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Preface

Presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan is considered to be a major reason behind Taliban war against the Afghan government and international forces in last 17 years. In a series of recent direct US-Taliban talks, putting an end to the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan was the most important demand of the Taliban.

In last few days, reports of western media showed that the US President is thinking about withdrawal of half of US troops from Afghanistan. Nevertheless, following the reports, the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Joseph Dunford told hundreds of US soldiers in Kabul that the US Mission in Afghanistan will continue as planned. Meanwhile, the general commander of the Resolute Support Mission, Gen. Scott Miller has also said that he has not received any order for evacuating the troops from Afghanistan.

Talking to Taliban for reaching a peace deal after 17 years of war and confess of US generals that only war is not solution, are something that have augmented hopes for withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan; but why Trump intends to withdraw half of the forces and what could be the impact on situation of Afghanistan; are the topics discussed in first part of the CSRS Weekly Analysis.

Second part of the Weekly Analysis is dedicated to discuss air pollution in Kabul. Kabul, as the largest city of Afghanistan is hosting 6 million residents and according to its air condition, it is reported to be among world's most polluted cities. Currently, air pollution of Kabul city is considered another great threat to the lives of millions of Afghans after the war and explosions.

Why Trump Ponders Withdrawal of US Soldiers from Afghanistan?



It is almost three months that peace talks between US and Taliban continue. In the series of talks, representatives of both parties held a 3-day joint meeting at United Arab Emirates (UAE) a few days ago. Although the detailed niceties of the meeting are yet to be put out; however, the Taliban, through publishing a statement, said that they have talked over putting an end to the military presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan in their talks with the US representatives.

Last week, following the recent US-Taliban meeting in Abu Dhabi, Reuters and New York Times published some reports which indicate that the US President Donald Trump ponders on withdrawal of his 7 thousand soldiers from Afghanistan and it seems that the aforementioned number of soldiers will be withdrew from Afghanistan in first few months of 2019.

These reports of media have instigated different reactions inside and outside Afghanistan; therefore, the first part of the Analysis has discussed over the motive that made the US President to think over withdrawal of half of his soldiers from Afghanistan, has looked at the US 17-year war in Afghanistan and has focused on changes that will be happen in the country after withdrawal of seven thousand US soldiers from Afghanistan.

US War in Afghanistan

The United States of America campaigned on Afghanistan and sent its tens of thousands troops to Afghanistan after New York and Washington cities of America came under attack by four hijacked planes of “United” and “American” Air Lines on September 9, 2011, where almost 3000 persons became killed.

Approximately, seventeen years have been passed from the US campaign on Afghanistan; however, the war is still sizzling and takes the lives of tens of Afghans on a daily basis. Not only the US and its international partners were able to stifle the war in last 17 years, but it also expanded and got bloodier in their existence.

3559 foreign soldiers, whose 2417 are Americans, have been killed in Afghan war since last 17 years, according to [icasualties](#). Moreover, thousands of foreign soldiers have become wounded in the Afghan war. Besides that, tens of thousands of civilians have become killed in the on-going war, and according to UN, 40 thousand Afghan civilians have suffered casualties in last four years only.

On the other hand, after the US campaign on Afghanistan, a new system under its leadership became established in the country; however, 17 years have been passed but Afghanistan is yet to be country with powerful central government, it has not got control over its entire territory and does not have a full political stability. For that reason, Afghanistan is the world’s fourth most corrupt country.

Despite that, billions of dollars have been arrived to Afghanistan after the international forces came to Afghanistan; however, they got disappeared in a way where 40 per cent of Afghans live under the poverty line and almost two million Afghan labor force is unemployed.

Donald Trump and Afghan War

The on-going US war in Afghanistan is reflected as the longest war of the American history. Most of the people inside US, especially ordinary Americans, are against the continuation of the war and do not want their country to be engaged in war with other countries of the globe. Thus, putting an end to the Afghan war is reckoned as a powerful campaign slogan for political leaders in that country.

During the 2009 US Presidential Elections, Barack Obama was able to reach Presidency mostly for the power of slogan on putting an end to the wars of Afghanistan and Iraq. Obama announced his Afghan Policy in 2009 which contained the withdrawal schedule as well as adding up in the number of troops.

