



## Center for Strategic & Regional Studies Kabul

### **Weekly Analysis**-Issue Number 259 (July 7-14, 2018)

Weekly Analysis is one of CSRS’ publications, which significantly analyses weekly economic and political events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them to design best policies. Weekly Analysis is published in local languages (Pashto and Dari) and international languages (English and Arabic).

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## Preface

It is more than ten years that the Afghan government is making efforts to start negotiations with the Taliban; however, these efforts were taken into new step and became more rapid with the establishment of the National Unity Government. Afghan president Ashraf Ghani has increased military pressures besides regional and international-level political pressures on the Taliban; however, these efforts are yet to be as effective as to bring the Taliban into the negotiation table.

Another part of the President Ghani's policy was to increase religious pressure on the Taliban, whose latest effort was convening past week's meeting in Saudi Arabia, the center of Islamic World. The important points of the conference on the Afghan issue and their impacts on the ongoing war and the peace process in Afghanistan are analyzed in the first part of the Weekly Analysis brought to you by Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS).

The second part of the Weekly Analysis is allocated for President Ghani's decree on the establishment of a new anti-corruption inspection body and, at all, the condition of corruption and fight against the phenomenon in National Unity Government (NUG). Corruption is considered as the major problem after security and political instability in Afghanistan, which has caused Afghanistan to be listed among the most corrupt countries in the world.

## Saudi Conference and the Future of Peace in Afghanistan



A two-day conference of Religious Scholars of Islamic World on Afghan War and Peace became convened as result of the initiative of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and collaboration of Saudi Arabia last week (10-11 July 2018).

More than 100 religious scholars from 37 countries, including Afghanistan, were participated in the 2-day international conference entitled “Peace and Stability in Afghanistan” where it issued a declaration after two days of discussions on the issue of Afghanistan. The declaration states: “the government of Afghanistan is Islamic, its people are Muslim and fight against Muslims is illicit in accordance with Text [Nas] of the Quran.” A part of the declaration also emphasized on inter-Afghan negotiations between Taliban and the Afghan government and asked both sides to sit together and make peace for the sake of ending war and bloodshed in the country.

Notwithstanding, America is one of the sides involved in the Afghan war; however, the declaration of the conference did not point out the role of America in ending the war in Afghanistan and maintaining peace in the country.

On the other side, the Taliban, in a statement, has called holding such conferences as a proposal and program of American officials and has said that no famous and accepted religious scholar had participated in the conference, and the persons participated in the conference were “official authorities” of government.

The consequences of the conference and role and responsibility of the United States in ending the ongoing war and maintaining peace in Afghanistan are discussed in the Analysis.

### **Peace Conference or a New Pressure Tool**

Peace and talks with Taliban is the issue that despite the government of Afghanistan, there are many other domestic and foreign independent institutions that struggle and make efforts for since last one decade. In the meantime, establishment of High Peace Council (HPC), Urumqi and Murree talks in China and Pakistan, “Quadrilateral Peace Conferences” process in Kabul and Islamabad and “Kabul Process” two Conferences are among the main efforts made by the Afghan government for the purpose of initiation of peace talks with the Taliban; however, there is yet to be discernable.

Putting pressure on the Taliban through religious scholars is a new strategy of the Afghan government for making Taliban come to the negotiation table and thus tries to challenge the fight Taliban against the Afghan government from the religious perspective through creating religious oppositions to Taliban war against the government.

Holding a joint conference of Afghan, Pakistani and Indonesian religious scholars was among the efforts by government which required these scholars to declare the Afghan war as “forbidden”. After a lot of efforts, the conference became convened on May 11, 2018, in Indonesia and, unlike the expectations of the Afghan government; the conference did not issue an explicit fatwa on calling the Afghan war as illegitimate.

Three weeks after the Indonesia Conference, the Afghan government held another conference in Kabul on June 4, 2018, where more than 2000 Afghan religious scholars had participated in it and issued a fatwa on illegitimacy of the ongoing war in Afghanistan; however, the Taliban, in a statement of it, had called the fatwa of religious scholars in Kabul as an American proposal and process.

