



## Center for Strategic & Regional Studies Kabul

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## Preface

Afghan war is considered among most important cases of the U.S. foreign policy; because, from one hand, it is counted as the longest foreign war of America, and from other hand, the war is still continuing with its entire severity. Besides foreign troops, tens of thousands of Afghans have suffered casualties in this war and it is continued to do so.

Recently, criticisms on the U.S. military strategy in Afghanistan have increased because it was not able to bring stability into Afghanistan as the Kabul-Washington Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) failed to do so. The air bombardments in different parts of the country have been increased as a result of this Strategy, which has resulted in excessive civilian casualties as well. The first part of the Weekly Analysis of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) is focused on the Trump Afghan Strategy and future of the presence of America troops in Afghanistan.

The second part of the Analysis is devoted to the ongoing drought in Afghanistan and its impact on the people. In addition to insecurity, drought and economic problems are the reasons behind higher internal displacement in last months. The people are negatively affected by drought in the time where the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) has not got the capability to assist the affected people either. You would read an analysis about the present situation of, its impacts and the reasons behind drought in Afghanistan.

## A Look at U.S. Military Strategy in Afghanistan



By **Hekmatullah Zaland** \ CSRS

Increasing insecurity and security challenges in Afghanistan have led to discussions among Afghans about the US military strategy for Afghanistan. The US inspectors also said in a report a few days ago that the Trump military strategy for Afghanistan was not successful.

Members of the Afghan parliament and some of the country's politicians recently criticized the current US military strategy for Afghanistan and the three-year achievement of the security agreement between the two countries, and some members of the Afghan Senate called for the lifting of the Kabul-Washington Security Agreement. For this reason, the Senate has announced that it will review the implementation and effectiveness of the security agreement between Kabul and Washington.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Etilaatroz Daily, see it online: <http://etilaatroz.com/60940/>

On the other hand, the achievements of this strategy are sometimes spoken on both sides as well. In a recent incident, U.S. and Afghan National Security Advisers discussed the implementation and achievements of the new US strategy for Afghanistan through a video conference on May 29, 2018.

Nearly 10 months have passed since the announcement of the new US strategy for Afghanistan, during which the war broke out, and the military and civilian casualties of Afghanistan increased unprecedentedly. The question is how has the new American strategy influenced the situation in Afghanistan? What does the outlook of this strategy seem in the light of the current situation in the country?

### **U.S. War Strategies (2001-2018)**

The US strategy for Afghanistan has been steadily changing over the past decade and has not been successful in most cases. After 2001 and the beginning of US attacks on Afghanistan on October 7, the US war strategy in Afghanistan has been vacillated for a variety of reasons, and for this reason it has changed about six times. The six stages of the US war in Afghanistan are listed below:

**First;** from 2001 to 2005: During the first term of the George W. Bush, the United States pursued two distinct goals in the Afghan war that were the devastation of the Taliban regime and the elimination of Osama bin Laden; one of which was the overthrowing of the Taliban regime and founding of the new government in the country beamed achieve in the very beginning. During this period, almost all regions of the country were peaceful and there was no particular resistance seen to foreign forces and the Afghan government.

**Second;** from 2005 to 2009: During the second term of George W. Bush and in the early years of this era, U.S. forces carried out night-time search of homes and arrested former Taliban members, which is also deliberated as one of the major reasons for the revival of the Taliban warfare. For this reason, the focus was mainly given to the battlefield, and in 2006, the number of foreign troops in the country beamed increased. During this period, the war in the country flared up year after year, and the casualties of U.S. troops rose from 129 persons in 2005 to 516 persons in 2009.

**Third;** Between 2009 and 2011: The increase in casualties of American troops during the second term of George W. Bush caused Americans widespread criticism of the war in Afghanistan, and as a result, Barack Obama came to power under the slogan of ending the Afghan and Iraq war in 2009. Obama has increased its troop strength to above 100,000 over the years which caused in severity of war between the Taliban and the foreign troops. With the intensification of the US war during these years, not only the Taliban did not fail, but the Taliban's resistance to foreign forces was on the rise as well. Therefore, the Taliban became accepted as a political and military power and talks on inauguration of a political office for the group in Qatar begun.

