



## Center for Strategic & Regional Studies Kabul

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#### **In this issue:**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Preface.....  | 2  |
| <br><b>The growing incredulity between the U.S. and the Afghan government</b>     |    |
| Kabul’s foreign policy toward Washington.....                                     | 4  |
| Incredulity between Kabul and Washington .....                                    | 5  |
| The future of Kabul-Washington relations .....                                    | 6  |
| <br><b>The condition of private institutes of higher education in Afghanistan</b> |    |
| Higher education in Afghanistan.....  | 8  |
| Private higher education institutions .....                                       | 8  |
| Problems in private higher education institutions .....                           | 9  |
| Conclusion .....  | 10 |

## Preface

While the face-to-face negotiations between the Taliban and the United States have increased hopes for peace in Afghanistan, the exclusion of the Afghan government from peace negotiations have raised concerns.

The National Unity government officials have directly and indirectly expressed displeasure about the peace negotiations process since the commencement of the process, Hamdullah Moheb, National security advisor's recent statement openly opposed the negotiation process and considered it as a deal for illegitimatizing the Afghan government

The criticisms of Afghanistan's national security advisor on the United States' stand in the US-Taliban negotiations have turned the Kabul-Washington links incredulous. The first part of CSRS Weekly analysis discusses the foreign policy of Afghanistan towards Washington, considering the recent changes and occurrences.

The second part of the weekly analysis discusses the condition of private universities in Afghanistan. The ministry of Higher Education recently postponed the operations of 26 private universities due to their poor performance and quality of services. Although the number of private universities has increased remarkably since 18 years, most of them have the problem of quality. We discuss a few issues related to the topics.

## The growing incredulity between the U.S. and the Afghan government



A few days ago on 23rd Hoot, 1397 [Solar year] in Washington, Hamdullah Mohib, national security advisor strongly criticized Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. special representative for Afghanistan. He blamed Khalilzad for bypassing Afghan government in the peace process for his interests. However, the U.S. Department of State called such statements destructive for Kabul-Washington links and the peace negotiation process and thus summoned Hamdullah Mohib.

Regarding the issue, Reuters news agency by quoting some sources said that David Hale, U.S. secretary of state for political affairs had a telephonic conversation with president Ghani and has told that “Moheb will no longer be welcomed in Washington and the United States does not want to cooperate with him in Kabul and Washington.”

Hamdullah Moheb criticizes the U.S. stand in the peace process and blames Khalilzad’s ambitions in a time when the Afghan government has been excluded from the peace negotiation process and is unpleasant about the process

Here, we discuss the foreign policy of the unity government, the dysfunctional Kabul-Washington links and the future of relations between two sides.

## **Kabul's foreign policy toward Washington**

Although the Kabul-Washington relations were extremely belligerent during the last years of Karzai's presidency, reconciled with the establishment of the unity government and the Afghan-US bilateral security agreement was signed by Ghani within 24 hours of his inauguration of authority.

After the reconciliation of Kabul-Washington links, President Barak Obama changed the schedule of army pullout in 2016 and announced that 8400 soldiers would remain in 2017. The previous plan was to keep the 5500 soldiers after 2016.

The Kabul-Washington relations remained ambiguous during the first eight months of Trump's presidency. Although the Afghan government was unaware and worried about the U.S. strategy for the future, the concerns reduced after the announcement of Trump's war-oriented policy for Afghanistan and the government welcomed the strategy of the U.S.

The Afghan foreign policy was carried out by the U.S. strategy for Afghanistan. This resulted in unbalance in the Afghan foreign policy towards countries in the region because the policy was in harmony with the strategy of India but not with countries like Pakistan, Iran, Russia, and China.

The US-centered foreign policy of Afghan government caused the abolition of regional consensus. Similarly, the government became close to the United States to a state in which ignored and became silent about every crime of foreign forces after the announcement of the new strategy.

After the declaration of Trump's strategy, airstrikes increased exceptionally, and airstrikes bombarded people's houses, religious schools, mosques and even stations of Afghan security forces. Nonetheless, the Afghan government never expressed any reaction. However, when the United States chose the path of negotiations instead of war, the government voiced hostility about it. Thus, skepticism appeared in Kabul-Washington links.

## **Incredulity between Kabul and Washington**

Due to change in U.S. strategy about the Afghan war and the alteration in United States' decision to negotiate instead of fighting with the Taliban, the Kabul-Washington relations become hostile for the first time during the unity government.

Although president Ghani strived to negotiate with the Taliban, the Taliban has constantly refused to negotiate with the Afghan government. The United States struggled to defeat the Taliban on the battlefield, but the 18 years of war is a failed experience. Therefore, they altered their strategy and chose to negotiate with the Taliban.

President Ghani was expecting that the Taliban, just like Hezb-e-Islami, will negotiate with the government. Conversely, the Taliban started negotiation with the United States and bypassed the Afghan government. The government is thus, displeased about the peace process.

The U.S. selected Zalmay Khalilzad as their representative for peace. He commenced negotiations with the Taliban and so far has conducted five official meetings with them. Ashraf Ghani at the beginning of the peace negotiation process said that "The United States' ongoing efforts for peace are a part of Afghan government's program for peace and will be negotiated under the Afghan government's leadership." However, when the rumors of agreement over the U.S. pullout spread, the concerns of the Afghan government also increased. President Ghani by sending a letter to the U.S. strived to prevent trump from the pullout. Later, he stated in an interview that no foreign side has permission to decide on peace in Afghanistan.

