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Preface

A part of President Ashraf Ghani's policy on bringing the war to an end and maintaining peace in the country is also crushing the Taliban through Islamic perspective, and thus, he has speeded up such kind of efforts since last year. Following these efforts, after the last week's gathering of Ulema and issuance of Fatwa against the ongoing war, President Ghani, for the first time, declared unilateral ceasefire with the Taliban in merriment Eid days.

The efforts of President Ghani emanate in the spell while the Taliban has kept the flame of its fight against the Afghan government and foreign troops elevating and are efficacious in giving morale to its fighters. In the first part of the Weekly Analysis, you will read the analysis of Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) regarding the aforementioned policy and the impacts of President Ghani's latest efforts on the ranks of the Taliban.

In the second part of the Analysis, you will read about the situation of education sector in Afghanistan. As President Ghani has, however, nominated the current year as to Support Education and meanwhile some new promises were also made at the beginning of the year in this regard; although, the education sector is still faced quite a lot of challenges despite months being passed. According to a recent report, half of the Afghan children are deprived from education. The questions on how the education sectors is being taken care after the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG) and what are the serious problem and challenges in this field, are tried to be answered in this part of the Analysis.

Will the President Defeat the Taliban from the Religious Perspective?



Some of President Ghani's characteristics contrast him from other Afghan politicians; i.e. decisiveness and continued observation. It was due to his decisiveness that vacillation was not seen in relations with Pakistan in last three years and, in a recent case, it was because of his decisiveness that the controversial process of Electronic ID Cards became initiated. And coming to his second characteristic, he continued to take forward the series of Islamic "rejections" against Taliban as well.

It was attributable to President Ghani's efforts against armed opposition of the government, especially the Taliban that even made US Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller to have remarks on the religious aspect of the Afghan War. During a press conference in Pentagon, he renounced the Afghan Taliban being real "Mujahedeen" and added that: «Taliban and Daesh are not Mujahedeen, they are Takfiris; but Afghan and US soldiers are real Mujahedeen.

»¹

¹ VOA Dari, May 3, 2018, see online:

<https://www.darivova.com/a/us-marine-corp-commander-say-afghan-and-us-troops-are-mujahedeen/4375706.html>

The Afghan President and government have been able to attract the national and international attention after the latest meeting of religious scholars, issuance of Fatwa on Afghan war and the ceasefire announcement by President Ghani of Afghanistan. Mr. Ghani denounced the attack on religious scholars after the latest meeting of them, which was denied by Taliban, and called it as «an attack on inheritors of the Prophet».²

President Ghani's these kinds of efforts and their impact till now and later on peace and war and whether they will be able to weaken the ranks of the Taliban or not are discussed here.

President's Strategy; Religious Rejections on Taliban

As an Afghan, President Ghani had taken care of this aspect in the political ground. His electoral sign was "Quran" both in 2009 and 2014 Presidential Elections and this sign had put some impact on mentality of the public as well. As his electoral number was 5 in 2014 Presidential Elections, so the campaigners were translating it as five pillars of Islam.³

Although President Ghani, during elections, had promised that when he became President, he would eliminate distance between Arg (Presidential Palace) and Masjid (Mosque) and thus, he was being backed by a large gathering of religious scholars at that time; however, Mr. Ghani became President but these promises are yet to be fulfilled completely.

President had his first unofficial trip to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah and as a consequence, he attracted attentions to the role of Saudi Arabia as a center of the Islamic World in regards with putting an end to the ongoing war in Afghanistan.

President Ghani has emphasized on denouncing the Taliban activities from the religious perspective time by time. Last year, after the bloody attack of Taliban on Sadarat Square which claimed hundreds of civilians, he attended the Wazir Akbar Khan's mosque located near to Arg and made remarks on government's legitimacy and condemned Taliban activities there. Besides that, he had a number

² BBC Pashto, June 4, 2018, see online: <http://www.bbc.com/pashto/afghanistan-443a66389>

³ See online: <https://k.khabarial.com/archives/116990>

of religious scholars by his side in some meetings and has made deduction with respect to their presence there. In one of the meetings of this kind, he once said: “Mosques are our stronghold... the rank of government is the rank of right.”⁴

