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Preface

In this weekly analysis of the CSRS you will read about: President Ashraf Ghani is getting ready for his first official visit to Islamabad, the impacts of the visit, and the actions of Ashraf Ghani toward the peace with armed opponents, which is analyzed by the analytical board of the CSRC.

After returning from China, President Ashraf Ghani said that he is getting ready for the trip of Pakistan; But, as in the inaugural ceremony he said that the neighboring countries are in the first circle of his foreign policy, which express the importance of these countries in the foreign policy of the country, and Pakistan and Iran are counted as special countries for the peace and security of the country; so what were the reasons that causes the trip to Pakistan to take place after the trips of Saudi and China? Will be the trip to Pakistan part of President Ashraf Ghani's peace plan? What would be the main points that would be in the discussion agenda? And, overall what are the existing obstacles for the relations of both countries?

In addition to that, President Ashraf Ghani, like the former president and some other Afghan Officials, had called the armed opponents as political opposition. What could be the reason for calling the armed opponents as the political opposition, and looking to the history of the country to what extent this expression (the political opposition) is true about the armed opponents? Here you will read the details of the analysis of the board about the mentioned topics:

The Afghan-Pak Relations and the new Government's Regional Perspective



After his visit to China, President Ashraf Ghani said he is in the preparation to visit Pakistan, and it seems that he, who is newly elected as the president of Afghanistan, will have an official trip to Pakistan on 15th November. This visit will be his next visit after his Saudi and Chinese official visits. Therefore, going to Pakistan is not only valuable to Kabul, but it also shows the active diplomacy of the new government in order to achieve peace and stability.

Ashraf Ghani's Pakistan visit is a hot topic in both Afghan and international media. Pakistanis', especially their former diplomats, are hopeful about this visit, and they think that Ashraf Ghani's trip will be helpful in constructing brotherly relationships between the two neighbors. There are also debates going on in Afghanistan related to Ashraf Ghani's Pakistani Visit. For example, some of the members of Afghan Upper House emphasized that the issue of Pakistan's missile attacks on the Afghan territory should be taken seriously.

On the other hand, the Pentagon, in its six-month report persuaded both, Afghanistan and Pakistan, to take serious steps to not only develop their bilateral relationships, but also improve peace and security. A question might arise why President Ghani chooses Islamabad for his visit after his Saudi and Chinese visits? Will this trip play an active role in the development of bilateral relationships? And to which extent the relationships of Karzai's government will influence the new government in its relations with Pakistan?

The Relations of President Karzai's Government with Pakistan:

In 1980s and 1990s, the main focus of Pakistan's policy about Afghanistan was based on "Strategic Depth", to break up the collision of Kabul-Delhi against Pakistan; but, though India was one of the involved countries in the Afghan Civil War, still after the incident of 9/11 and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Delhi rejuvenated its soft power in Afghanistan by economic-trades and investments in this country, and according to one of the B.B.C. surveys India gained its status back in Afghanistan. That is why earlier the Indian Foreign Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh said that the "Indian" name itself is a passport in Afghanistan.

Pakistan is also afraid of the Indian factor in Afghanistan and blamed Indian Councils, especially the one in Ningarhar and Kandahar, to have her role in insurgency in Pakistan. Therefore Pakistan did not have close relationships with Afghanistan during Karzai's regime; though Karzai said in his speeches, "Pakistan is our brother, and India is our close friend".

Though Karzai had many trips to Pakistan; but its final result was that Karzai in his speech said that Pakistan want to control foreign policy of Afghanistan, especially Afghan foreign policy toward India. As Karzai in his interview with a famous Pakistani Journalist Salim Safai said that if Pakistan is under attack, Afghanistan will stand with Pakistan, therefore the Pakistani Diplomats did not trust Karzai.

Overall, the Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan entered dark stage during Karzai's government due to the factors that are mentioned here:

1. Usage of Afghan Land against Pakistan.
2. Shelters of Afghan Taliban in Pakistan.
3. Increasing activities of India in Afghanistan.
4. Blaming Pakistan for terrifying and imprisoning the Taliban who want to negotiate with Afghan Government about peace.
5. Afghan-Indian Strategic Agreement, and not only Afghanistan buys weapons from India, but also the Afghan National Army is trained by Indians.
6. Missile attacks of Pakistan on the eastern parts of Afghanistan.
7. Arise of the issue of Durand Line, and so on.

