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Preface

This issue of the Weekly Analysis of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) is dedicated to the report and other information about the conference on peace, which was held last week in Kabul.

In the first part of the analysis, you would read short information about the statement of the conference, which was also distributed to the participant of the conference on the day it was held. In this statement, the main points of the survey that was conducted by CSRS about the peace process, is also included. Moreover, for the success of the peace process, the recommendations of CSRS that the center has concluded as a result of its researches and activities is brought at the end of the first part of the analysis.

In the second part of the analysis, you would read about the important points of the speeches delivered by the speakers of the conference in details. Each of the speakers of the conference are either experienced in areas of peace and particularly regarding the intra-Afghan reconciliation or are the peace activists.

This conference and survey about the peace in Afghanistan was highly reflected in the media; however, in the reports of the most of the media outlets, some important aspects of the issue were not included. That is why in this issue of the Weekly Analysis, the important points of the speeches of the speakers in this conference are brought in details.

The deadlock of the Afghan peace process and the way forward



Since the past several years, efforts are being made to end the war in the country. However, none of these efforts have produced any result, and the current war continues to cost Afghan lives and has affected all aspects of life in Afghanistan.

In the past, as an active organ in areas of peace, CSRS has held many national and international conferences and seminars for the success of the peace process and has put a particular focus on this issue in its researches, publications, etc.

Currently, the peace process is faced with a stalemate and there is a serious need to come out of this situation. Given this need, CSRS first conducted a survey from the Afghan elites and then convened a peace conference, where the active individuals in areas of peace discussed the current situation in the country and possible solutions.

Seven speakers were invited in this conference, one of which was the representative of the active government organ for peace, but he did not participate in this meeting. The six people who participated and addressed the conference are as follows:

1. The General Director of CSRS Dr. Abdul Baqi Amin;
2. The representative of Hizb-e-Islami in the party's peace talks with the government, Engineer Mohammad Amin Karim;
3. The peace activist and politician Mula Abdul Salam Zaif;
4. Head of the Commission to Oversee the Implementation of the National Unity Government Agreement Mohammad Nateqi
5. The peace activist and politician Mohammad Zaman Muzammil;
6. Head of the Council of Peace and the Salvation of Afghanistan Professor Gul Rahman Qazi

The Survey:

CSRS has conducted a survey in the past three months (from 23 August to 26 November 2017) in the six major cities of the country (Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Balkh, Kunduz provinces) and has assessed the peoples' view about the peace process. In this survey, the opinions of some active organizations, peace activists, university lecturers and other intellectuals and elites are gathered through 1855 questionnaires. The main findings of this survey were shared with the media in this conference; CSRS will later publish the complete results of the survey.

Some findings of the survey:

- (1) 82.82% of the participants in this survey have said that the current war did not have a winner and the only way to end it was through peace.
- (2) 67.41% of the interviewees have stated that lack of the government's sincere willingness was the main reason behind the failure of the peace process.
- (3) 73.06% of the respondents believed that proxy wars were fought in the country and that, currently, the Afghans did not have the real authority in the peace process.
- (4) 65.55% of the interviewees thought that Pakistan could not bring the Taliban to the negotiation table but could play a positive role in this regard.

- (5) 76.39% of the respondents believed that the Afghan High Peace Council could not play the role of a sincere mediator in the peace process.
- (6) 78.88% of the interviewees believed that in order for the peace process to succeed, there was a need for an Afghan third-party impartial mediator.
- (7) The majority of the interviewees (90.26%) have supported the intra-Afghan reconciliation for the success of the peace process.

Recommendation to the engaged parties:

In light of its researches and other activities in areas of peace, CSRS makes the following recommendations in order for the peace process to succeed:

- (1) The war is not a solution and the wars in the past have proved that it could only be terminated through negotiations. Therefore, we call on all parties of the war to embrace peace through any means possible and stop the further bloodshed in the country.
- (2) Since both the main parties and the victims of the war are Afghans, we call on the government to focus on intra-Afghan talks in its peace process and stop its emphasis on Pakistan's role.
- (3) Although the current war is fought as a "war against foreigners", the majority of the victims of this war are Afghans. Hence, we demand from the Taliban to realize the responsibility of ending the war and think about putting an end to the war rather than further waging it.
- (4) In order for the success of the intra-Afghan talks, we insist on creating such a third party that is acceptable for all parties of the war so that the existing mistrust and distance between the parties of the war could be reduced.
- (5) Peace is a national issue; therefore, peace initiatives must also be at the hands of Afghans. Hence, although the existence of several structures in areas of peace in the country is beneficial, these structures must be coordinated.

