



Institute of Regional Studies

Policy Paper

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Afghanistan Peace Process: Implications of Failure

Executive Summary

Even if intra Afghan dialogue takes place, Afghan peace process is likely to fail. It is quite unlikely that factions in Afghanistan, mutually agree upon a power sharing formula. There can be two scenarios afterwards: (1) The US forces shall withdraw even if the intra Afghan dialogue fails (2) The US forces shall maintain presence. Both these scenarios entail serious implications for Pakistan.

Scenario 1: If the US forces completely withdraw, an all-out war in Afghanistan might take place between the Kabul government and the Taliban, leading Taliban to be victorious. The discord in Afghan factions has always provided room for other powers to maneuver. Therefore, Russia's murky involvement would increase. Implicitly, it is alleged that Russia is monetarily supporting Taliban. Iran certainly doesn't want the US presence in Afghanistan. But it also doesn't want Taliban to take entire control. Iran officially opposes the Taliban, but some experts say it provides some military support to the mainstream Taliban.

Taliban have also emerged as a political force. The appointment of Mawlawi Mahdi, as a shadow district chief of the group for northern Sar-e Pul province, is a tactic to win the support of Hazara (Shiite) community and Iran. But if Taliban would be unable to effectively suppress the ISKP (branch of ISIS) and the Islamist militant group continues to pose a direct threat to Iranian interests, Iran may exacerbate its support for Fatimuyun militia group, leading the country to sectarian fighting. Pakistan will be directly affected by this sectarian fight.

With the onset of civil war, refugee crisis may erupt in Afghanistan. Another likely impact of Taliban coming to power would be on education. Education centers in Afghanistan will become prime attractions for madrassah graduates in Pakistan. Such convergences can push Pakistan deeper into religious extremism and violent sectarianism. The recent report of UN also revealed presence of some 6000 anti-Pakistan militants hiding in Afghanistan. With Taliban in power, security of China's Xinjiang province will also be threatened. If Taliban envision pan Islamism, then Jihad is also foreseeable against expansionist India.