

# US ELECTIONS AND THE FATE OF AFGHAN PEACE

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Although the US elections began on 3rd November, 2020, but the results have still not been officially announced even after 12 days. Preliminary results show that Joe Biden, Candidate of Democrat Party has attained higher votes compared to his rival President Donald J. Trump. However, Trump does not concord with the results and accuses Biden's campaign of fraud. The clash over the results magnifies while votes are still being counted in some parts of the US. Here, we discuss effects of results of the US elections which are seemingly won by Joe Biden.

### **Trump vs Biden; US Presidential Elections**

Competition between Republican Party's Donald J. Trump and the candidate of Democrats Joe Biden in US presidential elections of 2020 was tight enough that political analysts could not project the winner. The elections had 65% eligible American voters and had the largest number of participants after 1900.

Donald J. Trump seem to have attained lesser votes due to rise in unemployment rate in US, poor administration of Covid-19, fall in trade with other countries and having the slogan of "America First". The Coronavirus killed more than 242 thousand Americans. President Trump and First Lady Melania also tested positive for Covid-19 recently. Earlier, President Trump used to consider the virus as ordinary. According to a survey of ABC News, 72% of Americans believed that president Trump did not consider Covid-19 as a serious threat. On the other hand, the "America First" policy shaded relations of the US with the world and affected US's reputation worldwide. Joe Biden has declared that he will not pursue the policy of "America First" and will have close relations with the allies of the United States.

President Trump has made corruption claims and has expressed that his 2.7

million votes have been deleted from the Dominion Voting system. On 14th November, 2020, President Trump spoke to a Covid-19 Media conference about the plans of his future administration regarding the Coronavirus. His speech indicates that he implicitly accepts his loss in the elections. On the other hand, the cybersecurity agency of the electoral system has expressed that elections 2020 were the most transparent elections in the history of the United States and rejects the claims of President Trump.

### **Biden's Policies for the US and the World**

If Biden wins, the greatest challenge for his administration will be combating Covid-19 which has infected 10.7 million Americans. In addition, reducing unemployment is another challenge for Biden.

Converse to Trump's foreign policy, Biden has expressed that he will sanction the Paris agreement about climate change which was previously declined by Trump's administration. This will be a remarkable development in efforts for fighting climate change.

In addition, Joe Biden used to criticize Trump's policy about Iran. During his electoral campaign, Biden expressed that he will commit to the Nuclear agreement of 2015 with Iran. He accused President Trump of incongruously pressuring Iran and has expressed that he will work on a policy will secure interests of the US in the Middle East. Hassan Rohani, President of Iran is optimistic for the US elections and has stated that new administration in the US will retribute its previous mistakes. However, US's green light for Iran may not please Arab countries and may have negative impact on the security of the region.

The issue of Kashmir is another complicated matter between India and Pakistan. President Trump has previously made statements that he will arbitrate to resolve the issue. On the other hand, Biden has expressed that minorities are oppressed in Kashmir and he work to resolve the issue. Therefore, Pakistani officials are optimistic for Biden's win and strives to attain support of US's new administration regarding Kashmir.

Reconstructing political and trade relations with China is another great challenge for Biden's administration. China has congratulated Biden, though, late compared to other countries.

The Russian government has not congratulated any of the candidates and emphasizes that we should wait for official results of the elections. While during the US election 2016, President Putin was the first to congratulate Trump for his

win. Biden has previously accused Russia of interfering in US elections 2016. Hostile and distant relations between the US and Russia can affect their ties and condition of the region.

### **Biden and for Afghanistan**

As Biden was vice president of US between 2009 and 2017, he therefore has sufficient information about the situation of Afghanistan. He has traveled to many areas of Afghanistan.

After the September 11 incident, the US commenced attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. During his Vice Presidency, Biden was against the attacks on Iraq.

In 2012, he expressed to CNN during an interview that the US should withdraw all its forces from Afghanistan. He stated that US's purpose of attack on Afghanistan was to eliminate Alqaeda. As Alqaeda is currently in weakest state in Afghanistan, responsibility of security should be submitted to Afghan forces and the US no longer wants to remain in Afghanistan. However, in order to eliminate threats, the US will support Pakistan in order to combat terrorism. Biden has previously stated that Afghanistan should be administered by Pakistan, which faced serious condemnations of Afghans.