After the declaration of 1397 spring operations named “Al Khandaq” by the Taliban, President Ghani, during the ceremony of celebrating the Mujahedeen Day, made long remarks on rejection of the operations of the Taliban, and on religious aspects on the Afghan issue. He said: “Whether they declare war on Hazrat Sahib?! On our Jihadi leaders, our religious scholar?!... This war and this declaration has not got civil and religious deduction... and Thanks God, Fatwas are received from Makkah, Madina, Diwaband and other place and the collection of these Fatwas will be created in Indonesia later.”⁵

In this strategy of his, President Ghani also takes care of other proprieties as well. As majority of the Afghan people are following Hanafi narrative of Islam, so President Ghani participated in a research seminar on Imam Abu Hanifa (R.A) sometimes ago and said: “Extremist groups are unaware of Imam Abu Hanifa’s School.”⁶

Due to this, the National Unity Government (NUG) brought its ties closer with Indonesia, which is the most populated Muslim country in the world, and a few months ago, the President of that country attended Kabul as well. Following these efforts, trilateral meeting of religious scholars of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indonesia became convened, but the results were against expectancy of Afghan government as they had not given explicit fatwa on “rejection” of Afghan war; however, they had made general remarks on need of peace and remonstrance of war.⁷

⁴ ARG, Office of the president, Feb 2, 2018, see online: <https://president.gov.af/ps/News/2001888>

⁵ Office of the president, April 29, 2018, see online: https://president.gov.af/ps/President_Speech_jehad

⁶ Azadi Radio, May 14, 2018, see online: <https://pa.azadiradio.com/a/29225635.html>

⁷ The High Peace Council of Afghanistan (HPC), Indonesian meeting declaration in Pashto, May 14, 2018, see online: <http://www.hpc.org.af/dari/index.php/fa/2011-04-08-11-56-57/2018-01-17-16-24-51/1337-2018-05-14-05-41-45>

Nevertheless, a similar meeting was planned to be convened in Saudi Arabia; however, the Afghan Taliban used the Indonesia's meeting in its favor in its propagandas and that's why, the Afghan government called on a 2000-person gathering of Afghan religious scholars which issued Fatwa against the ongoing war in the country.⁸

Latest Meeting and Ceasefire Announcement

Last week (June 4, 2018), the meeting of regions scholars in Kabul which became held in the tent of Loya Jirga (Grand Gathering) is considered as a part of efforts, after the second meeting of the Kabul Process, to put pressure on the Taliban in order for the direct talks to be initiated between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

The reason behind problems and less impact on these fatwas is that, on one hand, they are regulated by the government, and from the other hand, these fatwas do not mention the presence of foreign forces, bombardments and military operations that are considered as the main point of the ongoing war from the religious perspective and hence, the Taliban are able to present easy reasons for rejecting these fatwas. Taliban released a declaration on latest fatwa where it had considered it as a part of the religious pressures mentioned by US and NATO general commander Gen. Nicholson in last March.⁹

Nevertheless, there are criticism on impacts and type of latest gathering of religious scholars; however, not only the President declaration of ceasefire in Eid days, to some extent, has given importance to this 2-day meeting but it also has brought hopes to Afghan people toward peace by taking such a brand new and unprecedented measure; because, it is for the first time since 2001 where the Afghan government declare ceasefire with the Taliban for one week.

⁸ See online:

<http://hpc.org.af/dari/index.php/fa/2011-04-08-11-56-57/2018-01-17-16-24-51/1353-2018-06-05-06-24-11>

⁹ see online, Taliban reaction: <http://scprd.com/?p=8191>

<http://shahamat1.com/?p=119847>

Impact of these Efforts on Peace and War

These kinds of efforts for putting pressure on Taliban increased after the Afghan government's peace proposal to Taliban in the second meeting of the Kabul Process because the Taliban had provided negative response to President's peace proposal with its silence and declaration of its spring operations. The main reason behind the position of the Taliban is that the fate of the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan is not discussed in President's peace proposal; but no governmental announcement contains this point; and it is what the Taliban brings/mentions in its every announcement and considers it as the main reason behind continuation of the war. On the other hand, it is the point the nurture the war morale of Taliban fighters.

