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## Preface

From several months, the news on internal disputes and breakaway in the ranks of the Taliban were broadcast; however, some days ago, a number of Taliban leaders that had differences with Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour from the very beginning, announced a Mullah Mohammad Rasool as their new leader. This is the first time the Taliban became divided into two groups. Here, you are reading about the background of Taliban's internal disputes after the announcement of Mullah Mohammad Omar's death, the military impact of this splinter group and the impact of this splinter group on the power of the Taliban and the peace process.

In the second part of the Analysis, you will read about the lack of coordination between the leaders of the National Unity Government (NUG) and their splitter positions on national issues. From the very beginning of the establishment of NUG, there were some differences on some issues and are very often seen. Last week, a key culprit of Kabul Bank Scandal, Khalilullah Ferozi, who was sentenced to ten years of imprisonment, participated in inauguration ceremony of a township in Kabul along with senior government officials. Immediately After this event, President Ashraf Ghani cancelled the license of this township and ordered investigations on this issue. Besides that, the leaders of the government also faced serious differences and the lack of coordination in a lot of other issues.

These are the issues which will be discussed in details in this issue of weekly Analysis.

## Internal Disputes of the Taliban and the experience of Splinter group



Last week, the news on the breakaway group of the Taliban widely broadcasted in Afghan and international media. The Taliban splinter group which names itself “the High Council of Afghanistan Islamic Emirate” appointed Mullah Mohammad Rasool as its leader in a meeting in Western Farah Province.

Before that, a lot of the leaders of this new group were against the leadership of Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour; however, in practice, these disputes opened a gateway for a new group to be separated from the Taliban, now.

Taliban was the only group in Afghanistan that yet to face a breakaway and fraction; however, it seems now that this group is also passing through this experience. What would be the impact of the Taliban splinter group on the Taliban itself and the peace process? It is discussed in this analysis.

## The Background of the Taliban Internal differences

Some disputes emerged inside the ranks of the Taliban after the news on the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar, the late Supreme Leader of the Taliban was revealed and Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour became appointed as a new leader of this group. A number of Senior Taliban leaders like Mullah Mohammad Hassan Rahmani, Mullah Abdurrazaq and Mullah Mohammad Rasool avoid pledging its allegiance to Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour and according to the Taliban itself; they started campaigning against Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour and his proponents<sup>1</sup>.

These disputes increased after the news of the opposition of Mullah Mohammad Omar's family (including his son Mullah Mohammad Yaaqoub and his brother Mullah Abdul Manan Hotak) with Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour were broadcasted. However, the family of Mullah Mohammad Omar published a declaration about the successor of Mullah Mohammad Omar and said that the thoughts and ideas of the founder personalities (scholars and mujahedeen) of the Islamic Emirate should have been asked about the appointment of the new leader of the Taliban and from the other hand, it denied disputes in the ranks of the Taliban and/or supporting an opposition and, through this, announced its neutrality.

The family of Mullah Mohammad Omar cleared in its position that: “We neither support nor oppose any party, whether it’s Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour’s or others”. The disputes among the Taliban increased specifically after the Mullah Mohammad Omar’s family announced its impartiality and both Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour and the opposition started its efforts to gain the support of this family.

Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir, the former head of the Taliban Military Committee that had resigned a few months ago and was considered as an important opponent of Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour and there were also rumors about him that he oppose the new leader of the Taliban. On July 31, 2015, he clarified his position in an official declaration and said “these rumors are baseless...I serve with my entire energy...I

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<sup>1</sup> The letter of clarification by Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir, a member of the leadership council of the Taliban, See Online: <http://shahamat-english.com/letter-of-clarification-by-the-respected-mullah-abdul-qayyum-zakir-a-member-of-leadership-council-of-islamic-emirate-of-afghanistan/>

obey well than every other”.<sup>2</sup> This letter of clarification of Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir strengthened the position of Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour to a large extent.