As in the same year the internal structures of government in Afghanistan and Pakistan replaced; Nawaz Sharif in Islamabad and Ashraf Ghani in Kabul became the rules, now both sides are trying to improve their relationship with each other. Pakistani diplomats also point to

this point and writes in their articles that now untrusted Hamid Karzai has gone and Ashraf Ghani has come, so it is a great chance for improvement of the relations and both the parties should take advantages from it. In addition to slogans, expressions and mutual declarations, the actions will play an important role; because, if those activities were useful for improvement of relations, it would be improved by the trips of Hamid Karzai.

Regional Risks and Mutual Cooperation:

The shared history, geography, culture, and religion of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and economically dependent to each other, are the factors that oblige both the countries to have close and loyal relations. Due to the mentioned reasons, either both the countries want or not, they had and have to have great relations with each other.

While Cold War the relations of both the countries were not good, still they had commercial relations with each other. During the 13 years of Karzai's government both the countries had complexity in their relations; still their commercial relations were above 2 billion dollars. Due to the mentioned reasons the peace and security of both the countries and region are related to each other and they need to have close relationship with each other. As much Pakistan take advantages of peace and security in Afghanistan, that much it will take advantages of the survival projects of the Central Asia.

Most of the regional challenges are also tied to each other. From Central Asia to South Asia, and from China to the Middle East, most of the countries have similar challenges and obstacles, which fighting with those challenges in each of the country requires the cooperation of the neighboring countries. Disputes on smuggling drugs, smuggling human beings, water, between Afghanistan and Pakistan, India and Pakistan, some other countries in the Middle East, struggle against fundamentalism, and so on could be some of the examples.

It seems that President Ashraf Ghani is also concerned about this point, and may concentrate on such regional cooperation. Related to the suicide attack in Waga Border of Pakistan, in which there were many people killed a few days ago, in a presidential newsletter it was mentioned that President Ashraf Ghani said that such regional challenges need serious, mutual cooperation and compromises.

Overall, all the regional countries, especially Pakistan-India-Afghanistan, should work on long term projects that are beneficial for all the countries in the region, and each country should know the limits of the interests of other countries.

The Active Diplomacy of Kabul for Peace:

As President Ashraf Ghani has given the priority to peace in the country; so after his election as the president of the country, he started attempts of expansion of relations with the key players of the peace in the country (Turkey, China, Saudi, and Pakistan).

President Ashraf Ghani in the fourth conference of the Heart of Asia (Istanbul Process), in which the officials of 14 countries including Iran, Pakistan and India participated, also said “Peace is our foundational priority, we ask the political opponents, including the Taliban, to participate in the inter-Afghani consensus, and also ask the international community to support the peace process of Afghanistan.”

Though President Ashraf Ghani did not give any details about the peace plan; but according to many analysts, he has chosen an active diplomacy for the peace, and will reach peace through new ways and new plans. The strong idea about his peace plan is that Saudi, Turkey, and China have given strong promises to him about the peace process; therefore he points the armed opponents of the government differently. He, different from other Afghan leaders and the former president, points to the Taliban as political opponents and call them unhappy brothers.

The support of those countries is clear from the speech of President Ashraf Ghani, which was given after his trip to China. He said that the idea of the government about the peace is expanded; though it is not yet clear that what did he mean by expansion? But by mentioning the name of China, he said that when a problem involves three parties, it is not between two countries (the Chinese officials are also concerned about the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan that will influence Xinjiang State of China, and China will never stay silent.”

Some analysts believe that though China knows that Pakistan is involved in some activities in Xinjiang, still it does not force Pakistan, so why will it force Pakistan for the sake of Afghanistan?

Though it is a historical and logical reason; but compared to its earlier stages china is enthusiastic to the Afghan peace for:

1. The new map of the new Silk Way, and the “Movement toward West” of the new policies of the Afghan leaders are visible.
2. The security condition of Badakhshan Province is getting wore day by bay, which is an extreme concern for China because of the issue of Xinjiang.
3. The head of the Al-Qaida Aiman Al Zawaheri also declared war against China.

