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Preface

17 years ago, on September 9, 2001, a bloody attack was launched on New York and Washington cities of the United States and thus the U.S. held Osama Bin Laden, leader of Al Qaeda responsible for the attacks and as a result, launched an attack on Afghanistan taking advantage of the subterfuge.

17 years have passed, however, the war is still raging, other armed groups including ISIS are active, and it seems that Afghanistan is gradually turning into a rivalry ground for regional and international powers. After 17 years of foreign intervention and despite the involved parties, tens of thousands of civilians have been killed and injured in the war.

The first part of the weekly analysis of Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) discusses how 9/11 attacks occurred, what were U.S. goals behind the campaign on Afghanistan and why the Afghan war still continues.

The second part of the analysis studies the civilian casualties occurring due to the negligence of parties involved in the war started by the United States. More than forty thousand civilians have suffered casualties in four years of the National Unity Government (NUG) based on UN reports. The war has intensified more than ever and its domain expanded to cities after NUG was established. Heavy casualties are being suffered by civilians in the ongoing war due to assaults and explosions of armed opposition or the operations and air strikes of foreign forces deployed in Afghanistan and/or the Afghan security forces.

9/11 and Never-ending Afghan Tragedy



On September 11, 2001, 19 member of Al Qaeda, most of whom were from Saudi Arabia, hijacked four airplanes of “United” and “America” airways and carried out attacks on New York and Washington cities of the United States. Around 3000 people were killed in these attacks and thus, were considered a justification for launching the war on Afghanistan. The U.S invaded Afghanistan and deployed tens of thousands of troops there under the banner of the “War on Terror”.

17 years later, the Afghan war initiated by the U.S is still ongoing and claims the lives of countless Afghans every day. After 17 years of war, not only does the Taliban remain undefeated, but a number of other armed groups including ISIS (Daesh) have also emerged in Afghanistan.

The analysis will look into how the 9/11 attacks occurred, the U.S. war on Afghanistan and what the U.S has gained in Afghanistan since 9/11.

U.S. Campaign on Afghanistan

A number of Arab nationals were residing in Afghanistan during the Soviet Union attack on Afghanistan, and were aiding Afghan Mujahedeen on different grounds. Some Arab nationals including Osama Bin Laden and his comrades remained in Afghanistan during the Taliban regime. They were being supported by the Rabbani administration prior to that.

Osama Bin Laden was the cause of Taliban and U.S enmity. Though the United States had launched a number of missile assaults on Afghanistan in 1998; the dispute over Osama Bin Laden, once again led to animosity after the 9/11 incident.

On September 20, 2001, the U.S. President, George W. Bush made the following [demands](#) on the Taliban; to deliver to the United States authorities all of the leaders of Al Qaeda who hide in Afghanistan, to release all foreign nationals, to immediately and permanently close down every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and to hand over every terrorist and their support structure to appropriate authorities. The U.S also demanded to be given full access to terrorist training camps, so that they could make sure that they are no longer operating. Nevertheless, the Taliban rejected these demands and said that the United States possessed no evidence against Osama Bin Laden's involvement in the incident.

Later, the Taliban however [proposed](#) to the United States that they were ready to hand Osama bin Laden over to Pakistan to be tried; but Parwez Musharraf precluded the proposal. On October 7, 2001, Taliban, once again, proposed that they were ready to try Osama Bin Laden in a [court](#) in Afghanistan; however, the U.S. continued with the attacks on the day and initiated the ongoing war.

The Current Situation of the Ongoing U.S War in Afghanistan

Apparently, the U.S. attack on Afghanistan began under the pretext of a “War on Terror”, however, 17 years later terrorism is yet to be eliminated and new armed groups have emerged in Afghanistan as well. The war has intensified day by day and despite the involved parties, tens of thousands of Afghan civilians have suffered casualties.

Overall, the consequences of the U.S. war on Afghanistan in the last 17 years can be established as follows:

First: 17 years later, the war is still ongoing, and apart from Taliban, various other armed groups, including ISIS have emerged in Afghanistan. More than 40 per cent of Afghan land is controlled by the armed opposition of the Afghan government, according to SIGAR. More than 40 thousand civilians have suffered casualties during the four years of the National Unity Government (NUG) only, according to UN. The United States has perpetrated many crimes and is afraid of investigating them. It has threatened against files of U.S soldiers being referred to the International Court of Justice.

