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Preface

In recent months, exchange of visits of senior officials between Kabul and Islamabad has been increased whose main reason is to eliminate the existed mistrusts between both countries. In this series, the Pakistani premier also visited Kabul some days ago and had talks on peace process besides other issues with Afghan authorities. After the visit of Pakistan's ex-premier, Nawaz Sharif to Kabul in May, 2015, it is, then, another visit of higher Pakistani authority to Kabul for the purpose of rebuilding ties and eliminating the present discords between two countries.

In past years, however, similar visits and efforts aiming to rebuild the ties between two countries have taken place; yet the relations between both countries are on the most tangled situation. In the first part of the Weekly Analysis of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS), you will read the analysis on the question that what is the fundamental problem in relations of both countries and whether these relations will go toward amelioration or not?

You will read about the recent efforts under the banner of People's Peace Movement for ending the war in different provinces of the country. The civil casualties are in rise in recent year and the on-going war takes victims from Afghanistan in different parts of the country every day. Hence, the bloody situation has made the people to raise their voice for peace in order to have pressure put on the parties involved in the war. The question on need and impact of these civilian movements is tried to be answered here.

Will Kabul-Islamabad Ties Ameliorate?



By **Hekmatullah Zaland** / CSRS

In recent years and after the formation of National Unity Government (NUG), tensions between Kabul and Islamabad raised after the Afghan side urged Pakistan to take practical steps towards its commitments to this country. Relations between the two countries have become tensed in this period, which has even led to conflicts between the soldiers of two countries. Recently, a few days after the visit of Pakistani premier to Kabul, border troops of both countries became engaged in a firefight in Khost province which had casualties as well.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi visited Kabul a few days ago while the Pakistani side was under the pressure of international community due to lack of cooperation in the Afghan peace process, and on the other hand, bilateral talks are ongoing in order to resolve the existing problems between Kabul and Islamabad, but there is no progress seen yet. The finalization of Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan had been agreed upon during the visit of Pakistani premier to Kabul.

Pakistan has repeatedly pledged its promise of cooperation in the Afghan peace process, but these promises have never been fulfilled. The question here is what is the basic problem of in relations of two countries? Does not Pakistan want to change its policy towards Afghanistan or cannot it do it?

The Bilateral Ties at a Glance

From the very beginning, the history of relations between the two countries has been accompanied by ups and downs, and there have always been various distrusts between Afghanistan and Pakistan. After 2001, these relations had been accompanied by tensions and distrusts in both terms of Hamid Karzai. During his presidency, Hamid Karzai traveled to Pakistan 21 times, but even complained about the lack of cooperation of Islamabad on the last day of his presidency and when he was transferring power to his successor, and said: "Afghanistan's key to peace is with Pakistan and America."

With the advent of the National Unity Government (NUG), President Ghani has sought to improve the Kabul-Islamabad ties and gave privileges to Pakistan. The National Unity Government, at the beginning, even made Kabul-Delhi relations colder in order to reduce Islamabad's concerns.

NUG tried to make Pakistan for truly cooperation in the peace process especially with regards to bringing the Taliban into the negotiation table through using closeness of ties with Pakistan and simultaneously getting use of its foreign policy tools. But after passing several months, the increase in insecurity and deadly attacks in the country and the failure of direct talk process with the Taliban following the announcement of the death of former Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, triggered a turning-point in the policy and relationship of the Afghan government with Islamabad.

Tension between two countries eventually led to conflicts between the troops of two countries in the ports of Torkham and Chaman, which caused the both sides to suffer casualties. Not only did this situation bring the two countries closer to the most intense stage, but also caused antipathy among the people of both sides. Hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees returned to their country

because of the harassment of the Pakistani police, and trade between the two countries dropped by more than USD 1 Billion.

Main Problem in Kabul-Islamabad Ties

Considering the history of Kabul-Islamabad relations, we also occasionally witnessed improvements in these relations, but in general, distrusts and tensions have always existed between the two countries. The root of these distrusts can be summarized in a few points as below.

The issue of Durand is one of the factors affecting the relations between the two countries over the past seven decades. After the formation of Pakistan, this issue has remained as a permanent problem between the two countries and has put shadow on Pakistan's foreign policy toward Afghanistan, as this is one of the factors for which Pakistan seeks to achieve "strategic depth" in Afghanistan.

