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Preface

Registration for the Presidential Elections will be opened on December 15, 2018 and the Election Day, then, will be on April 20, 2019, according to the announcement of the Afghan Independent Election Commission.

Ashraf Ghani became President at the National Unity Government after the 2014 controversial Presidential Elections, who is now close to the end of his presidential term; however, he has recently said in his interview with the Bloomberg that he will run for 2019 Presidential Elections as he needs to finish what he had started at the beginning of his term.

The Afghan security and political situation was more unstable during the current presidential term of Ashraf Ghani in compare to last one and a half decade. Moreover, poverty and unemployment have also increased. Despite great efforts that have been made on making peace with Taliban, the war has got severed and its domain became expanded to almost every locality of the country.

First part of the CSRS Weekly Analysis had a glance at security situation, especially civilian casualties in the battlegrounds, during the Ghani Administration.

Second part of the CSRS Weekly Analysis has discussed interruption in primary results of Parliamentary Elections as well as concerns over transparency in the results. Although, the National Unity Government was able to hold the Parliamentary Elections with all of its disorders, problems and challenges; however, the information of Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) indicates concerns over transparency in tallying votes and some secret political deals in the final results that have emerged suspicions about the process.

Afghan Security Situation during Ghani Term



President Ghani took the office in September 2014 while military and security responsibilities were handed to Afghan forces by international forces and a large portion of foreign forces deployed in Afghanistan had withdrawn the country and their number was decreased by 15000 for overall 130 thousand foreign soldiers in Afghanistan.

After Ghani took office as the President of Afghanistan, the mission of foreign forces turned in to advising and training Afghan forces only and thus the Afghan battlefield was handed to Afghan military forces only which resulted in high casualties of Afghan forces and further flaming of the war.

The topics on battlefield condition in last four years, civilian casualties in the period and reasons behind further severity in Afghan security conditions are discussed here.

War Condition in Last Four Years

Although there was poor security situation during the formation of National Unity Government (NUG); however, the condition became deteriorated after the NUG begun its work. The war geography expanded from south to north and the war became severe in Northern provinces in compare to past.

During the Ghani Administration, the Taliban became as powerful as to extend their battle to the domains of big cities and to have more focus on aggressive assaults in their war strategy. Following the trend, Kunduz was the first city captured by Taliban during NUG after their collapse in 2001. Meanwhile, Farah and Ghazni cities were also became under control of Taliban for a few days during the NUG.

Khurasan branch of the Islamic State (ISIS-K) or Daesh also became emerged at the beginning of NUG and expanded its activities during NUG to the status where they were able to carry out bloody attack in capital Kabul and other big cities of the country, and it is, now, considered a big threat toward Afghan security.

The Afghan government control over its soil is shrinking, according to Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). The report presented to the US Congress by October 31 writes that the Afghan government control over its soil is decreased by 52%; in the case, it was 72% in the same period in October 2015.

Air Strikes and Afghan Military and Civilian Casualties

Lack of taking care of civilian lives by parties involved in the Afghan war is a great concern and a most detestable aspect of the war. Targeting civilians and killing children and women has been turned into a usual job in last 17 years done by parties involved in the war. More than 10 thousand civilians have been killed and injured every years after the NUG became established in 2014, according the statistics provided by international institutions.

The number of civilian casualties for last four years provided by United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is as following: 10,534 in 2014, 11,002 in 2015, 11,500 in [2016](#) and 10,453 in [2017](#). According to the recent [report](#) by UNAMA, 5,122 civilians have been killed and injured in first half of 2018 which shows a one per cent increase in compare to the same period in last year.

Despite increase in civilian casualties, there was also a rise in military casualties during the NUG as well. Five thousand Afghan security forces had been killed and 15 thousand others had become injured during 2015, according to SIGAR. Its previous reports indicate that 6,785 Afghan security forces became killed and 11,777 others became wounded from January 1st to November 12th of 2016. However, the number was much higher in 2017. The latest SIGAR report writes that 2,531 Afghan soldiers became killed and 4,238 others became wounded only from 1 January – 8 May, 2017.

Deadly and blind air strikes of foreign and Afghan forces have become killed and wounded hundreds of civilians, and sometimes Afghan security forces, during the Ghani Administration. The strikes have been increased by multiple times after signing the Bilateral Security Agreement between Kabul – Washington (BSA) and, then, the announcement of new US military strategy for Afghanistan that have, in several cases, targeted the civilians. Based on reports, the US forces have carried out 2,611 strikes in Afghanistan in 2017; in the case, the number was 1,071 in 2016 and 236 in 2015; however, the National Unity Government (NUG) has always kept its silence over these incidents.

In last few weeks only, several reports on civilian casualties rooted from joint forces' air strikes have been reported from different provinces. For example, 14 civilians including 1 woman and 11 children became killed in Mullah Hafiz village of Wardak's Jaghato district as a result of an airstrike. 18 civilians became killed as a result of airstrike on a wedding ceremony in Tagab district of Kapisa province. Similarly, 29 civilians became killed as a result of joint forces' airstrikes in Paktia and Nangarhar province which shows increase in air raids and heavy civilian casualties in these raids.

Reasons behind deteriorated security situation

The following points are noteworthy in this regard:

First; after the emerge of ISIS-K in Afghanistan and US insistence over having presence in the region has interrupted the regional and international consensus over the Afghan issue that has made the regional countries to be suspicious about US goals in the region. Therefore, the Afghan war is getting complicated day by day and apparently, the confrontations between US and Russia points out to a “New Cold War” going-on between great powers in the region and, hence, Afghanistan is turned into of its main battlegrounds.