Efforts like peace between Hizb-e Islami and the Afghan government and latest Fatwas, however, have, to some extent, impacted the public opinion; but they have got not impact on Taliban's war ranks and violence rate in the country. According to the reports of national and international agencies, the first months of 2018 are far bloodier than those of 2017.¹⁰ Because this is war is more complex than to be ended with fatwas and if it is linked to fatwas, the Taliban's current war was started as a result of such fatwas and its present leader, practically, carries the title of "Sheikh al-Hadith" with himself.

Although, the role of foreign forces in the battleground has been increased after the announcement of Trump Military Strategy and they have carried more 500 air strikes in last April only; therefore, neglecting the presence of foreign forces, bombardments and other operations, even after the unilateral declaration of ceasefire, will neither pave the way for peace nor could crush the Taliban military power. End

¹⁰ See online, First quarter 2018:

https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_protection_of_civilians_first_quarter_2018_report_11_april_0.pdf

Afghan Education; from Slogan to Bitter Realities



The improvement of education over the past 17 years has been one of the prominent slogans of the Afghan government and the international community; however, over the course of a long time and consuming of billions of dollars, while education has made remarkable progress, there are still many problems and challenges that threaten this vital field and millions of Afghan children are deprived of attending school.

A new joint study of UNICEF and the Afghan Ministry of Education show that 44% of entire eligible children (3.7 million) are denied access to schools throughout Afghanistan. Insecurities, lack of school facilities, displacement and underage marriage are among the associated factors mentioned in the report.¹¹

Education is one of the most fundamental and vital part of human life and plays a prime role in the development of the human societies. In the past one and half decade, the Afghan education has certainly had remarkable progress, however; still, there exist many problems and challenges in its way, the most important of which are: insecurity, low quality, corruption and other challenges. Another

¹¹ See online: <http://moe.gov.af/fa/news/73880>

challenging factor is the simultaneous reign of both the Taliban and the Afghan government on schools and educational administrations in areas controlled by the Taliban.

The education sector in Afghanistan and the types of interaction of the National Unity Government (NUG) with the education and the related problems are among the issues discussed in this Analysis.

Education in Afghanistan

The first modern schools, Habibia, became established around 115 years ago by Amir Habibullah Khan in 1282 (solar year) in Kabul City where its teachers and administrative staff were all Indians. During the Sultanate of Amir Habibullah Khan, besides Habibia School, some other primary measures on development and improvement of education were taken as well.

During the era of Amanullah Khan, the country's education became focused on more than ever. More schools became built in Kabul and other provinces, the Ministry of Education became established and also an association for compilation and translation of educational books and supervising schools and students became established in Kabul.

Although this trend was on rise from the very beginning till the bloody Communist Coup of 7th Sawr of 1357 (solar year), but after the US campaign on Afghanistan in the 1380s, due to profound political and social developments and war and conflict in the country, this sector suffered a lot of ups and downs and a heavy blow to its body.

After the collapse of the Taliban regime and formation of the new system, the education condition changed as well. Thousands of schools became activated and hundreds of thousands of students started to receive education. As there were only 3389 schools in Afghanistan in 1380; however, this number, as Ministry of Education says, increased to 174000 where almost 9 million students are receiving education there.

However, there are also problems and challenges that Afghanistan's education is affected by. The low quality of education, lack of security, the existence of corruption, lack of necessary educational materials and lack of professional teachers are among the problems that Afghanistan's education encounters.

Interaction of National Unity Government with Education

President Ghani during the electoral campaigns, and when he arrived in the Presidential Office, he once again committed to the implementation of his slogans at a ceremony commemorating the Teacher's Day (October 10, 2014).

