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Kabul

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## Preface

The Chinese senior officials visited Kabul last week and met senior Afghan officials. Considering the situation in Afghanistan and the region this visit is of great significance. After the formation of the National Unity Government and when Ashraf Ghani came to power he tried to improve relations with China and now it seems that China is also inclined to the issues in Afghanistan. In this issue of the weekly analysis you would read analysis about the Kabul-Beijing relations particularly about the recent visit of the Chinese Military Chief to Afghanistan.

In the second part of the analysis you would read about the crisis of the Afghan migrants in the European and Afghanistan's neighboring countries. Since a while the condition of Afghan migrants in the neighboring countries (particularly in Pakistan) is deteriorated and contrary to its agreement with the Afghan government, Pakistan has neither registered the "unregistered Afghan migrants" nor has extended the expiring date of the migration IDs of the Afghan migrants and meanwhile, Afghan migrants are experiencing mal behavior of the Pakistani police.

On the other hand, tens of thousands of the Afghan migrants are either living in worst conditions in European countries or are stuck in dangerous areas on the way to Europe. Most European countries have closed their borders which have added to the problems of the Afghan migrants in Europe. Thus a great number of the Afghan migrants who were seeking asylum in the European countries are now willing to return home.

You would read more detailed analysis about the above two subjects in this issue of the weekly analysis of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies.

## The expanding Kabul-Beijing military ties



Chinese Military Chief General Fang Fenghui in an unannounced trip visited Kabul and met the Afghan senior officials including Afghan President, the Afghan Chief Executive Officer and the Afghan National Security Advisor.

According to a press release by the Presidential Palace, in his meeting with Ashraf Ghani Fang Fenghui promised to attribute 480 million Chinese yens (around \$73 million) to Afghan military. He also proposed an anti-terrorism plan which requires the joint struggle of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and Tajikistan against terrorism.

The Chinese Military Chief's visit to Afghanistan was warmly welcomed. This visit indicates that China is now more inclined to Afghanistan than the past.

After the formation of the Afghan National Unity Government (NUG) which direction is the Afghanistan-China relation heads? What are the impacts of the Chinese Military Chief's visit to Kabul? And what happened in this visit? These are the question we will analyze in this part of the analysis.

## **The Kabul-Beijing ties after the formation of NUG**

Following the formation of the NUG the senior officials of the two countries increasingly visited each other's countries and thus Kabul-Beijing ties were improved more than ever.

In his first foreign trip Ashraf Ghani went to China where Chinese officials promised an attribution of \$329 million to the Afghan government. After this visit China started to play a better role in the Afghan Peace Process. Later the Afghan Chief Executive Officer, Afghan Interior Minister, Afghan Defense Minister and the Afghan Foreign Minister also visited China. On the other hand, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Members of the Chinese Cabinet, Chinese Vice President and Chinese Military Chief officially visited Afghanistan.

In the Afghan Peace Process, first, Chinese officials invited Qari Din Mohammad a member of the Taliban's political office in Qatar to China, then hosted Urumqi meetings and in the Murree direct talks with the Taliban this country had attended as an observer, but in the quadrilateral meetings china played a far significant role in the Afghan peace process.

The Kabul-Beijing ties in security and military fields have also improved compared to the past years. Several security agreements were signed between the two countries according to which China would train Afghan police and border forces and would build doors to Kabul to secure the city; and now the country has promised the attribution of \$73 million to Afghanistan.

## **The Chinese Military Chief visits Kabul**

Chinese Military Chief General Fang Fenghui in an unannounced one day trip came to Kabul on 29 February 2016 and met senior Afghan officials. Besides promising \$ 73 million financial aid to Afghanistan, General Fang Fenghui also proposed an anti-terrorism four-nation regional alliance which includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and Tajikistan; he also promised that China will

convene an international conference on President Ghani's proposal against terrorism.

Chinese Military Chief's visit takes place at a time where two Chinese economic projects ("one belt one road" and "China-Pakistan economic corridor") are being applied in the region.

On the other hand, Afghanistan is located at a "Geo-Strategic" and "Geo-Economic" intersection and China is aware of the risks of an insurgency strengthen or rule in Afghanistan and due to 90 km border of its an unsecure province with Afghanistan the country is conscious about the situation in Afghanistan.

Therefore, stability and security in Afghanistan is of a great significance for China because on the one hand Afghanistan is located in a region where the two Chinese economic projects are being applied and on the other hand insecurity in Afghanistan would have a direct impact on the security situation in Xinjiang province of China.

Therefore, China being aware of the significance of a secure Afghanistan, wants to have military cooperation with Afghanistan, and that is why the country wants to form an anti-terrorism alliance with Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan which are the key countries to secure its projects and its Sink yank province.

