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Preface

The recent declaration of BRICS triggered the reactions of the several countries in the region. Besides international issues such as the issues of Iraq, Syria, and North Korea, the recent declaration of BRICS condemned armed groups in the region and also pointed the finger toward Pakistan.

In the recent summit of BRICS, held in Xiamen city of China on 3 and 5 September, the Brazilian President Michel Temer, the Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Chinese President Xi Jinping, the South African Prime Ministers Jacob Zuma and the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had participated. Besides member countries, some officials of the other countries had taken part in the summit as well.

Since the past several years the Afghan government is striving to form a regional consensus against terrorism and particularly against Pakistan's support of "terrorism", something that came true in the recent declaration of BRICS. The various aspects of the recent declaration of BRICS are what analyzed in the first part of the Weekly Analysis.

We have allocated the second part of the analysis to evaluate the 16 years of the US and NATO war in Afghanistan. 16 years ago the 9/11 incident occurred in the US, which triggered the US attack on Afghanistan, overthrowing the Taliban regime. In the last part of the analysis, you would read about 16-years of war and the ongoing situation in Afghanistan.

The BRICS declaration and its impacts on the region



In the declaration of its recent summit on September 11, BRICS, which is an organization of five powerful countries, condemned the activities of the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Haqqani Network, ISIS, Lashkar-e-Tayiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Jamaat ul-Ahrar, and some other armed groups in the region and particularly in Afghanistan.

Most importantly, in this declaration the phrase terrorist groups “within Pakistan” was mentioned, something that sparked Pakistan’s reaction. Pakistan rejected the declaration of BRICS while its strategic partner China is one of its signators.

When was BRICS established and why? What was the contents of the Xiamen declaration of BRICS and what is its impacts on the region? These and other similar questions are analyzed here.

Introduction of BRICS

The scheme of BRIC organization was first brought by the then-chairman of Goldman Sachs Company Jim O’Neill in 2001 in one of his pieces. At first, this organization had four members; B-Brazil, R-Russia, I-India, C-China (BRIC). In 2010 South Africa also joined this organization and, thus, the organization was called BRICS.

The five BRICS countries represent 41% of the world population, have 22% of gross world product, controls 27% of the land on Earth, has 50% of world’s economic growth, the value of its vote in the World Bank is 13.24%, and their share in IMF is 15%.

The Xiamen declaration of BRICS and reactions

The presidents of the three member countries and Prime Minister of the two member countries had participated in the 9th summit of BRICS held in Xiamen, China. Although the organization organizes meetings and issues statements and declaration every year, the importance of its recent declaration is due to its indication of “terrorism” in the region as well as the security situation in Afghanistan and the region.

For instance, BRICS condemned the violence of armed groups particularly the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Haqqani Network, ISIS, and some other groups in Afghanistan. That is why they also announced their support from the Afghan security forces. Moreover, the declaration has also pointed out groups in Pakistan that had threatened the security of the region. Besides the Taliban and Haqqani Network, the declaration also named Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Tayiba as well. It is certainly a backing of Afghan and Indian stances. That is why both Afghanistan and India have welcomed the BRICS declaration and have said that it was a historic declaration.

On the other hand, Pakistan has rejected the declaration. From Pakistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs to its Ministry of Defense, many officials have commented on the issue. According to the official stance of Pakistan, it is

Afghanistan that has endangered the security of the region because they say that the Afghan forces do not have control over 55% of their territory. In addition, as before, Islamabad has also played the card of sympathy saying that it is Pakistan which is the victim of “terrorism” and not others.

Why is the recent BRICS declaration surprising?

Currently, our region is witnessing interesting geopolitical changes. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which is a security and economic organization, is now gradually adopting cultural aspects; the SCO Youth Camp is a proof of the fact. Moreover, BRICS, which is largely an economic forum, is gradually paying attention to the security aspects of the region. In the Xiamen declaration of BRICS, the security part was astonishing for everyone because:

First, for the first time China did not support the Pakistani stance regarding terrorism and the presence of al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and Haqqani Network in Pakistan, but quite contrarily indirectly supported Afghanistan and India’s position.

Second, for the first time, China named the anti-Indian terrorist groups in Pakistan as “terrorists” and expressed concern about their existence. It occurs at time that in the past 18 months, China has repeatedly blocked the Indian initiative to include the leader of Jaish-e-Mohammad in the terrorist-list of the UN.

Third, despite the closing relations of Pakistan with China and Russia, Beijing and Moscow supported such a declaration, which was unexpected.