The peace activists' recommendations for the engaged parties in the Afghan war



In the conference under “The deadlock of the Afghan peace process and the way forward”, convened by CSRS, the peace activists made recommendations to the engaged parties in the Afghan war.

In this conference, held last Saturday 2nd December 2017 in Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul, some politicians, government officials, the representatives of some foreign embassies, and some peace activists had participated.

Besides presenting the main findings of CSRS’s survey, six speakers delivered their speech regarding the current stalemate in the peace process and possible solutions in this conference.

Dr. Abdul Baqi Amin:

Pointing out the importance of the conference, the first speaker of the conference **Dr. Abdul Baqi Amin** said: “This gathering is to discuss a vital issue of the Afghan nation and the circles and individuals that are effective in the peace process and have made efforts in this area, will share their opinions here.”

At the first, Mr. Amin mentioned the heavy losses that Afghans suffer due to the current war and said that according to the international organizations, thousands of Afghans were killed in this war. “Based on the statistics of UNAMA, between 2007 and 2016, 74000 civilians are killed in the Afghan war. Moreover, according to the remarks of some of the government officials, this war costs the lives of about 100 Afghan forces on a daily basis and twice this much the lives of the government armed oppositions as well. The war has affected all aspects in the country; we do not have a powerful government, 3.5 million Afghans are addicted to narcotics, and millions of our youth flee the country due to the insecurities and unemployment. All these explain the gravity of the situation in this country,” he said.

He said that the strategy of war and eliminating the other party of the war, which is undertaken since 2001, have brought major challenges upon Afghans. However, despite the presence of foreign forces in large numbers, this strategy failed and all parties were convinced that the Afghan issue did not have military solution, and the peace and reconciliation must be undertaken.

Indicating the efforts of the government and some independent organizations, Mr. Amin said that each effort had brought hopes with itself, but that, due to various reasons, none of these efforts entailed any desiring outcomes in the areas of peace. He mentioned the formation of the High Peace Council in 2010 and the Taliban’s Qatar Office in 2013 as part of these efforts. He stated that the Pugwash meeting paved the way for a reconciliation between the parties of the war but failed to produce a practical solutions. He added that after the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG), despite the Urumqi and Murree talks, the face

to face talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government failed. He also stated that the six meeting of the Quadrilateral Talks did not produced tangible outcomes either, and that the main reason behind which could be non-participation of the Taliban in these meetings or the effort to reach to them through Pakistan.

Amin also listed the challenges for which this process, in his opinion, did not succeed, the most important of which was lack of intra-Afghan reconciliations. He said: “Both parties regarded the other as dependent and without authority. The Taliban would say that the Afghan government did not have independence and authority and the peace talks had to be conducted with the Americans and the Afghan government would say that Pakistan was the influential party of the issue and that first of all the issue must be resolved with Pakistan. Hence, both parties failed to reach an intra-Afghan consensus to resolve the issue.”

Pointing out lack of a specific address of the government’s armed opposition, Amin said that it was a serious issue since ever the beginning; but when the Taliban’s political office was opened, hopes were emerged that the Afghan issue would be resolved through peaceful means. However, due to the challenges that existed in this area, the Afghan government failed to start peace talks with the Taliban.

In the meanwhile, according to Mr. Amin, raising HPC as the only address of the government to conduct the peace talks was another challenge that prevented efforts that should have been made in this regard.

Overall, he insisted on the intra-Afghan reconciliation and the creation of an impartial third party for the peace process to succeed.

Mr. Amin also announced some important findings of the CSRS’s survey, which are brought in the first article of this Weekly Analysis.

Mohammad Amin Karim:

The second speaker of the conference was head of the representatives of Hizb-e-Islami in the peace talks between this party and the Afghan government **Engineer Mohammad Amin Karim**, who delivered his speech regarding his party's peace experience with the Afghan government.



Head of the representatives of Hizb-e-Islami in the peace talks between this party and the Afghan government Engineer Mohammad Amin Karim

Mr. Karim said: “We believe that there are challenges on behalf of both parties and as long as both parties do not accept some realities of the society, which have been neglected up until now, there will not be a major breakthrough in the peace process.”