Following these efforts, a conference on Afghan war and peace was convened in the land of the Two Holy Mosques (Haramain Sharifain) last week where a large number of religious scholars from Islamic countries, more explicitly, called the ongoing war in Afghanistan as “prohibited”.

At all, the Afghan government, by putting pressure on Taliban through religious scholars, tries to weaken the morale of their fighters from one hand, and from the other hand, it tries to bring the Taliban into peace negotiation table with the Afghan government seeking logic and language.

### **Consequences and Achievements**

Whatsoever, the religious scholars’ conference in Kabul had issued the same fatwa; however, the fatwa of International Conference of religious scholars from 37 Islamic countries in Jeddah and Makkah was the largest and most important fatwa against Taliban in last 17 years of war in Afghanistan. The important points of the fatwa are as following:

- Afghanistan forms a Muslim state. Its citizens are Muslims whose life is sacrosanct and who all aspire to peace and security, and the perpetrations it has been undergoing in terms of the killings of innocent lives are contrary to the principles and formal teachings of Islam.
- A national dialogue is the optimal way to end the conflict between the Afghan Government and the Taliban Movement, and the solution to the cause of the Muslim Afghani must particularly go through mutual understanding and direct peace negotiations.

- We call upon Afghanistan’s government and the Taliban movement to conform to a truce and ceasefire and set on a track of direct Afghani negotiations.
- We pay tributes to the efforts put in by Afghan religious scholars and praise them for maintaining peace. We also endorse the recent unconditional Peace Proposal of President Ghani who is ready to talk to the Taliban, and we want the Taliban We also call on the Taliban Movement to respond to the invitation made by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to eschew violence, end the mutual killings and sit together around the negotiating table.
- We hereby call on Muslim states, organizations, and elites to join efforts and pull their weight towards the establishment of peace and security in Afghanistan.

There is nothing different seen in the fatwa of religious scholars in the Saudi Arabia Conference in compare to the fatwa of Afghan religious scholars in Kabul. Because the government of Afghanistan was also called Islamic and the ongoing war Haram in the Kabul Conference; however, the point that was neither mentioned in the Kabul Conference nor in the Saudi Arabia Conference was presence of foreign forces especially the United States as the starter of the war and their role in ending the war and maintaining the peace.

The Saudi Arabia Conference also stressed on inter-Afghan dialogue between government and the Taliban; in the case, the Taliban has, for many times, rejected the peace talks with the government of Afghanistan and has called it “incompetence”. Therefore, proposing solutions for main obstacles toward peace in Afghanistan is must in such a deadlock.

## **America; neglected side at the conference**

The United States, apparently, attacked on Afghanistan in order to fight against terrorism, eliminate Al Qaeda and form a new government and ruin the Taliban regime; however, there were many other important goals in the main scenario which were focused on after the battleground of Afghanistan became warmer in 2005.

As there was relative security in entire Afghanistan till 2005; however, for the purpose of creating insecurity and revival of war, American troops started night raids, arrested former Taliban members, did inhumane activities, killed civilians and did many other things which, eventually, resulted in the restoration of Taliban war.

There were more than hundred thousand American troops in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2012 and the battleground was warmest than ever; however, their number decreased by 10,000 while the war was on the peak in 2014 reasoning the transmission of security responsibility to Afghan forces. After then, they have played their role just as “watcher”.

After the formation of National Unity Government (NUG) and signing of Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA), American troops revived night raids and the Afghan officials neglected the intentional killings of American troops. After Donald Trump took office and announced his new military strategy where I had stressed in increase in the number of soldiers and pressure on Taliban; hopelessness on ending the Afghan war once again arrived as presence of foreign troops is the main reason behind Taliban fight in Afghanistan and so the group give emphasis to not stop fighting until withdrawal of foreign troops.

