

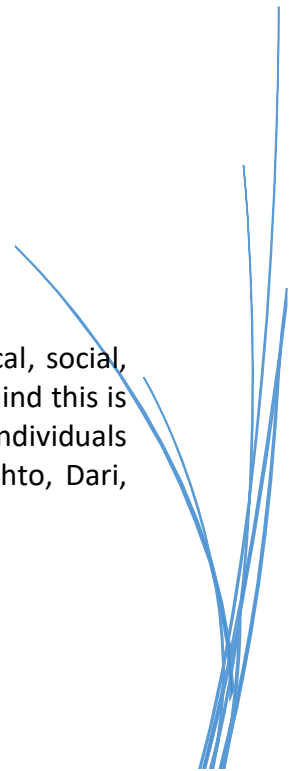
WEEKLY ANALYSIS

Issue Number – 429
(Feb 20 - 26, 2024)

POWER STRUGGLES IN PAKISTAN'S ELECTIONS AND POSSIBLE FUTURE SCENARIOS IN AFGHANISTAN



Weekly Analysis is one of the CSRS publications analyzing significant weekly political, social, economic, and security 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 design better policies. Weekly Analysis is published in Pashto, Dari, English and Arabic languages.



In this issue:

- Power struggles in Pakistan's elections and possible future scenarios in Afghanistan 1
- Power struggles in Pakistan's elections and possible future scenarios in Afghanistan 3
- An overview of the 2024 elections in Pakistan 3
- Examining the situation of Pakistan in the future government of this country 5
- Pakistan's Future Government Scenarios with Afghanistan 7
- Result 9
- References 9

Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS)

POWER STRUGGLES IN PAKISTAN'S ELECTIONS AND POSSIBLE FUTURE SCENARIOS IN AFGHANISTAN

Introduction

In the 12th general election of Pakistan, which was held on February 8th, 2024. Most of the votes were from independent candidates, in which about 92 were affiliated with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led by Imran Khan (the Former Prime Minister of Pakistan who is still in prison). Nawaz's Muslim League Party (N PML) led by Nawaz Sharif, who has previously served as Prime Minister of Pakistan three times, won 79 seats and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari won 54 seats.¹

In 2018, the leader of Tehreek-e-Insaf, Imran Khan was elected as Prime Minister as a result of the national general elections by getting the majority of votes. But in 2022, due to the formation of opposition and the no-confidence movement against Imran Khan in the national assembly, he was removed from the position of prime minister and instead, the leader of the opposition Shehbaz Sharif took charge as the prime minister of Pakistan. Previously, in 1999, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, was removed from the post of Prime Minister as a result of a military coup.² In the past during the years 1988, 1977, and 1958, similarly the government of Pakistan was overthrown through a coup or other similar situations.³

The result of Pakistan's 2024 election was announced despite the protests and allegations of fraud in the voting process, while none of the parties in the 336-member parliament of this country could achieve the quorum (169) seats which is the criteria for forming a government. But recent reports indicate that the two famous and former ruling parties Nawaz's Muslim League party and Pakistan People's Party may ally to form a coalition government, both parties have the maximum votes after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. Although votes related to both parties separately are below the quorum.

The main topics assessed in this article are, a review of Pakistan General Elections of the year 2024, an examination of Pakistan's situation under the new government, and what will be the impact and scenarios of the future government of Pakistan on Afghanistan?

AN OVERVIEW OF THE 2024 ELECTIONS IN PAKISTAN

The announcement of Pakistan's election result, which is said to have involved 48% of the 128 million eligible voters was made with a delay of some days while Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Imran Khan was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment by the country's interim government and is still in prison, but his party led the election by getting the largest number of votes amongst other parties. On the other hand, a day before the elections two deadly explosions took place near the electoral offices in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan killing around 30 individuals. Also, on election day nine individuals



were killed as a result of the explosion of a planted bomb in the same province. In the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an armed attack has also taken place on a polling station.⁴

On the other hand, even though the counting of votes took several days, there were widespread demonstrations and protests in the big cities of Pakistan due to the confessions of some election commissioners, such as Liaquat Ali Chata, the election commissioner of Rawalpindi who in a press conference confessed that he was pressurized to be part of electoral fraud against candidates who were supporting Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf. Meanwhile, leaders and supporters of various political parties in Quetta blocked all the main highways leading to Balochistan and some other highways. It is said that in addition to the alliance of Nawaz's Muslim League with the Pakistan People's Party and some other parties, about 19 political and religious parties of Pakistan have formed a new formation under the title "Great Democratic Alliance" by agreeing on an agenda for cooperation.⁵

