

The American led NATO mission in Afghanistan and its impacts on Afghanistan and Pakistan

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Abstract:

After the overthrow of Taliban government in 2001, Pakistan becomes the safe haven for the top Taliban and Al-Qaida leadership. The decision of Musharraf government to support and act as an important ally of USA in its campaign of war against terrorism on the one hand prove very important for the relations between USA and Pakistan, but on the other hand it becomes a cause for the unrest in the tribal areas of Pakistan against both USA and Pakistani government (Neil A. Engelhard 2010). The Taliban leadership under the umbrella of strong ethnic ties with the NWFP of Pakistan are able to gather the support for the rebirth of insurgent movement against the America led NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Key words: - Taliban, Al-Qaida, NATO, NWFP, TTP, drones

Introduction

Afghanistan is a land locked country, abundant with natural resources and remains as an important strategic point for the countries like Pakistan, Iran, India, Russia and USA. It shared its vast boundary with Pakistan and Iran. Afghanistan remained as a war torn country since Soviet Union invasion in order to save the troublesome communist government (Zain 2006). In 1979 when soviet union invade this country, USA took this invasion as threat for its strategic interests as Afghanistan acts as the centre for the USA to satisfy its interests in the South Asia, Central Asia, middle east and China. In presence of Soviet Union it was not possible for the USA to play any role in the above mentioned regions. After 11 September 2001, USA attacked Afghanistan, claiming its campaign against terrorism (Zain 2006). In this campaign of war against terrorism Iran which is declared as an axis of evil in 2002 by George bush also provides logistic and technical support in order to curb the fundamental largely Sunni dominated Taliban group (carter 2010).

As soon as the Soviet Union entered in to Afghanistan the Mujahedeen who belonged to different ethnic tribes like Pashtuns, Hazers, and Uzbeks got together and started a farce insurgent movement against the soviet forces.

On the other hand, the USA along with Pakistani military ruler Ziaul-Haq provides every kind of help to the mujahedeen groups for their fight against the soviet forces (Zain 2006). It was the American CIA in strong collaboration with the Pakistani ISI who provides training, Armaments; moral support etc. In order to make them so much capable that they can posed a serious threat for the soviet forces in Afghanistan. As American did not like to come in direct confrontation with the Soviet Union, so it chooses an option to use Pakistan based intelligence agency as the main channel for providing armaments to the warriors with the name of Mujahedeen I.e. the soldiers of God (Bearden 2010). As USA provides all kind of military help to the varies mujahedeen groups who were operated against the soviet forces including rocket launchers, AK 47s, mortars, and more importantly the stinger guns which prove fatal for the air force of soviet union(Zaine 2006).

In the initial stage the soviet forces had the upper hand in the Afghanistan against the Mujahedeen but later on, the USA provide them latest rocket launcher guns which proved disastrous for the Soviet Air force(Bearden 2001). The situation becomes so bad that the Soviet Air force feels reluctant in flying and advancing against the Mujahedeen in the Afghanistan. On the other hand the military dictator Zia-Ul Haq shows full cooperation in the American game against the Soviet Union in order to divert the growing resentment against his rule and to halt the pressure to restore democracy in the country (Nasreen Akther 2008).

The key role played by the Pakistani intelligence agency ISI by providing proper training, distribute armaments, and control all the activates of mujahedeen groups so that Pakistan will be in a position to use these factions later on to satisfy its own interests (Nasreen Akther 2010). As soon as the causalities of solders of soviet unions with the passage of every day increases and the worse economic hard ships it faced at home compel the Soviet Union to sign the Geneva Accord in 1985. Once Soviet Union withdraws from the Afghanistan the warlords tried to increase their activities to get more power in the future political system of Afghanistan. The main struggle for the power was between Hikmatyar and Rabani factions. It was Pakistan who used his influence by persuading all the major warlords to conclude a power sharing arrangement under an important Accord known as Peshawar Accord in 1992.

The efforts of Pakistan received a heavy set back when Rabani reused to share power with Hikmatyar more ever he tried to keep his monopoly up on the affairs of Kabul by subjugating other groups from Kabul like Hizb-wahadat and jumbishi- Milli led by Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam. Pakistan tried to change the ground realities by supporting other warlords in order to put pressure on the Rabani and Ahmad Shah Masood not engage with India, Russia and Iran at the cost of Pakistani interests in the region. But all the efforts Pakistan made prove useless as those factions Pakistan support were not prove very strong to challenge the pro Indian and pro-Russian warlords in that situation Pakistan decides to search other options like Taliban (Misdaq 2006).

Afghanistan and Taliban

There are different explanations about the rise of Taliban into Afghan politics. But the most accepted explanation about the origin of Taliban was the chaos and confusion and the political instability and the deteriorating law and order situation created by the landlords in the areas of their respective control. The man who led the movement from the front was the one eyed leader from the oruzgn province in central Afghanistan named Mullah Mohammad Omar (Bearden 2001). The Taliban under Mullah Omer in a very short span of time became most dominant force in Afghanistan by defeating most of the former Mujahedeen commanders who were fighting with each other to control Kabul. The main cause for the success of Taliban was the frustration, anarchy, lawlessness and disorder created by the war lords under the areas of their control.