Due to the three mentioned reason, China want to show enthusiasm for peace in Afghanistan.

The Main Goals of Ashraf Ghani's Trip to Pakistan



Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai had many trips to Pakistan, during his 13 years of government; but finally the relations of both countries reached the point that Karzai in his last speech as the president of the country said that Pakistan want to keep the Afghan Foreign Policy in its own control. So, his speech shows how effective were his trips to Pakistan.

If President Ashraf Ghani's trips are as same as the ones of Karzai were, the trips will neither cooperate the peace and security in Afghanistan, nor will be improvement visible in the region, therefore at the first stage the below points could be the main goals of President Ashraf Ghani's trip to Pakistan:

Peace:

It seems that President Ashraf Ghani is following his peace plan step by step. It is visible from Ashraf Ghani's trips that he values the involvement of Turkey, Saudi, China and Pakistan in the Afghan Peace Process.

Pakistan is extremely important country for the peace process of Afghanistan, therefore President Ashraf Ghani want to ask the cooperation of those countries that see their own interests in the peace of Afghanistan, and those countries should not only force Pakistan, but also should guarantee the promises given by Pakistan.

It seems that with the election of President Ashraf Ghani, Pakistan's diplomacy has changed. The trip of Pakistan's National Security and Foreign Policy Advisor Sartaj Aziz's and lately the army chief of Pakistan General Raheel Sharif's trips to Kabul, and their views it seems that

Pakistan also expects changes. During Sartaj Aziz's trip to Kabul, both the parties promised that they will not express their anger against each other: because it causes the relations of both the country to disbelieve each other. In addition, both the parties compromised that their lands should not be used against each other. Though those words were only ceremonial, still it expresses the eagerness of Pakistan.

The consequence of Pakistani Officials' trips to Afghanistan, and Raheel Sharif's propose for signing strategic agreement with Afghanistan express that Pakistan want to open a new chapter of its relationship with Afghanistan. Therefore, President Ashraf Ghani's this trip, which is for the peace and security in the country, would be the beginning of his upcoming trips.

Missile Attacks of Pakistan:

Since last four years Pakistan fired more than 5000 rockets on the eastern parts of Afghanistan. In these attacks hundreds of Afghans are killed and injured, and most of the population of Kunar Province migrated to other safer places of the country.

This case reached its peak during the last years of the former President Karzai's government in the country, in addition to following the steps of its "Strategic Depth", it is proved to the world that Pakistan has hypocrisy in its diplomacy.

Some members of the Afghan Upper House requested Ashraf Ghani that he should emphasize about this issue, in his trip to Pakistan. And, at least Pakistan should stop its attacks on Afghan Land to prove its words are true. Otherwise, due to the existing ideas about Pakistan in Afghanistan, its soft power will reach its weakest stage in Afghanistan.

Strategic Depth:

Most of the analysts believe that Pakistan is going to follow the policy of the British era, in which British were going to use Afghanistan as a buffer state. Following the same policy, now Islamabad wants to have a friendly government in Kabul, so it will not safe itself from being trapped between Afghanistan and India, but will also enter the war with India through its eastern borders easily.

Since many years, Islamabad was working on the policy of "Strategic Depth", which caused disbelieve against Pakistan in Kabul and Delhi. In addition, Pakistan is worried about the

increase of Delhi's activities in Afghanistan, especially the security and military cooperation of India with Afghanistan extremely concerned Pakistan.

As it is mentioned in one of the six-month report of the U.S. defense ministry that currently Pakistan is using militias against Afghanistan and India, it is pointing to the "Strategic Depth".

With respect to this point, on one hand the new Afghan Government should motivate Pakistan to give up its childish game (Strategic Depth) in Afghanistan, on the other hand it should try to remove the concerns of Pakistan about India; because as much Islamabad's relations are important to Kabul, similarly Delhi's relations are also important for Kabul.

Pakistan also should give the positive signs of improving its relations and cooperation with Kabul, which will rebuild its soft power in Kabul. For example, at the first stage increasing imports from Afghanistan, softness in the transits way, decreasing taxes of fresh fruits, increasing investment in Afghanistan, and in the security field it should stop missile attacks from the other side of the border.

Are the armed opposition political opponents?