President Trump who was, however, a critic of US Policy in Afghanistan and was stressing on putting an end to the on-going US war in Afghanistan before taking the office; but after entering the White House, he announced his new military strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia after a delay of eight months which, alike several other strategies, was emphasizing on continuation of war in Afghanistan. Trump was convinced by US generals to do so; however, after a while, they also confessed the deadlock of the war in Afghanistan and admitted that they cannot win war through military means.

Putting an end to the US on-going wars and military interventions in other countries is counted as an important factor in attaining the public support in US Presidential Elections. Hence, Trump is trying to win the elections once again. First, he announced withdrawal of his forces from Syria and, then, a series of reports got published which indicated his intention to withdraw 7000 of his troops from the Afghan war.

Despite American domestic politics, there are analyses that the issue of withdrawal of troops is rooted from US-Taliban peace talks. It is also said that the United States might have taken the step for the purpose of trust-building and, in return, the Taliban might announced a short-term ceasefire.

At the end, it can be said that United States has had deployed tens of thousands of its troops in Afghanistan since last 17 years; however, the war is yet to be ended and the situation of Afghanistan got deteriorated day by day. Lately, the US also admits that the Afghan is reached a deadlock and believes that it cannot be won through military means. Therefore, it makes effort to put an end to the war through talks.

Conclusion

Afghans have seen nothing after the US campaign on Afghanistan 17 years ago except for war and catastrophe. Every pained Afghan is thirsty for peace and wants the war to be ended with any price. They become content with every small step towards peace and carry a lot of hopes with them. Therefore, withdrawal of US from the country is a great hope of every Afghan.

Probable withdrawal of US and other foreign forces from Afghanistan bring countless positive points with itself but the trend also contains a number of negative points that are connected to the political cleverness of Afghans.

Taliban fight against foreign forces since last 17 years. The group has limited the entire peace and reconciliation talks to the presence of foreign forces. Withdrawal of foreign forces in such circumstances eliminates a big obstacle in front peace and revive new hopes to achieve peace. For now, it abolishes the cause behind fighting of the entire militant armed groups and killings and tragedies will be eliminated or at least dwindled as a result of putting an end to the war.

Moreover, the presence of foreign forces has put shadow on the sovereignty and decisiveness of Afghan government. Their interferences in Afghan government affairs have resulted in internal disputes among governmental officials. Most of the fateful processes have lost their credence due to their interventions, and the prejudice and discrimination have increased among the people under different banners.

On the other hand, presence of US and its allies in Afghanistan has made the regional country to become panicked and, thus, to interfere in Afghanistan for the sake of protecting themselves, in order to create a headache for US and its allies; but the ultimate sacrifice is given by Afghans.

Existence of the circles that seek their interests in continuation of war and never want the war to be ended is also an issue of great concern besides positive points on withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan. Such people may create barriers towards peace; but the authorities on Taliban and government sides who want to put an end to the war should get use of great smartness, and to prefer a policy for the sake of national interests which will lead to withdrawal of US forces and creation of a powerful and all-inclusive Afghan government in order for the experience after withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan not to be repeated.

End

Air Pollution; an Immense Challenge against Afghan Lives



On December 15, 2018, Air Visual, a US-based air quality monitor, called Kabul as the most polluted city in the world. While having 353 points of US Air Quality Index (US AQI) at December 15 (and [363 points on December 29](#)), Kabul was among the first ten most polluted cities of world which was followed by Pakistan's Lahore , Magnolia's Ulaanbaatar and Bangladesh's Dhaka City.

In a country like Afghanistan where tens are losing their lives on daily basis due to war and insecurity, air pollution is an extra problem that causes tens of Afghans to visit healthcare centers.

Air pollution in Kabul city made the Afghan Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSAMD) and the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) to publish a joint [statement](#) for the purpose of preventing air pollution and decreasing traffic in Kabul City, where they changed the working hours of public organizations. The statement specifies that from December 26, 2018 onwards, working hours of 14 ministries and 8 independent commissions will be from 08:30 AM to 04:30 PM and the working hours for rest of the governmental ministries and offices will be from 07:30 AM to 03:30 PM.

This analysis focuses on upsurge in world's air pollution and as well as in Kabul city and the reasons behind its rise and the possible preventive strategies.

Air Pollution; a Global Predicament

Nine out of ten people worldwide breathe polluted air, according to World Health Organization ([WHO](http://www.who.int)). Less developed countries of Africa and Asia are most vulnerable to the challenge.

