for their intensity in discriminative behavior. As result of various economic sanctions by the US during the last few decades, Iran's economy has been collapsing. The Iranian government has said that they are incapable to accept and manage refugees while being sanctioned. In addition, Iranian researchers have found that presence of Afghans in Iran negatively affect the labor markets and all sectors of the country are lacking working opportunities.

Result

The latest and any other acts of violence and discriminations can distress political and economic policies. Alike increase in hatred and animosity among the people due to such incidents, political and economic policies also changes their directions and goals.

Although the poor and unsuccessful diplomacy of the Afghan government may not bring perpetrators into justice, but the incident will definitely impact political ties between the two countries. Despite many problems and restraints, the Afghan government has been impartial in US-Iran tensions. If Iran does not transparently investigate the incident, and does not apologize for the act, the impartiality of the Afghan government may fade and the US may find a reason to provoke Afghanistan against Iran. In addition, the Harirod river execution is a legal and criminal incident. Nobody has the right to forgive the perpetrators except the families of the victims. If they cannot bring them justice, Iranian officials can at least pay the victims the blood money.

As the region is already in turmoil due to US-Iran tensions and the Afghan war, the recent act of violence and any other similar doings are beneficial for none of the countries. Such acts are not only inhumane, but can cause political and economic hostility. Therefore, leaders of both countries should not only strive to seek justice for the families of victims but make efforts for human compassion, better neighborhood and constructive political and economic relations between both countries.

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