Mohammad Daoud Khan was the first Afghan president to oppose the Durand line as the official border between the two countries. During the civil wars and the Taliban regime, despite the repeated demands of Pakistan, all of the governments of Afghanistan had not recognized the Durand line as an official border between the two countries. After 2001, and in both terms of President Hamid Karzai, Durand's case has shone on the ties between the two countries, and Karzai has repeatedly declared that Durand will not be recognized.

Influence and "soft power" of India in Afghanistan are also among the most important factors that Pakistan sees them as threats to itself. Therefore, Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan is more about reaching a strategic depth in Afghanistan, which, on the one hand, recognizes the Durand Line and, on the other hand, controls India's influence in Afghanistan. As Hamid Karzai summed up his 13-year-old experience with Pakistan in two points that were the Durand issue and control on Afghanistan's foreign policy.

In addition to historical distrusts, Pakistan's inability to fulfill its commitments in recent years has been one of the problems that have affected the relations between the two countries. Pakistan has always given commitments to Afghanistan that it has not been able to carry out. Although Pakistan can play a positive role in the Afghan peace process, Pakistan cannot bring the Taliban to the negotiation table, as many factors have made it clear that the country has no control over that group as it is said.

The future of Kabul-Islamabad Ties

Pakistan's efforts to improve relations with Afghanistan are more likely to be due to pressures Pakistan encounters. In recent months and after the announcement of Trump's strategy towards Afghanistan, we have seen a series of pressures from the United States on that country. Even China, as Pakistan's strategic economic and political ally in the region, has put pressure on the country because of the activities of radical armed groups inside Pakistani territory. In the recent declaration of BRICS, dated September 2017, where China is considered as one of its most important members, the activities of armed groups in the region were denounced, and more importantly, the word "inside Pakistan" was used.

Thus, the visit of the Pakistani PM and other Pakistani civilian and military officials in the past few months has shown Pakistan's concern over the tensions with Afghanistan, as the country is isolated because of the pressure and steady position of the Afghan government and the international community on the lack of cooperation of Pakistan with the peace process in Afghanistan.

As the main factor behind tenuous relations in recent years has been the lack of fulfillment of commitments by Pakistan, now, it also seems that the Afghan government will not rid of its prerequisites in improving relations with Pakistan easily, and considering the recent position of the Afghan government, improvement of relations between two country will be related to the honest cooperation of Pakistan in the Afghan peace process.

However, in the past few months, despite the isolation of Pakistan, there has been no tangible progress witnessed in resolving the problems between the two countries and changing Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan. In addition, the atmosphere of distrust in the relations between Kabul and Islamabad has spread so much over the past two years that these tense relationships will not improve soon and without taking of serious and practical measures.

People Peace Demands and Hopes for Security Maintenance



By **Zia-ul-Islam Shirani** / CSRS

The decades-long on-going war in Afghanistan, in different phases and through different parties, has taken hundred thousands of victims as well as made millions to leave their country.

After the collapse of Taliban regime by America in 2001, the Afghan war became handed to America and NATO-member countries. There was, however, relative security in Afghanistan for a few years after the collapse of the Taliban regime; but slowly, the war revived and became severed day by day.

Civilians are widely killed due to war policy of parties involved in the on-going war and the assaults are even carried out on public places like crowded areas, hospitals, mosques and madrasas. This situation and tremendous civilian casualties have caused the people to raise their voice against war; thus, women and men, youth and elders demand peace for the parties involved in the war.

The questions on the need of people's movement for the purpose of ending the on-going war in Afghanistan, the rise of peace-demanding voice from Helmand, the assessment of demands of the people's movements and their impacts on peace and war are tried to be answered here.

Peace and People Movement Need

The war that has begun after 2001 in Afghanistan has caused heavy casualties to Afghans that reach up to hundreds of thousands.

Bases on the report of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), only in 2017, more than 10,000 civilians became killed or injured due to the on-going war and even celebration parties and religious ceremonies had been targeted by parties involved in war.

Apart from casualties, approximately 3.5 million Afghans whose most of them are youth have been addicted with drugs due to martial and bad situation in the country. The same numbers of Afghan children are deprived from school. Almost 40 percent of Afghans live under the poverty line and according the statistics of the World Bank, 1.9 million qualified Afghans are unemployed. The most important thing is that most Afghans are disappointed and this disappointment and lack of confidence is on the rise day by day.