**Fourth;** from 2012 to 2014: Under the Obama Strategy for the war in Afghanistan, the number of US troops in Afghanistan gradually decreased and the Afghan security forces started to burden security responsibilities. During this time, Obama sought to establish permanent bases in Afghanistan and sign a security agreement as a result of signing a strategic agreement between Kabul and Washington, but the deal did not become signed due to the increase of Karzai's tensions with the United States.

**Fifth;** from 2015 to 2017: In the second term of the Obama administration and after the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG) following the US intervention in the Afghan elections, the security agreement with the United States became promptly signed, and Kabul-Washington relations became improved. Another factor in improving relations with the United States was the revival of night operations and the neglect of Afghan officials from the deliberate killings by foreign forces in different parts of the country. For this reason, Obama changed the decision to reduce the number of his troops in Afghanistan and retained about 10,000 troops in Afghanistan.

**Sixth;** from 2017 to 2018: With the formation of new administration in the United States and the arrival of Donald Trump, Americans, once again, faced the vacillation of continuing or ending the war in Afghanistan. That's why the new US strategy for Afghanistan, the longest war of US in abroad, has been delayed for about eight months, which generally, re-focused on war and the increase in number of US troops.

## Evaluation of Trump Military Strategy

Donald Trump was somewhat opposed to continuation of US war in Afghanistan before reaching Presidency. His silence during the election and a few months after the election was also attributed to his vacillation on contention the US war in Afghanistan. For this reason, during the discussions on a new strategy for Afghanistan, the option of complete withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan was also on the table. Eventually, on August 22, 2017, he announced his country's new strategy, which mainly spans some of the following points:

- Obscuring future of US military presence in Afghanistan;
- Focusing on war and sending more troops to Afghanistan;
- Strong positioning against Pakistan and emphasizing on growing India's role in Afghanistan.

Over 10 months after the announcement of a new US military strategy for Afghanistan, the strategy is being evaluated by Afghan and US observers as a failed<sup>2</sup> one, due to several reasons some of which are given below:

**First:** The focus on and return of foreign troops to the battlefield has made the country's situation worse. The security situation is so badly ruined that the provinces collide with the threat of collapse, and districts in different provinces of the country collapse one after another. The casualties of Afghan military and civilians have increased unexpectedly, which according to some reports, in recent weeks, more than 250 Afghan soldiers have been killed on the battlefield and more than 350 others became injured in a week.<sup>3</sup> The increase in US air strikes has also been a problem which has increased civilian casualties.

**Second:** the ambiguity surrounding the future of the United States in Afghanistan in terms of time and number of forces in the country, and the strategy for achieving peace through a war that has not resulted in peace in the past 17 years, has raised doubts in the region. For this reason, in recent months, the Cold War has flared up with other countries in Afghanistan. For example, the Cold War of

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<sup>2</sup> Watchdog: Afghan strategy failing, May 21, 2018, see online:

<http://www.rep-am.com/news/national/2018/05/21/watchdog-afghan-strategy-failing/>

<sup>3</sup> VOA Dari, In one week, 252 Afghan soldiers were killed, see it online in Dari:

<https://www.darivova.com/a/ansdf-casualties/4382706.html>

Russia and the United States and their proxy war in Afghanistan have also aggravated the relationship between Afghanistan and Russia.

**Third:** Trump's strategy not only has not helped in improving the political situation in Afghanistan, but also caused further problems as well. Domestic disputes have increased at various levels, especially among the heads of government, and ethnic and linguistic differences have risen more than ever. The parliamentary Election Process is faced with mistrust due to the U.S. intervention in the past elections. Widespread corruption is existed in the government as it was in the past.