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF PAKISTAN SEATS WON BY PARTIES IN GENERAL ELECTIONS 2024

Sr.	Party	Seats won	Percentage
1	Ind (Backed by PTI)	92	40.89%
2	PML (N)	79	35.11%
3	PPP	54	24.00%
Total		225	100%

As seen in the table above, none of the election teams won enough votes to meet the criteria set for selecting the prime minister, but the constitution of Pakistan stipulates that political parties must form the government within three weeks (21 days) after the election. It is noted that the Pakistan Parliament consists of 336 seats, of which 266 seats are determined by direct voting on election day, while 70 seats are reserved, 60 seats are reserved for women and 10 seats are designated for non-Muslim minorities. The seats are allocated based on the strength of each party in the parliament. After the establishment of the National Assembly, voting is held to elect the Prime Minister, and the successful candidate must obtain the majority votes of the Assembly,⁶ which means getting the support of at least 169 members of the Assembly. When a candidate gets the majority votes in the parliament, he takes the oath to become a Prime Minister. After taking the oath, he chooses his cabinet ministers who form the federal government. Similarly, the



same process is followed on the provincial level to elect the chief minister and a provincial government.

Therefore, the national demonstration based on alleged electoral fraud is taking place at a time when Pakistan is in an unfavorable economic situation and security situation. What will be the situation of Pakistan about the formation of a coalition government by the parties with the majority of votes, we will discuss it below.

EXAMINING THE SITUATION OF PAKISTAN IN THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT OF THIS COUNTRY

According to the final result of the election and the comments of the election headquarters of the leading parties in the election, it is believed that one of these two strong teams will take control of the power of Pakistan, each of which has its effects in connection with the improvement of the situation in Pakistan and Relations between neighboring countries and the region will have:

- Election team of Muslim League Nawaz with Pakistan People's Party: It seems that the Pakistan Muslim League Party of Nawaz branch will form a coalition government with the cooperation of the Pakistan People's Party and some other parties, while Shahbaz Sharif, the younger brother of Nawaz Sharif, is believed to be a candidate for the post of prime minister. In any case, the possible scenarios might be electing Nawaz Sharif, his younger brother Shahbaz Sharif, or Bilawal Bhutto Zardari the leader of the Pakistan People's Party for the post of Prime Minister. However, in the past Pakistan People Party and the Muslim League in coalition against Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf made accusations against each other from time to time. According to a report from Mehr news agency quoted from "Pakistan" newspaper, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari asked Nawaz Sharif to resign as prime minister in 2016 and at that time added that Nawaz Sharif's government ship was sinking and the foundations of his government had weakened. Thus, he should resign from the position of prime minister so that the financial scandal case of him and his children can be investigated.⁷ " But according to the interpretation of politics in democratic societies, "politics knows no father and mother", the possibility of the coalition of both parties seems certain. Nawaz Sharif has been repeatedly accused of corruption, especially financial corruption, and was living in exile in London before his brother Shahbaz Sharif came to power as prime minister.

Anyway, considering the fact these electoral teams have a closer relationship with the Pakistan army as compared to the opposing team and how Pakistan's army has always played a central role in the formation and overthrow of governments throughout the period since the country's independence, and the fact that the current interim government and opposition coalition formed against Imran Khan's government was led by these parties there is a strong possibility that these parties will come to power again. It is worth mentioning that after the overthrow of Imran Khan day by day the economic and security



situation of Pakistan is deteriorating. Due to the widespread protests and demonstrations in connection with the alleged fraud by these parties and the warnings of the opposition parties especially the Tehreek-e-Insaf Party, in case of not reaching power in addition to existing economic, security, and political challenges of the country where about 40% of the population is living below the poverty line, inflation has risen to more than 30% and as per a recent survey 70% of the country's population believes that the economic conditions are getting worse the expectation and possibility of situation in Pakistan improving will be very low if this team takes power.⁸

On the other hand, since the friendly relationship of this election team with America seems closer compared to the team of Tehreek-e-Insaf, it will cause the attacks of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan to intensify on the military forces of the country, which will for sure have an impact on the security situation and move the country towards possible economic crisis.

- Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf election team: Worth mentioning Tehreek-e-Insaf party's acquisition of 92 parliamentary seats in the elections at the time when Imran Khan the leader of the Tehreek-e-Insaf party is still in prison is an unpredictable and surprising fact for everyone. However, Tehreek-e-Insaf does not reach the quorum by winning this number of seats, and considering Pakistan Law regarding the formation of a coalition at this stage of the election, this electoral team also needs to form a coalition with other parties involved in the elections, recent reports indicate that this party has formed a coalition with two other parties, "Sunni Unity Council" and Shia party "Majlis Vahdat al-Muslimin".

Since several electoral parties have joined the demonstrations in connection with the alleged fraud in Pakistan's elections reaching to total of 19 parties with supporters of the Tehreek-e-Insaf Party also points towards a possible coalition between these parties with Pakistan⁹ Tehreek-e-Insaf which will form a ground for Tahreek-e-Insaf to return to power. On the other hand, America usually plays a critical role in the formation of governments in the region while Imran Khan believes that America led the conspiracy against him which resulted in his removal from the post of Prime Minister due to his trip to Russia and his meeting with Vladimir Putin, his presence in Moscow at the time of Russia's military operations against Ukraine and his neutrality in condemning Russia military operations against Ukraine and this can be considered as one of the main factors which can have a negative impact on possibility of Tehreek-e-Insaf getting back to power and electing prime minister.¹⁰ However, at the time when Imran Khan was prime minister, Pakistan did not have a suitable economic and political situation but his government adopted an economy-oriented policy and the attacks of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan did not existed on the scale that they are happening today and considering the background of Imran Khan's soft and neutral policy and intellectual commonalities with Tehreek-e-



Taliban Pakistan, it is believed that the re-emergence of this party along with its popular support in this election will help improve the situation in Pakistan. More clearly, it is expected that the attacks of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan will be reduced if the Tehreek-e-Insaf party returns to power according to the above considerations but there is a possibility that Pakistan will be face sanctions from the American side.

PAKISTAN'S FUTURE GOVERNMENT SCENARIOS WITH AFGHANISTAN

Regarding the above possibilities regarding the formation of the future government of Pakistan and the relationship background of possible personalities with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan; the below scenarios can be predicted in Afghanistan:

The First Scenario: In case if Muslim League Nawaz Party forms a coalition with the Pakistan People's Party, whose leaders have been in power for years and each of them had their policy towards Afghanistan, especially the Islamic Emirate; For example, Nawaz Sharif was the prime minister of Pakistan during the first period of Taliban rule in Afghanistan, and his government was the first government to recognize the Islamic Emirate, and in 1997 to 1998, he praised Mullah Muhammad Omar, who was the ruler of Afghanistan at that time. Nawaz Sharif told the members of the Pakistani Parliament at that time that he considered the Taliban government in Afghanistan is a role model until the coup of General Parvez Musharraf in 1999 caused his plan to collapse. Also, as soon as Nawaz Sharif took power in 2013, he announced the start of negotiations that with the Pakistani Taliban. While most of the government officials during the democratic government period in Afghanistan did not have a positive view of Pakistan and always considered Pakistan to be involved in the insecurity of Afghanistan still diplomatic relations were maintained. During the presidency of Hamid Karzai in 2013 and Ashraf Ghani's presidency in 2015 Nawaz Sharif visited Afghanistan leading a high-level delegation for peace and better relationship.

Shahbaz Sharif, the brother of Nawaz Sharif, is said to have friendly relations with the military officials of this country and is most likely to be the prime minister of Pakistan. He was previously a member of the Punjab State Assembly, the chief minister of the state, and recently after the overthrow Imran Khan was elected as the prime minister of Pakistan in 2022 by the opposition and remained as the prime minister until October 2023. At the time when Shahbaz Sharif was the prime minister of Pakistan, He expressed his concern about the presence of terrorist groups in Afghanistan at the 77th General Assembly of the United Nations and said: "Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, East Turkestan Islamic Movement and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan" are present in Afghanistan". His comment was considered irresponsible and out of stress by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. In August 2023, he asked the government of the Islamic Emirate to prevent the fighters from crossing the border to Pakistan.¹¹