Second: After the Taliban regime collapsed, a new system was established by the U.S and its international allies in Afghanistan 17 years ago; however, political instability and deep disputes among government officials are still considered big challenges. The Afghan electoral commission is yet to be trusted even after they held three Presidential Elections, and Afghanistan is still among the four most corrupt countries in the world.

Third: Billions of dollars entered the country with the arrival of international troops, however, they have filled the pockets of specific individuals and circles in the country. For now, about 40 per cent of Afghans are living below the poverty line, where almost 2 million of them are eligible to work but are unemployed. Hundreds of thousands of educated Afghan youth migrated to foreign countries due to unemployment, where a large number of them lost their lives travelling through dangerous routes.

Fourth: The U.S war on Afghanistan resulted in a “by hook or by crook” involvement of some regional countries like Iran, Pakistan, Russia and China in Afghanistan. Nowadays a large number of analysts believe that the Afghan war is prolonged due to secret confrontation and interference of regional and world countries. If this continues, Afghanistan will perhaps turn into the rivalry center of great powers.

Conclusion

The 9/11 attacks have had as much negative impacts on Afghanistan as its domain is yet to be shortened. Due to these attacks, the U.S. and a number of other military powers found justification in attacking Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and many more countries, leading to deaths of thousands of human beings in these wars.

Alot of analysts believe that after 17 years of war on Afghanistan, the U.S. is not interested in the War on Terror, instead, it follows its strategic and long-term regional interests and that the 9/11 incidents are interlinked to these goals.

Hence, the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan has led to the concern of some regional countries like Iran, China and Russia. In the last few years, Russia and Iran believe that the U.S. intentionally instigates insecurity in the region and supports the terrorists under the banner of “War on Terror”; however, U.S. has always rejected these allegations and inversely has accused these countries of providing support to armed groups.

In conclusion, the post-9/11 U.S. attack on Afghanistan was the start of its longest war. After 17 years, the U.S. generals today, have concluded that the ongoing U.S. war in Afghanistan has encountered deadlock and it is necessary to put an end to it through negotiations. Due to its inappropriate policies, the U.S. is subject to criticism from inside and outside. End

High Civilian Casualties during Four Years of NUG



Last week, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock in his 2-day visit to Afghanistan [said](#) that 40 thousand civilians have been killed and injured during the four years of the National Unity Government (NUG).

Although, the U.S war on Afghanistan is ongoing since the last 17 years; it has enflamed more than ever after the NUG was established in 2014. Apart from the involved parties, the death and injury of tens of thousands of civilians was caused; but the U.S. and the armed opposition of the government are yet to eliminate the opposite side in the battlefield.

The subject of the increase in civilian casualties after establishment of NUG, responsible circles behind civilian casualties in Afghan war, and the solution for prevention of bloodshed of innocent Afghan civilians are discussed here.

NUG and Civilian Casualties

Four years ago, the National Unity Government (NUG) began to operate on September 2014 following the controversial election result. From the very beginning, the NUG faced security challenges after its leaders signed the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) between USA and Afghanistan. However today the war in Afghanistan has intensified.

During the National Unity Government (NUG), the domain of war expanded to almost the entire country and security has deteriorated year by year. The fall of Kunduz province to Taliban for the first time after 2001, the Taliban attacks on provincial centers of Farah and Ghazni bringing majority of the governmental bodies of the two provinces under their control, and the increase in suicide attacks are the signs of the poor security situation in Afghanistan. Additionally, as the war intensifies, increase in suicide attacks of the armed opposition and air strikes of the foreign forces and Afghan militants have caused a rise in civilian casualties.

Considering the statistics of international organizations, more than 10 thousands civilians have been killed and injured every year since the establishment of NUG in 2014.

The total civilian casualties were 10534 in 2015, 11002 in 2015, 11500 in [2016](#) and 10453 in [2017](#), according to UNAMA. Considering these statistics, the civilian casualties, except for 2017, were on the rise in the past years.

