

Conference Report

National Dialogue-II

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Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS)

National Dialogue-II

"The relationship between Afghanistan and USA"

April 20, 2017 - Kabul

Conference Report



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About AISS

The Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) was established in October 2012. It aims to create an intellectual space for addressing strategic issues pertaining to Afghanistan in the wider regional and international context. Promoting dialogue between and among different stakeholders will be an end as well as an integral means in attaining AISS objectives.

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Executive summary

The Second Round of National Dialogue hosted by the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) was held on Thursday 20 April 2017 on the topic of "The relationship between Afghanistan and the United States of America". A number of experts in international relations, members of parliament, civil society members, the media and academics attended the event at the Office of Afghan Institute of Strategic Studies of Afghanistan. The conference focused on Afghanistan and the United States of America relations in two working sessions; outlining the relations between the two countries and identifying problems and opportunities.

This report addresses the key challenges and opportunities that two countries face in the future and the way forward as the new US administration is trying to set its policy for countering the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan.

US should remain committed to all signed security agreements between Afghanistan and the US and implement them. A key speaker of the event emphasized that Afghanistan's relations with the United States is based on strategic alliances between the two sides. He said that once the security concerns in Afghanistan are being addressed the developmental approach in the country could proceed on the basis of lessons learned in the recent years. "The US is aware that if this problem is resolved, the rest of the problems of Afghanistan as a land-locked country are similar to the problems faced by other land-locked countries and require long-term development planning."

The source and birthplace of terrorism must be targeted. It is widely believed that Pakistan is the source and birthplace of the terrorism and if there is a fight against terrorism, the US administration must put pressure on Pakistan to act responsibly. It is believed that at the regional level, as long as Pakistan keeps funding the Taliban and offering safe heavens to them, the group will remain undefeatable. The key to defeat the Taliban and dismantle other terrorist networks in the region is Islamabad's cooperation. Strategically, the options of dealing with Pakistan are limited and consequential, but certainly the situation necessitates a comprehensive revision of the US policies toward Pakistan. "Both the military and political leaders of America accept that the sanctuaries of terrorists are in Pakistan, but they have not yet provided a clear policy about how to deal with the sanctuaries available in Pakistan. Afghan officials have been repeatedly raising this issue. We hope that the new administration in America pay close attention on this problem, and develop a comprehensible policy and take measures against those sanctuaries. Unfortunately, we are losing the time and opportunities, and do not have tangible results."

US must help Afghanistan to stand on its own feet. There should be more attention on political stability that is badly needed and countries in the region must be assured, otherwise neither US nor Afghanistan will overcome the existing challenges. Afghan institutions, including the security agencies must be supported and there should be more efforts to help Afghanistan stand on its own feet. Because America could not help Afghanistan endlessly and Afghanistan should not expect this.

USA's financial aids have not been effective in establishing key government institutions. Experts suggest that US economic and financial assistance should be spent through the Afghan government and US direct supervision.

Afghanistan should take responsibility

Afghanistan should take the war against terrorism seriously and fight corruption effectively.

“As a country we should be able to synchronize with our allies. We have to assure our people and the world that we will continue our fight against terrorism and we also fight corruption. Usurpers assets should be confiscated and their bank accounts must be closed as soon as possible to assure that we're synchronous with our allies in good governance.

Afghanistan should hold a balance in its relationship with the regional and international partners. There is an argument that Afghanistan will not be successful without the cooperation of its neighbors in the fight against terrorism. We have to strengthen regional cooperation. The relationship between Afghanistan and America is strongly influenced by the nature of the relationship between Afghanistan and anti- America governments in the region. The degree of Afghan relationship with countries like China and Iran would not stay out of political calculation of America and would be involved and considered in US –Afghan relationship equation. Therefore, Afghanistan needs to outdistance the current passive situation in relation to America and should adjust its relations with countries in the region to its relationship equation with America. The question that arises in this context is that what are Afghanistan capacities and facilities to get close to America and at the same time prevent the penetration of hostile regional powers?

Introduction

The Afghanistan-United States relations, historically and proportional to international architecture can be divided in several stages:

1919-1945

In this phase of multi-polar international system, the relations between the US and Afghanistan have been purely economic in nature. Trade between the two countries has been the driving factor for the relationship.

1945-1989

In this stage of bipolar international system Cold War between the two axis of West headed by the United States and the Soviet East continued. Unlike earlier periods of economic relations between the two countries, this period was shaped by political activities and combined with economy and military means. The US had no relation with the Kabul based government and Afghan Mujahideen was on the core of US relation.

1989-2001

This was a period of oblivion and silence for Afghanistan by the United States that brought terrorist groups into being and the major example of this was the Taliban Emirate in Afghanistan. The Taliban regime not only imposed irreversible loss for Afghanistan, but also for the United States. The major menace of this period was the 9/11 incident.

After 9/11 Afghanistan-US relation entered a new phase. Both countries national interests and common local and regional threats changed their relationship from normal to strategic stage. During this period, there relations were comprehensive and encompassed all aspects of relations between the two countries. At the beginning of this stage, the core US objectives were countering Al-Qaida and the terrorists. The US presence in Afghanistan has been well documented in various books and reports. However, the US soon noticed that the war against Al-Qaida and the terrorists without a broad-based government through democratic processes to replaced Taliban could not be successful. Thus, the economic and humanitarian aid to Afghanistan began.

It is said that the US has spent \$ 113 billion in Afghanistan in the past 14 years, of which 72 billion has been spent in the military sector alone.

Of course, many challenges still exist in the US and Afghanistan relation and the most important ones are as follows:

1. The Afghan Government expected the US to counter terrorism's main sources and origin on its war on terror. Unfortunately, so far this issue has not been addressed.

2. The Afghan Government wanted the US economic and financial assistance to be spent through the Afghan Ministry of Finance. However, documents show that only a small amount is spent through the Afghan Government.
3. The Afghan Government sought to strengthen Afghan institutions, especially the security institutions but the US Government has been supportive to parallel institutions such as private security companies. Large amount of money was invested on these companies by the US to provide security for the coalition forces at their pick presence in Afghanistan.
4. The Afghan Government wanted to develop the capacity building requirements but this issue has never been addressed. Although large amount of money has been spent on capacity building programs, but this has not produced the expected results.

Now, with the new administration reviewing its policies for Afghanistan what steps should be taken for future prospects?

Recommendations

1. US should remain committed to all signed security agreement between Afghanistan and the US and implement it.
2. The source and birthplace of terrorism must be addressed.
3. US economic and financial assistance to be spent through the Afghan government and US direct supervision.
4. Afghan institutions, including the security agencies must be supported and there should be more efforts to help Afghanistan stand on its own feet. Because America could not help Afghanistan endlessly and Afghanistan should not expect this.
5. US economic and financial assistance must be creating jobs, as unemployment has also caused the youth in the country to join and add to the lines of terrorists. In order to avoid youth radicalization, institutions should be established to revive indigenous understating of Islam, which is distinct from Wahabi interpretation of Islam and its Shiite rival (this cultural approach is close to Turkish model established by Mutafa Kemal Ataturk).
6. Terrorist financial sources must be cut in internal and external level. If terrorist funding vanish, they cannot operate. Unfortunately this has been neglected in the past.
7. The fight against corruption should be taken seriously; especially to put pressure on the Afghan government to not appoint who are corrupt and fight against corruption should not be a selective approach.
8. Electoral reform needs special attention. And those issues that guarantee election transparency must be considered. It is time political parties played an important role in politics by brining norms and principals to the scene of politics as political parties can balance the ambitions of predatory political figures who are mostly self-

interested with almost no political program and principles. Unfortunately in the past this has not been only neglected, but problem has been created.¹

9. Political system of Afghanistan, with a multi-ethnic and diverse communities, should be reconsidered as 'majoritarian' system, which means winner takes all, might not work. Government in Afghanistan should be broad-based, fully representative and gender sensitive (the way it was envisaged in Bonn Agreement, 2001).
10. Finally, US should bring radical shift in its policy toward Afghanistan; there should be more attention on political stability that is badly needed and countries in the region must be assured, otherwise neither US nor Afghanistan will win it.

