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Preface

Although, corruption is the problem inherited by the National Unity Government from the Karzai administration; however, during his electoral campaign and after taking the office, President Ghani was promising the Afghan nation and international community regarding decisive struggle against the phenomenon. Even though, corruption has been a great challenge for the National Unity government in last four years as well as it was in the Karzai administration and the government efforts are yet to be fruitful in this regard.

Some interventions on tackling the corruption have been made during the Ghani Presidential term but as the government had got the framework of a coalition and thus there was lack of coordination; therefore, President Ghani was not able to perform his promises in this regard. Hence, Afghanistan is still the world's fourth most corrupt country.

The first part of the Weekly Analysis has discussed the Ghani's anti-corruption strategy, the work has been done in this regard in last four years and reasons behind unsuccessfulness of these efforts at all.

The second part of the Weekly Analysis is allocated for the Moscow Meeting on Afghan peace. Similar meeting had been convened in Moscow last year but the Taliban were not invited there; however, a senior delegation of the Taliban Political Office was invited to this meeting.

The Moscow Meeting in convened while recent direct peace talks between Taliban and US officials have emerged hopes on succeeding the Afghan peace process. Impacts of the Moscow Meeting on Afghan peace are discussed in this part of the Analysis as well.

The Struggle against Corruption in Ghani's Term



Realization of good governance in Afghanistan was one of important promises of President Ghani at the beginning of his term, whose one of the most important indices are counted to be maintaining transparency and tackling corruption.

President Ghani took the office while Afghanistan was being considered as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, according to the reports of international institutions. From the other hand, the Ghani administration had to make decisive struggle against and eliminate corruption in Afghanistan in order to grab the financial assistance of the international community. Hence, steps on tackling corruption have been taken during the four year term of the National Unity Government (NUG); however, they were accompanied by deficiencies and challenges and thus the government struggle against corruption was not successful at all and, therefore, Afghanistan is still considered as one of the most corrupt counties in the world.

The President Ghani anti-corruption strategy, the 4-year achievements of government in the field and the reasons behind failure of government in this regard are discussed here.

President Ghani Anti-Corruption Strategy

The NUG leaders have been calling the struggle against corruption among their priorities both during their electoral campaigns and after taking the office. The Chief Executive of NUG, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, however, had got manifesto or written plan neither during his electoral campaigns nor after taking the office; but President Ghani had allocated a part of his Manifesto on how to tackle corruption and following the four-year work of NUG, we will conclude that most of the anti-corruption interventions are realized by the President.

In his Manifesto, Ashraf Ghani had made 19 promises regarding struggle against corruption and had frequently emphasized on accountability and transparency. In the Manifesto, he had called the lack of legal registration of the assets as well as an effective legal system as main reasons behind administrative corruption in the government and thus had proposed the following solutions:

- Reforms in the Ministry of Justice, General Attorney's Office, Courts and Police;
- Legal registration of lands, assets and liabilities;
- Evaluating the public contracts;
- Preventing smuggle and illegal exports;
- Controlling ports and highways through the related organs;
- Taking measures against buying and selling government positions.¹

After the NUG became established, President Ghani announced his anti-corruption strategy in 20 promises through presenting the reform article in the 2014 London Conference.

The President's anti-corruption strategy could be summarized in developing anti-corruption policies and laws, creating anti-corruption bodies and commissions, making efforts to follow the big anti-corruption cases in person, enhancing the anti-corruption efforts prior to international conferences and introducing a number of senior officials to the Justice and Judiciary organs.

¹ Ashraf Ghani Manifesto

Four-Year Anti-Corruption Achievements of Government

President Ghani started its anti-corruption struggle with reopening the Kabul Bank case. Kabul Bank was established by Shir Khan Farnood in 2004 which was bought by the Central Bank of Afghanistan (Da Afghanistan Bank) due to the risk of collapse in 2010. Approximately 1 Billion US Dollars became disappeared in the case which resulted in detention of a number of debtors; however, the influences were exempted from the intervention. After President Ghani reopened the case, some accused were tried to imprisonment and repaying their debts to the Kabul Bank and some other's assets became frozen. Some of the accused were imposed exist bans on. Reopening of the Kabul Bank case resulted in decline in the rank of Afghanistan (fourth from second), according to the [report](#) of the Transparency International.

In second step, President Ghani presented his anti-corruption strategy in the 2014 London Conference where he called corruption in the big contracts, weakness of rule of law, and abuse of the legal system as the most important factors behind administrative corruption.

