



## Center for Strategic & Regional Studies Kabul

### **Weekly Analysis**-Issue Number 226 (October 14-21, 2017)

Weekly Analysis is one of CSRS’ publications, which significantly analyses weekly economic and political events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them to design best policies. Weekly Analysis is published in local languages (Pashto and Dari) and international languages (English and Arabic).

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## Preface

After longtime negotiations, the six powers of the world (P5+1) reached a “historic agreement” on Iran’s nuclear program on 14 July 2015 in Vienna, Austria. The US President opposed this agreement since ever the beginning, and now that he is the US President this agreement may be revoked.

While announcing the new US policy towards Iran, Mr. Trump said last week that Iran did not act by this agreement and that he would want from the US Congress to work on a bill to increase pressures on Iran. Trump also authorized the US Department of Treasury to issue sanctions on the officials, representatives, and partners of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard for their support of terrorism.

It seems that the relations between these two countries is deteriorating. The Washington-Tehran ties and the implications of the revocation of the nuclear agreement with Iran for Afghanistan are issues that are analyzed in the first part of the Weekly Analysis of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS).

In the second part of the analysis, you would read about the current security, political, economic, and social situation in Afghanistan. Amnesty International has called on the Afghan government to stop the process of forced repatriation of Afghan migrants from European countries by presenting a real image of the situation in this country. The situation of various sectors is assessed in the second part of the analysis.

## The escalation of tensions in the US-Iran ties and its impacts on Afghanistan



The US President Donald Trump last week criticized Iran for its ballistic missiles and its support from the extremist groups in the Middle East. Since the past one month, it is not the first time that Trump criticizes Iran; before this, he had used harsh rhetoric against this country and criticized the nuclear deal between P5+1 and Iran during his speech at the General Assembly of the UN.

While announcing the new US strategy towards Iran, Trump called Iran a “rogue regime” and threatened to withdraw from the nuclear deal with this country if the serious gaps in this deal were not addressed, something that the US allies do not agree with.

The nuclear deal between Iran and P5+1, Trump’s policy towards Iran compared to that of Obama, and the impacts of the revocation of the nuclear deal with Iran on Afghanistan are issues that are analyzed here.

## **The P5+1 and Iran Agreement**

The US and Iran were engaged in negotiations on Iran's nuclear program since the past one decade. When Hassan Ruhani came to power in Iran, after 18 months of talks, Washington and Tehran reached a primary agreement, and four months after that, the two countries signed the historic nuclear agreement in Vienna.

Based on this agreement, Iran will limit its nuclear program and in return receive sanctions relief which would have positive effects on the Iranian economy. For instance, Iran would have the opportunity to get its frozen assets, which were about \$120bn. Moreover, Iranian banks were linked to SWIFT. After the 2012 and 2013 restrictions, Iran's oil exports were reduced by 50%, after the agreement, these exports once again increased. Moreover, many international companies want to invest in Iran and win the Iranian market.

Kabul welcomed the agreement between Iran and P5+1 because, unlike the past, Kabul now could engage in major projects such as Chabahar port with Iran.

## **Trump's Iran policy**

Trump criticized the Iran and P5+1 agreement since ever the beginning. After the signature of the agreement, Trump had termed it an overall failed agreement.

Also, Trump had said that if he became the US President, he would renegotiate the terms of this deal because he was not happy with all aspects of the agreement, particularly the time boundaries, lifting sanctions and the observation of Iran's nuclear program.

In 2016, Trump also called Iran the biggest exporter of terrorism in the world and said that as the US President he would put an end to Iran's net of terrorism and this country's expansion in the region.

Later, when Trump held power in the US, he continued his criticism about this agreement. On 2 February 2017, President Trump wrote on his Twitter: "Iran was on the brink of collapse when the US came forward and gave the country a \$150bn." "Iran plays with fire, they do not realize how good Obama was with them, but I am not," he wrote on his Twitter page one day later.

Last month, in the UN General Assembly, Trump once again criticized Iran and the nuclear deal with this country. He said that this agreement was a point of shame for the US and that talks about this agreement still remained open. He also termed Iranian regime as corrupt, dictator, and rogue.

