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In this issue:

- Preface..... 2

Afghan-Tajik ties; the past and future

- The background of Afghan-Tajik ties..... 3
- The Afghan-Tajik ties after 2001..... 4
- The NUG and Kabul-Dushanbe Relations..... 5
- The significance of Dushanbe in Kabul's foreign policy..... 5

Traffic fatalities on the rise in Afghanistan

- Increasing statistics of traffic accidents..... 8
- Fatalities of traffic accidents in Afghanistan..... 9
- Factors behinds the rise in traffic accidents..... 10
- Solutions and recommendations to prevent traffic accidents..... 12

Preface

The Afghan President Ashraf Ghani went in his first visit to Tajikistan on Monday and discussed various issues with Tajikistani officials. In this visit, officials from both sides signed prisoners transfer agreement and in a joint press conference with Tajikistani President Emam Ali Rahman, Ashraf Ghani emphasized on joint struggle against extremism and drug smuggling.

Two days after Ghani's visit to Tajikistan, the Afghan Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah also visited Tajikistan and along with Pakistani and Kirgiz Prime Ministers and Tajik President participated in the inauguration ceremony of CASA-1000 power project. The project transfers electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan which is one of the most important projects in the region. Here you will read about the past and future of the Afghan-Tajik relations and the significance of Tajikistan in the Afghan Foreign Policy.

In the second part of the analysis, you will read about the rise in traffic accidents and traffic fatalities in the country. More than 70 people including women and children were killed in a deadly traffic accident on Kabul-Kandahar highway in Ghazni province. Incidents of this type have occurred before this too.

Researches show that, traffic accidents are annually increasing in the country; but the question is why the government does not take necessary measures to prevent or at least reduce traffic accidents? And what are the reasons behind the rise in these accidents?

In this issue of Weekly Analysis you will read analysis of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies on above two subjects.

Afghan-Tajik ties; the past and future



Based on official invitation by Emam Ali Rahman, the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani visited Tajikistan on Tuesday May 10, 2016. Since the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG) in Afghanistan, this is the first visit to Tajikistan by Ashraf Ghani.

Later, the Afghan Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah also visited Tajikistan to participate in inauguration ceremony of the Central Asia-South Asia (CASA-1000) power project.

The background, present and future of the Afghan-Tajik relations and the significance of Tajikistan in the Afghan Foreign Policy are the issues that will be analyzed here.

The background of Afghan-Tajik ties

The fact that Afghanistan and Tajikistan share common language, ethnic and culture has connected them to each other. The two countries have had close relations throughout history and in various historical periods both were under

same sovereignty; for instance during Great Khurasan and in some Islamic periods like Ghaznawi period.

Afghans had close relations with Tajikistan during Ahmad Shah Baba reign. Later in 20th century, Amir Habibullah Khan, Amir Amanullah Khan and Mahmood Tarzi assisted Central Asian Muslims in their uprising against Russians, which are commonly known as 'Basmachi' movement.

After the failure of their uprising, the Central Asian Emirates were coming under Russian control one after another; and until 1991 all these Muslim nations were under Soviet Union control. Kabul had kept its cultural ties with Dushanbe and played its role in reviving Persian terms; because based on the Soviet Union Ideology; Persian terms had been replaced with Russian terms.

After the success of Afghan Jihad against Russia, Tajikistan was able to announce its independence on May 9, 1991 and Afghanistan recognized its independence on September 12, 1991. But after the independence, Tajikistan witnessed a bloody civil war which pushed tens of thousands of Tajik migrants toward Afghanistan. The Tajik Civil War ended in 1997 with the mediation of United Nations, Iran and Afghanistan.

At that time, Taliban and Northern Alliance fought against each other in Afghanistan; and Tajikistan backed one of the fighting sides (Northern Alliance).

The Afghan-Tajik ties after 2001

The Afghan and Tajik officials have paid fewer visits to each other's countries after 2001 compared to other neighbor countries, but generally the Afghan-Tajik relations were normal and better then.

In this period, besides common culture, history and language some economic, energy, trade and transit cooperation were also the subject of discussions. For instance the five nation railway, CASA-1000 power project, exportation of electricity from Tajikistan to Afghanistan, transit through Afghanistan to Pakistan and etc.

The NUG and Kabul-Dushanbe Relations

Neighbors play the most significant role in Ghani's foreign policy; but China, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Iran seemed to be more important for Ghani. However, Afghanistan had better relations with Tajikistan compared to Uzbekistan.

The Afghan President went to Tajikistan on a two day trip and met Tajik President, Prime Minister and head of Tajik Parliament.

Tajikistan is concerned about the growth of Narcotics and extremism in Afghanistan in the past two decades. That is why the emergence of ISIS and insecurity in northern Afghanistan were part of discussion between officials of both countries. Besides that the two sided discussed about CASA-1000 power project which was officially inaugurated last week. This project exports 1300 megawatts of electricity from Central Asia to Afghanistan and Pakistan which in addition to meet the electricity demands of Afghanistan, adds 30 to 40 million dollars to Afghanistan's income annually.