Conference Report

The Second Round of National Dialogue on "The relationship between Afghanistan and the United States of America" held on Thursday 20 April 2017 with the participation of experts in international relations, members of parliament, civil society members, the media and academics at the Office of Afghan Institute of Strategic Studies of Afghanistan. The conference focused on Afghanistan and the United States of America relations in two working sessions; outlining the relations between the two countries and identifying problems and opportunities.

Welcome Speech by Dr. Davood Moradian, director of Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies

At the beginning Mr. Moradian welcomed the participants and stressed on the importance of understanding the relationship between Afghanistan and the United States of America.

The purpose of today's discussion is about outlining the relationship between the two countries and identify problems, hinting at uncertainties as well as opportunities in order to further strengthen relations between the two countries.

There is no doubt that since Taliban regime was toppled, the US has been the most important country for Afghanistan and with respect to the conditions and internal and external

¹ I - Government has to respect the independency of Independent Election Commission. II, government should provide the adequate and necessary funds in coordination with international community to the commission and oversee elections. III, voter registration and population registration has to be carried out jointly by Civil and Voter Registration Commission and the Ministry of Interior. V, Polling Stations shall be re-evaluated again.

IV, when constituencies can be modified to small, single-seat constituencies that firstly the country's population statistics fairly conducted and administrative units may not otherwise be modified.

VI - people with experience and skills should be appointed in the election commission. VII - Election Operation Plan must be shared with security forces to enable them ensure security for the election. VIII - in areas where security forces cannot provide security, Polling Stations should not be considered, if it's not taken seriously it will lead to massive fraud. IX - voting and counting procedures has to be adjusted so that election results be announced as soon as possible, this can help prevent powerful and influential people interventions in election process.

realities, America will play this role in Afghanistan and the region a few more years. Therefore, a better understanding of the country as well as a better understanding of each other has a significant role in improving relations between the two countries. One reason for tension in bilateral relations and incorrect policies by Kabul and Washington, has been inadequate knowledge of each other. Fortunately, today's meeting coincides with a new team in Washington and the new administration's readiness to review its policies in Afghanistan. In the past few days the US national security adviser, Mr. McMaster (Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster) had meetings during his visit in Kabul. Mr. McMaster knows Afghans and many of us have had a working relationship with him. As one of those Afghans who had a working relationship with him, I expressed my gratitude when I met him few days ago. Today he is one of those who is going to review Afghanistan's case in Washington and fortunately he has emotional ties with Afghanistan. There are other US diplomats who have knowledge of Afghanistan. But Mr. McMaster in addition to his official responsibilities, has an emotional relationship with the Afghan people. Mr. McMaster was introducing himself in many places before he started his work, as an Afghan-American General. Since his first ceremony as a one-star general was held in Afghanistan, Mr. McMaster has established a relationship with the people of Afghanistan, and we hope that this relationship lead to a better policy by the new team.

Fortunately, today's meeting is an opportunity to deliver expectations of the people of Afghanistan, or at least part of the people and the Afghan political elite to the new team in US. Our American friends and colleagues are eager to know what Afghans think about the relationship between the two countries.

Panel 1: Outlining relations between the two countries

Moderator:

Mr. Parviz Kawa, Chief Editor of 8-Sobh Daily

Speaker:

- Mr. Yaqub Ibrahimi, Doctorate degree nominee at Carleton University
- Mr. Zakaria Zakaria, Member of Afghanistan Parliament
- Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Hadiari, General Director of Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

As a prologue to the start the first working session Mr. Kawa raised these questions:

1. How different is Trump America from the Obama or Bush America?
2. How will the relationships be formed? How predictable is this relationship?

3. What are the unpredictable factors in relations between Afghanistan and the United States of America?
4. What will be the role of recent US National Security Advisor visit to Afghanistan in outlining the relationship?
5. With respect to the relationship between Afghanistan and the United States of America that is affected by some relationships that we have in the region, what would be the role of regional players? How will America shape its relation with Afghanistan to answer the concerns of regional players like Russian, Iran, China, India and Pakistan?

Lecture by Mr. Yaqub Ibrahimi

The structure of the international system is the context of states' foreign relations

Mr. Ibrahimi began his speech entitled "The structure of the international system, Afghanistan and America relations posture" emphasizing that relation among states as a whole forms within the framework of the international system.

At the end of the Cold War, the United States of America's foreign policy under the Republicans or the Democrats has not been substantively different. As America's foreign policy was shaped in a framework of an international system that was set up after the Cold War, this policy maintains America's national interests.

So, Americans have no interest in changing their foreign policy fundamentally towards other regions of the world. What I am talking about is the possibility of large-scale rotation in America's foreign policy in response to the possibility of rotation in the structure of the international system. The question is if America's foreign policy moves from a liberal hegemony to massive confrontations, what could be Afghanistan's stand and how should the Afghan foreign apparatus shape and adjust its foreign policy?

The structure of the international system is the context of foreign relation of the states. In this context the structure of relations among the governments forms. The nature and extent of the relationship, however, differs from international system to system. Afghanistan's current relationship with Bulgaria, for example, on the relationship between the two countries in the bipolar system of the Cold War era, has a fundamental distinction. Therefore, when it comes to foreign relations between Afghanistan and America, understanding the international context in which these relationships are formed is vital. In this respect, the nature and characteristics of the contemporary international system helps to have a deeper look into the nature and aspects of the relations between Afghanistan and the United States. Therefore, the present article explains more about the context of relations between the two countries, rather than explain the details of the relationship and diplomacy that shapes it daily.

Here are three key issues of significant importance: 1) explaining the nature and characteristics of the international system and how government acts. 2) Dimensions of

America's foreign policy in the context of contemporary international architecture. 3) Hypothesis on how Afghanistan capabilities are, to play a significant role on its relation with the US and to avoid the current passive role.

The doctrine of state's foreign policy is formed in the framework of the rules and theoretical assumption from the nature and structure of the international system.

A conscious government, which understands the role of this structure, forms and regulates its strategy and its foreign policy in the aegis of this.

The key role of international system in the formulation of the doctrine and the provision of foreign relations of the states have been questionable for political scientists about how this system works.

The common understanding and consensus that exist about the structure of international system has two key elements: Governments as primary players and governments set up in the system.

Basically, states are disobedient units that extend their benefits and enhance their security fence with any possible tools. Hence, the states are nothing but hurried institutions that seek their survival in the ongoing effort to expand their sphere of influence and their security umbrella. Overall, states have three major features: autonomy or independence in practice, consistent increasing for power for their security and survival, goal orientation (endeavor to become effective power or hegemon in the region and the world).

America's global hegemony has been challenged.

The international system is nothing more than an order in which the states have an irregular hierarchy network and have anarchistic nature. But this structure, although its nature of anarchists has not changed, it always changes the characteristics by the rise and fall of great powers and has taken many forms. Overall, our world from the time of compiling the history of international politics has experienced four international systems: unipolar system (the Roman Empire and the present), bipolar (twentieth century), the multipolar balanced and multipolar system unbalanced (nineteenth century). According to this narrative, the current international system is unipolar.