Earlier in 2011, he expressed to Former President hamid Karzai that Pakistan has 50% greater importance for the US compared to Afghanistan, the golden age of George W. Bush has ended and the Taliban are your problem, as Alqaeda is ours. Hence, His previous statements are seemingly not in favor of a better system in Afghanistan.

Considering his statements, security of Afghanistan may not get better during his administration and bloodshed may persist.

On the other hand, President Ashraf Ghani has congratulated Biden and has hoped that the US will continue its strategic support from Afghanistan.

### **Biden's Standpoint about the Doha Agreement**

The Doha agreement was signed during Trump's administration. Considering Biden's prior statements about Afghanistan, the Afghan nation may not witness a greater advancement in the peace process. The Taliban have proclaimed the US elections are their internal issue. They have requested the US to respect the agreement because some groups whose interests are connected to war are striving to sabotage the peace process, which is not in favor of the US.

On the other hand, 2nd Vice President Sarwar Danish has requested Biden's

administration to reassess the peace agreement with the Taliban and pressure them to reduce violence.

After Danish's statements, First Vice President Amrullah Saleh during a security conference in Herat expressed that the Afghan government does not officially recognize the Doha agreement because the Afghan government released 5000 prisoners of the Taliban in concord with the international community. Yet, violence still persists.

Such statements of the Afghan officials during the intra-Afghan dialogue can give opportunity to the US to easily discard the peace agreement for their own national interests.

On the other hand, US security officials believe that the US pullout is based on consideration of circumstances. If interests of the US are threatened, they will stay in Afghanistan.

After the Doha agreement, violence is still intensifying in Afghanistan. A former security advisor of the US National Security has expressed to BBC that the Doha agreement was the biggest failure of Trump in foreign politics. He believes that the Taliban and the US have allied against the Afghan government.

Mark Esper, Former US secretary of defense has sent a letter to the white house and has expressed his concerns about the US pullout. He has stated that the US should not haste while withdrawing from Afghanistan.

Considering Biden's prior statements about Afghanistan, his administration may not be interested in the success of the peace process. As a result, the current peace efforts may face dead-end. By bearing in mind US's security officials declarations, Biden will therefore allow presence of a certain number of troops in Afghanistan, converse to the Doha agreement. Later, further steps regarding the future of Afghanistan will be taken considering the interests of the United States, since their interests are always prioritized compared to the Afghan peace.

Henceforth, the Taliban and the Afghan government should take effective step for the success of the peace process. Both sides must declare ceasefire because victims of both sides are Afghans. If the war persists, it will give opportunity to the enemies to interfere in the peace process for their own interests and somehow eliminate the Doha agreement which was considered as an important step towards peace.

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Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS)

## **ATTACK ON KABUL UNIVERSITY AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS**



On 2nd November, 2020, three gunmen entered Kabul university and fought gun battle with security forces for four hours. Kabul Police officials have confirmed that 13 policemen have been arrested for negligence regarding the Kabul University attack which left 22 dead and 40 injured. Most of the victims were student of Kabul university.

The outrageous attack on the biggest academic institution of the country has raised many questions. People ask what was the stimulant of the attack? how were the gunmen able to reach the gates of Kabul University with various weapons? And where did deformity occurred in the security system?

### **A Bitter Experience for University Students**

The attacked on Kabul university on 2nd November, 2020 has triggered terror amongst academic establishments and the public. The incident has wounded the hearts of Afghans and has caused great sorrow all over the country. The attack was carried out on the building of law studies where students of two faculties; management and public policy, and law and political sciences were gathered.

Shakila, a 32-year old student of the faculty of policy and public administration is among the survivors of the attack. Although she is alive, but is in shock since she saw her classmates die in front of her eyes. She said “We heard the gunshots around 10:46 AM. It happened when electricity went off and our lecturer was

about to end his class. Our lecturer asked us to lay down on the ground. But the shooting intensified and a grenade was thrown to our class. I and a few of my friends were laying on the ground in a corner of our class. Chairs fell down on us and blood of our classmates was all over on our faces. The attackers therefore thought we are dead”.