Despite all what has been said, as the foreign forces, the Afghan government and Taliban are the main sides involved in the Afghan War, so it is their responsibility to make peace and put an end to the ongoing war in the country. Therefore, until Taliban accepts the Afghan government as a main side in the issue of peace and war and until the United States does not enter the issue as a main side of war instead of playing a mediator role, these efforts will not have ideal results. End



## National Unity Government and the Struggle against Corruption



A new inspection body became established as a result of a decree by President Ashraf Ghani for the purpose of making more effective struggle against corruption and inspecting the activities of senior governmental officials. The inspection body, however, is being established while there are many other institutions on tackling corruption including Supreme Audit Office (SAO), and thus, the recent action of the government was accompanied by different reactions.

Looking at recent struggles against corruption, former Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology, Abdul Razaq Wahidi was tried at bar being accused for embezzlement and corruption; and it is for the first time that a senior minister-level official is tried for corruption allegations.

The efforts of National Unity Government (NUG) are come to ground while a spokesperson of Presidential Palace (ARG), Shah Hussain Murtazawi, on Tuesday (July 10, 2018) admitted that 700 Million USD is defalcated in the Afghan customs and so the government is making effort to increase domestic proceeds through eliminating corruption in the customs.



Besides NUG's 3-year tireless efforts against it, corruption is still considered as a big challenge for Afghanistan and thus, the country is still listed among the world's corrupt countries. United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has released its report on Afghanistan's fight against corruption which includes the period between January 2017 and April 2018 where it considered corruption in Afghanistan as massive, inhumane and brazen.

Here, you will read about the 3-years struggle of NUG against corruption, the failure of government in tackling it and the roots of it in Afghanistan.

### **Corruption; a Big Challenge to Afghan Governments**

Afghanistan is not the only country which is faced the problem of massive corruption; but there are also plenty of modern countries that encounter the challenging problem. Corruption was a big challenge for Afghan government in 13 years of Karzai Administration where is caused the Afghan people to have their rights suppressed, and for the country to be disreputable on international stage.

With arrival of foreign troops and abundant amount money in Afghanistan, corruption also spread to different sector and as time was passing, it reached the point where various surveys conducted in last 17 years revealed that corruption was one of biggest challenge for Afghan people. We can point of the numerous surveys of Asia Foundation, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other national and international institutions in this regard.

As some measures were taken against corruption and a number of institutions and laws were made for this purpose in the Karzai Administration; however, Afghanistan, for several years, has secured its position at top among the world's most corrupt countries, according to Transparency International. Meanwhile, Afghans were faced massive corruption in the whole mentioned period. According to the surveys of Transparency International, the level of corruption increased from 2005 to 2009; however, its level decreased between 2009 and 2011. Nevertheless, the level of corruption, once again, increased in 2012 and 2013. As a consequence, the problem was, then, inherited by the National Unity Government (NUG).

## Efforts of National Unity Government

At the beginning, however, President Ashraf Ghani took harsh position against corruption and reopened the Kabul Bank Case for investigation immediately after he took office; however, the policy of NUG and its 3.5 years of fight against corruption were not fruitful. Lack of coordination between authorities and creating barrier by senior officials were among the problems which has had put shadow on government's fight against corruption.

Reopening of Kabul Bank Case in 2014, banning a number of senior officials accused with corruption from travelling abroad and introducing them to the Attorney General Office and establishing National Procurement Authority (NPA) were the efforts which made Afghanistan to secure 4<sup>th</sup> position instead of 2<sup>nd</sup> one in the ranking of Transparency International.

An amount was also received from the borrowers of Kabul Bank in 2015; however, due to the cases of release of an important suspect of the case, Khalilullah Ferozi, and massive internal disputes caused Afghanistan to, once again, secure the rank of second most corrupt country.

Afghanistan got out from world's three most corrupt countries and secured 8<sup>th</sup> position this time due to many reasons; among them are: inauguration of Judicial Anti-Corruption Center, registration of possessions of government authorities, dismissal of 600 judges, 20 attorneys and 25% employees of customs in all over the country, restrained passports of more than hundred senior officials, prevention of embezzlement of 220 Million USD in 1250 contracts and etc.

The fight against corruption, once again, became affected by political disputes and security instability in 2017; because this year was full of problems and challenges for Afghanistan. For this reason, Afghanistan, over again, became the fourth most corrupt countries in the world.