In this international system, America is the only superpower. The governments realizing this fact have set their foreign relations with America and have accepted the rules of the game in this context. Regional hegemony like China have adjusted their behavior and accepted the fact that the United States of post-Cold War is the head and lead of each of the four pillars of international power (military, industrial, economic-financial and intellectual). For example, China has accepted capitalism in economic sphere and obeys the open market in industrial production sphere and has acceded to America's dominant role in intellectual methodology

and western wisdom but, has avoided showing power in military term to the US. China's ultimate goal as a rising power is to outflank America by accepting liberal rules of the game.

For this reason, American realists have come to this conclusion that if the liberal doctrine which is dominant in the US foreign policy since the end of the Cold War, is not replaced with one which has a pragmatic attitude to the world, the decline of America and the rise of China would be inevitable.

Liberal doctrine relying on globalization, market and promote of democracy in the world, assumes that American values are universal and eternal. Thus, instead of direct confrontation with the government, particularly regional powers, the US prefers to extend its hegemony by software through free market and engineering communities. The steady emergence of China as a global power, however, has challenged the myth of immortal authority of America in the world. It has driven American scholars to think about changing its foreign policy doctrine of liberal hegemony strategy to a direct confrontation with the rising power of China.

If a substantial rotation occurs in America's foreign policy, our region (Central Asia, South Asia and East) would face profound changes in their foreign relations with America. Governments understand the changing behavior of the sole superpower in a unipolar system and would manipulate their contemporary foreign policy and as a result, new coalitions would form in the region. If this happens, it would raise serious questions about the status of Afghan government and its foreign relations of Afghanistan with the US and countries in the region.

Now, with respect to unipolar nature of the international system, the possibility of rotation in America's foreign policy and the possibility of the formation of the grand coalition in our region, the question that our foreign policy apparatus will face is sample: still relations between the two countries has not exceeded the daily limit of diplomacy and has not taken a political tradition. However, Afghanistan continues to have deep cultural and historic ties and relations with the countries in the region due to the vicinity and neighborhood. Considering this I want to make three hypotheses to try to deal with this fundamental question. In all three conditions, Afghanistan needs to consider three different possible directions with the two major coalitions and assess and adjust its foreign relations with America.

First) overtly join the coalition led by America. While joining any hostile coalition openly is costly and at least equivalent guarantees strategic defense line of the Afghan government. It means, if Afghanistan joins the possible coalition of Afghanistan America-Russia-India, the countries must accept that if China or Pakistan militarily invades Afghanistan they will support Afghanistan militarily. In this case, Afghanistan needs to use this opportunity to regulate its long-term relationship with allied states and change its routine nature of diplomatic relationship with our potential allies and focus on establishing political tradition. But, does Afghan diplomacy has the ability to deal with such a thing?

Second) the relationship between Afghanistan and America is strongly influenced by the nature of the relationship between Afghanistan and anti-America governments in the region. The degree of Afghan relationship with countries like China and Iran would not stay out of political calculation of America and would be involved and considered in US –Afghan relationship equation. Therefore, Afghanistan needs to outdistance the current passive situation in relation to America and should adjust its relations with countries in the region to its relationship equation with America. The question that arises in this context is whether the countries of the region, those who have explicit relations with America and at the same time political, economic and cultural depth in Afghanistan will leave Afghanistan alone? What are Afghanistan capacities and facilities to get close to America and at the same time prevent the penetration of hostile regional powers?

Third) maintaining balanced relations with both sides of international politics quarrel that has a lot of client in Afghanistan and it is currently the dominant rhetoric of political leaders in Afghanistan. The question that arises in this context is this: Such an approach, in case of US foreign policy rotation would be acceptable for American politicians? By relying on the liberal-oriented business-friendly views in the international system that has strict calculations we cannot deal with the states. Possible rotation in America's foreign policy would challenge Afghanistan's foreign policy apparatus that was used to the liberal doctrine of the world for the past fifteen years.

Lecture by Mr. Ashraf Haidari

Afghanistan's relations with the United States is based on strategic alliances between the two sides.

Mr. Ashraf Haidari said that Afghanistan's foreign policy was based on four pillars: 1) relations with countries in the region, 2) relations with Muslim countries in the region and beyond, including countries with big number of Muslims population, such as India. 3) Relations with Asian countries (Recently President Ghani visited several Asian countries to exploit the experience of development and governance in these countries) and 4) relations with our strategic partners, mainly in North America, Europe and other international organizations like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Afghanistan's relationship with America is a special relationship, which is based on two documents we have signed with the United States of America. These documents have been signed under both Republicans and Democrats governments. When I was working at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington, DC, in May 2005, our first strategic partnership document was signed during Mr. Bush's administration. That document has wide and deep targets in various sectors, including the military and civilian sectors. The document was also signed under the Democratic administration of Mr. Obama. Negotiations took a long time during Mr. Karzai's Presidency. Later, the bilateral security agreement under which the commission was formed signed to implement the document. Afghan government sees the

relationship with Mr. Trump's administration as an amity relation. It is also based on both countries achievements during past sixteen years. We remember Afghanistan under Taliban rule. Afghanistan was a country that had no government, neither exports nor imports.

The vast majority of our people who had to the ability to flee the country, they did so, and others who were unable to escape suffered under the Taliban and other armed groups' rules. Since then our achievements in various sectors are clear. Now, all our attention is focused on the fact that how to strengthen civil and military achievements and move towards a sustainable government. Our development is directly related to the attainment of a sustainable peace and security in our country. The main challenge in this regard is security that we are being affected by intervention from of certain countries in the region. A few days ago I headed the Afghan delegation on regional consultative meeting hosted by the Government of the Russian Federation and we had significant debate about creating a comprehensive consensus in the region. This consensus, however, should come in partnership with regional countries; and countries beyond the region, especially the United States of America.

United States of America as a friendly country can encourage and even put pressure on our neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan who has the capacity to bring the Taliban to the peace talks to help us solve the security problem. Then we can begin to move towards sustainable development goals that we have pledged to the international community at the conference held last year.

The international community has pledged \$ 15.2 million to fund the implementation of this framework. We expect the government of America under Mr. Trump's administration to clearly identify and take serious actions against those countries that endanger the stability of Afghanistan through proxy groups, including the Taliban. As far as we have heard from General McMaster, especially in meetings with Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, we have been assured that he would take up the problem seriously. The US is aware that if this problem is resolved, the rest of the problems of Afghanistan as a land-locked country are similar to the problems faced by other land-locked countries and require long-term development.

Afghanistan's developmental problems can be gradually addressed on the basis of lessons learned from the flow of aid in the recent years. With the help of donor countries, especially the United States of America through the Afghan national budget, not only can we build the technical and fundamental capacity but we can also extract mines and restore agricultural sector and offer products at the national, regional and international level and move towards a sustainable economy and self-sufficiency.

Lecture by Mr. Zakaria Zakaria

There should be coordination between Afghanistan and its allies in the region and the world

Mr. Zakaria Zakaria began his lecture with a historical reference to the end of the Cold War. From 1989 onwards there have been numerous wars in the world, including the war in Iraq, the war in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Libya. In all these wars was only one country involved? If we see the global relationships today with realism, neorealism and offensive realism and assess the situation, we see that new groups are forming creating a strong economy and the growth of China as a new power, measured in the same perspective. New alliances are forming. In today's international relations, "great power" is replaced by "power politics". In this era, every state for the sake of its national interests in various areas, threatens the interests of other states. Military and economic threats are being conducted in various parts of the world, and to survive it is necessary for each country to look for new ally in any sphere.