WHO estimates that around 7 million people die every year from exposure to fine particles in polluted air that penetrate deep into the lungs and cardiovascular system, causing diseases including stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and respiratory infections, including pneumonia.

Ambient air pollution alone caused some 4.2 million deaths in 2016, while household air pollution from cooking with polluting fuels and technologies caused an estimated 3.8 million deaths in the same period.

Therefore, air pollution is one of the major global challenges against the lives of organisms that exterminates millions of them annually; and if necessary attention is not paid to the improve of air quality, the transportation system, increase in fuel quality and use of electronic vehicles worldwide, the enemy will take the lives of millions of other human beings.

Kabul; One of the Most Polluted Cities of Globe

Afghanistan is a country with high mountains and rivers full of water as well as a beautiful and diverse nature; however, war and insecurity in the country have deprived the lovely people of Afghanistan from the stunning and unpolluted nature in most parts of the country and, thus, they have swarmed on cities, especially Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan.

Based on studies, Kabul is suitable for a population of one and a half million; however, currently it is home for approximately six million residents. The congestion of population has resulted in the air of the city to turn into the main killer of the dwellers, as hundreds of citizens are oblige to visit hospitals because of the polluted air on a daily basis.

The most vulnerable people from air pollution are the poor and indigent people of the society that are even not safe from the polluted air inside their rooms and homes; and thus, they are exposed to various pulmonary diseases and respiratory infections, including pneumonia as they use poor-quality materials for heating and are not equipped for the cold weather of winter. However, what are the main reasons behind air pollution in Kabul?

Following are some of the points worth mentioning:

Density of Population: Kabul is the most populated city of Afghanistan where around six million people are living. The large population, itself, is one of the main reasons behind air pollution in Kabul because it results to high number of vehicles and increased consumption of fuel.

Low-Quality Fuel: consuming coal, petroleum products, wood and others in factories and for heating homes, especially in winter is an important factor behind air pollution in Kabul city. Poverty has caused shortage of standardized material and consumption of cheap and low-quality goods for cooking and heating which result in air pollution.

Unpaved Roads: Unpaved roads and streets of Kabul are another main reason behind air pollution in the city. After 2001, billions of dollars of foreign aid was donated to Afghanistan but was spoiled because of high rate of corruption and low capacity in the government institutions and by passage of 17 years, the roads and streets of the city are still not asphalted which causes air pollution.

Drought: Lack of rain in the recent years in Afghanistan, especially in Kabul City, has also contributed in an increase in air pollution. Lack of rainfall has caused in degradation of vegetation cover and increase in dust in the city.

Poor Governance of Responsible Government Institutions: Lack of adequate mechanism for standardization of Kabul City and absence of effective and practical strategies for fighting against pollution has caused excess in air pollution and the responsible government institution not to respond to it.

Strategies for Fighting Against Air Pollution

Applicable strategies for preventing or eradicating a dangerous phenomenon from the environment requires scientific expertise, economic capacity, decision-making of leadership and preventive measures.. Here, we have discussed few strategies for prevention of air pollution:

First: Public awareness on harms caused by air pollution and encouraging the public to take part in preventing the pollution is an effective mean in order to fight air pollution.

Second: adopting mechanisms for standardization of service delivery in urban areas and adequate measures by responsible organizations to prevent air pollution in long run.

Currently, the Afghan government has declared Thursday as holiday in Kabul city and and has changed working hours for government ministries in order to reduce air pollution. Although these measures are effective to some extent, Afghan government needs to work on factors that result in reduction of air pollution and entire prevention in long term. For instance, taking the manufacturing factories away from the residential area; oversight on fuel consumption, collecting old vehicles that are still operating in the city and adopting a proper mechanism for collecting solid and other kinds of waste from the city.

Third: Supplying reliable and sustainable electricity to all citizens in order To give an environment-friendly option for cooking and heating instead of using polluting fuel.

Generally, air pollution is undoubtedly a global challenge and its rate in a specific area shows level of richness of culture of societies and the development of service delivery and brings thoughts and understandings about the governmental bodies and people of that specific geographic area.

The problem of air pollution is not affecting specific individuals or institutions in an area, its harms are affecting every one. Hence, every individual should contribute to efforts in reduction of air pollution and without putting the burden on others and wasting time and resources in blaming others, we all need to struggle for our health and protection of our families and environment.

End

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