In 2015, the government was able to obtain 228 Million US Dollar from the debtors of the Kabul Bank; however, the government's anti-corruption efforts and strategy were not coordinated and, in some cases, the NUG leaders were in obvious confrontation. One of these cases were release of an accused in the Kabul Bank case (Khalilullah Ferozi) from the prison and allowing him to sign the contract of a city in presence of senior government officials, i.e. Minister of Urban Development and Housing and former advisor to Afghan president on reforms and good governance. The case emerged doubts and eventually caused in Afghanistan to secure second place among the world's most corrupt countries, according to the indices of Transparency International in 2015.

Establishment of the National Procurement [Commission](#) heading by President in person was another step taken by President in 2015. The National Procurement Commission was convening weekly meetings in the ARG (Presidential Palace) in order to reevaluate the closed contracts. Meanwhile, the greatest mine contract of (Aynak Copper) was published for the purpose of transparency in 2015.

In 2016, some steps of government have caused it to secure eighth position in compare to the previous second position among the world's most corrupt countries in the ranking of Transparency International. The steps were as following; establishing High Council for Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption, inauguration of the anti-corruption justice center, expelling 600 judges, 20 attorneys and 25% of the customs' employees, holding passports of more than 100 senior officials, preventing the embezzlement of 220 Million US Dollars in 1250 contracts and a number of [other steps](#) in this regard.

In 2017, Afghanistan, once again, became positioned at the top of the world's most corrupt countries and secured fourth position after Somalia, South Sudan and Syria by receiving 15 scores similar to 2014. Although the Afghan Attorney General's Office reported on studying the 1526 files of Afghan senior officials; however, the Transparency International still considers the Afghan government as failed in this year. Afghanistan Transparency Watch call the internal disputes in the government as main reason behind failure in the anti-corruption efforts.

In 2018, President Ghani created another audit office for the propose of monitoring the activities of senior government officials and it was, then, for the first time that an ex-minister of Communications and Information Technology, Abdul Raziq Wahidi had presence in an open court hearing. However, the reports indicate increase in the rate of administrative corruption in the year. UNAMA had called the corruption in Afghanistan as inhumane and brazen in its report on evaluating the government efforts from the beginning of 2017 till April, 2018.

Whether President's Anti-Corruption Efforts Were Successful?

A number of domestic and international organizations like Transparency International, Asia Foundation, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) and the Afghan Transparency Watch publish annual reports on the corruption conditions in Afghanistan.

Based on reports by organization observing anti-corruption efforts, there was widespread corruption in mine sector, security organs, justice and judiciary organs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, education, customs, national assembly and

other organs and they President efforts on eradicating corruption were yet to be fruitful in the last four years. Besides that, the President was not able to fulfill a number of its promises either.

The establishment of numerous organs by President for the purpose of eradicating corruption took place while there were other similar bodies already existed like Supreme Audit [Office](#), anti-corruption high [organ](#), High [Office](#) of Oversight and Anti-Corruption and etc.

Generally, the anti-corruption efforts are made prior to the convention of international conferences. For example, the Kabul Bank case was reopened as the 2014 London Conference was getting closer, registration of senior governmental officials took place as the 2016 Warsaw Conference was getting closer and the Anti-Corruption Justice Center became inaugurated as the Brussels Conference was getting closer.

Briefly, existence of numerous anti-corruption organs and lack of a powerful and capable organ in this regard, political and security instability in the country and lack of coordination in anti-corruption strategies were behind failure in anti-corruption efforts in this term.

A brief overview of the President's 4-years anti-corruption efforts indicates that more work other than merely establishing some anti-corruption laws and organs have been done; however, these efforts were not only inadequate but they also have brought any great achievement with themselves either. End

The Moscow Meeting and its Impacts on Afghan Peace Process



Last week (November 9, 2018), Moscow was hosting an important meeting on Afghan peace. Twelve regional countries, including the United States and Afghanistan, were invited to the meeting; however, the US participated as an observer and Afghanistan sent a senior Afghan High Peace Council delegation to the meeting instead of dispatching its official representatives.

The Islamic State group or Daesh is being supported by some countries in order for the region to become insecure, referring the presence and threat of Daesh fighters in Afghanistan, Russian Foreign Minister told while giving inaugural speech to the meeting. He recalled the Russia's efforts in Afghanistan for the sake of peace and stability in the country.

The meeting had grabbed the international attention as a senior Taliban delegation had participated in it and as the Russia's interest and involvement has increased in Afghanistan due to the recent Cold War between Russian and America.

