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## NUG two years on and its prospects to govern



### Introduction

Since the establishment of the National Unity Government (NUG), there is less coordination between Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Afghan Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr Abdullah, instead they had political differences over many issues. However, now, the political divide reached new heights. Speaking at a press conference on August 11, 2016, the Afghan Chief Executive lashed out at Ghani and said, “If someone does not have tolerance, they do not deserve presidency”. He accused Ghani of unilateral control of the government and said that, “even over a period of three months the President do not have time to see his chief executive in a one-to-one meeting once”.

A day later, releasing a statement, the presidential palace termed Abdullah’s expressions “against the spirit of governance” and later in a gathering organized to celebrate “Youth Day” President Ghani said that, only those people accuse him of monopolizing the power whose interests are at risk due to his fight against corruption.

In the past two years, the NUG had to deal with insecurity, the Afghan Taliban's fighting seasons, worsening economic recession and challenges such as NUG legitimacy but in the past two weeks, the internal differences is also been added to challenges list. Although the views of the two leaders differed in the past but these differences have never reached the point where they fiercely criticized each other.

The questions arises is there any other experience of National Unity Government in the world except Afghanistan, whether Afghan NUG has any achievements or failures and in a present scenario what is the future of NUG when the political agreement which is expected by some political circles to be running out in upcoming months? These are questions which are answered and analyzed in this issue of weekly analysis of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS).

## **The experience of national unity governments in the world**

**Governments of National Unity** Generally, national unity governments are formed either after a prolonged war (or at a time of war) or other national emergency. Usually, NUG consist of all parties or at least the major parties that form a coalition. During war, emergency and civil wars, due to the participation of all parties and groups in a national unity government the security and stability of the country is positively influenced.

In the last one century, there are many instances of National Unity Governments worldwide, which are formed under this name or any other similar names in England, Israel, Zimbabwe, New Zealand, Italy, Greece, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Nepal and etc. Neither of these governments became successful stories to be an ideal form of government during war, post-war and emergency periods.

The governments of national unity were also established in some African countries to turn these countries from worse situation to less bad. Thus these governments are a short term solution to reduce war and crisis in order to pave the way for peace and reconciliation in the long-run.

## **National Unity Government in Afghanistan**

After the second round of 2014 presidential elections, tensions between the two leading candidates rose which continued for several months and finally a political deal and settlement was reached via mediation of US Secretary of State John Kerry and hence the two rivals of 2014 elections agreed upon to establish a National Unity Government.. It is still unclear that who first brought the idea of forming NUG, but despite this, the international community warmly welcomed it, because at that time none of these political rivals were prepared to accept the complete success of the other and thus the voting process reached a deadlock.

After soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Afghan Mujahedeen had formed a similar government like NUG but was failed to achieve its goals. . In 2009 Presidential elections, when tensions rose over election results, the United State of America suggested the formation of a similar government but Hamid Karzai rejected this proposal.

Finally on September 2014, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah agreed to establish the NUG and thus for the first time in the country's history a coalition government under the name of "National Unity Government" was formed.

Whether forming the NUG was a right decision at that time, is difficult to answer but still one can say that this government is not established with the participation of all post-war parties and is only formed due to the oppositions of two rival parties over the election results in order to secure their interests and to include both winner and loser in the government.

## **NUG: After Two Years**

NUG is nearly completing its two years but the question arises whether it has become a successful or a failure story? We will answer this question in two parts:

First: by comparing general situation of the country;

Second: by comparing the NUG agreement.

**By comparing the general situation of the country;** if one compares the security, economic, corruption, migration and other aspects of the NUG with the previous government one will find that the NUG has failed in this regards. In 2014 the country's economic growth was 1.3%, in 2015 it was 1.5%, and it is predicted to be 2% in 2016 which are the lowest growth rates since 2001. On the other hand, after the formation of the NUG some districts fallen into Taliban's hand, Kunduz- the strategic city of the country also falls into Taliban's hands for two weeks- the number of explosions and criminal offenses have increased, and the Afghan government's control over its territory was also decreased (Now the Afghan government has control over 65% of its territories which is the lowest level since 2001). Moreover, due to insecurity and economic recession Afghans have migrated to Europe, the largest number since 2001.