Fourth, the declaration was surprising also because some of its contents was for a long time the main lines of the Afghan and India foreign policies. Therefore, this declaration may be an indication of the triumph of Afghan and Indian diplomacy.

The impacts of the declaration of BRICS on the region

The Xiamen declaration of BRICS could have impacts on the region in the following aspects:

First; the Pakistan-China relations: since the past several years, China pressurizes Pakistan in official meetings to end its policy of using armed groups as instruments to further its foreign policy goals. These pressures were to a greater part hidden from the eyes of the public and cameras of the media. It is the first time that China publicly expresses its disgust regarding this policy of Pakistan. Despite all these developments, it does not mean that the Chinese-Pakistani relations are deteriorating, but China is putting pressures on Pakistan for the security of its major regional economic projects while Pakistan is no longer a strategic partner of the US.

Second, Afghanistan: since ever the beginning of his tenure, the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani was seeking regional consensus against “terrorism”. To achieve this end, he traveled to many countries but did not get any positive response except from China. However, the recent declaration of BRICS revived Kabul’s hopes because, on the one hand, it recognized Pakistan as an engaged party in Afghanistan and, on the other hand, condemning the violence of armed groups pledged assistance with the Afghan security forces.

Third, India-China ties: since July 2017, violence between India and China has increased in Doklam, and since 1962 it is the first time that tensions on the borders between the two countries have escalated. However, one week before the summit of BRICS, the two countries reached an agreement and settled the dispute between themselves. This situation also played a role in drafting the recent declaration. In the current year, supporting Pakistan, China blocked Indian efforts twice; India’s membership in the NIG and recognition of the leader of Jaish-e-Mohammad as a “terrorist” in the UN. However, the question is how much naming the Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Tayiba as terrorist groups in the BRICS declaration will affect the India-China relations.

The Afghan War; 16 years after the 9/11 attacks



The current war in Afghanistan was started 16 years ago by the US and NATO, and apparently, the 9/11 attacks were the main reason behind the US attack in Afghanistan. This war was waged to overthrow the Taliban regime and eliminate the al-Qaeda bases from Afghanistan. Although primarily the US and NATO forces defeated the Taliban, this defeat was temporary; later they reemerged and began their activities, and now they are stronger than the past. Now the insecurities have spread from the South to the North of the country, and the Afghan government has lost the control of a large proportion of its territory.

In addition to the casualties of the engaged parties, this war, which has continued for 16 and is getting intensified every day, has killed and injured tens of thousands of civilians.

Here you would read about the US attack on Afghanistan, the US 16-years war in Afghanistan, the new US strategy in Afghanistan and the ongoing situation in Afghanistan.

The US attack on Afghanistan

During the Afghan Jihad against the Soviet Union, thousands of Arab fighters were fighting alongside the Afghan Mujahidin. Later the Mujahidin government under Ustad Burhanuddin Rabbani give these fighters sanctuary and, to some of them, the Afghan nationality. When the Taliban hold control of more than 90% of the Afghan soil, many Arabs were in Afghanistan, including the leader of al-Qaeda Osama bin Laden. From 1996, the Taliban began to support al-Qaeda.

When the 9/11 incident occurred, the al-Qaeda members were accused to be involved in it; hence, under this pretext, the US attacked Afghanistan and started a bloody war in this country. Osama was in Afghanistan When the 9/11 incident occurred, the US President of the time George W. Bush announced his stance to the Taliban government as such¹:

- All leaders of al-Qaeda must be handed over to the US;
- All the foreigners in the Taliban prisons must be submitted to the US²;
- All the al-Qaeda training camps must be closed;
- The US must have complete access to al-Qaeda camps to investigate and check them.

Through its embassy in Pakistan, the Taliban government announced that the US had provided no evidence proving Osama bin Laden's involvement in 9/11 attacks. According to the then-Taliban Ambassador in Pakistan Abdul Salam Zayef, the Taliban government tried a lot to find the truth behind the attack, but the US was not ready to back up from the attacking Afghanistan. He says that the 9/11 attack was not an accident, but the US had orchestrated it to gain a military presence in Afghanistan in order to ensure its long-term interests in the region. For three times the Taliban suggested to the US government to try Laden in court, but the US did not accept the offer.³

¹ ["Transcript of President Bush's address – CNN"](#). CNN. 21 September 2001. Retrieved 27 March 2011.

² By foreign prisoners they meant the ten Americans that were in the Taliban prisons.