The people of Afghanistan want to end the atrocities and the corrupt system under the rule of which people were compelled to lead a life which is full of hardships. The Taliban movement created a sign of hope among the people for such an Afghanistan where the honour of the people will be protected, corruption will be eradicated, atrocities against the women will be stopped and the most importantly Afghanistan will be created as a unified country irrespective of the division of the country on the basis of tribes like Pashtuns, Hazaras, Tajiks and Uzbeks (Misdaq 2006). Most of the Taliban were the students who were studying in NWFP, FATA and other parts of the country consists mostly those Afghans who fled from Afghanistan after the withdrawal of Soviet union when civil war broke out among the leaders of Mujahedeen factions (Davis 2001).

The Taliban created problems for themselves and their policies like fundamentalist Islamic interpretation of sharia like ban on women education, prohibition of employment of women, strict ban on music, television cinema and they introduced proper dress code for both men and women in Afghanistan (Keating 2001). The UNICIF reacting against policies of Taliban announced on 10 November 1995 that the organisation decided to stop all the assistance for education in those Areas where the Taliban put restrictions up on the girls (Dupree 2001).

The way Taliban made quick ground attracted the attention of Pakistan to support this group in order to counter the influence of India, Iran, and Russia etc and satisfy its strategic as well as economic interests with central Asia through Afghanistan (carter 2010). When Taliban capture Kabul USA though not publically but silently saw Taliban government as a hope to secure the energy reserves in central Asia. But the hopes did not last long as the Fundamentalist Islamic interpretation of Islamic rule of Taliban and its growing strong links with Al-Qaida turn USA against Taliban (Nasreen Akther 2008). In the initial stage of the Taliban movement American government feel little reluctant to make its stand clear because of the goals that America wants to fulfill. 1. It wants Taliban to serve as an obstacle against the Russian and Iranian interests in Afghanistan. Secondly restore law and order all over the country the way they done in Kandahar and other parts. Thirdly get rid of terrorist camps. Fourthly provide Pakistan a trusty American ally, an overland link to the immense profits to be made from the trade of central Asian republics (Mackenzie 2001).

But all these expectations from the American government proved futile as Taliban likes to move forward as an independent group without acting as the puppet of America and Pakistan. The American policy makers take a u turn because of the following reasons. 1. The cultivation of opium poppy reached at its peak as more than 90

% of the total opium began to cultivate in Afghanistan as Taliban acts as the direct benefiter of this trade. Secondly the sanctuary Taliban provided to Osama-bin-laden who was responsible for the attacks that are carried out by Al-Qaida in the barracks in Saudi Arabia in which large number of American military persons got killed (Rasheed 2001).The support that Taliban got from the religious parties like jamiat-e-Ulema-i-Islam headed by Maulana Fazlur Rehman who always supports their political activities on anti-American speeches.

The way Afghanistan becomes the safe haven for all the training of most of the terrorist organisations especially Al-Qaida who was responsible for attacks on the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (Mackenzie 2001).

American campaign against terrorism and post-Taliban scenario in Afghanistan

Major combat in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom, OEF) began on October 7, 2001. The U.S. effort initially consisted primarily of U.S. air-strikes on Taliban and Al Qaeda forces, facilitated by the cooperation between reported small numbers (about 1,000) of U.S. special operations forces and Central Intelligence Agency operatives (Katzman 2014). The purpose of these operations was to help the Northern Alliance and Pashtun anti-Taliban forces advance by directing U.S. air strikes on Taliban positions. Bombardment was heavy, for example, of the Shomali plain that extends to Bigram Airfield—that airport marked the forward positions of the Northern Alliance at the time of the September 11 attacks. In late October 2001, about 1,300 Marines moved into Afghanistan to pressure the Taliban around Qandahar, but there were few pitched battles between U.S. and Taliban forces (Katzman 2014).

The Taliban regime unravelled rapidly after it lost Mazar-e-Sharif on November 9, 2001 to forces led by General Dostam .Northern Alliance forces—despite promises to then-Secretary of State Colin Powell that they would not enter Kabul—did so on November 12, 2001, to popular jubilation. The Taliban subsequently lost the south and east to U.S.-supported Pashtun leaders, including Hamid Karzai (Sidky 2007). The Taliban regime formally ended on December 9, 2001, when the Taliban and Mullah Umar fled Qandahar, leaving it under Pashtun tribal law. Subsequently, U.S. and Afghan forces conducted “Operation Anaconda” in the Shah-i-Kot Valley south of Gardez (Paktia Province) during March 2-19, 2002, against 800 Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters. In March 2003, about 1,000 U.S. troops raided suspected Taliban or Al Qaeda fighters in villages around Qandahar (Operation Valiant Strike). On May 1, 2003, then Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld announced an end to major combat. (Bidle 2003). After the Taliban were oust from power in Afghanistan the Northern Alliance becomes the sole power in Afghanistan as it were they who under the leadership of Dostam throw Taliban out of power with the assistance of America (jones 2008). But the policy makers of USA realised that there is an urgent need to accommodate all the ethnic groups. That is why Hamid Karzai a Pashtun was appointed as the president of interim government in the first Bonn conference held in 2001.The first Bonn conference which was dominated by leaders of Northern Alliance able, to take major share in the interim government headed by Hamid Karzai Afghanistan (jones 2008). It was an effort to unify whole country by