### **China and Russia; the regional players of Ghani's anti-terrorism struggle**

From the very beginning of its formation the NUG has made efforts to improve its relations with the regional countries besides the US and NATO; therefor besides improving its relations with China, Kabul has started diplomatic effort to improve relations with Russia. The Afghan Vice President General Abdul Rashid Dustem visited Russia and demanded anti-terrorism military and technology aids; later the Afghan Parliament members also visited Russia and had the same demands; the Afghan government also offered the proposals to buy MI-35 aircrafts from Russia.

The Afghan Defense, Interior and Foreign Ministers have also demanded military assistance from China in their visits to China and now that the Chinese Military Chief has come to Kabul, the Afghan National Security Advisor Hanif Atmar asked China to assist Afghanistan to strengthen its air forces. And according to a source in the Chief Executive Office, China has asked a list of the military demands of Afghanistan.

It seems that besides the international collations the NUG seeks to gain the anti-terrorism support of the regional countries. Whether how successful will Kabul be in this policy, is a question to which, the time will answer.

## The crisis of Afghan migrants in Europe and neighboring countries



The European countries have tightened border control, which most of all impacts Afghan migrants. The European countries have distinguished the migrants and thus they have prioritized the Iraqi and Syrian migrants over Afghan migrants to cross European borders. Therefore, on 24 February 2016, 135 Afghans voluntarily repatriated from Germany to Afghanistan<sup>1</sup>, and according to the Afghan embassy in Germany, around 1000 other Afghan migrants have requested to be returned home. They are the people whose asylum applications have been rejected by the German government.

According to the “Los Angeles times”, a famous American newspaper, one third of the migrants in Europe are Afghans. And due to the tight border control, at least 5000 Afghans are stuck at Greece-Macedonia border.

On the other hand, according to an agreement with the Afghan government, Pakistan was supposed to register those Afghan migrants who are not registered

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<sup>1</sup> For further information read the Afghan MoRR's report  
<http://morr.gov.af/fa/news/59580>

yet and extend the expiration date of the migration IDs of those Afghan migrants who are already registered, which is not done yet.

The migration phases of the Afghans to the European countries, the current position of the Afghan government about migrants, the condition of the Afghan migrants in Europe and neighboring countries and their future challenges are the issues we have tried to analyze here.

### **Migration to the industrialized countries**

Afghans have a long history of migration and the Aryan migrations is the proof of it, But in the “modern history”, Afghan migration to the industrialized<sup>2</sup> and neighborhood countries began after the communist coup d’état on 27 April 1978 (7 Sour 1357) and after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

In 1982, there were 2022 Afghan migrants in the industrialized countries, but by the end of 1989 this number rose to 6553 Afghans.

After the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan, the country became exhausted by civil war and the country’s economy was also destroyed; therefore, migration to the industrialized countries increased. From withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan until 2001 the number of the Afghan migrants increased to 54620. It should be mentioned that these numbers show that the Afghans who were not granted the citizenship of the host countries and were only counted as migrants. In this phase a great number of Afghans immigrated to the European countries because of economic and political problems in their own country and most of them gained the citizenship of these countries.

After the US attack on Afghanistan in 2001, once again the Afghan migrants to the industrialized countries increased and in 2002 their number rose to 152466. But from 2002 this number began to decrease and became 104559 Afghan migrants in 2007. Since 2008, due to the economic and political reasons the number of Afghan migrants in the industrialized countries is increasing annually; only in 2015 an amount of 250000 Afghans have claimed asylum in these countries.

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<sup>2</sup> European Union, Australia, Japan, United Kingdom, and the United States of America are among the industrialized countries.

## **Afghan Refugees in neighboring countries**

The Afghan migration to the neighboring countries also began after the “Sour coup d’état” and with the soviet invasion of Afghanistan it reached to its climax and After the Geneva agreement in 1988 the Afghan migrants began to repatriate.

During the “Civil War”, a great portion of Afghans migrated to Pakistan, but they returned home soon after 2001 and until now 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home from the neighboring countries and there are more than 5 million Afghan migrants still in the neighboring countries.

In 2015, Pakistan and Iran agreed that they would not force the Afghan migrants to return home. And both these countries had agreed to register those Afghan migrants who are not registered yet; but the Afghan migrants are still not registered in these countries and in Pakistan the date of their migration IDs are not extended (contrary to the agreement).

## **The significances of the migration issue**

According to unofficial statistics, there are 5.5 million Afghan migrants in the neighboring countries which include 1.4 million registered and 2 million unregistered migrants in Pakistan and one million registered and two million unregistered Afghan migrants in Iran. In the Industrial countries there are tens of thousands of Afghan migrants and a total of 250 thousands more have newly arrived Europe in 2015.