For Afghanistan to survive and find its position in the global system, it has to deal with its new allies to seek solutions. We understand that in the current situation in our region Pakistan and China are in an absolute and serious unity, and Afghanistan and its partners need to seek other regional allies. This perception that the global situation trying bring Russia and Iran to this unity is promising. Recent American position toward Iran has shifted from a hostile one, this is positive from Afghanistan standpoint. A global alliance with Russia and Iran in the region can deal with China's hegemonic approach. For good outcome it is necessary that the people and government of Afghanistan do some home works.

Mutually, the world based on parallel universal principles has demands from us and we, as a country should be able to synchronize with our allies. We have to assure our people and the world that 1) we fight corruption. Usurpers assets should be confiscated and their bank accounts must be closed as soon as possible to assure that we're synchronous with our allies in good governance. 2) We must continue our fight against terrorism.

Questions and Answers of the first Session:

Mr. Kava asked Mr. Ibrahimi what are the predictable policies in the future and what role Afghanistan can play?

Afghanistan itself is a proxy country in the region

Mr. Ibrahimi said in response to questions, each state plays a role according to its ability in the international system. History of international relations is the history of rise and decline of powers. Superpowers never change their foreign policy until they see the conditions to their advantages. If they identify that the situation is changing in a way that undermines their superpower status, they precede the change. America is now in such a situation. After the fall of Soviet Union, Americans were experiencing a kind of expansion. They thought that liberal democracy was a universal phenomenon and thus as a leader, their values and power was eternal. Now, over time, we see the rise of China has confused American leaders. This

confusion is not improper, because over all in a unipolar system, there always has been a creepy and quiet emerging power.

In cases where the rising power has been harnessed the superpower has sustained. Americans have now come to the conclusion that allowing China within the framework of liberal rule threatens them. There are four basic principles that transform a regional hegemon to superpower and these are as follow: maximizing the wealth, military and political power in the region and an atomic bomb. China has all of the above. China is now a regional hegemon. China's relations with the countries of the world, particularly in the context of economic projects are developing. In this sense, I believe that America's foreign policy has a very important turnaround after the Cold War. Afghanistan due to its location and proximity to China and also because of the complexity of its regional policy, will be affected quickly from this rotation than other countries.

On the other hand, we have to ask what kind of government rules in Afghanistan? Afghanistan is currently a proxy country in the region. Afghanistan's relations are not relations of an independent state. For example, India's relationship with Afghanistan is part of India's relationship with Pakistan. The main reason for this diminution of Afghanistan is the fall of the Soviet Union and the Afghan Civil War. During the civil war we saw that the Afghan Government was divided into groups of proxy. But we saw the regional policy moved forward. At a time when the Taliban fell, we had countries in the region that did not had the Afghanistan experience, but they had strong army and stable economy, and their regional and international relations at the same time were not scattered. If we change the policy of America in the region, countries like Pakistan have the ability to change direction. They even proved their ability to balance their policy during the Cold War between America and China. However, as a traditional ally of China if Pakistan ever faces a foreign policy dilemma, it will go to China. Both countries have extensive economic interests and a common foe, India. It is important for the Afghan Government to understand these fragile relations in the international system. This issue should be discussed in the Foreign Ministry's think tanks to conduct the correct responses in case of any possible rotation and change. Afghanistan must take into account that if necessary to choose for Pakistan between America and China, at the end of the day it will choose China. Afghanistan should analyze these issues to develop its foreign policy relations.

Mr. Zakaria was asked that for designing the relationship between Afghanistan and the United States, what exactly Afghanistan should do.

To outline its relationship with America, Afghanistan should build confidence.

In response to the question, Mr. Zakaria said, we must realize that our life is in danger without global partners. Sometimes history repeats itself. Once the British and the Russians had confrontation in Afghanistan and wanted to break down the country, when Napoleon emerged on the world scenario and reached the Iranian borders. Eventually, the British and the Russians were forced to accept Afghanistan as a buffer state and they left it to its own

fate. China and Pakistan should guarantee that they will not interfere in our work. It is in Russia's interest to ally with America in the region rather than allying with China.

To counter China's growing threat in the region, Russia must make peace in the region. If we assume that Russia has good intentions in dealing with the Taliban to restore stability in the region, we must adapt to the realities. The facts however indicate that this project has not had the desired outcomes. Russia has to find the main ally in the region and should seek for peace in this region. Afghanistan also has responsibilities in this regard. Afghanistan's allies should start building trust and should take the fight against corruption seriously. Usurpers confiscation of assets is one of the most important functions of government to build confidence. Usurpers should know that there is no financial space for them.

The world must seriously believe that we can come out from this situation. With General McMaster's visit and his ideas to put pressure on Pakistan, we have to strongly lobby for our position and should stay with our strategic allies and our good friends in the region. Pakistan has never been honest. America's policy in Truman and Trump doctrines is moving in a course of strange rotation. Truman's doctrine containment principle provided 7.2 million dollars to Pakistan to eliminate extremism. But, it did not have good results. Other ways must be sought to eliminate extremism. Now Trump moves in new ways, and we observe that his way is different from Truman and Richardson doctrine. Obama believed in this doctrine and tried to solve the problem in the region. But, Trump is considering new strategies. Sometimes things look suspicious for us. You must accept this as a fact that someone's decisions cannot be read and if you could understand it in such a way, you cannot measure it. Decisions taken today by America in the world, we would not understand soon because the world is full of complex cases. Trump's moves are based on experiences of US administration for the past few years. We can only work on a project which is in the national interests of Afghanistan. We must take the right direction for national interests of Afghanistan. We must be careful in choosing partners who could guarantee higher national interests of Afghanistan. So far, keeping our national interests in mind we see that America has been supporting Afghanistan.

Mr. Asey (fellow researcher at the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies): I think we should have spoken more regularly on this issue. Relations between countries are based on mutual interest and can be seen on ideological framework. Realists see it from its own perspective, liberals think other way. It was good that our discussion could focus on several issues: One such issue was the evolution of relations between Afghanistan and America throughout history and contemporary history. What common interests and threats the two countries have? What are the tools, interests and capacities on both sides that could bring the two countries closer to each other? Finally, how the relations could be defined during Trump's rein in power? Mr. Asey posed three questions to Mr. Ibrahimi:

The first question: Currently in the international system, we have not only governments, but also non-governmental organizations, international organizations and wealthy individuals

(like Bill Gates and others) that are actual actors. How do you think that Afghanistan could make use of these non-state actors?

The second question: If we consider few countries in world as the main actors, other countries and all governments are proxy. For instance, India recently signed a strategic agreement with America, because America has a problem with China, then India is potential to be a proxy government? Shouldn't we delve more seriously and carefully in using the concepts and terms?

The third question: Pakistan is in a quite basic isolation. Afghan politicians usually have four approaches to foreign policy: either they are isolationism oriented such that Rahman Khan who said, we have nothing to do with others, or like the communists who had thrown themselves into the lap of a superpower to act against the other faction. The third approach is of the Islamists who have thought should be put into the lap of a religious ideology. Zahir Shah pursued a balanced policy, and was to be with everyone and no one at all. We've experienced all these version. But is there a fifth edition? This is not the first time that Afghanistan is forced to seek new allies.

Afghanistan is the loneliest country in the world

Mr. Ibrahimi in response to the second question of Mr. Asey said: There is no doubt that the foreign relations of the countries are defined and ordered somehow based on their dependence on the greater powers than themselves. For instance, in the region, the foreign policy of Pakistan is possibly defined somehow in relation with to China. But in Afghanistan, generally, after the Cold War, we have not witnessed any unanimity on foreign policy of Afghanistan inside the foreign policy apparatus of the country. We do not have a single foreign ministry. There are three or four ministries. Possibly, a faction maybe interested in having close relationship with India, and some groups maybe interested in Pakistan. The term of "Proxy" is used in such a case. In my idea, Afghanistan is the loneliest country in the world. Now imagine if Afghanistan is militarily offended, who will be the second country that wants to defend Afghanistan by military means? No country. But if Pakistan is attacked by India's military, China will somehow use its third grade weapons and put India under pressure. In this regard, Afghanistan's position is drastically disastrous in defining its foreign relations as compared with other countries in defining their foreign relations. Overall, I believe that if we want to have a transparent foreign relations policy, we need to have a unified government. Political disagreements occur in other countries as well, but when it comes to the whole nation, all of them are consistent and united.