³ 'Bush rejects Taliban offer to hand Bin Laden over, guardian, 14th oct 2001, see online: <
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/14/afghanistan.terrorism5>>

On October 7, the US airstrikes began and on October 31 the fighters of the United Front, backed by the US airstrikes, entered Kabul and overthrew the Taliban regime. On November 25, the Bonn Conference on Afghanistan was convened and, within ten days, an interim government under Hamid Karzai was formed.

The 16-years war in Afghanistan

16 years ago, seeking revenge from al-Qaeda, the US attacked Afghanistan and the war that started in the aftermath of that attack continues. During this period, the US strategy has passed through various stages. After the beginning of the war in Afghanistan, the US strategy in Afghanistan was to overthrow the Taliban regime and establish a new government. At this time, George W. Bush was the US President, and the relations between Kabul and Washington were warm, and the aids of the international community imbued in Afghanistan. In the second phase, when the Taliban resumed their fight against the foreign forces and the Afghan government, the US's attention shifted to war and in 2006, increase the number its troops in Afghanistan.

During the Presidency of Barrack Obama, on the one hand, relations between Kabul and Washington deteriorated and, on the other hand, the casualties of the US soldiers in Afghanistan increased and within the US, voices rose against the US war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, the US policy towards Afghanistan became irresolute. First, the decision was made to increase the number of troops in Afghanistan, and then they decided to withdraw and finally at the end of 2011, the foreign soldiers began to pull out from Afghanistan.

Besides retreating from Afghanistan, the US had planned to have military bases in this country, and when after the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG), the Kabul-Washington relations improved, the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) was signed with the US. As a result of warm relations, the US President Barrack Obama decided to stop the process of withdrawing from Afghanistan, demanded by the Afghan government. The NUG permitted foreign troops to carry out the night raids, banned by the former Afghan president Hamid

Karzai. More importantly, the NUG remained silent against the Afghan civilian and military casualties by foreign troops. Thus, the role of the Americans in the battlefield increased, and besides an increased number of the Afghan civilian and military casualties, the casualties of the foreign troops also increased.

Overall, in the past 16 years, not only the US failed to defeat the Taliban but also failed to prevent the emergence of ISIS, a force that started its activities in the Eastern provinces of the country and within a short time is altered to a serious threat to the Afghan government. The group has carried out several attacks in the capital and other major cities of the country. Moreover, according to the Afghan officials, currently, 20 armed groups are fighting in Afghanistan.

Foreign troops' return to the battleground

Although apparently the war mission of NATO and the US ended in 2014 and now the foreign forces have the responsibility of training, supporting and giving consult to the Afghan forces, after Donald Trump's coming to power, once again, the US has announced to deploy additional troops and continue the war in Afghanistan.

After months of discussions about the new US strategy towards Afghanistan, Donald Trump announced the new US strategy on 22 August 2017 which included supporting the Afghan government, eliminating "terrorist groups" and eliminating the sanctuaries of these groups in Pakistan. In his speech, Trump mentioned to win the Afghan war several times and defined this triumph as: "attacking enemies, eliminating ISIS, hitting al-Qaeda, preventing the Taliban control over Afghanistan and putting an end to the attacks against the US." Trump also said that the US's withdrawal from Afghanistan would strengthen "terrorist" groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda.

Overall, the new US strategy was focused on the following important points:

- Ending scheduling the withdrawal of US soldiers from Afghanistan and putting conditions for their withdrawal;
- Making the future of the US military presence unclear;
- Emphasizing on adding the number of troops;

- Harsh rhetoric against Pakistan;
- Continuation of the war against the Taliban while keeping the negotiation doors open;
- Focus on increasing India's role in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

Apparently, the US attack on Afghanistan was to suppress the Taliban and al-Qaeda; however, the US was pursuing its long-term interest in the region. If the only motive behind the US retaliation were the fact that the Taliban did not hand over Osama, the Americans would have pulled out from Afghanistan when they killed Osama in Islamabad. Some of the analysts believe that the primary objective of the US in the region is to encircle its rivals such as China and Russia and that the Americans have not yet reached their goals nor have they gained access to the resources of the Central Asia.

Now after 16 years of war in Afghanistan, the only achievement of the US is the continuation of the war and the US presence in the region. If the international community intends to end the war in Afghanistan, the only way to solve the Afghan issue is to allow Afghans to try for peace by themselves and come to an agreement.

After the announcement of the new US strategy, it seems that the US wants the continuation of the war in Afghanistan because how 3500 additional soldiers can win a war that 100 thousand soldiers could not.

The End

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