The significance of Dushanbe in Kabul's foreign policy

Tajikistan has an important role in the Afghan foreign policy for the following economic reasons.

- **Transit and Trade:** Afghanistan and Tajikistan are both landlocked countries and rely on each other for transit. Although Tajikistan has close relations with Russia and is often under Russian influence; it is still trying to trade and transit through Afghanistan-Pakistan and Afghanistan-Iran. Due to its deteriorated relations with Uzbekistan transit through Afghanistan is now very important for Tajikistan.

In 1384 the Tajik President and Pakistani Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali agreed on building two roads to connect Tajikistan and Pakistan through Afghanistan. The first road was planned to pass through Dushanbe, Kunduz, Kabul, Jalalabad and Peshawar and the second road

was planned to connect Chatral through Wakhan; but in this regard practical steps are yet to be taken.

Besides that, the agreement on five nation railway has also been signed which will connect China through Afghanistan and Tajikistan to Iran. Building another railway that would connect Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Tajikistan and China is also under consideration.

In 2010, due to Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Agreement (APTA) Pakistan was allowed to trade with Tajikistan (Central Asia) through Afghanistan; but later in 2015, since Pakistan did not allow Afghanistan to trade with India through Wagah boarder the agreement was canceled.

- **Energy:** for the following two factors energy is also important:
 - First:** internal power generation does not supply Afghanistan's needed energy; therefore it imports electricity from neighborhood countries including Tajikistan. Besides that by TUTAP and CASA-1000 power project, Tajikistan exports electricity through Afghanistan to Pakistan.
 - Second:** Amu River is border between both countries. In Amu basin there are vast oil and gas reserves which are the common property of both countries.

Traffic fatalities on the rise in Afghanistan



After insecurity and natural disasters, traffic accidents were the third deadliest incidents in recent few years that have raised the mortality rate in the country.

At least 73 people were killed and 70 others injured in the country when a bloody accident occurred on Kabul-Kandahar highway, last week.¹ The incident happened when two passenger buses collided with a fuel tanker in Muger district, Ghazni province.

The bloody accident triggered reactions about recklessness of the government to prevent such incidents. The Afghan president Ashraf Ghani held a meeting on Tuesday where he ordered a delegation formed of the representatives of five ministries to design and provide Presidential Office a plan to prevent such

¹ Read more in this report of BBC here:

http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2016/05/160508_k02-ghazni-accident

horrible incidents in the future.² On the other hand, a commission headed by first deputy of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was also formed to prevent traffic accidents in the country.

In a consultative meeting with the first deputy of CEO, officials from the Afghan Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation announced that from 943 transportation companies they have canceled licenses of 230 companies because of non-compliance with traffic law³. On the other hand, in response to the recent traffic accident the Taliban has said that they would seriously deal with the transportation companies, if such incident was repeated⁴. They announced some mobile numbers to receive passengers' complaints against the drivers and Transportation Company.

High death toll in traffic accidents in Afghanistan has raised concerns; but the question is why traffic accidents are increasing year after year? and what measures should be held to prevent these accidents?

Increasing statistics of traffic accidents

Since 1387, the number of traffic accidents is on the rise in Afghanistan. In 1387, the total number of traffic accidents was 2423⁵, while this figure rose to 4393 in 1392. (Chart-1)

Although there is no specific statistic from traffic accidents in 1393 and 1394; but according to some institutions, traffic incidents are increased in these years. In 1394, traffic accidents are soared to 6729.⁶ (Chart-1)

In the past few years most of traffic accidents have occurred due to the high speed of vehicles. For instance, in 1392 from 4393 traffic incidents 1995 of them had occurred by high speed cars.

² you can find detail from the link below:

<http://president.gov.af/fa/news/87000>

³ the Afghan Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation canceled the licensed of 230 transportation companies:

http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2016/05/160510_k04_review_road_safety_meeting

⁴ read more here:

<http://shahamat-farsi.com/?p=28232>

⁵ see details on this link:

[http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/4-44\(1\).pdf](http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/4-44(1).pdf)

⁶ read more on this link: <http://www.tolonews.com/fa/afghanistan/20716-sharp-spike-recorded-in-traffic-accidents-moph?tmpl=component&layout=default>

Chart-1: statistics of traffic accidents in Afghanistan by vehicle type (1387-1394)⁷

Year	1387	1388	1389	1390	1391	1392	1393	1394
Bus	136	275	233	238	520	586	-	-
Truck	422	451	598	656	718	696	-	-
Car	1299	1398	1600	1799	1877	1995	-	-
Motorcycle	466	665	973	950	1088	1116	-	-
Total	2423	2789	3404	3643	4203	4393	4290	6729

Fatalities of traffic accidents in Afghanistan

Based on the statistics of World Health Organization (WHO), Afghanistan is one of the countries where the number of casualties caused by traffic accidents is high. According to WHO, due to traffic accidents in 2013, 4734 people are dead in Afghanistan and these incidents have cost the lives of 15.5 people from every one hundred thousand peoples.⁸

On the other hand, the statistics of traffic accidents provided by officials in Afghan government are less than statistics provided by international institutions. For instance, authorities in charge of traffic accidents in Afghanistan stated that in 1393, around 3277 traffic accidents have occurred which have left 1297 people dead and 3946 others injured.⁹ According to Afghan officials 10 people die from traffic accidents every day in the country.

