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## Preface

17 years has passed since the US attack on Afghanistan; however, the war strategies of the involved parties have caused elongation of the war and are considered the main motive behind the civilian casualties. All parties involved in the war are accountable for instability but the civilian casualties hit the peak after the establishment of National Unity Government (NUG) and announcement of the new military strategy of Trump on Afghanistan.

The air strikes have increased more than the past after the new military strategy of Trump was announced, wherein most of the time, civilians, innocent Afghans, civilian homes, madrasas and masjids are targeted in these strikes. In the first six months of 2018, the rate of civilian casualties resulting from air strikes have increased by 52 per cent in comparison to the same period of 2017, according to the UN report.

The report is published while tens of civilians including children and women have been killed due to air strikes of Afghan and foreign forces in different parts of the country in the last few days.

The first part of the Weekly Analysis has discussed the issue of civilian casualties resulting from blind air strikes and their future consequences.

The second part of the Weekly Analysis is allocated for the 73rd United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Heading a high-level official delegation, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of Afghanistan had participated in the Assembly. Besides addressing the General Assembly, he also held meetings with leaders of some countries on the sidelines of the assembly and discussed Afghan and regional issues with them. Overall, there are rumors that the reason behind why President Ghani did not attend the UNGA is that President Donald Trump had refused to have a meeting with him.

## Continuation of Blind Air Strikes under shadow of silence of National Unity Government



Since 17 years, the Afghan war has targeted civilians by parties involved in the war resulting in the death and injury of tens of thousands of Afghans.

Air strikes and joint operations of Afghan and foreign forces have always caused a large portion of civilian casualties. Recently, 14 civilians most of whom were women and children were killed as a result of joint night operations and bombardment of Afghan and foreign forces in Jaghato District's Mullah Hafez village of Maidan Wardak province last week. Simultaneously, 18 civilians were killed in an air strike by foreign forces on a wedding ceremony in Tagab district of Kapisa province. Furthermore, 29 civilians were killed and 14 others wounded as a result of Afghan and foreign forces joint operations in Paktia and Nangarhar province some days ago.

Although these attacks were condemned and even called a “Crime against Humanity” by former President Karzai, Hizbe Islami Party leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a number of Parliament members and the public, the Ministry of Defense is yet to condemn the Jaghato tragedy. It has said that it will appoint a delegation to investigate the Tagab case.

The Afghan government denies the civilian casualties in Jaghato district of Maidan Wardak provinces while the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), through publishing a statement, has confirmed that 11 children and a woman belonging to one family have been killed in the Jaghato incident.

Increase in air strikes of foreign forces is no doubt a part of the new military strategy of Trump for Afghanistan that has achieved no result other than increase in civilian casualties and severity of war.

The consequences of lack of attention to the lives of civilians in the war is reflected in the frequent targeting of civilian homes in air strikes and the silence of the government and international community against the killing of civilians.

### **Lack of attention to the lives of people in the Afghan war**

After the US troops and coalition forces initiated the current war in 2001. 17 years have passed and till today none of the parties involved in the ongoing war have shown concern for the lives of civilians.

Civilians are killed and wounded in deadly attacks and explosions of armed opposition of the government on the one hand, and on the other hand, they are targeted by operations of Afghan and foreign forces. During the last 17 years, the parties involved in the war have always targeted civilians and have shown disregard for civilians' lives.

In recent years, particularly after the new US strategy was announced for Afghanistan, the military strategy of the country focused on more air strikes and night raids than before.

On the other hand, the Taliban changed their war strategy carrying out aggressive attacks and assaults on Afghan big cities in the form of large groups.

Moreover, the Daesh group has also carried out suicide attacks and deadly explosions in different parts of the country, each of them resulting in increase in civilian casualties.

The parties involved in the Afghan war, while targeting their enemy take the lives of countless civilians as well, and that is why every war causes more civilian casualties. For now, the Afghan situation is severe and Afghans do not feel secure in cities or in villages. They are not safe from the armed opposition's attack and explosions in cities and Afghan and foreign forces' night raids and blind air strikes. These are realities that has made life for Afghan people hard.

### **Blind Air Strikes**

Apparently, the foreign forces abandoned the battlefield after 2014 and signaling of Kabul-Washington security agreement; however, their bombardment still continues and has infact increased after the announcement of the new military strategy of Trump for Afghanistan, which in most cases targeted civilians. Based on reports, the US has carried out 2611 air strikes in 2017; while the number was 1071 in 2016 and only 236 in 2015.