Mr. Ibrahimi acknowledging differences in political views, stressed that his aim was only to highlight the issue, that if there happened any strategic changes in the USA's foreign policy, where should Afghanistan stand? He said: Anyone who is familiar with the alphabet of political science knows that there are multiple actors, but the main actors are the states in an international system. The main weakness of liberals is that they stress on international

organizations and the formation of such organizations for coordination in international system, but do not answer the question why these regimes fall apart. The reason is that the states who are the main actors in the international system either form or end the international organizations. For example, see how the League of Nations fell apart. On the other hand, two other issues globalization of markets and engineering countries towards democratization and westernization are pushing all other communities to the margin. There are many examples that when countries notice their interests are in danger, they exit from both free market system and coalitions and international organizations. Europe's economic crisis showed that the myth of the common market, and joint cooperation was nothing but a fantasy. German banks swallowed all Greek banks. In the previous analysis, it was found that the banks that worked as multinational banks were ultimately owned by a single government.

Mr. Zakaria in response to the last question of Mr. Asey said: If no solution is agreed upon, Afghanistan will be divided.

Mr. Ahamad Saeedi, scholar and political expert, raised his questions followed by some comments as following:

1. There is no political independence without economic independence. Economic independence and political independence are interdependent on each other.
2. In other countries, the policies are program-oriented, but in Afghanistan the policies are figure-oriented. National unity government diplomats are illiterate and cannot run political programs.
3. Afghan government does not have an independent economic and military policy, then how can it devise its foreign policy and expect the Trump administration to accept it?

There is no country in the world without economic dependency.

Mr. Zakaria in response to Saeedi's concerns about the country's economic dependence said that even in times of war, the countries need economic relations with each other and are interdependent. According to philosophical discussions of Neo-Platonic school of thought, in countries where democracy, freedom, women's rights and human rights does not come naturally, we have to institutionalize them by financial and economic support. All Third World countries and specifically Afghanistan is one of them. According to this doctrine, we need financial aid and even military intervention, if necessary, to prepare grounds for democracy. The followers of this thought were the people who had been working in Bush administration and who had made the decision of intervention in Afghanistan. Besides the fight against terrorism, al-Qaeda and extremism, they changed the mindset of America's people that in a society where the conditions for democracy were not available naturally, they should be institutionalized by economic assistance followed by military intervention. This program was implemented, and it was the political logic of this century we have seen it many times in some cases. There has always been economic dependence, but it depends on

the nations how they use it. For example Korea and Japan has used it to reach to peak of economic growth and save their nations.

Our situation is affected by the lack of collective wisdom in Afghanistan

Hadi Miran, Researcher said: For Afghanistan to have better relationship with America, and eventually to reach to a strategic alliance, the following points must be kept in mind:

1. Far distance of the USA from the region;
2. America's engagement in international issues in a broad geography;
3. The probability of changes in America's approach to international issues (anytime its approach for international issues may change);
4. Lack of diplomatic knowledge and capacity of political negotiations in diplomatic apparatus of Afghanistan.

The questions:

1. Considering the tips mentioned above, are you optimistic about the capacity of Afghan Government to pass this situation and reach a better position? Can Afghanistan be a strategic partner to the USA in the region?
2. In my idea, current situation of Afghanistan rather than to express the geopolitical developments of the in the region or be a strategic point in the region, is affected by other factors. There are countries neighboring Afghanistan who are positioned in strategic locations in international political relations, but are not in crisis; why? Our situation, more than any other factors, is affected by the lack of wisdom among the people of our country.

Dr. Sima Samar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIGRC): How much do our internal relations and conflicts influence on our relations with the USA? How much America can rely on Afghanistan with a divided society and a shaky government grappled with differences?

Our relationship with the USA is figure-oriented.

Mr. Hassan Hussainyar, a graduate student in International Relations said: International system means first defining the relations among the countries, and second dealing with the security aspect. This holds true especially in the relationship between Afghanistan and USA. In the current dominant atmosphere in the world, trade of fear, power of fear and relation of fear are the concepts defining the relations among the countries. It is true that relationship between the USA and Canada does not produce fear, because their relationship is not based on fear. But our relationship with America is totally based on security. In this context, the main concern is that power of fear is rising. I think in this context, Afghanistan's national interest will not fulfilled and considered until we do not help America in spreading fear and horror. One serious issue affecting our relations with the USA is that the son of the Secretary of Homeland Security of America was killed in Afghanistan. On the other hand, General

McMaster, the US National Security Adviser has once worked in Afghanistan in a mission. Besides, there are many refugees from Afghanistan residing in the USA. These factors can be used in defining our relations with the USA. However, negative point is that our relations with America are figure-oriented rather than program-oriented, so the relations are always swinging with changes of figures in the leadership of the government.

Panel 2: Identifying Challenges and Opportunities

Moderator:

Mr. Mohammad Rafi Rafiq Sediqi, Chief Operational Officer at Khurshid TV

Speaker:

- Mr. Kawoon Kakar, Political Expert
- Mr. Nazir Kabiri, Advisor to the Finance of Ministry / AISS Fellow Researcher
- Dr. Davood Ali Najafi, Former Secretariat Chief of Independent Election Commission

Speech by Mr. Davood Ali Najafi

USA's financial aids have not been effective in establishing key government institutions

Mr. Davood Ali Najafi in his speech spoke about his experiences as a top government official working with the United States of America. He was talking about his experience of working with two government institutions working closely with the United States of America.² An overall study of the relations between the USA and Afghanistan shows that there have been ups and downs. But, after the 9/11 the countries enter into a more serious relationship. Based on the literature and documents, it is proved that the main goal of the US has been its fight against the al-Qaida. If you refer to the books written by American diplomats during these years, you would understand that reconstruction of Afghanistan has been a priority for the US. My own experience as the head of independent election commission secretariat working directly with the Americans, and also my work experience in the UN agencies, shows that USA has paid serious attention on establishing fundamental institutions of Afghanistan. This has been one of the challenges of relationship of USA and Afghanistan. If America is supporting elections of Afghanistan—America has been the biggest supporter of elections of Afghanistan—, should be asked that where the assistances have been expended and what challenges have been addressed by them. Unfortunately, there have been many challenges in this regard. For instance, in 2008, we decided to solve the problems of registration of the voters to prevent frauds in the coming elections. We wanted to both prepare the list of the voters and issue e-Tazkira to the people. In this regard, we worked together with the Ministry of Interior and implemented three pilot projects in Yakawlang, district of Bamiyan,

² Mr. Najafi previously has worked as head of the Independent Election Commission Secretariat and the Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation of Afghanistan.