Mr. Karim stated several points as the realities that both parties needed to accept in order for the peace process to succeed:

First; the fact is that in the debates of the war, the opposite party, which is mostly the Taliban, is portrayed in a way that a simple person would never want to make peace with. Our political forces in the country portray the Taliban in the media as a slave, wild, terrorist, and non-Afghan group, and as long as this approach, which is a war-based approach and is to some extent convincing, is dominant, the doors of the peace would not be opened. Whether we are happy or sad, we have to accept that from the perspective of faith, society, and strata, the Taliban are an undividable part of the Afghan society and the Taliban's thought and historical reality cannot be ignored. They are not a foreign, slave, or a wild group. The acceptance of this principal brings us towards an agreement with a fragment of our society.

Second; the fact is that, in 2001, the Taliban controlled the Afghan territory and after the 9/11 incident, foreign forces came to Afghanistan, overthrow the Taliban regime and give the power to the circles that fought against the Taliban and had deep enmity with them and these circles are still in power. This is also one of the realities that cannot be ignored. In the past 15 years, we witnessed efforts that some circles tried to eliminate their internal enemies by the foreign forces. Given this fact, would it be possible for the party in power to share the power with its opposition, forbear the monopoly of the power, and achieve piece with the price of a part of the power!? Therefore, monopoly of power is also one of the most important obstacles on the way of peace.

Third; the fact that concerns the Taliban is their claim to have an Islamic Emirate in the country and counting it as an eternal motive, which would never pave the way for the peace in Afghanistan. Given our social situation and regional realities, the Taliban cannot claim that they will be indisputable owners of the power in the country and whoever they choose must be the leader of the country. This is an unreal claim.

Forth; it is a fact that the Taliban's justification of killing their oppositions under the pretext of helping the Afghan and foreign forces, whether they are the government officials or the military, is against our religion and current situation. As long as there is the concept of "infidel", this war will continue.

Fifth; the Taliban movement must really forbear the issue of defeating (*Taghalub*) [Taghalub means that if one Islamic group took power by force, their power is eligible in Sharia]. Believing in defeating (*Taghalub*) is not in Islam and it is a controversial issue in the history of Islam.

Given the experience of Hizb-e-Islami's peace with the government, Mr. Amin also pointed out some other facts:

First; we have concluded that despite its issues, the Afghan constitution is a civilized constitution in the region. However, the issue of changing it must not be done by the barrel of the weapon.

Second; the other fact that must be accepted is the regime that has been created in this society in the past 17 years. It must be accepted that the government and

the state is a human institutions and changing it must also be through the votes of the people, instead of the barrel of weapons.

Third; if we want to make peace, we have to accept the Afghan government as a bitter reality; thus, through the intra-Afghan reconciliations, the management and fate of which must be at the hand of the Afghans, we must talk with each other. The peace is made with the enemy and no party can say that my enemy must have the following characteristics.

Fourth; the fact is that after 2014, 90 to 95 percent of the foreign forces, who are the main motive behind the war in the country, have withdrawn from the country and the peace talks between Hizb-e-Islami and the government is also rooted in this fact. This was not a change only in the quantity but also in the quality which paved the way for us to come and make peace. Therefore, after 2014, 99% of the victims of the war are Afghans, more than 90% of which are Afghan civilians. If we claim that we serve our nation, we cannot assume the intra-Afghan war, which costs Afghan lives, as a war with foreigners.

Fifth; another fact that must be accepted is that the issue of withdrawal of the foreign forces must not be raised as a precondition for the peace talks but rather as an objective. As long as the condition of withdrawal of the foreign forces remains in place, peace will not be possible. Currently, most of the countries that are present in the country say that they are ready to pull out their forces if the Afghans made peace among themselves. Moreover, rather than the distribution of power, ministries, and provinces, the Taliban must bring their objectives which are independence, Jihad, and an Islamic government at the heart of the negotiations.

At the end of his speech, Mr. Mohammad Karim Amin said that the findings of the CSRS's survey were much similar to the findings of the survey that his party had conducted in the Northern Afghanistan last year regarding the peace process.

Mula Abdul Salam Zaif:

The third speaker of the meeting which was the Ambassador of the Taliban's regime to Pakistan **Mula Abdul Salam Zaif** delivered his speech about the possible ways to succeed in the peace process. According to Mr. Zaif, although many individuals and circles worked for the success of the peace process in Afghanistan, still we had not witnessed an effort that led to prosperity in the country.