**Fourth:** In addition to the political and security situation, the economic and social situation of the people of Afghanistan in the past year has not only failed to recover, it is also deteriorating. Poverty and unemployment are at their peak, and Afghans leave their homes due to security and economic problems. According to the remarks of the Minister of Immigrants, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has now reached 1.4 million, and since the beginning of 2018, about 200,000 people have been displaced by war and insecurity and the deteriorated economic situation.<sup>4</sup> The number reported by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is 114,000 since the beginning of the year.<sup>5</sup>

What constitutes the achievement of the Trump Strategy for Afghanistan is the pressure of America on Pakistan to cooperate in the Afghan peace process. In this regard, although the pressures and isolation of Pakistan have led Pakistan to begin its efforts to improve relations with Afghanistan, since Pakistan's concrete progress towards honest engagement in Afghan peace is not seen in the past year, this country does not seem to change its policy towards Afghanistan that easy. On the other hand, due to various reasons, Pakistan, as it is said, does not have control over the Taliban, and if it so wishes, it will not succeed in bringing the Taliban into direct talks with the Afghan government. Therefore, these pressures are not a guarantee of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

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<sup>4</sup> Azadi Radio, Interview with Afghan Minister of Refugees, 29 May 2018, See online: <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/29256203.html>

<sup>5</sup> Relief Web, Afghanistan Weekly Field Report | 21 -27 May 2018, see online: <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-weekly-field-report-21-27-may-2018>

## **Future of U.S. War in Afghanistan**

The US war strategy for Afghanistan destines the fate of war and peace in this country, which is why it has got a lot of importance. The past 17 years, however, has proven that realistic peace does not include the US war strategy in Afghanistan, and it has now also pursued the failed policy of making peace through the war.

Given the current strategy of America in Afghanistan, the image of the future of US war in this country seems to be darker because, on the one hand, the peace and war in Afghanistan are increasingly becoming complex, and on the other hand, America is also not prepared, for the sake of its interests in the region, to leave this country.

Hence, it is the responsibility of Afghans, especially the Afghan government, to have a clear picture of the future of the United States in Afghanistan in order to avoid further threats and endless wars in the country, and to not face the country with greater indistinctness for the sake of funding and protecting its half dead government. End



## Drought; another Challenging Threat for Afghans



By Zia ul Islam Shirani \ CSRS

For now, Drought is another big challenge in the war-torn Afghanistan that, after insecurity and wars, has put the life of millions of Afghans at risk.

In its latest report, The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has indicated that a drought is affecting two out of three provinces across Afghanistan with more than two million people expected to become severely food insecure.<sup>6</sup>

Last week President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani presided over the meeting on countering drought and its consequences which was attended by international donor agencies representatives where he thanked their efforts and emphasized on their assistance to drought affected areas. Meanwhile UNAMA chief Yamamoto assured his agency's cooperation with Afghan government in this regard.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> OCHA: Drought grips large part of Afghanistan:

[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20180525\\_ocha\\_afghanistan\\_monthly\\_humanitarian\\_bulletin\\_april\\_2018\\_en\\_final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20180525_ocha_afghanistan_monthly_humanitarian_bulletin_april_2018_en_final.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> For further information: <http://bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/politics/item/33349-president-ghani-asks-donor-agencies-to-assist-drought-hit-areas.html?tmpl=component&print=1>

The overall impact of Climate Changes and, particularly, of Drought in Afghanistan and the present situation, reasons behind and ways out are analyzed here.

### **Drought in Afghanistan**

Local drought is being arrived in different parts of the country once in every 3 to 5 years; however, zone-level drought is being arrived once in every 9 to 11 years and national-level drought is being arrived once in every 20 to 30 years, according to Asian Development Bank.

If we consider the last two decades, it is for the fifth time that Afghanistan faced drought. During Civil War, Afghanistan faced long-lasting drought in 1995 which became out from it due to continuous precipitation in 2002 and 2003. Afghanistan, once again, faced drought in 2008, 2010 and 2012 which has a negative impact of agricultural products, particularly, the wheat crops. Overall, this situation also put an impact on Afghan economic growth as well. For example, the growth of agriculture sector in Afghanistan was 21 percent in 2008; however this number increased to 51 percent in 2009 which had a positive impact of the country's economic growth.