The US President, once again, criticized Iran and the nuclear agreement with this country and said that Iran was not going on with the spirit of the agreement. He means that Iran should not acquire nuclear weapons and that is why he is sending the agreement to the US Congress to determine about it. Trump also said that Iran's Revolutionary Corps was intervening in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq.

Although Trump has not yet revoked the agreement, the US Congress will determine its fate in the upcoming 60 days. If the US Congress recommend sanctions on Iran, it will revoke the agreement between Iran and the US; otherwise, the agreement will remain at its status quo.

### **Impacts on Afghanistan**

The revocation of the nuclear agreement between Iran and the US will also affect Afghanistan because, on the one hand, Afghanistan would have to limit its economic ties with Iran and, on the other hand, it will also affect the Chabahar port deal. It will also affect Afghanistan's dry fruit transit through Iran because currently given the tenuous relations between Kabul and Islamabad, a great part of the Afghan transit is through Iran.

Also, this agreement will have an impact on the oil prices in global markets which would directly affect the Afghan economy because Afghanistan imports part of its oil from Iran.

In the meanwhile, while the US soldiers are present in Afghanistan and the Afghan government is presumed as a strategic partner of the US, the deteriorating relations between the US and Iran will also affect the security situation in Afghanistan. The close ties between the Afghan Taliban and Iran will get even closer, and even official aspects will be added to ties.

## The current situation in Afghanistan and the need to project its real image



The US and NATO came to Afghanistan under the slogans of maintaining peace and stability in this country. After 16 years, their presence has not brought peace and stability but rather has fueled the war until now. The continuation of the war has deepened the challenges of the country in various areas and has augmented the desperation of Afghans for a better future. That is why in the recent few years, hundred thousands of Afghans have taken various paths to the European countries, most of them were forced out in the neighboring country, and this crisis continues.

Amnesty International has recently demanded from the Afghan government to prevent the forced repatriation of Afghans from European countries by projecting an image of the real situation in Afghanistan to the world. Officials in this international institution reiterate that nowhere in Afghanistan is safe including its capital city and that the current situation means that this country is not a safe place for Afghans that are returned from European countries. They have also said that the Afghan government has failed to distribute necessary aid among these returnees.

Here you would read about the security, social, economic, political situation of the country as well as the need to present a real image of the situation on the ground in Afghanistan.

### **The security situation**

The ongoing war in Afghanistan is deteriorating and costs the lives of dozen Afghans on a daily basis. More than 100 people killed and hundreds injured in the most recent security incidents in the country. Only in the recent two security incidents in Ghazni and Paktia, more than 80 were killed, and 300 others were wounded.

After the announcement of the new US strategy towards Afghanistan and South Asia, the US airstrikes in Afghanistan have increased and civilian casualties in these attacks have doubled. Based on the report of the US military command in Afghanistan, in the first eight months of 2017, the US forces have dropped more than 2000 bombs in Afghanistan, which is twice a number of bombs dropped in this country in 2016.<sup>1</sup>

In its most recent report, UNAMA has written that from January to September 2017, 2640 civilians are killed, and 5379 others are injured in Afghanistan, 466 of which are killed in the airstrikes carried out by foreign forces, 66 of which were children and women. This number of civilian casualties caused by airstrikes shows a 52% increase compared to the statistics of the same period last year.<sup>2</sup>

The most recent airstrike by the US forces claimed the lives of 15 members of the two families in Kunar province. The airstrikes of the foreign troops have also inflicted heavy civilian casualties in other provinces of the country. These attacks left 15 killed and 5 injured in Herat province and 13 killed and 12 wounded in Logar province. Moreover, in several cases the Afghan forces were also targeted

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<sup>1</sup> Newsmax, Report 2017: More Than 2,000 Bombs Dropped in Afghanistan So Far, Double 2016, 12 Sep 2017, see it online:

<https://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/bombs-air-force-military-2017/2017/09/12/id/813189/>

<sup>2</sup> Radio Azadi: «یوناما: تلفات ملکی ناشی از حملات هوایی در افغانستان افزایش یافته است» [UNAMA: civilian casualties caused by airstrikes in Afghanistan have increased] 21 Mizan 1396 solar year:

<https://da.azadiradio.com/a/28791118.html>

by these strikes; nevertheless, the National Unity Government (NUG) remains silent.