1692 civilians were killed in the first six months of 2018 according to a UNAMA report, among them, 544 were female, 263 were children and 785 were male. 3430 civilians became injured in this period, among them, 992 were children, 387 were women and 2051 were men. Although, the statistics of the mentioned organization in first six months of 2018 show 1% increase in casualties; however, it shows a 5% decrease in those who became injured in comparison to the same period in the last year.

Factors behind Civilian Casualties

The ongoing war in Afghanistan is being carried out by foreign forces, the Afghan government and armed opposition. Therefore, all involved parties are sharing the responsibility and have a role in civilian casualties due to the Afghan war. The civilian casualties are a result of war strategies of the involved parties and have increased and worsened after 2014.

Government Armed Opposition: one of the factors behind civilian casualties in Afghanistan is government armed opposition, especially the Taliban. Most of the time, civilians are killed and injured due to their explosions and suicide attacks. The bloody attacks on Enlightenment Movement, Charahi Zanbaq Square, Mawoud Educational Center, Wrestling Club, Protestors of Momand Dara of Nangarhar and tens of other deadly attacks during the four years of NUG that resulted in the death and injury of hundreds of civilians.

A UNAMA report indicates that the largest portion of civilian casualties are caused by government armed opposition especially the Taliban. Among the 2018 civilian casualties statistics, 65% of them are referred to government armed opposition with 42% linked to Taliban and the remaining linked to Daesh and other government armed opposition groups, though it is something the Taliban deny.

Afghan Government: Another important factor behind civilian casualties in Afghanistan is armed forces of Afghan government. Afghan military forces have caused civilian casualties due to negligence of war principles and mismanagement of war while carrying out land and air assaults. In its 2017 report, UNAMA stated that 16% of the civilian casualties are referred to Afghan government.

Foreign Forces Operations: The bombardment of foreign forces have increased during the 4-years of NUG, especially after the announcement of the new U.S military strategy for Afghanistan, which mainly targets civilians. The U.S forces deployed in Afghanistan have carried out 2611 air strikes in 2017. According to reports, the number of airstrikes were 1071 in 2016 and only 236 in 2015.

Foreign forces are another important factor behind civilian casualties in Afghanistan. Most of the time, civilians are killed as a result of foreign forces' air strikes. However, on the one hand UNAMA referred only 2% of civilian casualties

to foreign forces in 2017; and on the other hand, the leaders of NUG have chosen to, most of the time, ignore the bombardment of Afghan civilians by foreign forces.

Need to End War and Maintain Peace

The continuation of war under any banner is disadvantageous to the people regardless of strategy used and causes catastrophic tragedy for the people and the society. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the experience of the last 17 years, make efforts to put an end to the ongoing war in the country, and to have the involved parties make peace with each and eventually have peace maintained in the country.

During the last 17 years, U.S. has modified its war strategies and brought changes in the leadership of foreign forces involved in the Afghan war. The bombardment rate multiplied however, it is yet to receive any palpable result. The new military strategy of Donald Trump is actually the repetition of experiences of the past administrations and, as witnessed in the last one year, it is botched. The U.S general themselves confirm that the Afghan war has encountered deadlock.

Putting an end to the Afghan war and making realistic efforts for national conciliation is directly linked to the future of the security situation and living conditions in the country. If the U.S and the International Community want to put an end to the Afghan war, they need to continue their already begun negotiations with the Taliban in coordination with the Afghan government. The Taliban have understood that they cannot achieve their goals through war and should also struggle for peace talks and alleviating the raging war in the country.

Since the U.S initiated the war, it remains responsible in playing a vital role in ending it. Cooperation or lack of cooperation of neighbors and other regional countries in the Afghan issue has a direct link to the security situation and U.S presence in Afghanistan. After the establishment of U.S. permanent military bases in Afghanistan and emergence of the “Islamic State” group in the country, the regional countries, especially Russia, continuously criticize the U.S. policies about its “War on Terror”. Inversely, NATO and U.S accuse Russia of supporting Taliban

and thus, the Afghan and U.S officials are concerned about Russia and Taliban ties.

The confrontations of regional and world countries cause big security challenges for Afghanistan as well as the region, and is very likely to turn Afghanistan into the battlefield of long proxy wars. But for the sake achieving regional cooperation, the United States should hold its military presence to a withdrawing schedule from Afghanistan in order to eliminate the concerns and doubts of some regional countries about the presence of the U.S in Afghanistan.

End

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