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Preface

Two years has passed since the formation of the NUG and in these two years the NUG passed through many ups and downs. Some important commitments that were made in the NUG agreement were not fulfilled and as a result the NUG had to confront legitimacy crisis too.

Although, the government had to deal with many challenges and issues in the past two years; but besides that it had also some achievements. The achievements and the challenges of the NUG in the past two years is the issue that would be analyzed in the first part of the Weekly Analysis.

In the second part of the analysis you would read about the peace deal between the Afghan government and Hezb-e-Islami (Hekmatyar). On September 29, 2016, the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani signed the peace deal with HI and in also, Engineer Hekmatyar signed the agreement through a pre-recorded video which was played at the ceremony of signing the deal.

Although, HI had begun its effort for peace with the government several years ago, but due to various reasons, the peace deal was delayed till now. An important characteristic of the peace deal with HI is that it is the result of an intra-Afghan process; but still there are challenges and issues ahead for both sides of the agreement.

In this issue of the Weekly Analysis, you would read about the analysis of the Center of Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) about the above two issues.

The NUG's successes and failures in the past two years



On September 29, 2014, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah signed an agreement, with the mediation of the US Secretary of States John Kerry, to form a National Unity Government (NUG) and the NUG completed its two years on Wednesday, last week.

The NUG had to deal with plenty of political, economic and security issues and challenges in these two years. On the one hand, the NUG had to confront the legitimacy crisis and political oppositions and on the other hand, it had to deal with differences between the President and Chief Executive which in recent months had grown more serious than any time ever.

The achievements, challenges and failures of the NUG in the past two years would be analyzed in this issue of the Weekly analysis.

The NUG's achievements

Regional economic integration; the NUG has had achievements regarding economic integration in the region. The agreement of the TAPI pipeline which would transport Turkmenistan's natural gas through Afghanistan into Pakistan and India was signed between the leaders of the four countries (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) in January 2016.

The agreement of transferring 1300 Megawatts of electricity from Kirghizstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan (CASA-1000) was also signed between Kirghizstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan which is assumed to be an energy bridge connecting Central Asia to South Asia. This project was officially inaugurated in May 2016, in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

In the first months of 1395, Afghanistan signed the "One built; one road" agreement with China and thus became part of China's "New Silk Road" which connects China to Central Asia, Middle East, Northern Africa and Europe.

In the area of regional transit, the Chabahar Port deal was signed between Afghanistan, Iran and India in Tehran. In addition, trade between Afghanistan and China, using railway, through Tajikistan and Kirghizstan has also started since August.

Economic Projects; in the past two years, some infrastructural projects have also been completed or inaugurated inside the country; one of them being the Salma Dam in Herat which was constructed with the help of India and has the capacity to generate 42 megawatts of electricity and irrigate 200 acres of land. The contract of Kajaki Dam's expansion and installing four new turbines in this dam, which would increase the dam's production capacity from 51 to 151 megawatts of electricity, was signed between the Ministry of Power and Energy and a Turkish firm. On the other hand, the NUG also signed the contract of Bakhabad Dam in Farah with an Italian company; the dam would have the capacity to irrigate 104 Hectares of land in Farah and would produce 27 megawatts of electricity.

The rise in of government revenue; although the rise in the government's income is debatable; but still some reforms and changes such as taxes on telecommunication credit cards have played a role in increasing the government's revenues and in this year the Afghan government for the first time in the past several years has had more revenue than the estimated revenue.

Getting support from international community; the Afghan government presented its schemes of reforms in the London conference (2014) which was warmly welcomed by the donor countries and hence 59 countries emphasized on their commitments to support Afghanistan. The NUG also succeeded to attract support from NATO and European countries in the Brussels Conference and is now preparing itself for the upcoming Brussels Conference; therefore, in the past several months the leaders of the NUG made efforts to reduce their internal differences and also on the eve of this conference, they also signed the peace deal with Hezb-e-Islami. The support of International Community particularly their financial support is significant to the Afghan government in order to fund the Afghan forces and some development projects.

Rise of Security relations with regional countries; the NUG made some efforts to increase security relations with China, India and Russia and, as a result, China and India have given some military assistance to Afghanistan and Russia has sold M-17 and M-35 helicopters to the Afghan government.

Signing the peace deal with Hezb-e-Islami (HI); the peace deal between the Afghan government and HI (Hekmatyar) was signed on Thursday, September 29, 2016. Based on the agreement, Hezb-e-Islami would stop its armed struggle against the Afghan government and in return the names of the leaders and members of HI would be removed from the UN blacklists and political prisoners of this party would be released from the Afghan prisons. Although, the peace deal with HI would not have a landmark effect on the security situation and in the battlefield in Afghanistan but still, the deal is an achievement for the Afghan government.