Considering that it is almost impossible for each of the Muslim League and Pakistan People's Party parties to reach the top and bottom positions in this country without an alliance through voting, and also their political stand and almost similar relations with the Pakistan Army, their joint alliance in the opposition against Imran Khan's government; We need to add Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the leader of the Pakistan People's Party to this scenario as well.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari from the Pakistan People's Party, whose position as prime minister is a very small possibility. When he was the foreign minister of Pakistan, he did not have a clear view of the Islamic Emirate's government in Afghanistan. As he said: "America and NATO left their weapons in Afghanistan and left this country, now these weapons are in the hands of terrorists and not only in the hands of terrorists but also in the hands of criminal groups which poses a threat to the security of Pakistan. I hope we will fight this threat together with the Afghan government. We want the government of Afghanistan to take action against the groups that may pose a threat to the security of Pakistan and the Taliban (Islamic Emirate) must stand to their words, if they need Pakistan's help and cooperation, cooperation should be done with them."¹²

Therefore, looking at the differences in the opinions of each of them and the background of government relations during their time, in case if Sharif brothers or Bilawal Bhutto Zardari reached to prime minister post, looking at the bitter experience of Nawaz Sharif regarding the support of the Islamic Emirate in the nineties and the views of Shahbaz Sharif and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, it is believed that the political literature of both sides, especially the government of Pakistan, will assume an unbalanced state sometimes being optimistic and claiming to support the government of Afghanistan, and sometimes imposing political and economic pressures which in both possible situations will darken the diplomatic atmosphere between the two countries due to the intensification of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attacks on the government forces of this country.

The Second Scenario: The second scenario is related to the Tehreek-e-Insaf party. From the very beginning of his government, Imran Khan had adopted the policy of moving away from America and getting closer to China and Russia, which is the same direction the Taliban were moving. As well as his conflicts on Twitter with Donald Trump in 2018 about the situation in Afghanistan and Trump accusing Imran Khan of supporting the Taliban are considered to clearly indicate Imran Khan's opinion about the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.¹³ On the other hand, after the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, Imran Khan did not allow the US to use Pakistani bases to monitor the situation in Afghanistan and during his address at the Organization of Islamic Corporation (OIC) summit held in November 2021, regarding the girls education in Afghanistan he stated that the international community should respect the culture norms of the Afghan people, the context of his words was such that the culture and desire of the Afghan people is not in favor of girls' education and this was what the Islamic Emirate wanted at that



time. Therefore, it seems that with Imran Khan coming back to power, relations between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and the government of Pakistan will improve, and also due to Imran Khan's popular support and anti-American feelings, the attacks of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Taliban will decrease, which in turn will strengthen Islamabad's relations with Kabul-Kandahar. On the other hand, Imran Khan enjoyed good relations with Turkey and Iran during his prime ministership, which is what the Islamic Emirate wanted. Therefore, with Imran Khan's representative in power, it is believed that there will be regular and friendly relations in the region, including Afghanistan.

RESULT

Based on the above, we conclude that if the future government of Pakistan is formed by the election team of the Muslim League Nawaz in coalition with the Pakistan People's Party, due to the dissatisfaction of the absolute majority of Pakistan citizens (who identified themselves as supporters of Imran Khan in the elections), The intensification of the attacks from TTP and finally the freedom-loving and independence-seeking approach of the Afghans will cause the Pakistani authorities to accuse the Afghan government which will negatively impact the relationship between the Islamic Emirate and Pakistan affecting Afghanistan's economy due to the creation of friction in the trade route to South Asia and even China from Pakistan, as well as creating political pressure that can have an unpleasant future for the Islamic Emirate.