According to the World Bank, approximately 6.5 million people have been affected by drought in Afghanistan since 2002 which does not included the present number of people affected by drought. The World Bank also expects that Afghanistan will suffer a loss of 3 Billion USD in agricultural field if severe drought is arrived in this country.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See online:

<http://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/governance/voices/water/ppps/endpovertyinsouthasia/prs/archive/201707>

## Present Drought and its Impacts

The government and international agencies share concerns over the ongoing drought in Afghanistan since last three weeks. According to the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), the drought is being divided into three categories with regards to its level of threat:

There are 15 provinces in the first category (Jawzjan, Badghis, Faryab, Ghor, Uruzgan, Zabul, Kandahar, Helmand, Samangan, Balkh, Baghlan, Kunduz, Herat, Farah and Nimroz); the second category contains 6 provinces (Maidan Wardak, Logar, Takhar, Paktia, Nuristan and Sari Pul) and the third category encloses 13 provinces (Ghazni, Daikundi, Bamyán, Kapisa, Parwan, Panjshir, Kabul, Badakhshan, Laghman, Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktika and Khost).<sup>9</sup>

Approximately, 2 million people have been faced hunger due to drought in these provinces where, for now, 13 million people have encounter lack of adequate food, and thus, 500 Million USD is needed for tackling this threat and providing assistance to the affected persons.

There are concerns that the country's economic situation will also be impacted by the ongoing drought. Because the country's economy, to a large extent, is relied on agriculture and it assumed that the wheat production will be decreased by 2.5 million tons from that of 4.2 million tons. Additionally, there is a presumption of increasing internal displacement which has got negative impact of the country's economy.

## Reasons behind drought in Afghanistan

- **Afghanistan's water flowing to other countries;** Afghan has large resources of fresh water whose large portion is flowing to Afghanistan's neighboring countries which, as a result, faces Afghans with lack of water. According to the information provided by the Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW), 75 billion miter cubic of water is being produced in Afghanistan annually; however, Afghanistan could use only 25 percent of these waters and the remaining 75 percent are flowing to other countries.

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<sup>9</sup> See online: <https://pa.azadiradio.com/a/29254840.html>

- **Lack of precipitations;** Afghanistan is a land-locked mountainous country whose water resources are mainly dependent on seasonal precipitations. According to OCHA, below average snowfall and a precipitation deficit of 70 per cent has been registered in most parts of the country and water points and fountains across the country have dried up and the lack of rain and snow melt has made rivers run low or dry up completely and thus Afghans are faced a threat of drought.
- **Climate Changes;** Generally, the earth's temperature which is a result of emission of gases and temperature from factories on global level has caused in climate changes; however, devastation of jungles in Afghanistan due to war is also considered as an aspect of climate changes in the country. Because, the existence of jungles and the greenness of land keep the weather cooler, and the snow freezers and resources colder and thus prevent them from being melted out.

### **Why shared efforts on Drought are needed?**

Poor management of water and drought are considered as one of the greatest threats towards human life. Poverty and hunger is being engendered by drought and seasonal changes which make the people to leave their homes and migrate to other areas for the search of work, food, drink and good life.

Afghanistan is an agricultural country and almost 15 million of its people provide their living through agricultural in villages and rural areas, so drought is harmful for them in every case. As seasonal changes are considered as a most important reason behind people's displacement, OCHA says that at the beginning of May, the first migration movements of 21,000 persons, were reported from Badghis and Ghor provinces to Herat City, Herat Province, due to drought and depleted food stocks of families.

Considering the ongoing drought and its consequences in the country, a serious struggle against it is needed, and most importantly, the shared efforts of the government and international agencies are vital in this regard. The governmental bodies or ministries have not got the amount in the budget to be able to struggle against the ongoing drought solitarily.

According to MAIL, nearly 500 Million USD is needed to tackle drought; in the case, this ministry has got only 8 to 9 million USD in its budget. Afghanistan's National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) has got a total budget of 9 million USD. Thus, the assistance of international agencies is much needed in struggle against drought.

Nevertheless, considering the current situation, it is supposed to provide the needed persons with assistance as soon as possible and speed up the series of assistance provision. But for now, it seems that OCHA is faced challenges in gathering the assistance; as it has been able to collect only 22 per cent of the entire 500 million USD required for struggle against drought.

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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**