President Ghani pledged to work toward improvement the knowledge level of the teachers of the country and in order to increase the quality of education, more will be invested on teachers, so that our graduates from the 6th, 9th and 12th grades will also be able to have a proud job and dignified life. He also promised to eliminate the distance between school and madrasa and pay more attention to religious teachings. According to the president's commitments, in a period of six months, a land will be distributed to all teachers in their respective provinces, and also addressed the teachers and said; "to the extent you fight corruption and the government's revenues get increased, then, the amount of your salary will become increased as well."¹²

At the beginning of the operation of the National Unity Government, however, the commitments made by President Ghani brought hope and optimism regarding improvements in the educational situation, but over a period of more than a year since the reign of National Unity Government, President Ghani apologized the teachers for failing to fulfill his obligations, and once again at the ceremony of the beginning of the school year of 1395, he pledged that education will be at the top of his government agenda.¹³

¹²See online:

<http://tkg.af/%D9%88%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%87%E2%80%8E%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C-%DA%A9%D9%87-%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84%DB%8C-%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%AF/>

¹³See online:

http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2016/03/160322_k04_first_school_day_president_admits_failure

President Ghani, at the ceremony of the beginning of the school year of 1397, promised that 6000 new school-buildings will be built up to next two year. He also stressed to connect the Capital and provincial schools through internet and reemphasized on fulfilling his promises regarding increase in teachers' salaries till 18th of August, 2018.¹⁴

However, months have been passed from the recent commitments made by the President, but the education is in the same situation and there is no sign of the implementation of Mr. Ghani's commitments. In this perspective, the recent joint report of UNICEF and the Afghan Ministry of Education is a good illustration of the country's unsavory educational situation.

Education Bitter Realities

- **The Taliban's management of education;** while the Taliban has allowed other educational activities in areas under their control, without girls' schools, but at the same time monitors the education in those areas.

The Taliban has a specific committee to oversee schools in the areas under their control, which monitors education movements, as part of their oversight, changes have been made to the Afghan government's curriculum.

CSRS has some information in its possession that suggests the Taliban monitors and manages schools in areas under its control in some of the provinces (including Maidan Wardak, Logar, Ghazni, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Kunar, Helmand, etc.). In some cases, Taliban's management and decisions were against those of the Afghan government, which means more schools are at the risk of getting closed. For example, the banking mechanism of salary delivery, however, has also caused serious problems for instance in some Taliban-controlled areas, the Taliban have prevented teachers from taking their salaries through banks and, therefore, since the past six months, these teachers have not received their salaries.

¹⁴ See online: <https://president.gov.af/fa/News/90142018>

According to the information that CSRS has received, the Taliban regularly monitor the teaching process, teachers' presence and curriculum in areas under its control. Taliban has also added some subjects to the present curriculum as well, such as: "Al-Khair al-Ka'thir Lil-Mujahid Wal-Asir, morning and evening recitations and prayers, easy prayers in Persian language, and the Education of Islam and Facilitation of Logic".

- **Education being affected by electoral activities;** alike in previous elections, most of the voters' registration centers are located in schools. This issue, on the one hand, has made people concerned about the security of their schools and their children, because presently one of the military targets of the armed opposition is targeting these centers, but on the other hand, due to the lack of transparency in the registration process and the existence of corruption, a number of treachery teachers and school administrators are engaged in collecting student Tazkira (National ID Card) and selling them to parliamentary candidates.

Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) has accessed information that shows a number of teachers and administrators in some schools of Kabul gather Tazkira from high school students and sell them to the candidates which, the process caused in disconcerting educational progress at schools.

- **Security threats against education;** war and insecurity are another challenge to Afghanistan's education. The Taliban monitors the curriculum in their areas of control and teaches their own curriculum, but there are schools in some areas of Afghanistan that are either blocked as a result of war or by armed opposition groups and nobody is allowed to go to school. In the meantime, the ISIL group has recently announced in a newsletter that they are targeting schools in Nangarhar province and that people should avoid sending their children to schools.¹⁵

¹⁵ See online: <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/29269899.html>

- **Low Quality and Weakness in Management;** following one and a half decade of remarkable development in education when it comes to its quantity; however, low quality and level of the Afghan education is still considered as one of the most important challenges. Based on statistics of the Ministry of Education, only 27 percent of the entire 170000 teachers meet the least requirements of a professional teacher which is being graduated from 14th grade; and this condition, besides other factors, has directly impact on low educational quality and level in the country.

On the other hand, the Afghan education is faced low executive performance of Education sector in the Capital and provinces. The Education sector has faced weakness in management and monitoring of the Capital and most of the regions in the country due to lack of cadre and specialist potentials and appointment of unprofessional personalities due to existed corruption.

End

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