But if the government is formed by the Tehreek-e-Insaf party's election team, considering the good history of Imran Khan's relations with influential countries in the region, the possibility of regional efforts for stability in Pakistan will increase and there is a greater chance of reaching an understanding with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Taliban; both of which will result in favor of Afghanistan. and it is expected that Afghanistan will be able to reach its desired destination in the not-so-distant future, both economically and politically. It should not be left unsaid that there is a small possibility that if the demonstrations continue and turn violent in addition to the comprehensive challenges in Pakistan, the military of this country may take full power which is not considered in this article due to lower probability. **End**

REFERENCES

¹ .Pakistan Election 2024: Live Results, Party Positions, Candidates List, Constituencies Details, News Updates,

link:

<https://www.geo.tv/election>

² .BBC: نواز شریف: مردی برای تمام فصول، 17 دلو 1402 ه.ش؛ لینک:

<https://www.bbc.com/persian/world-features-68190609>

³ . مؤسسه مطالعات راهبردی شرق: نگاهی به چرخه قدرت در پاکستان؛ جدال نظامیان و سیاسیون، 19 جوزا 1399 ه.ش؛ لینک:



<https://www.iess.ir/fa/analysis/2312/>

⁴. خبرگزاری جمهور: انفجار تروریستی در بلوچستان پاکستان همزمان با انتخابات پارلمانی، 19 دلو 1402 ه.ش؛ لینک:

<https://www.jomhornews.com/fa/news/168639/>

⁵. خبرگزاری مهر: تظاهرات گسترده در پاکستان در اعتراض به نتایج انتخابات پارلمانی، 28 دلو 1402 ه.ش؛ لینک:

<https://www.mehrnews.com/news/6026606/%D8%AA%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%DA%AF%D8%B3%D8%A%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%B1%D9%BE%D8%A7%DA%A9%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B6%D8%A8%D9%87%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%BE%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C>

⁶. Pakistan's 2024 elections, 2/2024, link:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2024/757635/EPRS_ATA\(2024\)757635_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2024/757635/EPRS_ATA(2024)757635_EN.pdf)

⁷. خبرگزاری مهر: پسر بی نظیر بوتو: نواز شریف از مقام 11 اردیبهشت 1395 ه ش لینک:

<https://www.mehrnews.com/news/3612945/%D9%BE%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A8%DB%8C%D9%86%D8%B8%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%B4%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AE%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B2%DB%8C%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%81%D8%A7-%DA%A9%D9%86%D8%AF>

⁸. AL Jazeera: Abid Hussain, Pakistan's election: Can the next government bring economic stability? 7 Feb 2024, link:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2024/2/7/pakistans-election-can-the-incoming-government-bring-economic-stability>

⁹. خبرگزاری مهر: تظاهرات گسترده در پاکستان در اعتراض به نتایج انتخابات پارلمانی، 28 دلو 1402 ه.ش؛ لینک:

<https://www.mehrnews.com/news/6026606/%D8%AA%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%DA%AF%D8%B3%D8%A%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%B1%D9%BE%D8%A7%DA%A9%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B6%D8%A8%D9%87%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%BE%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C>

¹⁰. خبر آنلاین: عمران خان دلیل برکناری خود را اعلام کرد؛ 21 جوزا 1402 ه.ش؛ لینک:

<https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/1776367/%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AE%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%DA%A9%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%AF>

¹¹. خبرگزاری صدای افغان: اظهارات شهباز شریف در مورد افغانستان غیر مسؤولانه است، 2 میزان 1402 ه.ش؛ لینک:

<https://www.avapress.com/fa/news/258967/%D8%A7%D8%B8%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%B4%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%81%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%BA%DB%8C%D8%B1%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A6%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87>

¹². آریانا نیوز: شهباز شریف: امارت اسلامی از عبور جنگجویان به پاکستان جلوگیری کند، 11 اسد 1402 ه.ش؛ لینک:

<https://www.ariananews.af/fa/%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%B4%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%AC%D9%86%DA%AF%D8%AC%D9%88%DB%8C/>

¹³. آژند، فریدون، برکناری عمران خان؛ راه پاکستان از طالبان جدا می‌شود؟ 21 حمل 1401 ه.ش؛ لینک:



https://www.independentpersian.com/node/229211/%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%B%8C%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B9%DB%8C/print%20%27/taxonomy/term/%27.%24node%3Efield_main_section%5B%27und%27%5D%5B0%5D%5B%27tid%27%5D

The Centre for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) is an independent, non-profit, and non-governmental research organization established in July 2009 in Kabul. CSRS is committed to promoting policy-oriented research through conducting authentic and unbiased research concerning Afghanistan and the region.

Contact Us:

Email: info@csrskabul.com - csrskabul@gmail.com

Website: www.csrskabul.com - www.csrskabul.net



Phone & Whatsapp: +93780618000



www.csrskabul.com



info@csrskabul.com