Batikot district of Jalalabad and the 10th district of Kabul. Our aim was to implement two projects at the same time with the budget we were supposed to hold the election with. This could partly prevent fraud in future elections. After successful implementation of the pilot projects, we asked Dr. Spanta, former foreign affairs minister, to invite the donors including the United States of America to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss with them and convince them to permit us to expend the money we had in our hand in implementation of the two projects to hold a safer election. Unfortunately, our meeting did not end with a desired result with the donors. All other donors accepted our proposal except the Ambassador of the United States of America. America's Ambassador said explicitly that they do not allow their money to be used in the project we proposed. We faced similar problems in economic growth and development of Afghanistan. In all these areas, the US has not invested in infrastructure and institutional building. The money brought to Afghanistan has not been expended in Afghanistan. People from other countries like India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have made money in Afghanistan and then left the country. But Afghanistan's economy did not grow. The reason is evident. All the logistics have not been conducted by Afghan Government or Afghanistan. While we signed the agreement and told them that it is beneficial for private sector's growth in Afghanistan, they signed their contracts with foreign companies.

Introducing Mr. Kawun Kakar, Mr. Siddiqi asked him for his opinion whether America would invest in a stable Afghanistan or not. What operational challenges are available in relationship between Afghanistan and the USA?

Speech by Mr. Kawun Kakar

We must use the opportunity for establishing a good relationship with America

Mr. Kakar started his speech presenting a historical background of relationship of America and Afghanistan. In a sense America and Afghanistan have little in common. The United States of America has been the most powerful country in world since the early 20th century; an economic superpower with vast resources and international business centers. America has leadership role in the formation of policy, economy and the world order. But, Afghanistan is a small country with an ancient history. Afghanistan was famous for its route of Silk Road in the 13th and 14th centuries and it was known as a buffer zone between Great Britain and the Soviet Union in the 19th century. Afghanistan is a landlocked country with average resources and is surrounded by powerful neighbors.

There is no question that Afghanistan, in the past, was interested in developing close ties with America. But, contrary to Afghanistan's expectations the United States of America was keen on establishing closer ties with Afghanistan's eastern and western neighbors, especially Pakistan. For example, the purpose of the visits of Prime Minister Daoud Khan and Zahir Shah to America in the 1950s and 1960s was in this regard. As a result of these efforts the relations between the two countries began to thaw, but the relationship did not reach the

level of Afghanistan's expectations. The United States agreed to provide economic assistance to Afghanistan, and also committed to developing cultural programs but it did not do anything in terms of military assistance.

America's strategy in the region was focused on having relationship with Pakistan as a stronger and more valuable ally against Soviet influence in the Middle East. The formation of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) by America and Britain and their support for Pakistan's membership in this organization is only one example. As the demands of Afghanistan rejected by America, the country wanted to consolidate its relations with the Soviet Union, America's rival, which was welcomed by the Soviet Union. As we know its consequences for Afghanistan was disastrous, as it paved the way for the next invasion of the Red Army.

What proved to be more dangerous was that the United States military and economic aid was channeled to the Afghan Mujahedeen through Pakistan, particularly through its military intelligence that extremist groups were preferred to moderate groups and Afghan nationalists. Worse than that, ISI was encouraging the extremists to engage in jihad in Afghanistan from across the world. When the Soviet Union was defeated in Afghanistan, Afghanistan became a place for civil war among the armed groups and extremist ideologies. It was followed by destruction of public order and the rule of law or in other words Afghanistan became a failed state. America once again left Afghanistan by itself, but this time the United States paid a big price for what they had done—9/11 was an example of what America paid for their distance from Afghanistan. The deadly combination of extremism, advanced technologies and globalization process, all these issues caused that the territory without sovereignty be a fatal threat to the West and the international order.

After the fall of the Taliban, a new era has begun in relations between the United States and Afghanistan. Afghanistan expected that the presence of the United States would defend and protect it from various internal and external insurgent groups. Militarily, Afghanistan expected America to defend it against its enemies, and provide Afghanistan with modern military munitions and train the Afghan military forces. Economically, Afghanistan expected America that after three decades of war and mismanagement it would help to rebuild the country and support to establish a stable economy and invest on its infrastructure. Politically, the expectation was that the war should be ended, and new institutions should be established based on democracy by America's support.

If we suppose that Afghanistan's expectations were more than they should be, America's expectations were also not based on realities: America expected Afghanistan to quickly accept western democratic values. It expected that a democratic regime should be established across Afghanistan with democratic institutions. America expected Afghanistan to establish a functional social services system, merit-based and devoid of corruption. America expected Afghanistan to stand on its feet economically and defeat the Taliban and

other insurgent groups. But expectations of the both countries were not fulfilled, and guided the two countries to a deep diffidence.

Afghanistan is now the front line fighting against terrorism, and the security is getting deteriorated day-by-day. The number of American forces are getting decreased with a very little achievements in their mission. The financial assistances, most of them expended in military areas, have not been successful in building a stable economy. The financial budget and resources are drastically reducing, leading to downturn and exodus of young generation and professional human resources from Afghanistan. America believes that Afghan government is still corrupted and dysfunctional. Despite billions of aids from America, the Afghan security forces leadership could not fulfill the expectations. The continuation of financial aids is costly to America and is not supported by the people in America. In the recent presidential election, none of the candidates focused on Afghanistan.

The Way Forward

Expectations from Afghanistan

As Afghanistan has always been interested in having close relationship with America and western countries, there is again a great opportunity for Afghanistan to strengthen this relationship by observing its responsibilities towards this relationship. It is not acceptable to be both the greatest receiver of aids and the greatest exporter of drugs in the world. We have to create a meritocratic society where the youth have the chance to go ahead by their capabilities not based on nepotism. We cannot expect to have a democratic government without democratic institutions—especially without democratic parties. It is wrong to expect that law is to be observed only by the demos and not by the powerful people. The country will not improve if we focus only on our own and our families' interest. We have to do our best to help our country move forward. In other words, Afghanistan should have a critical analysis from its current situation, and should feel accountable itself toward its destiny.

Expectations from America

America should keep its long-term military and economic commitments toward Afghanistan, and should work on strengthening democratic institutions. When military and political leaders of America are claiming that Pakistan is not destabilizing Afghanistan and the region by proxy groups, America should make clear its policy toward Pakistan. America should use all its capability including encouraging countries like China and Saudi Arabia to force Pakistan to destroy terrorists' sanctuaries in Pakistan. As the military assistance scale is declining, America should raise economic assistances—the aids to be invested in strategic projects to help economic stability in long term.

Mr. Siddiqi asked Mr. Kakar to give his opinion about the security challenges in relations between Afghanistan and America.

Mr. Kakar said that there should be a close cooperation between Afghanistan and America in the fight against terrorism. It is not still clear that if such cooperation exists. It should be both strategic and technical cooperation between the two countries. There is a question that how powerful our security forces are. And, another important issue is that the terrorists' sanctuaries should be targeted. Both the military and political leaders of America accept that the sanctuaries of terrorists are in Pakistan, but they have not yet provided a clear policy about how to deal with the sanctuaries available in Pakistan. Afghan officials have been repeatedly raising this issue. We hope that the new administration in America pays close attention on this problem, and develops a comprehensible policy and takes measures against those sanctuaries. Unfortunately, we are losing the time and opportunities, and do not have tangible results.

Mr. Siddiqi summarizing Mr. Kakar's speech said that apparently our problem roots in our frailty inside the country. Therefore, what should our expectations be from the government in the future?

Mr. Kakar said that for years we wanted to be a player in international politics. But the facilities and grounds were not ready for us to be a role player. Over the past few years, we had the chance to play our role, but we were not well prepared. We were in a situation where our capacity was very low and we were still in war. But at this time we should more seriously consider such issues. Over the past ten years, we must admit that we have neglected a lot of important topics. We have very little time to make decisions on serious concerns. We have to make our decisions on what kind of government and society we want to be. Our goals and dreams are clear for us. We have to question ourselves that are we standing by our goals and objectives?; Or, we still want to cheat our people and the international community by giving excuses. Making such decisions are difficult, we may have characters who may lose their benefits and roles, but if the government wins, we have to accept it. We still witness characters and figures who insist on their power and personal interests and do not care about people.