Tayyib Agha, the former head of the Taliban Political Office (TPC) in Qatar had resigned at that time, also. He, in his resignation letter that was broadcasted through media, considered keeping the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar secret for two years and appointing the new leader outside the country as a “historical mistake”. Besides that pointing to the present disputes among the Taliban, he said that “he will not support any party in the present internal disputes among the Taliban”.<sup>3</sup>

After the resignation of Tayyib Agha, another senior leader of the Taliban, Mullah Abdul Manan Niazi that was in the opposition, talked about resolving differences and said that they will hold a major gathering of Ulema (religious scholars) in order to make a decision on the internal disputes in the ranks of the Taliban<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, the spokesman for the Taliban, in his talks to media, has several times said that that the internal disputes of the Taliban are about to eliminate; however, they are yet to come to an end and a group of the Taliban has already breakaway.

### **The Breakaway faction of the Taliban Movement**

Taliban was the only group in the modern history of Afghanistan that has not experienced breakaway and fraction; however, some individuals like Mullah Mutaseem Agha Jan separated from the Taliban and a lot of efforts on splitting this group were done; but the Taliban was still able to save its rank from the fraction.

Now, the new breakaway faction of the Taliban officially appointed Mullah Mohammad Rasool as its new leader in western Farah province, inside Afghanistan; however, some other media sources consider this location as Shindand district of Herat province. Mullah Mohammad Rasool also appointed and declared his four deputies. Mullah Baz Mohammad Haris, Mullah Mansoor Dadullah and Mullah Shir Mohammad Akhundzada are his military deputies and Mullah Abdul Manan Niazi is his political deputy.

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<sup>2</sup> For the clarification letter of Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir, See Online:

<http://alemara1.org/?p=21987>

<sup>3</sup> The complete resignation letter of Tayyib Agha, the former head of Taliban’s political office in Qatar, See Online:

<http://shahamat-english.com/letter-of-clarification-by-the-respected-mullah-abdul-qayyum-zakir-a-member-of-leadership-council-of-islamic-emirate-of-afghanistan/>

<sup>4</sup> See Online:

<http://gandhara.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-pakistan-taliban-differences/27170641.html>

## Support in the Battle Field

Basically, the power of the Taliban is based on Ulema, the Ulema Council, military commander and fighters. Every group that has a lot of support of the mentioned parties would be the most powerful group.

For now, Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour has a lot of support of Ulema and almost the entire provincial governors, commanders and fighters have pledged its allegiance to him. Besides that, Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour appointed Sirajuddin Haqqani, the head of the Haqqani Network as his deputy; and due to this, he received the support of this powerful group in the battle field. Moreover, Mullah Akhtar Mohammad also succeeded to achieve the support of Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir and the family of Mullah Mohammad Omar; and, these are the things that have strengthened the position of Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour.

However, the breakaway faction of the Taliban does not have the support of a lot of the Taliban fighters in the battlefield; but some individuals like Mullah Mansour Dadullah can be considered as a potential threat to the Taliban in some provinces. Therefore, after the splitter group officially appointed its leader in Farah province, the pro-Akhtar Mohammad Mansour Taliban and Ulema held a gathering and once again declared their support from Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour.<sup>5</sup> Need to be mentioned that Mullah Mansour Dadullah will not be able to gain the support of the Taliban fighters because he was dismissed by the late leader of the Taliban, Mullah Mohammad Omar and his actions were also criticized in one of Mullah Mohammad Omar's voice messages. On the other side, Mullah Mohammad Rasool appointed Shir Mohammad Akhundzada, the son of Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor from a famous Jihadi family as his military deputy, in order to gain some support for his group; however, the family of Mawlawi Nasrullah Mansoor denied its relation with this new group and said that "it rejects the efforts that cause separation in the Jihadi rank".

