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Preface

The last month's peace proposal of Afghan government to the Taliban have brought hope for successfulness of the peace process inside and outside the country and thus, the flexibility of Afghan government's position in the peace talks became widely praised.

Approximately a month later from the second meeting of the Kabul Process, the last week's conference in Tashkent also became widely covered by national and international media and the participants backed the peace proposal of the Afghan government. However, why the Taliban yet to provide any response to these specific suggestions of the Afghan government? It is something that you will read about in this first part of the Weekly Analysis of Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS).

You will read about the condition of education in the country and the related problems in second part of the Analysis. In the inauguration ceremony of 1397 educational year, President Ghani promised that he will prioritize this field in the on-going solar year. The low quality of education process is a challenge that is not taken care in the last one and a half decade. In this part of the Weekly Analysis, you will read the analysis of CSRS researchers on the background of education and factors behind its low quality.

The Tashkent Conference and Afghan Peace Success Factors



By Hekmatullah Zaland

Tashkent hosted an important international conference on Afghanistan last week. Besides Afghan and Uzbek presidents, the head of European Union Foreign Affairs, the representatives of more than 20 countries including U.S., U.K., Germany, Russian, China, France, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, India, five Central Asian countries and international organizations had participated in this 2-day conference.

In his speech to this conference, President Ashraf Ghani once again emphasized on international and regional consensus on Afghan peace and security and asked the participants to back the inter-Afghan peace with the Taliban.

The Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev expressed his readiness for hosting face-to-face talks between the Afghan government and Taliban and told that the Afghan peace process is important to the entire region and thus, the joint goal of reaching to peace should take practical shape.

The participants, in their joint declaration, also supported the proposal of Afghan government on face-to-face peace talks with Taliban and they asked the Taliban to accept the proposal of Afghan government.

In this analysis, it is tried to answer the questions regarding the course of Afghan peace policy, the evaluation of new peace proposal of Afghan government and the success factors in the overall peace process.

The changing peace policy of Afghan government

The peace policy of the National Unity Government (NUG) has been focused on foreign policy in last three years and mostly it was tried to form regional and international consensus. Domestically, the Afghan government, instead of paving the way for peace and trust-building, tried to bring the Taliban to the negotiation table by using force, and it is something that was useless in last one and a half decade.

This policy of government was always victimized by security incidents and whenever there was a tiny development, this process was being stopped as result of another incident. The only successfulness of Afghanistan government in the process of its peace talks with the Taliban was the Murree talks; however, this process became stalled after the revelation of Mullah Mohammad Omar's death.

It was for the first time, that changes in the government's peace position comprehended in the second meeting of the Kabul process, and instead of insisting on force and fighting, it had a number of suggestions for initiating face-to-face peace talks with the Taliban. The latest meeting in Tashkent is also a first move of 1397 [solar year] on bringing peace and security in Afghanistan, and backing the proposal of second meeting of the Kabul Process is considered as one of the main goals of this conference.

Evaluation of Government's Peace Proposal

In the second meeting of Kabul Process, President Ashraf Ghani announced the government's new peace policy. This meeting became held only few days after several bloody attacks of Taliban on Kabul and in the time the government had previously boycotted the peace talks; and thus it was not expected that the government would show such an unprecedented plasticity in peace talks with Taliban.

The Afghan government's proposal on face-to-face peace talks with Taliban was unexampled in last one and a half decade; because the government's peace call was always translated into Taliban surrender in the past.

The government's proposal to the Taliban in the second meeting of the Kabul Process was, to a large extent, called a practical step toward peace; however, the biggest challenge in it is that the fate of foreign forces in Afghanistan is not touched even slightly. It is something that is considered as the main factor behind Taliban fighting.

Overall, every peace-related effort brings hope and so this initiative of government has also brought hope for the successfulness of the peace process; however, it looks like the recent efforts of Afghan government would not have decisive results if the fundamental factors of war are not focused on. It is the reason why Taliban have not responded positively to the proposal of Afghan government by being silent.

Afghan Peace Success Factors

Nowadays it looks like the regional-level consensus on making peace with Taliban is at the peak more than every other time; yet, the success of Afghan government's peace proposal is interlinked with following two factors:

First; Americans talks with Taliban: a day before Afghan government reveal its peace proposal to the Taliban, their open letter to American Congress and people show that the Taliban have absolute agreement on talks with the U.S. At this moment, America considers itself as a third-party, not a side of war; nevertheless,

the raids of U.S. troops are practically considered as the main threats to the Taliban, and so they consider the U.S. as a main side of war for themselves.

Taliban has cogitated that the Afghan government does not have the capacity to address the Taliban's concern on withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan which is their first request. Whereas, America will spend USD 45 Billion on Afghan war in 2018, this remark of Taliban seem suitable. Therefore, until the U.S. did not initiate face-to-face talk with Taliban, it looks like the way for face-to-face talks between Afghan government and Taliban will not be paved.

Second; Change in Taliban's Position: until the Taliban did not accept the Afghan government and the 17-years old system as a truth, it would be almost impossible to have the peace talks initiated. Perhaps, the International Community, especially the United States will not be ready to have the Afghan government come out from the framework peace talks. If the U.S. became a part of the negotiations, perhaps, the Taliban would also coordinate with the proposal of inter-Afghan understanding; yet, in this case, both of these factors will be then considered necessary and required.