Although there are no accurate dates on foreign forces or joint forces' air strikes in 2018; the Taliban started to carry aggressive attacks recently. It is likely that Afghan and foreign forces use air strikes for defense purposes. Thus air strikes may further increase in the Afghan war; but regarding the civilian casualties caused by air strikes, UNAMA reports that 5122 civilians were killed and injured in the first six months of 2018 of whom 7 per cent (149 killed and 204 injured) were due to air strikes of foreign and Afghan forces.

The air strikes of foreign forces have always killed civilians and targeted religious schools and civilian homes instead of eliminating the armed opposition. The civilian killings have always been responded to with silence by the international community and head of the Afghan government, and/or sometimes, the foreign forces replies regarding the blood of innocent Afghans are "it was a mistake; Sorry!".

Overall, the rate of civilian casualties caused by foreign forces, specifically their air strikes, are high; however, UNAMA, intentionally and unbelievably refer a very small amount of the civilian casualties to foreign forces on the one hand; and on the other hand, the heads of National Unity Government (NUG) also choose to remain silent against the bombardments of foreign forces that cause civilian casualties.

## **Conclusion**

The homes of civilians have been targeted and their innocent women and children been killed in the 17-year War on Terror “mistakenly” and/or “unintentionally” and the perpetrators have always been forgotten without being punished or trialed.

Continuation and repetition of such strikes will increase distance between people and the government on the one hand; and on the other hand, the action will enflame the harsh reaction and hate of people against the perpetrators of these incidents and will instigate continuation of war in the country.

As the killing of women and children and, overall, targeting the innocent civilians is an action against human and Islamic principles; therefore, the Afghan government and international community are obligated to take immediate measures against preventing such blind strikes of Afghan and foreign forces.

The Afghan government should follow the recent relentless incidents instead of remaining silent or denying the facts. Besides that, it should also be deeply evaluated how such unyielding attacks could be prevented. Otherwise, treating the latest incidents without seriousness will be counterproductive and help in empowering the ranks of the armed opposition. In brief, the Afghan government is requested to focus on honest peace talks and on how to put an end to the ongoing bloody war, as well as how to prevent countless civilian casualties that occur daily. End

## 73rd UNGA and Afghanistan



Last week, the 73<sup>rd</sup> meeting of United Nations General Assembly was hosted in New York, where Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of Afghanistan, heading a senior delegation along with other leaders participated in it.

The UN member countries' leaders and their representatives held meetings with each other and discussed global issues. On the second day of the meeting, Dr. Abdullah addressed the UNGA and stressed regional cooperation for the sake of peace and stability. He asked neighboring countries, especially Pakistan, to help Afghanistan target terrorists and eliminate their safe havens.

Challenges are growing outwardly and world order is increasingly chaotic said António Guterres in his opening address to the 73<sup>rd</sup> UNGA. He also added that trust is at a breaking point and that trust in national institutions, trust among states, trust in the rules-based global order is lacking. He pointed out divisions in the Security Council too.

The following topics are discussed in the analysis: UN role in the Afghan issue, participation of Dr. Abdullah in UNGA and what happened there.

## **Afghanistan and UN**

The United Nations (UN) was established after WWII by 51 countries in 1945 and Afghanistan became its official [member](#) in 1946. There were 193 member countries in UN in 2006; however, Taiwan and Vatican are two states that are yet to receive membership of UN.

In 1979, the UN objected to the Soviet Union (USSR) attack on Afghanistan through issuing a resolution and considering the invasion of USSR, initiated their activities there. The Geneva Agreement that was signed in 1988 paving the way for withdrawal of Red Army forces from Afghanistan was also a result of UN efforts.

UN made efforts to prevent civil war in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of Soviet Union troops from Afghanistan; however, its efforts were fruitless. During the Taliban regime, it tried to pave the way for negotiations between Northern Coalition and Taliban; however, these efforts also had no positive outcomes.

The UN extended its activities in Afghanistan after the Taliban regime collapsed in 2001 and the new system was established through US cooperation. From establishing an administrative system to holding Loya Jirga, the UN carried out different missions; however, 17 years later, Afghanistan still faces political, economic and security instability. Thus considering the mission and activities of the organization, the role of UN in the Afghan issue attracts reproval.