## Numerous Bodies for Tackling Corruption

When we evaluate the anti-corruption efforts of the National Unity Government (NUG), we would conclude the government's strategy was mainly focused on making anti-corruption bodies, strategies and laws and besides that, on taking practical measures in this regard.

There are more than 10 anti-corruption bodies in the country from which four of them were built during the NUG. Both Jirgas of National Assembly, Judicial Anti-Corruption Center, Supreme Audit Office (SOA), Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption High Council, National Procurement Special Commission, High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption which is recently combined with the Attorney General's Office, and the body of President's Special Envoy in Reforms and Good Governance which is removed now.

Recently, a new body of inspection is established as a result of 9-article decree of President whose working area covers inspecting complaints related to the administrative units of the offices of the President and Chief Executive, heads of independent budget authorities and other senior officials; however, inspecting President's activities are not included in its working area. The head of the body will be appointed by the President for a term of 4 years that will be responsible to President only.

A promise of President in the London Conference (2014) was to establish an independent anti-corruption mission with a limited time and executive power. If the recent body is what the president had said, perhaps, it may be proved effective; however, for now, the opposition of the president thinks that the body will be used a political weapon by the President.

Moreover, existence of numerous anti-corruption bodies is a problem which has put negative shadow on fight against this phenomenon. The large number of them has caused, from one hand, in lack of their empowerment and capacity building and, from the other hand, to blame each other for failure in fight against corruption.

## Corruption Centers

In addition to activities of plenty anti-corruption laws and bodies, the level of corruption has not only decreased in the country, but it has increased day by day; and the reason is, the coalition formation of the National Unity Government (NUG), itself where, last year, the President also accused the Chief Executive of supporting corrupt officials.

There are some bodies where corruption is at the peak and there are also some anti-corruption bodies that have failed the NUG's fight against corruption; a number of them are as following:

- **Judicial Organs:** Surveys and researches of various domestic and foreign institutions on corruption indicate that courts and attorney general's office are most corrupt bodies from the perspective of Afghan people. This trend has put very negative shadow on NUG's fight against corruption.
- **Security Sector:** The Interior Ministry was the most corrupt organ in the term of NUG and President Ashraf Ghani, himself, had called the mentioned ministry as "the heart of corruption". In past years, for example, the most mistrust was in security sector as most people had paid bribes to police, according to 2010 Survey of Integrity Watch Afghanistan.
- **Mines:** The Integrity Watch Afghanistan released a report named "The Plunderers of Hope" in 2015 which show massive corruption in this sector. SIGAR also had indicated in its reports of April 2015 and January 2016 that Mafia and Strongmen, Less Observation and Mismanagement are most important factors behind corruption in the mine sector.
- **Customs:** the Customs are turned into corruption centers where ordinary vacancies are sold with high prices and hundreds of millions of dollars are embezzled there every year.
- **National Assembly:** National Assembly is responsible to observe the government's activities; however, this organ not only did not participate in fight against corruption, but it also had massive role in increasing its level. UNAMA in his latest report released two months ago (May 2018) has harshly

criticized the National Assembly and has considered as part of the problem of corruption. The National Unity Government (NUG) has been accused of corruption many times before that as well.

Besides all of them, foreign forces in Afghanistan are also involved in corruption on high level and are still causing in expansion of corruption. The efforts of government are fruitless in fight against corruption when it comes to them as it possesses a weak position in this regard. For many times, head of SIGAR, John Spoko also has confirmed involvement of Americans in corruption.

End

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**Contact Us:**

Email: [info@csrskabul.com](mailto:info@csrskabul.com) - [csrskabul@gmail.com](mailto:csrskabul@gmail.com)

Website: [www.csrskabul.com](http://www.csrskabul.com) - [www.csrskabul.net](http://www.csrskabul.net)

Office: **(+93) 202564049 - (+93) 784089590**



Chief Researcher: **Hekmatullah Zaland**

Researcher and Editor of Weekly Analysis: **Zia-ul-Islam Shirani**

Researcher and Distributor of Weekly Analysis: **Ahmad Shah Rashed**

Translated into English by **Abdullah Jawed**