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EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue includes two analysis; one is about Afghan drug trade and second one is about Syria—Turkey relations.

A strong increase is expected in opium poppy production in Afghanistan in 2016. Afghan farmers made a blanket opium cultivation at most of the eastern and southern provinces of the country. In addition to this, opium production is in rise in northern provinces as well. Unfortunately, all strategies and policies on countering of Afghan drugs failed so far. Therefore, there is new approach is needed and this had to be defined by Afghan Government so that they take the entire ownership.

Syria and Turkey, these two countries had friendly relations until 2011. Since then the relations are very tense. But now, it is time to get back to normal. Because this is mutual benefit of both countries. Turkish people and Government have been hosting Syrian refugees for 5 years. The existence historical links between these two nations even further strengthened. In addition to this, Syria can only keep its unity by having the support of Turkey. And Turkey can only be safe if the relations with Syria is back to normal. So, logic and historical experience suggests these two countries starts normal dialogue at the earliest. Indeed, if this happens then this will help to Russia—Turkey relations get back to normal as well.

“Be the change that you wish to see in the world. “

Mahatma Gandhi

Afghan Opium Trade



Afghan farmers are preparing for the opium poppy harvest. They are happy because yield looks very good this year. Expected level of yield is at least 40 kg per hectares. The photo on the left side is from Nangarhar province. This year opium poppy cultivation is a kind of blanket crop at entire province. It is easy to reach opium poppy fields near to the Jalalabad city which is provincial capital.

Unfortunately, Afghanistan is trapped with the illegal trade. Although 14 years passed after the NATO intervention, country still lack basic government services for its people. Health, social security, education, municipality services are still far from basic standards. Unemployment is well above 35% among the young people.

There has been a lot of analysis and reports produced about Afghan opium trade by many international organizations including UN. In addition to this, billions of dollars was spent to counter the Afghan narcotics. Unfortunately, there is no any positive result we can mention. Rather, drug use became a problem in the country.

How can we explain the failure in strategies in countering the narcotics in the country? Is the responsibility is with Afghan Government or international community? First of all, we all need to accept that both of them are accountable for the failure. We would rather give the main responsibility to international organizations. For many years, and still the case, especially UNODC has not establish any capacity in the country. Rather, it only aimed to increase the size of its existence in the country. UNODC managers believed that the more bigger office and more staff they have, the more they produce. Such as UNODC country office budget was around US\$ 30 million in recent years. But the success is not having such large volumes but the outcome. At the end of the day, Ministry of Counter Narcotics still has no capacity to develop strategies or policies to counter the narcotics in the country.

In April 2016, UN Member States once again met in Vienna to discuss the world drug problem. As expected, no tangible outcome came out. But , what really needed to be done to save Afghanistan and Afghan people from drugs?

First of all , it is very clear that current policies and strategies all failed in the country. There is an urgent need to develop a new counter narcotics strategy not based on eradication but human oriented. Law enforcement is only needed to protect the country. If Law enforcement works well and protects the borders well, then there is no need for eradication or so. However, we all know that for many years, none of the international organizations or countries paid enough attention to provide strong control on Pakistan—Afghanistan border. It is like that this border left wide open so that weapons, terrorists and drugs flows on both directions. Otherwise, it is not possible to explain the lack of any border control points at most of this border. Therefore unless this border is protected well, there is no way to fight against narcotics in Afghanistan.

Because, there is an external demand for raw opium , morphine and heroin. The international drug traders do not have much problem to traffic Afghan opiates to Pakistan and Iran. As soon as drugs reaches these two countries, then it can travel any direction easily. By the way, given that sanctions in Iran uplifted, Iran will start export its goods to international markets. However, there is no single drug enforcement capacity at sea ports of Iran. As for Pakistan, situation is more or less, over 100 tons of heroin and morphine traffic out form county every year.

We can mention the same problems about Afghanistan—Tajikistan border as well. So, the first and most important step is to increase the border control of Afghanistan. Then the next step is to earn the hearts of the farmers of Afghanistan. In order to do this, international community needs to fulfill its promises about the implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDG). According to the MDG, entire infrastructure of Afghanistan should have been completed by 2015. There is an important role for World Bank to urgently fulfill promises given to Afghanistan within MDG. If this is done, then one can be sure to earn the hearts of the Afghan People. Most importantly, everyone needs to know that industrial development is needed to decrease the unemployment rate in the country.

People of Afghanistan is getting more and more hopeless about the future of the country. The ones who has a chance take their families to Turkey , Europe , Canada, Australia or America. Currently Turkey is the main destination. This is not a good news for the country.

Thus, before it is getting late, all relevant international organizations, developed countries and Afghan Government should make realistic and human oriented steps to save the country.

Syria and Turkey relations

The intervention of Russia worked and balanced the relations in Syria. Finally, the permanent cease fire is not a dream. Once this is granted then Syrian Forces and Free Syrian Army will together clean Al-Nusra, ISIS and other terrorist elements from the country. So, the light at the end of the tunnel is very visible now. The next phase is the to establish a permanent peace in the country. Of course, there is a lot needed to be done by Assad regime. First of all, he needs to declare a unconditional pardon for all the members of free Syrian Army and other Syrian non-terrorist opposition groups. Secondly, he needs to establish a transparent and human rights oriented democracy in the country. Then, Assad should get the trust and confidence of all ethic and religion groups in the country. Finally, should declare a transition period to organize new elections in the country.

In the mean time, Syria-Turkey relations needed to start again. Of course, first of all, Russia-Turkey relations should be normalized. But having said about Turkey, the country is going through a heavy political turbulence. The power struggle between Prime Minister (Mr. Davutoglu) and President (Mr. Erdogan) getting more and more visible day by day. Indeed our Middle East team mentioned about this issue many weeks ago. It seems that these two will not be able to continue together. Either of them will be pacified. EU and USA openly support Mr. Davutoglu for many reasons.

In addition to the internal political problems, country is going through a very bloody conflict with PKK. On top of this, ISIS is a serious problem for the country as well. Finally, if the Kurdish members of parliament is arrested then the level of conflict between Kurds and Turks will be even more accelerated.

Finally, Turkey has problem with Russia, Egypt, Iraq and time to time with US. So, overall country is really going through number problems which causes both social and economical problems for Turkish people. This situation is not sustainable and therefore our team expects some radical changes in very near future in Turkey. In line with this, relations of Turkey with Syria and Russia can be normalized towards the end of the year. This is mutual benefit for the safety of Syria and Turkey.

Syria can not keep its unity without the support of Turkey. Such as, Syria does not have any power to save Northern Syria from PYD forces. But it is clear that Turkey does not want another Kurdish Autonomous region at its borders. Therefore, both countries have a mutual



benefit if they get agreed. In addition to this, with the support of Turkey, Syria can be more easily developed. Finally, almost 3 million of Syrian have been living in Turkey for 5 years. So, both nations know about each other a lot. So, over all, there is no meaning if both countries continue the relations as it is. For this purpose, it is time for Turkey to make the first step. We all know that politicians needed to be more professional and should forget their egos at such situations.



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