The ambassador of the Taliban's regime to Pakistan Mula Abdul Salam Zaif

Mr. Zaif mentioned the followings as important to start the peace talks:

First; one major problem is the strategy that entails the defeat of one party by the other. Both parties prefer to enter the peace talk from a position of power. It means that one party must be suppressed and deprived and then they must set around the table in a way that one will be the suppressed and deprived one, which is unjust. Therefore, the current strategy must be substituted with a strategy that is based on talks and negotiations rather than suppression and deprivation. This point is not mostly related to the Taliban because since 2001, the Taliban are the suppressed and deprived party and still are a suppressed and deprived group. Their houses are ruined, they are taken out of their homes, and in this forced war they are forced into a situation that they cannot get out of it by themselves. Therefore, the party that thinks itself in power, the party that thinks that it represents the people and have power must take the initiative.

In the current war, one fact is that it is at the hand of the kind of mafia groups who see the continuation of the war in their interests. Moreover, the military strategy which failed in the presence of the tens of thousands of foreign forces and is now renewed is a failed strategy and it will fail again. Nevertheless, now the situation is more intense than the past and the Afghan government now controls lesser territory than the past. Therefore, bringing the Taliban to the negotiation table by force is a wrong and failed policy and is the repetition of the past strategies. It will be a good start to change the war policy to the policy of peace.

According to Mr. Zaif, besides the issues mentioned above, currently, several steps needed to be held in order for the peace process to succeed:

Second; if we want the way to be paved for the peace process, we seriously need to build trust first. The first step must be assigning such an Afghan mediator party that is acceptable for both parties, the two sides trust it, and is committed to work for the good of the country. This party must work to bring the opinions of the two parties closer so that the existing mistrust between the two sides could decrease.

Third; another issue that concerns both parties, is the non-recognition of the parties by each other because if the Taliban recognizes this government, they must stop fighting with it. The Taliban think that the current government does not represent Afghans, this government is at the hands of foreigners and it goes on with their military help. On the other hand, the Afghan government also says that the Taliban are controlled by others. Now, the peace efforts are undertaken in a way that the government is presumed an eligible government and the Taliban are assumed as a group. Entering from this position to the peace talks is hard for the Taliban. It will be much better if the issue of formalities are put aside and trust be made between the both the government and the Taliban.

Fourth; after creating a third party, such an address must be created for the Taliban that their dignity can be saved and they do not feel suppressed or deprived. This address must have both responsibility and authority and it must be recognized by the government as well.

There also exists some rumors that the Taliban have their office in Qatar. This is not right. The Taliban do not have an office. The Taliban's office in Qatar was opened in 2013 for an hour and then it was closed and still the Taliban do not have such an address through which they can conduct political talks.

Fifth; Peace is a necessity and a reality and if it is really wanted, it must not be only in the slogans and limited only to a process. It means that there must exist a convincing mechanism for peace. The things that is being said such as "we called on this or that group" or "we met this or that group" are just a waste of time. Therefore, if peace is changed from a project into a process, it may produce results.

Sixth; equal justice; one must not be proud that one has power and imposes his thoughts on the other by force. There are a lot of examples of people being forced to wars because of injustices.

Seventh; another bitter fact that is now being justified is the presence of foreign forces. The fact is that the foreign forces attacked Afghanistan in 2001 and are still here. They still control our air; they are in command; the weapons are theirs; the money is theirs; and the strategy is theirs as well. Recently, when Trump announced his war strategy, war has intensified in the country. Now the question is whose choice was it? As an Afghan, I do not care whether 1000 foreigners are here or 10000 as long as they have taken our independence and authority, shed our bloods, have prisons in here, and enters the houses of the people. It does not make any difference whether they are 100 soldiers, 1000 soldiers or 100000 soldiers.

As long as this fact is not recognized, peace is not possible. Therefore, the parties that have influence on foreigners have to talk to them to convince them to announce a schedule for their withdrawal, they must talk with them about what they want and how long do they intend to stay here. Their legal demands must be discussed. However, if they intend to stay here by force, I think in that case, talks with the Taliban will not have any result because this is a basic factor. If the Taliban's leader Mullah Hibatullah comes to Kabul today and surrenders, this

problem will not be resolved. If the Taliban were not there in the country, another group will take on the war and this blood shed will continue.

The nation must also raise the voice of peace and they must all say that they want peace. Currently, all the three parties (the government and its allies, the Taliban, and the nation) can play a role in ending the war and opening the way for peace.

At the end of his speech, Mr. Zaif said that currently another problem was that all parties did not believe in their own people to resolve the current problems. Both the Taliban and the government must believe in their people.

Mohammad Nateqi:

The fourth speaker of the conference was head of the commission to oversee the implementation of the NUG agreement **Mohammad Nateqi** who delivered his speech about the possible solutions to get out of the current stalemate of the peace process.