Besides that, there are also around one million internal displaced persons and thousands of Wasirestani refugees inside the country. Afghan migrants all together form one fifth of all the population in Afghanistan. Therefore, due to its human, legal, political, security and economic aspects the migration is of a great importance to the Afghan government along with the issues of peace and security in the country.

## **Afghan migrants toward Europe in 2015**

According to the statistics of the “International Organization for Migration” from January 2015 to 27 January 2016, a number of around 1.103496 million people have arrived to Europe by land and sea routes and after the Syrians, Afghans are the second outnumbered migrant nation.<sup>3</sup>

Based on the statistics of the European Union, 942400 people have claimed asylums in European countries.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations said:” in 2015, more than 250000 Afghans claimed asylums in 44 different European countries, 150000 of which were in Germany.”

If one studies the number of the Afghan emigrants who arrive to Europe by illegal ways, one will find out that this number has unprecedentedly increased. According to a study conducted by European Union, around 26215 Afghans had claimed asylums in various European countries in 2013, in 2014 this number was 41370 and in 2015 it rose to 250000.

These migrants have met a lot of difficulties on their way to Europe and this journey to Europe has taken the lives of some of them. More than 4000 people were drowned trying to cross Mediterranean Sea on their way to Europe, and according to the spokesman of the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, 20% of the drowned people were Afghans (800 Afghans).

In 2015, due to the deteriorated security situation hundred thousands of migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Northern and central African countries arrived to Europe and thus the “migration crisis” began in Europe. Therefore the European countries have tried to forcefully expel the economic migrants.

Some European countries such as Germany count the Afghan refugees as the economic migrants. Therefore the German Chancellor Angela Merkel had said

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<sup>3</sup> For further information read the IOM’s report:

[http://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation\\_reports/file/europe-mediterranean-migration-crisis-response-situation-report-28-january-2016.pdf](http://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation_reports/file/europe-mediterranean-migration-crisis-response-situation-report-28-january-2016.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Read the report of BBC here:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>

that they have started “serious talks” with the Afghan government about the repatriation of the Afghan refugees whose asylum applications were rejected by the German government.<sup>5</sup>

German Interior Minister Thomas De Maiziere in his visit to Kabul said that he has come to an agreement with the Afghan government about the repatriation of those Afghan refugees whose asylums applications were rejected in Germany. He also said that the Afghan migrants are not counted as refugees because the situation in Afghanistan is relatively better and there are safe places in Afghanistan.

### **The Afghan governments position about the refugees**

The Afghan government’s official position about the Afghan migrants in the neighboring countries consist of the registration of the Afghan migrants and extending the expiration date of the migration IDs of the Afghan migrants who are already registered so that they do not experience the bad behavior of police in these countries.

However the neighboring countries have agreed to this policy of the Afghan government but they have not taken necessary measures to implement it and in this regard the Afghan migrants are facing major problems. For example the Pakistani police arrested 1100 people accused of terrorism, 600 of which were Afghans.

On the other hand, the Afghan migrants who are not registered and do not possess legal migrant documents face a lot of obstacles in the neighborhood countries. With the registration of the migrants most of the migrants’ obstacles in the areas of education, employment, and healthcare are being overcome.

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<sup>5</sup> read more here:

<https://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/22065-berlin-kabul-start-talks-on-repatriation-of-afghans-merkel>

But in this regard the Afghan government has had contradictory positions as the position of the presidential office is far different than that of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations.

” host country should understand the current situation in Afghanistan and based on individual cases of Afghan migrants, should grant asylum to Afghan migrants. We have not signed any agreement about the forceful deportation of the Afghan migrants, and only the volunteered return the Afghan migrants were the subject of our talks with other countries.”<sup>6</sup>

Any agreement about the forceful deportation of the Afghan migrant will add to the problems of the Afghan government because the arrival of every Afghan to the European countries costs an estimated 5 to 8 thousand American dollars (in this regard Afghans have spent \$1.25 to \$2 billion only in 2015).

Therefore the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations has declared the policy of not signing any agreement about the forceful deportation of Afghans<sup>7</sup> and had also stated that in the five following cases, the forceful deportation will be unacceptable to the Afghan government:

**First:** children under 18; **Second:** handicapped individuals; **Third:** the families whose head was granted asylum in the host country earlier; **Fourth:** the families whose heads are women; **Fifth:** the families without a caretaker.

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**Note:** Please let us know your feedback and suggestions for the improvement of Weekly analysis.

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<sup>6</sup> see online: <http://www.dw.com/en/afghanistans-minister-of-refugees-no-agreement-on-taking-back-deportees-from-germany/a-19020715>

<sup>7</sup> See online: <http://www.etilaatroz.com/33616>