Beginning of new Educational Year and Problems of Education system in Afghanistan



By Zia-ul-Islam Shirani

The 1397 [Solar year, all the following dates are solar year] educational years has begun in the cold-weathered regions of the country after President Ashraf Ghani ringed the school people; in case, there are still hundreds of schools in various provinces of Afghanistan that are blocked due to poor security situation.

President Ghani, in the school-bell-ringing ceremony, said that 1397 should be the year of supporting education in country and thus instructed the entire ministries to have comprehensive cooperation with Education (Ministry) and so put education in the top of his agenda.

President Ghani promised that 6000 new school-buildings will be built up to next two year and a budget of around USD 200 Million has been allocated for this purpose. He also stressed to connect Capital and provincial schools through

internet and reemphasized on performing promises regarding teachers' salaries till 18th of August, 2018.

This analysis review the background and current condition of education in Afghanistan, reasons behind problems related to education and the solutions on how to take the country's education from this unsavory condition.

Background of education in Afghanistan

Before the establishment of modern schools, education has been continued through traditional means. Students were taught religious lessons besides reading and writing by Mullah Imams and clergies, and this method of education is still to be continued in most areas of the country.

The first modern school, Habibia, became built around 115 years ago by Amir Habibullah Khan in 1282 (solar year) in Kabul city where its teachers and administrative staff were all Indians.

During the Sultanate of Amir Habibullah Khan, besides Habibia school, some other primary schools, education council that was responsible for reviewing educational materials, financial conditions, protection, order and administrative issues of schools and the first teachers' training center for those who had received education through traditional means became established and two years later, 65 students became graduated from this center.

After the Sultanate of Amir Habibullah Khan, during the era of Amanullah Khan, the country's education became focused on more than ever. More schools became built in Kabul and other provinces, the Ministry of Education became established and also an association for compilation and translation of educational books and supervising schools and students became established in Kabul.

This trend continued till Mohammad Daoud Khan's government that there were 2226 general educations schools in the country where 546000 students were enrolled in primary terms, 113000 schools in secondary term and 60000 in high terms.

After the Communist coup of 7 Sawr 1357, the country faced several political and social changes and subsequently, the campaign of Soviet Union on Afghanistan had brought a different atmosphere here. Education became politicized and thus most of the people, especially in remote areas lost their trust in education.

The political changes and strife, war and civil armed conflict between 1357 and 1380 have damaged the country, especially the education system.

After the collapse of the Taliban regime and formation of new system, the education condition changed also and mostly developed in regards with quantity. As there were only 3389 schools in Afghanistan in 1380; however, this number increased to 6000 in first three years. The number of schools was 8397 in 1384. This number increased to 16049 in 1395 where more than eight millions (8868122) students were studying there.

Education Condition in Afghanistan

After 1380 and formation of new system in the country, however, the Afghan education has undoubtedly had remarkable improvements, but there are still a lot of problems and challenges that threatens this vital field.

Having a glance regarding the education in last one and half a year indicates that development in education was mainly focused on quantity, and due to lack of consideration to quality, low quality is the biggest challenge of this field now.

Presently, around three and half a million qualified children are deprived from attending school, based on statistics by the Afghan Ministry of Education. Moreover, the active schools are also faced serious problems, i.e., professional teachers, education requisites, building, corruption and etc.; as President Ghani, during the 1397 school-bell-ringing ceremony, also said that half of the Afghan teachers are not qualified.

Various problems in this field have impacted the education seriously. Most of the high school students that enter universities have serious problems in writing and dictation.

On other side, simultaneous control of government and Taliban on schools and educational bodies in areas controlled by the Taliban has caused a lot of problems as well. Based on information obtained and published by Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) a few months ago (Jawza 1396), teachers and staff of schools in a number of insecure provinces in the country have not received their salaries due to restrictions by Taliban related to the process on salary-taking from banks, and thus, a large number of schools have been faced the threat of closure.

Reasons behind education's unsavory condition

Reasons behind deteriorated education condition in the country can be stated as the following:

Security: the on-going war and insecurity in the country have faced the education as well as every other field in the country. Based on UN latest report, 2017 was the bloodiest year for Afghan people where 10,000 civilians became killed and injured. Due to increasing insecurity, more than one thousand schools are shut in insecure areas of the country.

Corruption: presence of corruption in the Afghan education is another challenge. The Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC) in his report which became released on 26 October, 2017, said that presence of corruption in the Ministry of Education is serious. The report shows that corruption is evident in the appointing of teachers, of supplying of text books, the paying of salaries to teachers and other areas. Lack of buildings for school is also interlinked to corruption. Due to widespread corruption in the Ministry of Education, in most of the cases, phantasy schools are built and their money is eaten.

Low Quality: following security and corruption, low quality and level of the Afghan education is considered as one of the most important challenges. Based on statistics of the Ministry of Education, only 27 percent of the entire 170000 teachers meet the least requirement of a professional teacher which is being graduated from 14-class; and this condition, besides other factors, has directly impact on low educational quality and level in the country.

Weakness in Management: another problem the Afghan education is faced is low executive performance of Education sector in the Capital and provinces. The Education sector has faced weakness in management and monitoring of the Capital and most of the regions in the country due to lack of cadre and specialist potentials and appointment of unprofessional personalities due to existed corruption.

Firstly, the management system of the Ministry of Education in the educational sector is needed to be reformed; secondly, a national, ordered and comprehensive strategy based on standard researches and finds is needed that could be able to address the existed problems in the educational foundations of Afghanistan.

The End

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