**By comparing the implementation of the NUG agreement;** most of the commitments made in the NUG agreement are yet to be implemented. For instance, although based on the agreement, the post of Chief Executive is created; the Chief Executive Office is functioning since two years and despite the disagreements between the two leaders, the high ranking officials are appointed; but on the other hand, calling Loya Jirga to amend the constitution, the reformation of the electoral law, distribution of the "tazkeras - which means National Identity Card in Dari" to all Afghans, and holding district council and parliamentary elections are the provisions of the NUG agreement that are yet to be implemented.

## **The factors behind the internal disputes and the failure of the NUG**

The followings are the reasons behind the failure of the NUG in the past two years:

**First; the NUG itself:** the NUG was formed after disputes over election results and this newly formed government brought parties with various ideologies under one umbrella. In most of the countries the national unity governments are formed in a postwar period; but still the countries that have experienced this type of government (Zimbabwe, Kenya and Cambodia) it has survived for few years and became a failure.

**Second; Political differences:** the two sides had their differences in the past and later these differences became obvious from some stances of the government which even resulted to the resignation of some senior officials of the government. In the meanwhile another reason behind Dr. Abdullah Abdullah's criticism of Ghani is Abdullah's marginalization within Jamiat-e-Islami camp. Thus besides pressurizing the President, Abdullah wants to win back the support of Jamiat-e-Islami at a time when the party is expected to convene its congressional meeting in the near future.

**Third; the consequences of probable peace deal with Hezb-e-Islami (Hekmatyar):** peace talks between the Afghan government and Hezb-e-Islami has been going on for several months. Since Ghani is not backed by any powerful political party therefore it is assumed that with Hezb-e-Islami coming to the country's political theater Ghani's power would grow- something that Abdullah's camp do not deem to be in their interests.

**Fourth; dual interpretation of authorities:** separation of power between the two authorities of NUG is also a factor that has played a role in the failure of the NUG. Ghani thinks that based on the current constitution he is not obliged to have consensus of Chief Executive over some of the decisions. On the other hand, the Chief Executive thinks that he has 50% share in the government and therefore the

president must seek his consensus over important appointments and decisions. Besides that, the NUG agreement also lacks detailed and specific division of powers.

**Fifth; unclear imagination of the future:** both sides lack a clear picture of the future and particularly the future of the government. Dr. Abdullah may assume the current situation to be against his interests; because there are no legal guarantees for his post. That was the reason why he spoke to the US Secretary of State John Kerry about the legal tenure of the NUG, it was followed with harsh response from inside the country and even the Afghan Parliament termed it as improper intervention in domestic affairs.

**Sixth; failure to act on promises:** The two leaders in a greater part failed to fulfill the promises that they had delivered during their campaigns. In the meanwhile they also failed to fulfill their commitments in the NUG agreement. Thus, on the one hand, the government lost people's trust and on the other hand, Abdullah's camp in the NUG began its oppositions.

**Seventh; security situation in the country:** the ongoing war in the country is another factor that has faced the NUG with many challenges and has created many obstacles in the way of the NUG's economic programs. Besides that due to the deteriorating security situation the government has lost people's trust and through these controversial expressions the government wants to decrease the criticisms.

## **The future of the NUG**

Generally the future of the NUG is correlated with the following points:

**First; the reduction of the internal differences in the NUG:** a week after fierce criticism, the two leaders of the NUG had met last Wednesday at the presidential palace. In this meeting which was conducted in "a friendly atmosphere" the Chief Executive shared his concerns with the president. Although the details of the meeting are not clear but still it is said that the provisions of the NUG agreement

and some other political issues were the subject of discussions. In the second meeting the president would respond to the concerns and demands of the Chief Executive and in the third the disputes between them will be settled. In the short run the NUG is depended on these three meetings and in the long run it will be dependable on the following points.

**Second; the support of international community:** after the reduction of infightings between Ghani and Abdullah the fate of the NUG depends on the support of international community.

**Third; passing the legitimacy crisis in the second year;** passing the upcoming September is the second major challenge of the NUG after the two leaders' confrontation; because a number of politicians in the country insist that the NUG would have no legitimate base after its two year term, which will end in the upcoming September

**Fourth; improving overall situation of the country;** generally in all parts of the world the survival of the governments depends on the general situation of the countries and Afghanistan is no exception. If the security and economic situation of the country improves compared to the past two years, the NUG may survive for five years.

The end

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