The NUG's challenges and issues

Legitimacy crisis; a major challenge that the NUG dealt with in the past two years was its legitimacy. The NUG was formed in violation of Afghan constitution and the post of Chief Executive, which was not predicted in the constitution, was created by the NUG agreement. Contrary to the promises, reforms in the electoral system were not brought and the Parliament's term was, in violation of the constitution, extended for one year and some cabinet ministers also won the vote of confidence in this year. Besides that, the issue of calling for Loya Jirga (Great Assembly) also paved the way for the formation of a new opposition group against the Afghan government.

Internal differences and uncoordinated governmental policies; in the past two years, the stakeholders of the Afghan government had deep internal differences which used to result in the contradictory stances of the President and Chief Executive in some cases. The government's stances regarding the Afghan asylum seekers in Europe, fight against corruption, the Afghan government's position regarding the Saudi Arabia and Yemen war and disputes over giving medals and appreciation of senior officials are the examples of internal differences between the two leaders of the NUG.

Deteriorated security situation; after the formation of the NUG, the country's security situation was increasingly deteriorating. In the first stage, a wave of explosions hit the country particularly the Kabul city, the Shah Shaheed explosion and attack on the ninth police Headquarter and the building of the Ministry of Defense being the bloodiest of all. The Taliban's fighting tactics changed and they started to capture districts and cities. The war expanded to the north of the country; some districts fell in the hands of the Taliban and the strategic city of Kunduz also collapsed and was controlled by the Taliban for two weeks.

The ISIS emerged in some province of the country and began its fight against the Afghan government and the Taliban in Eastern provinces and besides intensifying war, the group's armed conflict increased civilian casualties and civilian casualties in this year hit new heights compared to the previous years.

On the other hand, two significant incidents occurred during the two years of the NUG; first, disclosure of the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar the founder and the first leader of the Taliban and second, the death of Mullah Akhtar Mansour the Taliban leader after Mullah Omar.

Deteriorated economic situation; in the two years of the NUG, the country's economy was shrinking, the value of Afghani was reduced more than ever, unemployment increased, assets fled the country, and the country's economic growth also decreased.

Youth fleeing the country; the country's worse security and economic situation forced hundred thousands of Afghans to immigrate to Europe. Thus the number of Afghan migration in Western countries unprecedentedly increased in the two years of the NUG and many Afghan educated and expert youth took dangerous paths to Europe.

Failing to fulfill promises; the leaders of the NUG failed to deliver the commitments that they had made in the early days of the formation of the NUG and afterwards. For instance, they are yet to fulfill the promises made in the charter of "Evolution and Continuity" electoral team and the promises made in the NUG agreement.

Political oppositions; the NUG dealt with many political oppositions in the past two years and at some points the oppositions reached levels that the government's political opponents sought to overthrow the government and establish an interim government.

Increasing mistrust towards government; based on some surveys, the public confidence on the NUG has been decreasing on a monthly basis. Based on the survey of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) in 1394 (2015-2016), 78.76% of the people have expressed their lack of trust in the government and general situation in the country and in response to another question, 69% of the people have said the NUG had fewer achievements in the past one and half years.

The NUG-HI peace deal; the background and future prospects



The peace deal between the Afghan government and Hezb-e-Islami (HI) was signed by the leader of HI and the Afghan President on September 29, 2016. Before the final signature ceremony, the deal was signed by the head of HI (Hekmatyar) delegation Engineer Amin Karim and the Afghan National Security Advisor Hanif Atmar on September 22, 2016.

A great ceremony was organized in the Afghan Presidential Palace (Arg), where the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, former President Hamid Karzai, Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, the Afghan Vice President Sarwar Danish, the first and second Deputy Chief Executives Engineer Mohammad Khan and Mohammad Muhaqiq, former Jihadi leaders, members of HI's delegation, foreign diplomats and some others had participated.

In this ceremony, Hekmatyar delivered his speech and signed the deal via a video link in Afghan Presidential Palace. The Afghan President also signed the peace deal on behalf of the Afghan government and delivered his speech in this regard. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Amin Karim, Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, Ghairat Baheer and Mrs. Balkhi also delivered their speeches.

The background of peace talks between the Afghan government and HI, perseverance of these talks after the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG) and HI's future in the country are the issues that are analyzed here.

The background of HI

HI has a forty years background in Afghan politics and same as Jamiat-e-Islami it is a branch of Islamic Movement of Afghanistan. During the Soviet-Afghan war, HI and Jamiat-e-Islami were the two most influential groups in the country. Later-on when the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, HI's activities stopped in the country and the leader of HI Engineer Gulbudin Hekmatyar then left the country.

During the Taliban regime, HI was marginalized from the Afghan issue but after the US attack on Afghanistan when the new government was established in Afghanistan; Gulbudin Hekmatyar termed the presence of the foreign troops as "occupation" and under the name of HI, he began armed struggle against foreign troops. Since 2001, most of HI members have come to Kabul and have taken part in the Afghan government.

The background of Peace talks between the Afghan government and HI

Although the exact date of the beginning of the HI's negotiation with the Afghan government is not known, but according to official statements these talks began in 2010. It is noteworthy that earlier some hezb members had also come to Kabul but it is yet to be known whether they had come by themselves or were sent by Hekmatyar?