Besides that, some statistic shows that 70% of traffic fatalities occur on highways; and the remaining 30% occur on roads inside the cities. Based on some other

⁷ The statistic of traffic accident from 1387 to 1392 is from the statistics of Afghan Central Statistic Organization (CSO) and the statistics of 1393 and 1394 are from the Afghan Ministry of Public Health.

⁸ Visit the WHO website online:

http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/2015/country_profiles/Afghanistan.pdf

⁹ Read more:

http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2015/05/150510_k02-afghanistan-accidents-casualties

statistics 63% men, 24% children and 13% women are the victims of traffic accidents.¹⁰

After insecurity, traffic accidents have cost the lives of most of the Afghans in the past few years. From 2005 to 2012, around 35 thousand Afghans are dead due to traffic accidents in all over the country.¹¹

Factors behinds the rise in traffic accidents

Problems on the roads and highways are repeatedly raised by people and media particularly after occurrence of such accidents but the government has not paid attention to these problems nor have they taken necessary measures to prevent such accident in the future. Various factors can cause horrible traffic accidents but the followings are the main factors of these accidents:

1. Corruption in traffic institutions: due to corruption in traffic institutions drivers easily get traffic licenses. For example, according to a report, from 100 drivers who were interviewed in Kabul, only 40 of them had said that they have got driving licenses through legal channels, according to report, officially a driver's license costs 720 Afghanis, but it can also be bought for about 8000 Afghanis.¹² In addition, ignoring violation of traffic law in exchange for bribes is another type of corruption in traffic institutions.

2. Substandard roads: due to the widespread corruption in road construction contracts, roads are not built according to international standards. On the other hand, lack of control of vehicle weight, explosions and war in Afghanistan have resulted in destruction of roads. Thus narrow and substandard roads are also a factor behind the increasing traffic accidents in the country.

3. Reckless drivers and violation of traffic law: inattention of transport officials, lack of traffic monitor over vehicles on the highways and lack of a proper traffic law

¹⁰

The number is in accordance with the fatality statistics in 1392, which media have quoted Traffic Department.

¹¹ For further information:

<http://www.etilaatroz.com/20185>

¹² for more information, please see the link below:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/06/corruption-rife-afghan-traffic-departments-2014627228805766.html>

has resulted in violation of traffic regulations by drivers and so far, no transport company has been investigated by Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation.

4. High speed and lack of traffic signs on the roads: driving with high speed is a serious factor in traffic accidents in the country. Statistics shows that most of the traffic accidents occur by high speed cars. For instance, in 1392, 45.4% of accidents have happened by high speed cars and 25.4% others by motorcycles. On the other hand, there are neither traffic signs nor speed control on highways in Afghanistan which in its own turn has augmented traffic accidents.

5. Addicted drivers: often drivers of trucks who drive long roads during the nights use drug. The first deputy of Afghan CEO, Engineer Mohammad Khan in a consultative meeting with Minister of Transport and Aviation, Traffic Department, and the man in charge of Transport Companies' Union said that most of drivers use hashish while driving on highways. Besides that, driving on long ways by one driver causes traffic accidents due to tiredness and drowsiness of driver.

6. Competition among transport companies: drivers say that transport companies give bonus to the drivers who arrive fast to the destination, and this is another reason behind the high speed of vehicles and thus behind increasing traffic accidents.

7. Safety precautions: wearing seat belt while driving car, wearing helmet while driving motorcycle, can prevent most of the casualties. But ignoring safety rules has caused the dead toll of traffic accident to rise in the country.

Solutions and recommendations to prevent traffic accidents

Since protection of people's lives is a basic duty of the government, therefore, the government must take all necessary measures to prevent such accidents. The followings can be part of the solution to prevent traffic accidents in the country:

- Implementation of traffic law; and compliance with safety precaution like wearing seat belts while driving cars and wearing helmets while driving motorcycles.
- Fighting corruption in road construction contract, transport and traffic sectors particularly while distribution of driving licenses.
- Speedometers and traffic signs must be installed on roads and highways to control speed of vehicles.
- The highway traffic has to be enabled.
- The weight of vehicles (particularly trucks) must be controlled to prevent destruction of roads.
- Teaching traffic signs to school students.

The end

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