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<sup>5</sup> For the report of this gathering, see:  
<http://alemara1.org/?p=34049>

## The Breakaway Group and *Daesh*

After the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar was announced, the news on some Taliban commanders that joined *Daesh* was published in the media. Among them was Mansoor Dadullah that the media reports to had joined *Daesh*; however, Mansoor Dadullah himself denied these news and rumors later.<sup>6</sup>

Soon after the splitter group of the Taliban announced its existence, the international media broadcasted some news which showed this group has joined *Daesh*; however, the newly appointed political deputy and spokesman of this group, Abdul Manan Niazi, in an interview with Aljazeera, denied the ISIL association and added that “We will never join them. Their ideologies are different; they come from a different background and a different history, we can never ask for their support”.<sup>7</sup>

However, the breakaway fraction denies the ISIL association; but Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour consider Mullah Manoor Dadullah, one of the splitter group’s leaders associated with *Daesh* and call the latest clashes between the Taliban in Zabul province as fight against *Daesh* and Mansoor Dadullah, who they claim associated himself with *Daesh*, not against the breakaway group.<sup>8</sup> It seems that there is a probability of joining this newly breakaway group with ISIL, and this is likely to be after the breakaway fraction is subdued by the group of Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor.

## Impact on the Taliban and the Peace Process

What would be the impact of the breakaway group on the Taliban unity and military power? As for the first time the group separates it from the Taliban due to deep frictions with it, now the Taliban would try to subdue this new faction and would fight with this splitter group as like it fights with ISIL. Thus, they alongside the Afghan government, foreign forces and ISIL would also be involved in a new fighting with this group.

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<sup>6</sup> Mullah Masnoor Dadullah denies joining Daesh, see this news of Pajhwok Afghan News:

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2015/09/17/disaffected-dadullah-denies-joining-daesh-after-rumors>

<sup>7</sup> Here is the link for Abdul Manan Niazi’s interview with Aljazeera:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/deadly-taliban-inter-fighting-erupts-afghanistan-151108190506338.html>

<sup>8</sup> Read the Taliban official clarification on Zabul fighting, here:

<http://alemara1.org/?p=34117>

The new splinter group would impact the policy of Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor related to peace; that's why this splitter group has asked to revive the stalled peace process. Of course, some analysts believe that the regional intelligence circles are also behind this breakaway faction in order to use it as pressure tool against Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor.

On the other side, some others believe that the separation among the Taliban would be the start of Taliban's weakening and thus, the country would go toward peace, then. However, if this group even weakens after the separation among the Taliban, the hopes for peace would become paled and the war would become more complicated.



## The National Unity Government without a coherent Strategy



A year has passed, however, the National Unity Government (NUG) is yet to become a symbol of unity; moreover, inconsistency and differences in the position of its members on important and critical issues in the country is sign of deep differences among them.

That's why every time one of NUG's members talks and gives a promise to the nation, the people do not take these promises seriously, because, perhaps, another member of it, with a contradictory word, is rejecting this promise.

However, it is not only NUG that is affected, but the foreign countries are also faced with a similar problem when it comes to the matter of Afghanistan; and the reflection of this confusion has reasons in such a situation. The foreigners, sometimes by leaving the country and sometimes by continuing their presence, give the impression that the International Community is also extremely confused in Afghanistan.

### From Disputes to Lack of Coordination

The Deep frictions among the NUG is emerged from the lack of planning that has caused this government to go towards an entirely uncertain course. The people of Afghanistan had thought that it would witness a brighter future in Afghanistan, if only Hamid Karzai

leave the power and Ashraf Ghani, who was emphasizing on meritocracy and plan during his presidential election campaign, became the President. However, the lack of coordination in the conduct of the government increased after a while. Today, a few people in Afghanistan believe in the promises given by the government and this issue has widen the gap between the government and the people more than Hamid Karzai's era.

### **Priority to Peace**

President Ghani, during his election campaign, was considering peace as a first priority of his government, however, after he took power, he chose, according to his own perception, the easiest mean to achieve the peace, and it was providing privileges to Pakistan. Two meetings that were held in China's Urumqi and Islamabad's Murree had not got any achievements. This policy, which caused the relations to become cooler with India, faced a total failure after the disclosure of the death of Mullah Mohammad Omar and, then, the relations between Kabul and Islamabad also badly deteriorated.

The friction over signing the intelligence agreement with Pakistan became problematic for the government and hence the NUG's CEO Dr. Abdullah criticized it. The Ashraf Ghani's party became obligated to deny the signing of any kind of MoU with Pakistan and to consider inking of a document for exchanging intelligence only as a primary step in order to build confidence between the two countries.