The interpretation of President Ghani about the political opponents in the U.S.-close personalities and parties faced various reactions. President Ghani called the Afghan Government Armed Enemies, especially the Taliban, as the political opponents of the government and said that all Afghans are patriots, which included the Taliban. Though some analysts claimed that the Taliban are not citizens of Afghanistan and they are enemies of this country, they blamed Ashraf Ghani that he is not able to differentiate armed opponents from political opponents.

This group of analysts believes that the political opponents are those who accept the constitution, and with respect to the social values they struggle to gain political power. The ones, who have chosen war and violence for gaining power, are not counted as political opponents, but terrorists and there should be two options for them, either put their arms down, or be killed!

Experiences of Political Opposition in Afghanistan:

If we see the modern history of Afghanistan, it is clear that political opposition in the country always expressed violence. The reason is obvious; the experience of democracy in the history of this country has been short-term and combined with failures.

Experience of ten years of democracy, which is called decade of democracy, during the reign of King Zahir Shah, was not able to save the government from the royal intervention. Therefore

the opponents of the government had chosen force, and by supporting the princes, who were in try of gaining power, like Dawood Khan they started a coup de ta and overthrew the kingdom. Meanwhile some other opponents of the government, who were fundamentalists, also hold arms against the regime. After a few years, communists, who supported Dawood Khan, also forced coup de ta and by killing Dawood Khan and his family members, they created a new system in the country.

War against communist regime lasted 14 years. During those years, the communist regime was calling their opponents terrorists and insurgents, and they believed that any type of attempt of peace with those groups was disloyalty to the regime.

National Peace of President Dr. Najib:

Finally the same regime was obliged to change its policy, and President Dr. Najib declared the policy of national reconciliation. Many times he asked the opponents to come and join the government. Even he was ready to give the position of defense ministry to Ahmad Shah Masood, but the opponents did not accept it.

Even that time (same as today) there were strong people in the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) who were not accepting Mujahidin as political opponents, and they were asking surrender the Mujahidin. They even accused Dr. Najib for compromise and surrender. As the Soviet Union was not supporting this orientation, they were abstracted and finally Dr. Najib's regime was overthrown.

The battles of Mujahidin were also wars among political opponents. The Wahdat Party, and Islamic Party started war against Professor Rabbani's reign. The only reason for those battles was that every party was thinking that the only way to create their favorite government was war. While General Dostum broke his loyalty and joined the opponents of Professor Rabbani's regime, Professor Rabbani declared jihad against General Dostum.

While the Taliban came, the earlier oppositions threw their oppositions with each other, and no one told that there should be jihad against General Dostum.

While the Taliban were controlling 90 % of the Afghan land, Jabha-e-Muttahed (the United Front) was fighting against them. They were the political opponents of the Taliban's regime. The reason of their war was that the Taliban did not want to divide power with them.

Afghanistan is not the West!

The definition of political opposition, which says that the ones with usage of arms and violence are not political oppositions, is possible in the countries with long term experiences of democracy; but in a country like Afghanistan, which is influenced by war and most of the political opposition leads to armed opposition, there is no evidence. “Even in England, the mother of democracy, republican movement in Northern Ireland, the IRA had chosen war, but the British government was willing to negotiate to resolve the problem with the group.”

Due to the mentioned experiences in Afghanistan, in the last presidential election the U.S. intervened and compromised both the opponents to participate in the government by the unity government, because the U.S. was afraid that the political opposition may cause to violence in the country.

Patriotism of Afghans:

The Afghan leaders spent their time in the neighboring countries and those countries were their hosts. The level of the influence of those countries over those leaders is not lower than the level of the influence of Pakistan over the Taliban. But, while those leaders returned to the country, their relations with those countries faded and in some cases it even caused dispute.

Therefore, the message, “The Taliban are supported by Pakistan, so they are not loyal to the national interests,’ may lead to the reactionary accusation; because the opponents of the peace with Taliban are supported by the Western countries, and there are cases which show that programs of the West is war for Islamic World, therefore those leaders are also not loyal to the national interests of Afghanistan.

The End

Contact Us:

Email: info@csrskabul.com - csrskabul@gmail.com

Website: www.csrskabul.com

Contact: **(+93) 784089590**