distributes power among all the ethnic groups especially Pashtuns, Hazaras, Tajiks and Uzbeks. But after 2005 Taliban again mobilised their resources and started stiff resistance for the coalition forces in Afghanistan. The result was a lack of security for Afghans and foreigners.

But the way Hamid Karzai government failed to provide good governance especially his failure to tackle corruption, mismanagement of the aid provided by the donors in first Boon conference, lack of cooperation with the Northern alliance about the various policies implemented in Afghanistan (shah 2008). The most important reason why American government failed to restore peace and stability was the lack of cooperation and the unwillingness of the warlords to surrender their armaments and they were largely profited by the donations provided by the various international donors for the reconstruction of the Afghanistan. As the lawlessness and instability increases it give boost to the Taliban insurgency again with the number of incidents deaths and attacks on the coalition forces increases 400 per cent (Katzman 2014).

The number of suicide attacks increased from 27 to 139, the number of remotely detonated attacks increased from 783 to 1,677 and the armed attacks increases three times more from 1585 to 4, 542.4 from 2004 to 2007 (Jones 2008). The main problems faced by the NATO led by America like lack of proper use of foreign aid, reconstruction and development. Some reports say that even 40 per cent of the total aid provided for the reconstruction of Afghanistan was not spent (Rashid 2008). The international efforts to provide training, Armaments and make the Afghan national Army organised force seems to be a failure. According to a report of US government accountability office only two out of 105 Afghan national Army units are only fully capable to carry out military operations (shah 2008).The reluctance of Iran, Russia, Uzbekistan and other important neighbours to provide sincere cooperation in the war efforts of Afghanistan also dilutes the mission of US in Afghanistan.

The way other coalition partners like Germany and Britain show reluctance to send more troops in Afghanistan because of their home pressure also largely undermine the mission in Afghanistan. The growing taking insurgency in Afghanistan is believed largely due to the support provided by the Pakistan. According to the US government Pakistan becomes a safe haven for the Taliban and al-Qaida leadership to hatch conspiracy and attacks on afghan soil against the coalition forces once they finish their job they cross the border and make ensure their safety (shah 2008).Analysing the Afghan scene, in a testimony on 11 December 2007, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen had stated that the Taliban support had tripled to about 20 per cent over the past two years. In the same vein, the June 2008 Department of Defense report says the 'Taliban is now a resilient insurgency—which is increasingly well coordinated, well-armed, and effective' and is likely to 'increase in scope and pace' through 2008 and into 2009 (Zaine 2006).

The 2001 attack on America not only effects US alone but it immensely effects Pakistan also because of the role of Pakistan as a front line ally of USA In its war against terrorism especially against Al-Qaida and Taliban. The decision of general Musharraf to become a strong ally of America led coalition against Taliban and Al-Qaida posed both positive and negative impacts on Pakistan. The Pakistani civilian governments especially peoples party of Pakistan (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim league

Nawaz remain consistently follow the Musharraf's policy of supporting the NATO forces which results in the killing of more than 50000 people by terrorists. The main reason for the terrorist organisations like TTP against the Pakistani state is the support and active involvement of Pakistan in the military action that USA have been taken against the Taliban and Al-Qaida in the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Ghufraan 2009). There is no evidence that shows that the present insurgency that Pakistan faces is based on ethno nationalism. There are evidences that this brutal insurgency in which thousands of Pakistanis had killed was carried out jointly by TTP, Punjabi Taliban and other group he banned militant sectarian groups based in Punjab, such as the Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (Soldiers of the Companions of the Prophet, SSP); lashkar-i-Jhangvi (Army of Jhangvi); and Jaish-i-Mohammad (Army of Mohammed, JeM) have been responsible for terrorist attacks in Punjab's major cities such as Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad (Ghufraan 2009).

Conclusion

Though American campaign against Taliban and Al-Qaida can be considered as successful so long it stopped the terrorist networks like Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups to make Afghanistan as a safe heave to export terrorism in other countries. But the way the lack of strategy in implementing the policies regarding the reconstruction of war torn Afghanistan was implemented becomes the cause of rebirth of Taliban insurgency. The way Pakistani government becomes an ally of USA in its war against terrorism costs Pakistan a heavy price in terms of loss of lives and destruction of property worth billions of dollars. There is an urgent need for America to relook its policy of war against terrorism in Afghanistan.

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