In its recent report “Children and Armed Conflicts”, the UN has said that in 2016, the casualties of children in Afghanistan were more than 3500. The report writes that more than 8000 children are either killed or injured in the armed conflicts in Yemen, Syria, Congo, and Afghanistan in recent years; however, the casualties of Afghan children form the most amount of casualties, 3512 killed or wounded.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to civilian casualties caused by the war, airstrikes, and deadly explosions, crimes are another challenge in the field of security in Afghanistan. Based on the statics of the statistic organizations of the country, thousands of crime incidents occur in the country on a yearly basis, and it is rising every year.

In recent years, crimes are increasing in all cities of the country, particularly in the major cities. The total number of crimes in Kabul has increased from 1345 incidents in the first quarter of 1394 [solar year] to 1779 in the first quarter of 1395 [solar year]. In 1395, 4950 incidents of crimes had occurred only in Kabul. In the first quarter of the current solar year, the number of crimes in Kabul city has, once again, increased. From a total of 5047 crime incident in all over Afghanistan, 1315 incidents have happened in Kabul. Heinous crimes such as murder and robbery are also increasing year after year. The murder cases in the first quarters of 1394, 1395, and 1396 were respectively 538, 606, and 640.<sup>4</sup>

### **The economic situation**

After the formation of the NUG, some infrastructural projects were completed or inaugurated, and the incomes of the government also increased in comparison to the previous years, one of the reasons behind which was the tax on the customers of the communication companies. However, the overall economic situation of the country was deteriorating compared to the past one and half decade. Afghani

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<sup>3</sup> VOA News, UN: More Than 8,000 Children Killed, Hurt in Conflicts, Oct 5 2017, see it online:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/un-children-killed-hurt-in-conflicts/4059019.html>

<sup>4</sup> CSRS: «جرائم جنایی؛ معضل روبه گسترش در شهرهای بزرگ کشور» [Crimes; a growing challenge in major cities] 14 Assad 1396 solar year:

<http://csrskabul.com/pal?p=3697>



depreciated to its lowest rate (in 2015 the value of Afghanis against US dollar was 57.76 Afghanis per dollar. Currently, one US dollar is exchanged against 68.30 Afghanis), unemployment has reached new heights, assets flee the country, the country's economic growth is falling, and more than 40% of Afghans live below the poverty line.

In its recent report, the World Bank reported that 1.9 million people in Afghanistan were unemployed. Moreover, according to Head of the Worker Unions of Afghanistan, every year 400000 youth are added to the unemployed population of the country.<sup>5</sup>

Based on the remarks of the Afghan President, poverty is a major challenge for Afghans, and 39% of Afghans live below the poverty line gaining 1.35 dollar a day. It means these people eat only once or twice a day and have limited facilities to send their children to schools.<sup>6</sup> According to Mr. Ghani, 15% of Afghans sleep hungry every night.

Failure to fight corruption is one of the reasons behind it. The high rate of corruption in the government administrations has faced both the government and the people with many challenges.

### **The political situation**

Differences among the high-ranking government officials have shadowed the situation in the country in various aspects. Most of these differences originate from the 50-50 sharing of power between Mr. Ghani and Mr. Abdullah, which meant that the job was not going to be given to the one who is capable. Also, the rise of some government officials against the government and even the formation of anti-government coalitions by the government officials have brought the country to the verge of political instability.

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<sup>5</sup> Radio Azadi: «بی‌کاری، فساد و جنگ سبب شده تا ۴۰ درصد افغان‌ها زیر خط فقر زندگی کنند» [Unemployment, corruption and the war have forced 40% of Afghans to live below the poverty line], 25 Mizan 1396 solar year:

<https://da.azadiradio.com/a/28797594.html>

<sup>6</sup> See online: <http://president.gov.af/en/speech/president-ghanis-remarks-at-brussels-conference-on-afghanistan-brussels-belgium/>

In addition to internal disputes, the Afghan government failed in its peace process as well, a process that could end the war. Although signing a peace deal with Hezb-e-Islami is presumed an achievement in the peace process for the Afghan government, in the past 16 years of the war, the Afghan government has failed to undertake a comprehensive peace strategy to end the war with the Taliban. That is why the current war in the country is intensifying day after day which in turn has disappointed Afghans from having a better future.

The End

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**Note:** Please let us know your feedback and suggestions for the improvement of Weekly analysis.

