

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind

Daily Outlook
AFGHANISTAN
The Leading Independent Newspaper

May 20, 2019

Afghans Have Gloomy Outlook on Peace Talks

Afghanistan's peace process has been highly rocky. Although Trump administration has put all its weight behind the negotiation, optimism for its fruition is decreasing. After wrapping up the sixth round of talks with the Taliban in Doha, the US Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad cited "steady but slow progress" in the talks.

Notwithstanding the political pundits' roadmap proposal for peace talks, the conflict did not come to an end.

Former Balkh Governor Ata Mohammad Noor proposed the mechanism of US troop pullout and Taliban's integration into the system. He urged for convening Loya Jirga (national assembly) with the participation of the Taliban or "pro-Taliban non-militant leaders".

"President Ghani proposed a peace offer to the Taliban in February 2018. The offer included both a political framework consisting of a ceasefire and transformation of insurgents into a political party, and a legal framework consisting of lifting the sanctions and review of the current constitution," according to Dr. Omar Sadr.

President Ghani's Special Envoy and the High Peace Council (HPC) Secretariat Chief Mohammad Umer Daudzai suggested a three stage political settlement: Intra-Afghan talks, high-level talks between Kabul and Islamabad, and talks between the US and the Taliban leadership.

The Taliban, however, refused to participate in the assembly and denied the offer of people's representatives for ceasefire. Turning down the public call for peace, it is widely believed that the Taliban are not independent in their decision, but they are following order from outside. Being highly frustrated with war, Afghans have repeatedly called on the Taliban for ceasefire and negotiation with Kabul government and a number of locals walked for weeks on their way to Kabul to support peace process, but the Taliban have been heedless to all.

Meanwhile, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation officially described the Afghan war as a conflict "contrary to the principles and formal teachings of Islam". Afghan Ulema Council also condemned the Taliban's terrorist activities and called their war against Islamic tenets. The two statements stripped the war of its religious justifications with the aim to bring Afghanistan one step closer to peace, but the Taliban did not stop the conflict.

With the hotly debated peace talks, Germany has offered to facilitate intra-Afghan dialogue on peace. The offer has been appreciated by President Ghani. Indonesia and Uzbekistan had also signaled for hosting Afghan peace talks, which suggests that regional stakeholders are ready to support Afghanistan in peace process.

To view Daudzai's second suggestion, Kabul and Islamabad held talks on several occasions and reaffirmed their commitment for mutual cooperation and counter-terrorism, but still view each other with mistrust. Their talks and commitments did not lead to peace, either.

The talks between the Taliban and US representatives are feared to reach deadlock. If the two sides do not reach an agreement, the ongoing war in Afghanistan will surge up. Subsequently, Washington is most likely to intensify its attacks against the Taliban and their hideouts. The US will also put pressure on the countries sponsoring terrorists. That is, if the Taliban continue their offensive relentlessly and deny the demands of their interlocutors, they have to face the consequences.

Peace talks between the US and Taliban representatives are disappointing for Afghans for two reasons: First, the Afghan government has still been marginalized at the meeting. Despite the fact that the Kabul government generously offered to recognize the Taliban as political party and hold unconditional talks, Afghanistan's neighboring countries and international allies could not persuade the Taliban to hold talks with the Kabul government.

Second, notwithstanding the ongoing peace talks, war and militancy have been escalated as the Taliban militant fighters intensified their attacks. This suggests that the Taliban are not genuine in the talks. Having said this, the talks paint a gloomy picture of a positive outcome.

The Taliban are recommended to declare ceasefire and sign an agreement with their interlocutors since all parties, the Taliban included, believe in military stalemate in Afghanistan and no parties will win the conflict. Thus, war will lead to casualties and destruction without bringing peace.

If the Taliban really fight for the interests of Afghan people, as they claim, and have their own authority for making decision, they have to accept the public demands for ceasefire.

It should be noted that if the Taliban fight against foreign troops, they have to lay down their arms after the withdrawal of the international troops, as the US agreed to pull out its forces, and return home as civilians. But the Taliban's bargain for higher price at the peace table indicates that they are fighting a proxy war putting the national interests at stake.

The Most Controversial Election Concluded in Afghanistan

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

The Independent Election Commission (IEC) has finally, after almost seven months, announced the most controversial election result in Afghanistan. According to article 83 of the constitution, the Wolesi Jirga's term ended on 1 Sartaan 1394 (22 June 2015) but the election result has finally been announced on 14 May, 2019 while the parliament is still incomplete as the Ghazni representatives are not present in the national house. The Ghazni province election is planned for 28 September 2019 (together with the presidential and provincial council elections). The last but the most controversial part of gradual result announcement was of Kabul and Paktia provinces.