## **Afghanistan Participation in 73<sup>rd</sup> UNGA**

As Chief Executive of Afghanistan attended the 73<sup>rd</sup> UNGA instead of President Ghani, speculation emerged of strains in ties between President Ghani and the Trump Administration.

According to a report by Afghan Pajhwok News quoting governmental sources: “it was planned for President Ghani to participate in the 73<sup>rd</sup> UNGA and have a meeting with President Trump on the sidelines of the General Assembly; however, Dr. Hamdullah Mohib, Afghan National Security Advisor to President Ghani and a high-level delegation was sent to the United States for this purpose;



but Trump having rejected meeting with Afghan President said that his Vice President Mike Pence would meet him". Thus President Ghani did not participate in the recent UN General Assembly.

Although the Presidential Palace termed these speculations "baseless"; the fact that President Trump did not even mention Afghanistan in his address to the UNGA give reason for such doubts to remain.

The 17-years of US war in Afghanistan has led to a kind of ambiguity and failure currently. The U.S has tried different strategies for winning the war it has initiated in Afghanistan in 2001; yet the only achievement seems to be the persistence of war.

Though the U.S aided in billions of dollars for the purpose of building a new governmental system in Afghanistan; the country still faces political, economic and security instability and is ranked at the top of world's most corrupt countries.

Taking the situation into consideration, Donald Trump had recently appointed Zalmay Khalilzad as his special envoy to Afghanistan in order to find a way out of the current ambiguous situation in Afghanistan. Most analysts believe that the Trump Administration is unsatisfied with the National Unity Government (NUG) performance. Since the situation has deteriorated and a number of political parties, former governmental officials and Afghan National Assembly emphasize a reviewing of the security agreement (BSA) signed with the United States, it is likely that Trump refusing to meet Afghan leaders is due to the ambiguity in the Afghan situation and the fact that they have not provided a clear picture and strategy on the situation in Afghanistan to Trump either.

## **What Happened at the 73<sup>rd</sup> UNGA?**

The US President Trump address to the 73<sup>rd</sup> UN General Assembly was the headlines of many media channels. He called Iran a country which has planted the seed of killing, chaos and terrorist actions throughout the Middle East and that neither respects its neighbors borders nor the national sovereignty of the other countries.

In the UN Security Council, Donald Trump also accused Iran and Russia of being involved in genocide of the Syrian people. He also criticized China and said that it interferes in the upcoming Presidential Elections in order to prevent Republicans from achieving success. Trump also said that he is the first American President who has challenged China when it comes to trade.

The latest situation of Syria, Yemen and Palestine was also discussed in the UNGA and the only close-to-negative issue in the UNGA was the lack of mentioning Afghanistan by Donald Trump in his address to the General Assembly.

Chief Executive of Afghanistan, Dr. Abdullah, however, addressed the UN General Assembly on its second day. However, there was nothing important in his speech to be able to bring the attention of the world to the Afghan issue. He stressed on peace from the perspective which shows the weak intention of Afghan government for making peace with the armed opposition. His remarks did not contain important points to grab the world's attention in regional issues either.

Chief Executive of Afghanistan, Dr. Abdullah had a meeting with Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani on the sidelines of the 73<sup>rd</sup> UNGA where both leaders stressed on joint efforts against terrorism. Rouhani asked for finalization of Tehran-Kabul Comprehensive Agreement and said that his country is ready to open the Chabahar Port for use and extend the Railway to Afghan border.

Dr. Abdullah also met the UN Secretary-General and assured him that transparent and reliable elections would be held through using the biometric system. In return, the UN Secretary-General also stressed that using the biometric system for the purpose of transparent and reliable elections will help in stability of Afghanistan. In the meeting, he also said that there are no changes seen in Pakistan's policies on efforts against terrorism and emphasized that the only way

to get out of current problems is authentic cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan. the UN Secretary-General assured Dr. Abdullah of full cooperation and said that our purpose is to have peace and stability maintained in Afghanistan.

Chief Executive of Afghanistan also met the US Deputy Foreign Security for Central and South Asia where they talked about peace talks in Afghanistan, Afghanistan regional ties, security situation there and other important issues.

Overall, Chief Executive of Afghanistan met premiers of Denmark and Belgium and promise of extension of ties between both sides was .

End

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