Regarding official talks between the Afghan government and HI (Hekmatyar) a source said to CSRS that when the head of HI's political commission and Hekmatyar's brother-in-law, Dr. Ghairat Baheer (an individual close to Hekmatyar) were released from the prison in 1387; they were the guests of Karzai in Afghan Presidential Palace for several days and relations, through Dr. Ghairat Baheer, with HI (Hekmatyar) had started back in those days. But according to media's

information, relations between the Afghan government and HI began when the US President Barrack Obama announced the beginning of the US troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan by the end of 2011.

Using the opportunity which was provided after the announcement of the US troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan and tenuous relations between Karzai's government and the United States, HI sent its delegation, under the leadership of Dr. Ghairat Baheer and Qutbudin Helal, for peace talks in Kabul. At that time, Hezb-e-Islami proposed a 15-point proposal, the most important of which were as follows:

1. As of July 2010 the withdrawal of foreign troops must begin and within six months they must leave Afghanistan.
2. A full turnover of security to the Afghan security forces.
3. Foreigners should not build prisons inside the country.
4. All the engaged parties will announce a cease fire for the time.
5. Foreign fighter will not stay in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of foreign troops.
6. After the withdrawal of the foreign troops, new presidential and parliamentary elections will be held and until the new election the current President and Parliament would continue functioning.¹

Karzai's government did not accept this proposal and thus these talks failed. Later in April 2012, once again HI sent its delegation to conduct peace negotiation with Kabul; at a time that the Taliban's Political Office in Qatar was about to open and the Afghan government had opposed direct peace talks between the US and the Taliban. The HI delegation, once again, presented their peace proposal but, once again, the Afghan government did not show interest to it.

¹ Read the 15-point proposal of Gulbudin Hekmatyar here:
http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/03/hekmatyars_peace_pla.php

The peace deal between the NUG and HI

After the formation of the NUG, HI sent its delegation to Kabul and peace talks between the Afghan government and HI began. But at that time the Afghan government had appropriated most of its attention to improve its relations with Pakistan and to make peace with the Taliban; but when the quadrilateral talks headed towards failure, in the joint press release of the third meeting of Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG), HI was also mentioned as part of the talks.

Releasing a statement on March 12, 2016, HI (Hekmatyar) stated that the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had invited the party to join the peace process and that the party has accepted it. Peace talks between the Afghan government and HI became serious from that time on; but some circles inside the country tried to sabotage these talks and as a result of these difference both afghan government and hizb side reached agreement after some months.

The peace deal between the NUG and HI consists of three chapters and 25 articles. The first chapter discusses about legislation, foreign troops' withdrawal from the country and the principles of democracy. Chapter two spells out the commitments of the government and chapter three focuses on HI's commitments.

Generally, in this agreement, both sides have emphasized on supporting the withdrawal of foreign military forces, recognition of current Afghan constitution, removal of HI's leaders and member from the UN blacklists, announcing ceasefire and releasing the prisoners of both sides.

Since no guarantee has been mentioned in order to implement the commitments in the agreement, therefore, the implementation of the deal and the upcoming three months would be challenging to both sides; one of the challenges that the Afghan government have to deal with would be to remove the names of HI's leaders and members from the UN and other countries' blacklists in the "shortest

possible time". Besides that, the government is supposed to release the HI-related prisoners within the upcoming three months.

On the other hand, the two sides are yet to reach a consensus over giving protocol to HI leader, HI's presence in the government and other minor issues; these issues would be resolved by the HI delegation and High Peace Council members in the future.

Although, the peace deal with HI, is believed to be an achievement of the NUG; but HI's peace with the government would not have deep effects in the battlefield nor would this peace deal provide the way for vis-à-vis talks with the Taliban- the most powerful group in the battlefield so far. There are also some opinions that peace deal with HI would probably make peace with the Taliban even more difficult; because the government would expect peace deal with the Taliban under easy conditions, as the conditions of HI, which might not be possible in the case of Taliban.

HI's future in the country

Generally, HI's future in the country depends on two issues;

First, whether the HI leader Engineer Gulbuddin Hekmatyar would be able to bring all the factions of HI under the umbrella of one sole party?

Second, how would HI treat the Taliban and a number of political groups inside the county which it had issues with in the past?

Through a pre-recorded video which was played in the ceremony of signing the peace deal, Hekmatyar on the one hand invited the Taliban to join the peace process and on the other hand, called the Taliban's armed struggle incorrect which would have psychologically negative effects in the ranks of the Taliban. But the Taliban have always seen the Afghan government's peace offers as complete surrender and has, therefore, always rejected these offers. Besides that there is no doubt that Hekmatyar would confront his political oppositions after coming in Kabul and besides gathering various factions of HI under one party, Hekmatyar's

position regarding the Taliban and other political oppositions would also be important in determining the fate of HI.

The end

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