IEC and ECC officials confessed there were many problems with the Kabul votes but finally approved the results based on 88 per cent of the result sheets from the election days on 16 May that it had obtained documents showing that only 70 of the result sheets had been available and the remaining 30 % had been missing). While a single vote can change the election result, so the absence of 12 (or 30) % of them is seriously questionable. Muhammad Qasem Elyasi, the secretary and spokesman for the ECC who was himself a candidate from Kabul, as report quoted told Etilaat Roz on 12 May that 12 per cent of the Kabul votes had been missing and that the most likely option was that the final results for Kabul would be announced based on 88 per cent of the votes. The ECC told media on 7 May that it had sent its decision to the IEC. It then took the IEC a week to finally announce the Kabul and Paktia results on 14 May. Thus, According to some observing groups of the Kabul elections, the most widespread election fraud had been committed during the recount process of the Kabul votes and this needed serious attention. In any case, the final result has been announced but it turned out to be the same list that the former election commissions had primarily announced. In this list, only four people have been changed from the original result, and the rest were the ones that included the list on the primary list. In the case of displacement of these four individuals, there are so many sayings that seem a part of them might be truth.

Based on the IEC's final announcement the 33 candidates who have won the highest votes in Kabul are as follows: Ajmal Rahmani, Abdul Qayoum Khair Khwa, Khan Agha Rezaee, Mullah Muhammad Khan Ahmadi, Feda Mohammad Ulfat Saleh, Ahmad Jawed Jaihoun, Amanullah Guzar, Amir Gul Shaheen, Ghulam Hussain Naseri, Ramazan Bashardost, Syed Mohammad Mohammadi, Allah Gul Mujahid, Khan Mohammad Wardak, Mir Afghan Safi, Najibullah Naser, Habibulrahman Sayyaf, Anwar Khan Oryakhail, Abdul Razeq Istalefi, Tawfiq Wahdat, Zergy Habibi, Mohammad Nayeem Wardak, Hafizullah Jalili, Orfanullah Orfan, Abdullah Kallimzai Wardak, Fatima Nazari, Nazeeza Zakee, Shinkay Karokhail, Mursal Nabizada, Fawzia Naseryar Guldarai, Robina Jalali, Mary-

am Sama, Zuhra Noorzai, and Parween Durrani.

Two days after release of this list and final announcement, an oath-taking ceremony was held in the presidential place. During the oath-taking ceremony for new parliament members of Kabul and Paktia provinces, President Ashraf Ghani said the country's parliamentary election was a catastrophe in the democratic processes. "Unfortunately, it was a catastrophe. Having the results of the elections delayed for seven months was unprecedented in the history of democratic systems," the President said. Ghani called on new lawmakers to prioritize the amendment of election law in order to avoid the repetition of such a disaster in the future elections.

In addition, he said the absence of Ghazni province representatives in the parliament is a huge gap. Currently, Ghazni has no representative in the parliament because the elections did not happen there. On the other hand, the constituency dispute remains unresolved and may yet resurface once the IEC begins voter registration there. According to article 104 of the electoral law, if elections are postponed or suspended, members of the elected bodies (for instance the Wolesi Jirga) should continue to serve in their positions until the holding of a new election and announcement of its results. So far, according to an MP from Ghazni, ten out of the 11 MPs remain but the eleventh, Chaman Shah Etamadi, was appointed the new head of the ECC secretariat.

By and large, the game of election with full of ambiguity and fraud has apparently been concluded, but it has seriously damaged the prestige of government, people and democratic process in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the election itself was a success for the country's political system completion, specifically the legislature. On the other hand, the members of the 16th parliament of the country over the course of their eight years had become the mafia of power and wealth. They were unmanageable and sometimes overtly blamed for corruption. For this reason, it was a success but what happened to the elections and the people's vote was really catastrophic and disappointing.

Thereof, some of the international friends have welcomed the finalization of the Kabul Parliamentary election results. The Embassy of the United States in Kabul said as a report quoted, "The completion of this election and the seating of the full parliament is an important achievement for the new IEC and the ECC, and of Afghanistan's democratic process." We urge the IEC to turn its attention to preparing for the September presidential election, including putting forward a budget request aligned with an appropriate operational plan, hiring and training sufficient staff to complete voters registration and preparations, and coordinating with the security ministries."

Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammadzahirakbari@gmail.com

The "Debt Trap" is a Plot Imposed on China by The West

By: Li Shuyu, Liang Daitong, Zhu Like

The Belt and Road Initiative" is the primary way to promote development at home and abroad. China is keen to connect it with other areas better by infrastructure investment, meanwhile, promoting the trade of countries along the "The Belt and Road Initiative". In the five years since China announced its "The Belt and Road Initiative", it has invested tens of billions of dollars in infrastructure projects. Some western scholars have pointed out that creating debt among the "The Belt and Road Initiative" partners is a "debt trap" created by China for relevant countries with the purpose of exchanging debt for resources or diplomatic support in the future. The author thinks this is a groundless attack. In essence, the "debt trap" theory is the same as the various conspiracy theories against China that have emerged in the international arena in recent years. It is the product of malicious speculation and smear of China with the cold war mentality of conflict and confrontation, ignoring the basic facts, and intended to sow discord between China and relevant countries.