After Ghani's statement, Hamdullah Moheb, Afghanistan's NSA criticized Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and opposed the peace negotiation process during his talk with news reporters in Washington. He accused Khalilzad of bypassing Afghan government, taking legitimacy and giving it to the Taliban. Also, he blamed Khalilzad for striving to establish a temporary government in which he becomes the leader.

The U.S. Department of State strongly reacted to Mohib's criticisms. The department rejected his claims and termed the attack on Khalilzad as an attack on the Department of State. Referring to Mohib's statement, Chief executive Abdullah Abdullah said that Afghanistan is not in a position to have destructive relations with the international community.

### **The future of Kabul-Washington relations**

Peace with the Taliban is a vital and definitive issue for Afghanistan. The Afghan government as a strategic partner of the U.S. and as a government consider this as its right to know completely about the course of the process.

This is the first time when the relations between Kabul and Washington became hostile during the unity government. Previously, the Kabul-Washington relations became hostile due to airstrikes, civilian casualty, and expansion of war during the last few years of Karzai's presidency. This time, however, the causes of hostility are not airstrikes and civilian casualty, but other issues. Currently, Ghani has nominated himself for the presidential elections, and it seems like he fears losing power. Thus, he tries to specify his position in the peace negotiation process.

It is being said that the Taliban and the U.S. have reached an agreement on the issues of pullout and counterterrorism and will sign the agreement during their next meeting. If the deal is genuinely signed during their upcoming meeting and the Afghan government starts to feel solitary, the Kabul-Washington relations will worsen. The end

## The condition of private institutes of higher education in Afghanistan



During the last days of 1397[Solar year], the ministry of higher education of Afghanistan banned 26 universities where medical sciences are taught after their Kankor exams.

According to MOHE, a delegation of the ministries of higher education and Public health review the activities of 45 private universities which were teaching medical sciences. Their report was submitted to the cabinet. Based on the cabinet's decision, 20 institutions were banned from enrolling new students due to poor performance and six institutions were banned temporarily.

After the establishment of government in 2001, dozens of universities began operations along with Public universities. However, concerns have raised regarding their poor and low quality. Here, we discuss higher education and the condition of private universities in Afghanistan.

## Higher education in Afghanistan

Faculty of medical sciences was the first higher education institution in Afghanistan which was established at the time of King Nadar Shah in 1932 in Kabul. Kabul University was established officially as the first university of Afghanistan in 1946 which currently has 21 faculties and 92 departments.

At the Time of Sardar Mohammad Dawood Khan, the ministry of higher education was established to enhance and develop higher education in Afghanistan. Later, higher education improved and many faculties and departments were established according to the interest and worldview of the people of Afghanistan.

With the establishment of the new government in 2001, the condition of higher education changed remarkably. The quantity of private higher education institutions increased incomparably after 2002 and dozens of universities were established along with Public universities.

According to the ministry of higher education, around 38 private and 131 private higher education institutions currently operate in Afghanistan. However, despite spending millions of dollars, the quality of higher education is still a serious problem in Afghanistan.

## Private higher education institutions

Various private higher education institutions are primary factors of entrepreneurship, facilities, and guarantors of quality in our societies. Higher education also play a role in the development of our community and currently the best universities like Harvard, Stanford, Oxford and other graduates scholars for the development

Like other countries, enhancement of higher education and the establishment of dozens of higher education in Afghanistan during 18 years was one the achievements in the sector. Kardan was the first private institution established in 2002 in Kabul after the fall of the Taliban regime. Later, progress was made in the sector, and dozens of universities and higher education institutions were established.



Although too much investment has been spent on private higher education institutions, quality, excessive establishments are still obstacles. Mostly when a youngster doesn't succeed to get admission in public university or doesn't get enrollment in his favorite faculty, he/she walks towards a private university and considers it an opportunity.

### **Problems in private higher education institutions**

Undoubtedly, the development of higher education was remarkable during the past 18 years. However, there are problems that have been witnessed in private institutions:

First: Absence of a precise mechanism for the attraction of students is one of the biggest problems of private higher education institutions. Some of the institutions have unhealthy competition. These institutions throw-outs all the rules and regulation of higher education from the beginning of the entrance exam until students' graduation. Such doings have reduced the quality of education.

Second: Lack of professional and academic staff is another problem in private institutions. Most of these institution does not higher worthy individuals to teach due to higher cost and financial requirements. Rather, they higher those who have low experience and poor educational background.

Third: Another problem with private higher education institutions is the lack of appropriates facilities to study. Most of the laboratories and libraries in private higher education institutions are not according to standards, and most of the institutions are established in residential houses.

Fourth: Due to the absence of monitoring, the owners of some institutions lack attention to the quality of education. It is necessary for the ministry of higher education to seriously need to monitor and evaluate the quality of private higher education.

Fifth: Overall, higher education institutions are seen business investment and the focus is on profit. However, it is necessary to focus on students' participation in class, teaching, and exam, so that a graduate knows something to represent something to the community.

Presence of the above and many other problems are causes of incompetence of graduates in the community.

## Conclusion

Considering the demands of the Afghan community and low capacity of public universities in Afghanistan, the presence of private higher education institutions is essential. On the other hand, poor quality of education in some private institution should be considered as an intricacy of the community.

It is the responsibility of the ministry of higher education to improve the quality of education in private institutions by bearing in mind efficient mechanism and strategies for controlling the condition.

The latest step of the evaluation of medical institutions by MOHE is itself an efficient step towards improvement. However, follow up and keeping the evaluation process away from corruption is crucial.

Most of the private higher education institutions haven't accomplished anything the betterment of teaching and have only strived for profit. For the ministry of higher education to have executed their duty, it required to monitor and evaluate the course of students and lecturers' absorption, study materials, application of curriculum and necessary equipment in private higher education institutions.

The end

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