While Ghani calls the armed opposition as (political opposition) and keeps the door open for negotiations, however, his senior adviser Ahmad Zia Massoud says that efforts to make peace with the opposition are vain and waste of time.

Salahuddin Rabbani, the Afghan foreign minister, in his meeting with the Chinese government's special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Deng Xijun said that the Afghan government has open the doors of peace to those who want to return to a peaceful life. However, it will fight against the elements and individuals that disrupt peace and security in the community.

On the other word, the government makes peace with the opponents that surrender and fights against those who fight. In this case, peace should be made between the government and the group which it fights.

## **Fighting Corruption and the Kabul Bank Scandal**

The fight against corruption was another important slogan that Ashraf Ghani was chanting during the Presidential Elections, and was calling on the people to support him. In his first action against corruption, he tasked the judicial institutions to review the biggest corruption scandal of Afghanistan's history, "the Kabul Bank Scandal".

Although, the review of this case had a more symbolically aspect, and Ashraf Ghani, by reopening the Kabul Bank Scandal wanted to convince the international community; because the international community conditioned its aid to Afghanistan to tackle corruption, and specifically solve the Kabul Bank Scandal. But suddenly people saw on TV news that Khalil Ferozi, the biggest embezzler of Kabul Bank that the court had sentenced him to ten years of imprisonment, was freely standing alongside the senior government officials including Ahmad Zia Massoud, the Special Representative of the President of Afghanistan in Reform and Good Governance and the Minister of Urban Development Affairs and Housing and, was inaugurating the township in the capital Kabul called "Smart City"!

The outcry of media prompted the president to cancel the contract of this city with Ferozi; in the case, the people close to the President were involved in this adventure. When the Minister of Urban Development Affairs and Housing was asked about this issue, he said that the Legal Adviser to the President sent three letters to him and asked him to sign this contract with Ferozi.

The question is that how can the Legal Advisor to the President violate the decision of the Court and not only release this person (Ferozi) from the prison, but also order a contract worth tens of millions of dollars to be signed with him? If it was his personal decision, he should be tried in court; but if he was ordered by the president, Ashraf Ghani should answer the people of Afghanistan and the international community in this regard.

## **Afghan Refugees in Germany**

The Afghan Minister of Refugees and Repatriation said regarding those Afghans who, by accepting the risk of death, has reached to Europe that the return of these people should be in accordance with the international conventions on refugees and they should not be forcibly returned to Afghanistan; however, the President of Afghanistan said that the government of Germany has the right to not accept the refugees and to return them to Afghanistan.

## **Foreigners Lack of Plan**

It seems that foreign countries are faced with the similar problem in Afghanistan. The unorganized situation in Afghanistan has caused the foreign countries to become confused on how to set its future policies on Afghanistan.

On Wednesday, November 4, Jeff Davis, the spokesman for Pentagon in a press briefing in Washington answered the questions asked by the reporters and said some things that was widely coverage in the international media. He said that the Washington considers the Afghan Taliban as an important partner in the peace process in this country and it does not account this group as “terrorist”. America does not intend to target the Taliban. It named only Al Qaeda and *Daesh* as groups targeted by Washington in Afghanistan.

Three days after this press conference, the press office of the Defense Department of America said that these words of the mentioned spokesman of the Defense Department were not accurate. For the justification of these words of Mr. Davis, it was told that his aim was that the Taliban does not have other choice but to join the peace process, if it wants to have legitimacy.

Although, the American Defense Department justified or corrected the expressions of its spokesperson, but it is remembered that the spokesperson for the Pentagon earlier in December, 2014 has said that his country, after January 2, 2015, will target those Taliban whose actions are a direct threat to U.S. security.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of this discussion may be short. Considering this, the situation in Afghanistan would not become better and its main factor is also the structural problem in NUG. Overthrowing the government is not a solution to this crisis, but it can also expand the scope of the crisis. However, bringing reforms in the government would tackle to some extent the crisis the country is faced with, but how should this be done? The key to this is again in the hands of those who have established this government.

The End

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