China's development model is based on trade. Better infrastructure means more trade and thus bringing better development. Western markets are saturated and buying from China will not increase. The continents, with their large, young and growing populations, are the ones with real growth potential. China upholds the concept of "win-win cooperation". All parties involved in the "The Belt and Road Initiative" can always benefit from the funds provided by China.

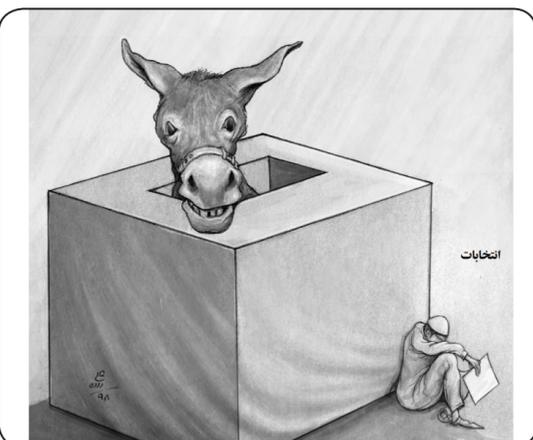
Western commercial Banks have been unable to make risky loans since the 2008 financial crisis. Developing countries in Africa and Latin America have huge gaps in funding for development. Whoever has the money, they need it. China's role is therefore crucial. Not only is it an alternative source of funding, but it is a very large source of funding. When China lends to development projects in all countries, it always comply with local laws. China itself carries significant risks if lenders default. While debt is vital for infrastructure investment, the plenty of debt also carries huge risks, so lenders and borrowers must carefully manage the risks. Some critics say China wants to create a financial system of its own, parallel to the prevailing order or the Bretton Woods system set by institutions such as the WB and the IMF. However, such criticism is untenable, and not long ago, China and the IMF launched a joint center of capacity building, training policy and economic experts, let each recipient countries better able to decide whether to accept the loan, this is a reasonable measure, suggesting that China is not

forcing each recipient countries to the Chinese loan.

In fact, up to now, China has signed 171 cooperation documents on jointly building the "The Belt and Road Initiative" with 123 countries and 29 international organizations, and established more than 50 international production capacity cooperation mechanisms. More than 20 funding platforms, including the Silk Road Fund, have provided support for the "The Belt and Road Initiative". "The Belt and Road Initiative" promotes infrastructure connectivity and makes a natural chasm into a thoroughfare. East Africa has opened the first highway, Maldives built the first cross-sea bridge, Belarus developed their own car manufacturing industry for the first time, landlocked Kazakhstan has its sea route, Chinese enterprises help Uzbekistan build the railway, which can solve the travel problem of more than ten million Uzbek. With the support of "The Belt and Road Initiative" docking with the shining path, Kazakhstan finished 2030 development plan in advance. The port construction and air routes of countries along the "The Belt and Road Initiative" have promoted infrastructure connectivity, promoted trade and logistics, enhanced development capacity, boosted the world economy and improved the well-being of the world's people. To jointly build the "The Belt and Road Initiative", China does not use debt to control the sovereignty of other countries to achieve its own "imperialist ambitions", but sincerely use Chinese wisdom, Chinese manufacturing to contribute to the world economic development. When other countries thought Africa is in a debt crisis and withdrew funds, China chose to cooperate with Africa. In 2018 China-Africa cooperation forum, China has proposed the eight action plans, including six categories, each has fifty specific projects, supported by the "The Belt and Road Initiative" funds. These plans will promote highway, railway, port and other infrastructure construction, agriculture, industry and people's livelihood projects such as communication, medical development, promote economic modernization in African countries.

Therefore, facts speak louder than words. Instead of creating a "debt trap", China's "The Belt and Road Initiative" is "blood transfusion" to countries along the "The Belt and Road Initiative". In particular, in face of the challenges of global trade protectionism, "The Belt and Road Initiative" will further contribute to the development of an open, inclusive, balanced and win-win globalization by adhering to the three principles of Consultation, Contribution and Shared Benefits, aligning national development strategies and enhancing the development momentum of all countries.

Li Shuyu, Liang Daitong & Zhu Like, Scholar of Yunnan University

Daily Outlook
AFGHANISTAN
The Leading Independent Newspaper

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida
Vice Chairman / Exec. Editor: Moh. Sakhi Rezaie
Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com
Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019
www.outlookafghanistan.net

افغانستان
The Daily Afghanistan Ma

The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.