Mr. Siddiqi introducing Mr. Nazir Kabiri to the stage, asked him to present his speech and sum up the session.

Speech by Nazir Kabiri

Afghanistan should take the war against terrorism seriously

Mr. Kabiri began his speech by detailing available opportunities between the two countries. Mr. Kabiri mentioned that the Ministry of Finance has the leading role in developing economic policy and coordinating Afghanistan with the donors. He said that his remarks were based on his experience of working in developing developmental policies for Afghanistan. According to Mr. Kabiri, the United States of America and the international community entered Afghanistan perusing two goals that can be explained in two narratives.

The first narrative: War against terror

The second narrative: Nation Building

Mr. Kabiri said that his experiences have been mostly in nation building area which includes development, human rights, and women's rights and so on. Mr. Kabiri continued his talk on three axes: 1) Basic facts 2) America's development performance in Afghanistan in recent years; economic opportunity 3) The recommendations.

I think the main problem between Afghanistan and America is the vagueness of the priorities. We do not know whether nation-building or fight against terrorism is our priority. We must make clear whether the goals should go parallel or we set priority. Over the past years we did not understand how the war or developmental aid have been managed and prioritized. We need to know what Mr. Trump's priority will be, so that we can align ourselves to his priority.

1. Facts about America's aids in Afghanistan.
 - The US foreign aid is equivalent to only one percent of America's annual budget. International indicators recommend that this amount should be 3%. Countries like Britain have a higher percentage; however, one percent of America's annual budget equals to 48 billion dollars.
 - Economic aid is a means of foreign policy of a country.
 - Assurances are conditional everywhere in the world.
 - Aid effectiveness is always little and relative everywhere in the world.
 - Growth and economic development of a country is a national decision than to be an international agenda. We cannot expect America to lead Afghanistan to development. There is not a single country who has reached stability and development by foreign assistance alone.
2. America's development performance in Afghanistan in recent years; economic opportunity

America spent 113.1 billion US dollars since the beginning of 2014 in different sectors. America's military budget nearly one trillion dollars is completely separate from the funds allotted as developmental aids. (The military aids to both Iraq and Afghanistan will be a total of three trillion dollars.) Out of 113 billion dollars, 72.4 billion dollars has been spent in military and security sectors. The government and people of Afghanistan do not know about these expenses in detail. So, when it comes to America's aids, there has not been a big amount of money. America has not expended much money in Afghanistan in proportion to Iraq. The remaining 40 billion dollars is spent in three areas: 1) in humanitarian assistance (aid for the victims of natural disasters such as flood and earthquake, assistance to immigrants) which is approximately 4.6 billion dollars. 2) 18 billion US dollars in development sector. Development assistance have been made in areas such as agriculture, democracy and governance, economic growth, education, gender, health, infrastructure and humanitarian aids. 3) The remaining 17 billion has been spent in different areas that we do not know in

detail. It is worth mentioning that all the \$ 18 billion development assistance has not been spent through the government of Afghanistan. Part of this assistance has been spent in other areas such civil society organizations, media and other related activities.

Another point to consider is between 2011 and 2014 America's aid has declined drastically in the three above-mentioned areas. In 2011, America spent 15 billion dollars and in 2012 its spending reached 16 billion dollars. But in 2016, it declined to 3.8 billion US dollars. In the years 2012, 2013 and 2014, it should be revealed that Mr. Hamid Karzai lost the chance of attracting more aids from international community. When we faced budget deficit in the 2014 presidential election, it was due to the fact that Mr. Karzai was not passing the indicators of reformation from the Cabinet. Mr. Karzai did not implement the commitments we made in Tokyo. He did not pass the Mining Act and the Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism law. So we lost 4 billion US dollars in Tokyo that Karzai was personally responsible for. We lost 4 billion US dollars in 2014 because Mr. Karzai neglected the IMF's indicators.

Relationship between Ghani's administration and the US is very different to what Karzai's administration had with America. The shortcomings of the previous government were fixed in the first few weeks of Ghani's presence in the office. Currently, the scenario is improving and we are moving towards a closer relationship between the two countries.

Mr. Kabiri insisted that the top priority of the international community was its fight against terrorism and regional diplomacy. From America's point of view the aids made to Afghanistan are effective compared to the other countries America has supported. Americans have been one of our best partners. Working with our European colleagues has been much difficult than America. America is providing half of the aids that international community has committed. In any international conference till America does not first raise its hand for assistance, European countries do not pay their donations. In development aid, Americans have been honest, though there have been problems and corruption.

Questions and Answers of the Second Session:

The Second Session was followed by a questions and answers session.

Mr. Mohammad Natiqi (former diplomat): President Hamid Karzai has a very bad record in military approach as well. There has not been any cooperation between the Karzai Government and the NATO forces. In the future, the government should not have a negative role.

Mr. Mohammed Saleh Saljoqi (Member of Parliament): The relations between the two countries, after 2012, has been set based on the long-term cooperation agreements with the United States of America. The question is to what extent we have been able to achieve our desired goals from our relationship with America? Based on the evidence we have been able to improve the security situation and establish good governance. When this is the case, the

government loses public support. The Afghan Government has lost public support. With the flood of rural people to the cities, we are facing huge insecurity. We have to think whether to continue the current situation of our relationship with the Americans in Afghanistan, which is surrounded by dangerous neighbors. We must develop a long-term strategic plan. The question is whether our relationship with America is beneficial to people or is just in favor of the national unity government?

Mr. Jandad Spinghar (the head of a civil society network): What is the main problem in relations between the two countries? While it is said that donors especially America is honestly helping Afghanistan, why do we still have major problems in political and economic development areas? Why have we not been able to take care of our basic problems?

Shah Gul Rezayee (Member of Parliament): Our main problem over the past years was that we could not define our foreign policy; neither with regional countries nor with the countries beyond the region and America. What is your definition from the relations between America and the USA?

Mr. Ismail Qasimyar (International Relations Advisor to the High Peace Council): First, we have to ask America to put under pressure any entity or government that supports terrorism or armed opposition. Second, America must make Afghanistan a good example to other countries. America must have short, medium and long term plans for this work.

Responding to questions from the speakers:

There should be a fundamental change made in America's policy towards Afghanistan.

Mr. Najafi: According to the statistics available, out of the total aid given by the United States of America, 72 billion dollars is spent on the military. 700 to 800 million dollars have been spent in elections, but what do we have now in hand? On the other hand, when we blame Karzai, we must ask the question whether the Karzai government was receiving more aid or the present government. Now 62 percent of the country's territory is not under government control. The Ministry of Finance should answer that what percentage of its budget is spent. By our optimism and saying that America is helping generously, we cannot solve our problems. We bargained and discussed with them that during the thirty days with this money we could buy a car to be used for many years. They replied that it was not their policy. How many institutions are now built and established by funds spent in Afghanistan? The bottom line is that until we are not a nation and do not build Afghanistan, nobody can solve our problem. The government which is not supported by ten percent of the people, cannot solve the problem. How did we reach here? America's intervention directed us here where we stand right now. Until America's policy towards Afghanistan is not fundamentally changed, and the regional countries are not assured, both Afghanistan and America will lose the war.