The most important factor behind this situation is the continuation of war in the country. In the past 17 years, the parties involved in war have been tried to eliminated their opposite in the battlefield; however, no party is yet to reach this goal and as the world history of war has proven that every war is ended by peace; therefore, if the on-going war was elongated for several other years, it would not have any winner.

The truth on Afghan war has been understood by the Afghan government and international community and thus, the Afghan government and various other domestic and international parties have made efforts for the aim of bringing peace since last few years, but they are yet to be succeeded.

The efforts of the Afghan government have not got any result yet, from one side; and from the other side, it is needed to put pressure on the parties involved in the war to bring changes in their martial policies. Considering that civilians are the main victims of the on-going war, it was much needed for the people's voice to be raised for peace. There were, however, various voice raised for peace, but they were not as reflective and ordered as the present movement.

Helmand Peace Demanders

On 23 March, 2018, after the car bombing in a sport stadium in Helmand which killed more than 20 civilians, tens of Helmandi youth and elders including women initiated a People's Peace Movement under the banner of "Oh Taliban! You shall make peace after that" and it almost one month that tents on supporting this voice have been erected in 17 provinces.

A member of People's Peace Movement in Helmand, Sharif Alizai told CSRS (Center for Strategic and Regional Studies): "we are tired of this war, neither our sanctities, nor public place or schools or hospital are secured, we are killed everywhere." War is not the solution, we want security and peace and peace is being brought after the people rise and made the parties involved in war to make peace; because, the war is being continued since last 40 year, it has not got winner and they only victims of it are Afghans, Alizai added.

Another member of People's Peace Movement in Helmand province, Eng. Daoud Farhang said that the People's Peace Movement started in Helmand is the voice of entire victimized nation of Afghanistan. "No man or group is behind this movement, it is a fully people's movement and this peace movement of us will be turned into a big people's movement with the aim of bringing security in the country", he insisted.

Helmand, alike other areas of Afghanistan, is a province that has suffered several causalities and heavy damages in the 17-year long war. Due to the consequences and causalities of war, eventually, the people of Helmand became obligated to raise their peaceful voice against war and to demand the parties involved in the war to Stop the War.

Demands of People's Peace Movement

As first steps toward peace, the People's Peace Movement demanded that Taliban and the government to apply ceasefire for two days in order for these two days to pave the way for long-term ceasefire as well as peace talks.

The demands of People's Peace Movement, however, were logical but the problem is that it has not accosted the important party of war (America). The presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan is the factor which has not let the peace efforts to become succeeded in past one decade and, it is considered as the main reason of war by the Taliban.

By reason of this, when the members of People's Peace Movement in Helmand wished to attend the Taliban center in Mosa Kala and ask them for ceasefire, they replied through publishing a [statement](#) and wrote: "we ask the protestors of Helmand to got to Americans' centers and bases as a remonstrance instead of attending the areas of Mujahedeen [the Taliban] and should inquire them to terminate the occupation and end the war; the Islamic Emirate [the Taliban] is obligated to war and resistance."

Nevertheless, every tiny and significant movement toward peace brings hope and is valuable in its position and attributable to that people's voices on bringing peace and security in Helmand and a number of other provinces have brought hopes with themselves; however, these movements will be more effective if they cause serious pressures on entire parties involved in the war.

The impact of People's Voice against War

In past years, several parties have made efforts to make the peace process between the Afghan government and the Taliban successful, however, the main reason behind this failure is considered to be lack of truthful intention for peace in the both sides and this issue is directly connected to the people's pressure in this regard. As some people seek their interests in war, so there has not been a ground facilitated for the Afghanistan-inclusive civilian pressure. Therefore, if these voices are continued and spread, perhaps, their impacts will be widespread; because the people's voice has always brought change.

The National Unity Government (NUG) presented peace proposal to Taliban in the second meeting of the Kabul Process which showed flexibility in the position of Afghan government for the first time in last one and a half decade and, it was mostly due to the people's pressure existed since recent years.

The peaceful protest against war which originated from Helmand became accepted by different tribes, areas and people and, in the present time, it was a hopeful movement. Hence, if the people's movements really stay people's and besides the Taliban, put pressure on the international community, especially, the United States, perhaps, Afghans voice under the umbrella of People's Peace Movements will be listened to and thus, the ending of war will be, then, truthfully considered in Afghanistan.

The End

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