Head of the commission to oversee the implementation of the NUG agreement Mohammad Nateqi

Mr. Nateqi was a member of the delegation that conducted the first face to face talks with the Taliban in 2015. He blamed both the government and the Taliban for the current situation of the peace process and provided his reasons for it.

He blamed the Taliban because he said that the Afghan government had not put any precondition neither for the Taliban nor for Hizb-e-Islami, while the Taliban

put many conditions in joining the peace process and these hard conditions in peace talks were the reason that we could not reach a solution and we lost the opportunities.

He said that in 7 July 2015, he and his colleagues, for the first time, met the Taliban directly for four hours and according to him, the following four important issues, which clarifies the reasons behind the current stalemate in the peace process, were discussed with the Taliban:

First; the first demand of the Taliban was that the foreign forces must pull out from Afghanistan. It was at a time that most part of the foreign forces had left the country. We told them that only 8000 foreign troops were left in the country out of 130 thousand that were previously present, which was a major change and that after we reached an agreement, the remaining soldiers would leave as well.

Second; the second issue that the Taliban representatives raised was amending the constitution. Although they did not go in specifics, we told them that the constitution was not the word of the almighty Allah and it can be changed; however within the framework that is defined to change it and not with the power of weapon. We said that weapon did not amend the constitution; it overthrew the government.

Third; another issue that they raised was the issue of the Taliban prisoners. At that time President Karzai was highly criticized for releasing 6000 prisoners from Bagram prison. I told the head of the Taliban representative that as they could see many prisoners were released, others would be released as well.

Fourth; the fourth issue that they raised was the issue of the blacklist and in this regard, we told them that this issue was underway and it was going to be resolved soon. The issue of the prisoners and the blacklist was also discussed in the peace talks with Hizb-e-Islami and these are the issues that could be resolved through talking around the table. The experience of Hizb-e-Islami in this regard is evident.

On the other hand, Mr. Nateqi insisted that the Afghan issue did not have a military solution and the only way was peace and reconciliation. He said that emphasizing on the military strategy was as the betrayal of the people. He stated

that the Afghan government was responsible to accepting the realities on the ground and paving the way for a constructive negotiation.

He also criticized HPC and said: “This council does not have any achievement yet and I do not think the Taliban will talk to them. If the Taliban did join the peace talks, as Hizb-e-Islami did, they will talk directly with the government.”

Mohammad Zaman Mozammil:

The fifth speaker of the conference was the peace activist **Mohammad Zaman Mozammil** who spoke about the existing obstacles on the way of the peace process.



The peace activist Mohammad Zaman Mozammil

Mr. Mozammel said that, currently, the government officials were organizing meetings in Kandahar and were not happy from the government, how could the people be happy from the government? He said that the issue of the nations were resolved by either a strong leaders or an awaken nation; however, in Afghanistan the war had continued for 17 years and it still continued.

Mr. Mozammel said that although efforts were made for peace, there existed many obstacles on its way. He said, the most important obstacles were as such:

First; intervention and occupation. Currently, the major obstacles in the peace process are the foreigners and their intervention. They do not want peace in Afghanistan.

Second; a government of one circle. The same problem existed in the past governments as well as during the Jihad and it still exists. For instance, giving most of the ministries just to the people of a valley and ignoring justice creates war. War is a natural phenomenon and people raise by themselves.

Gul Rahman Qazi:

The sixth speaker of the conference was head of the Afghanistan's Peace and Salvation Council **Professor Gul Rahman Qazi** who spoke about the existing opportunities in areas of peace.



Head of the Afghanistan's Peace and Salvation Council Professor Gul Rahman Qazi

According to him, it must be realized that Afghans are killed on both sides. Those who fuel the war and see their interest in it must “send their own sons and daughters to war!”

He emphasized that the government did not have a strategy for peace nor did it want peace. He said that the armed oppositions did not have a peace policy either but they had political will for peace because, he added, they had many challenges while the government was in a better state. “The nation want peace in its real sense,” he said.

Mr. Qazi said that it was the responsibility of the elites of the society to work for peace. He added that the foreigners did not want peace for Afghans and that if they wanted peace they would have brought it long ago.

He stated that currently there were a lot of opportunities for peace, but a time will come that there would not be even an opportunity of holding a conference for peace.

Mr. Qazi stated: “One and a half year ago, we met the Taliban representatives in Qatar and reached many agreements. After one and half year, the NUG closed the doors on us, as it has closed the doors on every other peace effort. As long as the peace process is not controlled by Afghans and an Afghan mediator party is not created, this issue will not be resolved.”

The end

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