“I wasn’t sure that I will survive. I repeated the Shahadah many times. I was in an unspeakable condition. I was only praying. Our class was full of dirt and blood. We remained in class for few hours. Then the police came in and pulled us out”. She said.

Shakila’s story is one of the bitter experiences of dozens of students of Kabul university who saw death in front of their eyes. The event will remain in their memories for the rest of their lives.

### **Responsibility Claims**

The attack on students and young generation of the country has caused great sorrow and anger among the citizens of Kabul. It is difficult to comprehend that how can a human cold-bloodedly preform such a horrifying act of terror.

The Islamic State Militants have claimed responsibility of the attack and have shared a photo of the two attackers who are claimed to have undertaken the assault on a graduation ceremony of investigators and judges in Kabul university. On the other hand, the Taliban denied responsibility of the attack.

However, Amrullah Saleh, First Vice President of Afghanistan has proclaimed that the statement of ISIS is fake since the weapons found with assailants do not match the picture of ISIS. Referring to flag of the Taliban which was apparently found in the scene, he claims that the Taliban are responsible for the attack, not ISIS.

A video of apparently of ISIS militants with covered faces which deny responsibility and blame the government for the attack makes the issue more equivocal. Experts say that the video is fake. It is still unclear that If the Taliban were striving to carry out the attack anonymously, why would they take their flag to the scene? A proclamation of the Taliban has condemned the attack and accused the government for backing ISIS. Zabihullah Mujahid, Spokesman of the Taliban has furiously expressed “How is it possible that the attackers toke a



moment to write on walls during the assault? What was the meaning of bringing flag to the scene?”. Some believes that criticisms of the Taliban are pointless because the attack was similar to the attack on the American university of Afghanistan which left 13 dead in 2016.

Educational and academic organizations are highly valued and respected globally. Scholars and knowledgeable individuals of every society who are among the key factors of cultural, political, economic and social development are the graduates of academic institutions. However, absence of vigilant planning for curriculum can have negative and inevitable impact on our country's development. While Development of a country without experts, scholars and knowledgeable individuals is far-fetched.

Sadly, the Kabul university attack was not the first on an academic institution in Afghanistan. Lately, Kawsar-e-Danish learning center in the west of Kabul was also targeted by a suicide explosion leaving 24 youths dead and 57 wounded.

### **Effects of the Attack on the Peace Process**

The peace process has been actively progressing these days compared to the past. In addition to optimistic views about the peace process, it also has various future challenges. Although the people of Afghanistan do not expect the process to present positive result rapidly, but they do not see any other way for the end of war in the country. Hence, their eyes of hope are towards the peace process.

However, amplification of war and attacks on non-military establishment threaten the peace process. The Kabul university attack is a part of a series of attacks which can bury the hopes for peace and national reconciliation.

Recently, elements which oppose the peace process are actively operating in order to disrupt the peace negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban. They anonymously undertake sanguinary acts of terror in every province of the country. However, the public blames the Taliban because they persist to continue war and do not settle for a ceasefire.

A day after the horrifying incident of Kabul university, students gathered in front of the gates of Kabul university and shouted against the Taliban. They requested

the government to disbar the intra-Afghan dialogue and refuse negotiations until the Taliban agree to have ceasefire.

With the horrific incident of Kabul university, burden of responsibilities on the shoulders of negotiating team's increases. The people request the negotiating teams of the government and the Taliban to conclude the peace talks as soon as possible. Negotiating teams should not waste time and wait for results of the US elections in order to comprehend the forthcoming decisions of US about the peace process. Peace is a necessity, and a national and religious obligation of Afghans. The key for peace is now in the hands of negotiating teams. Before occurrence of further bloodshed and horrifying incidents, the negotiating teams should unlock doors for a lasting peace. Otherwise, they will be face dishonor and disgrace in front of God and the people of Afghanistan.

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