Impact of US-Russia Cold War on Afghanistan, Russia's intentions behind its efforts and the outcomes and impacts of the recent meeting are discussed here.

US-Russia Cold War and Afghanistan

Although every step toward the Afghan peace emerges hopes; however, the Moscow Meeting was carrying the message of US-Russia Cold War and confrontation of these countries in the Afghan issue. Because of such a mentality, Russian Foreign Minister emphasized in his speech to the meeting that they do not want Afghanistan to be turned in to the battlefield between regional and international actors and superpower and the only purpose behind the meeting is strengthening peace in Afghanistan.

From one hand, the elongation of US war in Afghanistan and from other hand the failure of Afghan government's peace efforts have resulted in copiousness of regional and international actors in the Afghan issue. As Russia and America are engaged in a New Cold War on regional and international level since last few years, so Afghanistan has also turned into a ground of the Cold War.

Russia is nowadays afraid of the US presence in Afghanistan and its concerns have got increased especially after the US military bases became built in Afghanistan and Daesh expanded its activities in Afghanistan since 2015; therefore, it has started to play vital role in the Afghan issue after that.

There are two kind of analysis regarding the latest efforts of Russia and their impacts of Afghan issue:

First: Russia's efforts might be navigating the Cold War with US and aiming at putting pressures on America and thus the recent struggles on maintaining peace and security could have inverse results and will cause it in complexity and elongation of the Afghan war.

Second: There are some observations that, perhaps, the United States, might not welcome the expansion of Russia's role in the Afghan issue especially the further development of Russia's ties with the Taliban. Therefore, the US will enhance its efforts to reach an agreement with the Taliban through having direct talks with them.

Outcomes and Impacts of the Moscow Meeting

The Kabul-Moscow ties became deteriorated during the National Unity Government (NUG) in compare to the Karzai administration as the NUG was trying to establish good relations with Washington and as there were obvious changes in Russia's policies on Afghanistan. Thus, the Afghan government is skeptical of Russia's peace efforts and the latest meeting had worsened the atmosphere as well.

From one hand, the Afghan government does not like to participate in a meeting not lead by it, and from other hand, it is, to some extent, concerned about not to be neglected during US-Taliban direct talks. Therefore, it has backed the US position against Russia by not participating in the meeting. Simultaneously, the participation of Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) delegation in the meeting was displaying the weak and doubtful position of the Afghan government as the HPC is the official organs from peace process with Taliban; however, no developments are yet to be made by the HPC and it is concerned as an unserviceable address for peace.

On the other hand, it was a good opportunity for the Taliban to officially participate in a meeting with regional and international importance and to talk about its stands. From one hand, Taliban conveyed the message of having the support of powerful Russia to US and Afghan government and from other hand it raised their voice with international community with a broad and impactful manner. The Taliban delegation emphasized on the point that they are not a threat to the neighboring and regional countries, and it is what strengthens the Taliban regional support.

Taliban have enhanced their diplomatic efforts in recent years, specifically after the inauguration of their political office in Qatar in 2013. They have also understood that developing ties with Russia could increase pressure on America and will pave the way for direct US talks with the group.

Besides that, the US is concerned about participation of Taliban representative in the Moscow Meeting and perhaps, it, to an extent, could have impact on US position regarding its direct talks with Taliban; because the US does not want the expansion of Russia's role in Afghanistan than what it is today.

US-Taliban Talks

The Moscow Meeting is convened while the United States has recently taken hopeful steps toward Afghan peace in compare to past. Simultaneously, the special envoy of US Department of States for Afghan peace, Zalmay Khalilzad, who had previously met the Taliban representatives in Qatar, had also realized his second visit to the region as the meeting was going on.

The main reason behind continuation of Afghan war is presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan, and thus, as long as the United States did not put the withdrawal timetable of its forces from Afghanistan on the negotiation table with Taliban, the process might have not got any perceptible outcomes. The main argument that why the peace-related efforts of Afghan governed are remained fruitless is that the Taliban considers it as incapable when it comes to their main demand (fate of foreign forces in Afghanistan) and thus deny having direct talks with the government.

Besides that, the Afghan issue has got domestic and foreign aspects that are timetable for withdrawal of foreign forces and paving the way for inter-Afghan dialogue. In foreign aspect, regional efforts are counted useful to an extent and the Russia's pressure could have impact on US position; because the successfulness of peace process seems impossible until the US take and play direct role in the talks.

End

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