Second; the structure of National Unity Government and political disputes among the state leaders are considered as the main reasons behind constitution of insecurity and security crisis in Afghanistan. The trend has caused in lack of effective work for peace and putting an end to war, especially the civilians casualties deprived from blind airstrikes.

Third; weakness and corruption in the government’s military institutions are one of the reasons that have resulted in deteriorated security situation and severity in the Afghan war. Even the water and bread of Afghan forces become stolen due to existence of corruption in the security institutions and ranks of Afghan forces. The negative inclinations has resulted in some Afghan security forces to get dissatisfied and, in some case, to even join the ranks of the Armed Opposition Group (AOG) and fight against the government.

Fourth; poverty and unemployment are among the challenges that ground the people to join the AOG ranks. The issue has got severed during the NUG year by year. Based on the World Bank report, approximately 40 per cent of Afghan people are living under the poverty line and almost 24 per cent of the Afghan workforce is unemployed. Following the circumstances, more youth are inclined to do theft, murder and pick up the weapons that, in return, have important role in interrupting security, severity in war and increase in crimes. End

Concerns over Transparency in Parliamentary Elections Results



Parliamentary Elections for the 17th legislative term had been held in the entire countries except for Kandahar and Ghazni on October 20-21, 2018. Although, the elections became held in Kandahar after a week from that date; however, they the elections will be held in Ghazni simultaneous to the Presidential Elections there.

Afghan Independent Elections Commission (IEC), at first, however, said that the primary results of the elections will be announced on November 10, 2018 and the final results will be announced on December 20, 2018; but the IEC postponed the announcement of primary results for the Parliamentary Elections for two other weeks. Following the suspension, concerns and suspicions over fraud in the IEC and some secret political deals had become emerged.

The following topics are discussed here; technical and operational problems in the electoral process, suspicions and concerns over secret political deals and frauds, the characteristics of members of parliaments (MPs) for the 17th legislative term and the impacts of Parliamentary Elections on the upcoming Presidential Elections.

Technical and Operational problems in elections

The Parliamentary Elections became held after a delay of 3 years while were accompanied by insecurity, which prevented a large number of Afghans to cast vote, as well as full disorder and fraud.

The technical and operational problems in the elections were as following:

First; remarkable number of people participated in the elections in Kabul and other areas of the country that had rather good security situation; however, the management weakness of IEC was a big problems in those areas. Most of the polling stations became opened late on the Election Day which resulted in extension of elections to the second day. The voter's lists were transferred from a site to other which caused in deprivation of votes from casting vote due to lack of their names in the voter's lists. The biometric machines were not working well and the people were did not know about its usage either which had encountered the process with challenges.

Second; disorder and vast fraud on the Election Day have concerned the Electoral Watch institutions. Based on information receive by Center for Strategic and Regional Steadies (CSRS), boxes full of votes have been reached to the IEC headquarters from some areas where there were not polling stations opened. For example, seven thousand votes have been casted by a commander in favor of a specific candidate in Tala Wo Barfak district of Kunduz province where no one had casted vote there. 3,500 votes have been counted from two villages in Jaghato district of Wardak province where there was no polling station opened and no one had casted their vote. Similarly, votes have been sold out, the voting boxes have become filled by local strongmen and commanders in favor of specific candidates and even the boxes have become filled in the IEC offices in favor of a specific candidate citing the areas where people were not able to cast vote due to insecurity or where the electoral materials were sent in full.

Engineering Accusations

After the voting boxes returned to the IEC provincial offices, and then, to the headquarters, the observers, once again, raised their voice over interference in the results; and as the results are not announced for months, it emerges suspicions over corruption and fraud in the process.

Based on CSRS resources, interferences have been made in tallying process of vote in favor of specific candidates. Someone's votes get increased and some others get decreased. Most of the candidates' observers complain that the number of votes they counted in the polling stations are not the same tallied by IEC. Moreover, they say that boxes' code numbers they noted are changed now and it appears that fraud has been made there.

Based on our information, deals are weighing from 500,000 USD to one and a half million US dollars in order for the candidates to enter the Parliament. The situation has concerned the candidates having the people support only, not the money.

Besides that, there are rumors that the Afghan Presidential Palace (ARG) has also made efforts in order to have some of its favorite candidates to enter the Parliament and, then, to work in favor of the present team in the upcoming Presidential Elections.

Who will enter the Parliament?

There were more than 2,500 candidates in the Parliamentary Elections that were attached to different strata and ideologies; however, the CSRS analysts believe that the following category of people will rather have higher chances to enter the Parliament:

First; that will be committed to US and government's interests in the future as the government does not want to have an adverse parliament against it;

Second; candidates of some political and jihadi parties for having political and financial support;

Third; strongmen, plutocrats or businessmen; as they will try to enter the Parliament by any mean in order to gain political support for protecting and increasing their wealth.

Fourth; a number of patriot and loyal individuals will also enter the Parliament who wishes to represent their people and serve the country without pursuing any personal interests.

Impact of Parliamentary Elections on Upcoming Presidential Elections

Holding Parliamentary Elections after a delay of 3 years and with such a great scope of disorder and fraud illustrates the weak management and low capacity of the Independent Election Commission (IEC). The people trust is the IEC and the process has got enfeebled due to the existed problems. If the IEC postponed the announcement of Parliamentary Elections' results, it would emerge serious concerns over fraud in there which will badly hit the trust in the upcoming Presidential Elections.

Despite all security threats, which causes in killing and injury of tens of people due to explosions and assaults carried out by AOG, the people attended the polling stations and casted their votes in the Parliamentary Elections; but if their sacrifices are not respected by the IEC and their sacred votes are mixed with unclean votes, it will be cruelty from one hand; and from other hand, it will cause the people to not believe in IEC again and to not come out of their homes in such inappropriate circumstance from their homes for the sake of casting their votes.

End

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