United States of America was not prepared to deal with the situation

Mr. Kakar: If we argue on who the culprit was, America or Afghanistan, we may not reach to a conclusion. I think it is better to see both our successes and failures. I've been working both with the Afghan Government and on some international projects in Afghanistan. Clearly, I can say that even the United States of America has not been ready for the war against terrorism or nation-building missions. I have been working with a large project in justice sector that was managed by a 26-year-old boy who was responsible for projects at the same time in Afghanistan and Iraq. If we would send a small suggestion, it would take him months until he could see it. So, the American bureaucracy is also not ready for this mission. We know our problems better. We must expect ourselves more. We have to show our leadership capacity that in what extent we are capable of leading the projects. We have treated our foreign friends more emotionally than practically. Sometimes we argued on very petty problems that the results were negative. We have to ask ourselves whether we want to have relations with the United States of America and the West, and if we want, we have to make ask ourselves on what conditions. We must not lose the opportunity right now available. But this does not mean that in any way they define their relationship, we must admit. During the US elections America had a slogan of the new government "America is the priority". Right now the national interests are the red lines of the countries, so we have to prioritize our national interests and clearly define our demands. In this context, we can define our relationship with America.

Summing up the second working session

In summing up the second working session Mr. Siddiqi noted four points as important issues:

1. Improving domestic policies capacities as a great tool for foreign policy and reaching out for growth and development in Afghanistan;
2. How can we develop a comprehensive strategy to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan that is supported by all the elites?
3. It is said that Pakistan and Afghanistan are America's strategic allies in the region. However, Afghanistan has been the victim of terrorism and Pakistan the sponsor. Where has been the problem in America's policy that still could not convince Pakistan not to support terrorism? Stability in Afghanistan will end to a stable Pakistan and region.
4. In Afghanistan, we have four major needs: i) peace ii) development, iii) democracy and human rights, and iv) foreign policy choice.

How the available opportunities should be defined to reach to our needs?

Mr. Najafi: The current government must first solve their internal problems and differences. We must first create a strong government to use opportunities. Weak governments can never take advantage of opportunities and foreign aid.

Can America change Afghanistan into a graveyard for terrorists?

No, if America had the intention to do so, they would have done it by now. Fifteen years after their presence in Afghanistan, there are rumors that we may return to zero point.

Afghanistan should create a balance in the region to be able to receive foreign aid

Mr. Kakar: About the presence of America in Afghanistan, in recent years, there was an agreement or optimism in the region. But this optimism is not now available, and even countries work against it. It is very important for us to understand how to create a balance in the region to receive foreign aid and presence. In this case, we probably cannot expect too much from the new administration in America. All the focus is on military policies not diplomacy. It is a big concern and a challenge for us to take actions on defining and strengthening our relations with America. We have to have close ties with the Americans and very active relations with our neighboring countries as well.

Can America change Afghanistan into a graveyard for terrorists?

I do not think if America has the ability. They neither have sufficient knowledge nor enough resources. They may destroy many things with bombs. But we have think of strengthening our government. First, it the responsibility of the government. Second, the weakening of the government with negative comments is wrong. We must stand by our government when it comes to national issues.

The existence of a Republican administration in America is an opportunity

Mr. Kabiri: There is a group in power in Afghanistan which is in favor western democratic nation-building narrative. On the other hand, warlord groups that were supposed be leading the war against terrorism, have not fulfilled their responsibility. They have disguised themselves and entered the government. These two groups formed a national unity government during the past fifteen years. The nation of Afghanistan was not present during the past fifteen years. Our first assignment is to form the third group composed the youth. The young generation should take the leading role in Afghanistan. The young generation who now have modern knowledge as well, should form the destiny of the country. In that case, they can set the relations with America based on facts and logical analysis, and set a productive relationship with Pakistan. In America, Republicans being in power is an opportunity. It was the Republicans who brought Karzai to power. It was George Bush who kicked off the war. Republican Cabinet has deeper knowledge. Besides, as it turns out that Trump is interested in nation-building, and this is an opportunity for us. Because the development is depended to eradicating terrorism. We need to keep the balance between

the two narratives. Pakistan has aligned itself with America in fight against terrorism. Our government's focus on good governance is good but, cannot solve the country's problem. We need to keep our country away from the peace agenda. High Peace Council should be canceled. Instead of High Peace Council which has had no achievements, High War Council should be created. Targeting ISIS in Achin and visit of General McMaster indicates that the Afghan War is still not forgotten. We should not confuse America anymore. We have to make our expectations lower in development sector. Now that the assistances are getting decreased, we should focus more on the private sector.

If America does not help the people of Afghanistan in four areas where Afghanistan needs, what threats are targeting America?

Mr. Kabiri: Our major problem with America is now having not a clear position against Pakistan. America's position towards Pakistan should be clear. The roots of the conflicts that are in Pakistan should be addressed.

Mr. Najafi: If Afghanistan is once again forgotten, America will be once again threatened like 9/11.

General Suggestions from the Participants of the event:

At the end, participants stated their suggestions and expectations for improving relations between Afghanistan and the United States of America in brief:

- Rethinking the relations between the two countries, America's relations should be defined with the Afghan people.
- We should not continue the previous government's policy. The previous government has made mistakes in different areas.³

³ On military front the United States faces uneasy options in Afghanistan. To change the momentum of the war in favor of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANSF) and the Resolute Support Mission of NATO, Washington needs to push for fundamental top-down reforms. The leaderships of security sector ministries are corrupt and incapable of operationalizing the counterinsurgency resources provided by the United States and other partners of War on Terror. The systemic failure and corruption of ANDSF leadership has been documented with utmost authenticity by international watchdogs, including the office of Special Investigator General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). The war will remain unwinnable unless a systemic, professional, and result-oriented reform is implemented. The ongoing scale of corruption, incompetence, and incapacity at the leadership level of ANSF will diminish the chances of victory in this war. Moreover, the excessive condensation of authority at the office of President Ashraf Ghani and his National Security Council has created a structural confusion in the chain of command of war in Afghanistan. Systemic incapacitating of security sector ministries has proved counterproductive in the recent years.

- To change Afghanistan to a graveyard for terrorists, the Afghan government and its international partners should heavily target terrorism in Afghanistan to make them disappointed.⁴
- Finding an alternative for America is wrong. We must do our best to use from the current capacities and opportunities.
- Afghanistan will not be successful without the cooperation of its neighbors in the fight against terrorism. We have to strengthen regional cooperation.
- Building confidence is the most important thing that must be done in the relations between the two countries.
- Pakistan should be seriously put under pressure to be act responsibly.⁵
- It is better for America to be honest as a leading policy maker, and pursue the implementations of the policies.
- Young generations' negative mindset towards America should be changed to enable them take the initiatives and leadership of the relations with America.
- America must increase its consulate's capacity in Afghanistan.
- America should once again put the fight against terrorism in top priority.
- In setting up our relations with America we need effective and continuous lobbying.
- We cannot distinct the fight against terrorism and the act of nation-building.
- America should put more focus on building the institutions in Afghanistan based on the lessons learned in the past fifteen years. After the Bon Conference, America has invested on figures who were parts of the war in all areas such as: governance, justice, services, employment, natural and human resources. America should not be afraid of Afghan nationalism, and should support Afghanistan.
- The Americans must work more on political development.

The End

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⁴ Though military surge can potentially enable ANSF to win some battles against the Taliban and other terrorist groups, it cannot sustain the wining momentum. For that, Washington should speed up the process of equipping ANDSF with heavy artilleries and weaponries, including fighter jets, helicopters, and transporting airplanes.

⁵ At the regional level, as long as Pakistan keeps funding the Taliban and offering safe heavens to them, the group will remain undefeatable. The key to defeat the Taliban and dismantle other terrorist networks in the region is Islamabad's cooperation. Strategically, the options of dealing with Pakistan are limited and consequential, but certainly the situation necessitates a comprehensive revision of the US policies toward Pakistan. We at AISS, share some of the findings and the policy recommendations of Hussein Haqqani of Hudson Institute relevant to the situation and valid.