



AMERICA'S ROLE TO BRING PEACE AND STABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN UNDER TRUMP ERA

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Abstract

The America and the Taliban discussions have created much interest amidst strategic experts in the region and ahead. There are pieces of evidence that the Taliban solidifies their stance as America looks in a hurry to withdraw its troops. This paper discusses the highly grumpy politics in Afghanistan and the predominant culture of misgovernance, corruption, lawlessness and brutality. It is crucial to entail multiple ethnicities, areas and militant groups of all specters, including dissident groups within the Taliban, to ensure that the post-Soviet withdrawal structure of all-against-all does not materialize again, jeopardizing anticipation of peace and security in the coming years. At the zonal level, states having interests in Afghanistan must be entangled in a separate discussion to prevent the prospect of acting as a spoiler. Managing discussions would involve mature bargaining and efficient and firm signalling from America. It reinforces the values that promote human dignity, individual liberty and inclusive democracy through effective advocacy of liberally



mediated interpreted religious and cultural principles that enjoy a greater degree of acceptability in Afghan society.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Taliban, US, Peace Talks, Troops

Introduction

In December 2018, America decided to withdraw its forces from Syria; it looked evident that the US had shifted its policy and would be announced soon to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. The Trump regime has attempted to pursue reconciliation with the Taliban since early 2018 pointing to this eventuality. The news of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, citing unnamed US defence officials, finally came on December 20, 2018 (Mashal, 2018). It put neighbouring states of Afghanistan in a situation where they would consider it wise to reach out to the Taliban to protect their future interests in the region. The Tehran–Taliban talks in Iran on December 30, 2018, and the Indian decision to send retired diplomats to Moscow to attend peace talks with the Taliban as non-official delegates, indicate such policy revisions are being worked out in the region to stay in tune with the changing Afghan dynamics.

Unlike in Syria, there is a perception concerning the Afghan theatre that the US is desperate to leave. Through talks with the Taliban that mask its strategic defeat, it seeks an honourable exit. This has exacerbated the already complex security situation in the conflict-ridden country. As NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said a couple of weeks before the US decision on Syria, 'the cost of leaving [Afghanistan] is higher than staying' (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2018). The rapidly declining security situation inside Afghanistan, ever since the US–Taliban talks began, indicates that the Taliban, now more powerful than ever before, feel morally ascendant. At the same time, forces that backed the fledgling democratic experiment in Afghanistan show signs of fatigue and frustration. There is a view that an unthinking compromise with the Taliban at this juncture may put the future of Afghanistan and the region at high risk, which warrants a realistic assessment of the ground situation and the course of the present dialogue.

Research Methodology

The researcher applied a qualitative method to complete this paper. The researcher read the literature related to this topic to get helpful information to complete his work. The author got assistance from articles, books and newspapers to conclude this paper. The writer contacted different personalities to get valuable information regarding his topic. Johnson H. Thomson, a researcher and Professor at Naval Staff College California, helped complete



this research work. The researcher went to various libraries to get accurate data. The author got assistance from online journals and other media outlets to find out the facts regarding his topic.

Literature Review

US President Trump Policies towards South Asia with Particular Reference to Afghanistan, India and Pakistan by Muhammad Owais. The writer explains President Trump's policy towards South Asia, particularly Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan. The writer also compares the approaches of two American Presidents, Trump and Obama, in perspective to Afghanistan and highlights the similarities and differences. The author considers President Trump's attitude harsh towards Pakistan compared to India. India is a strategic partner to America in South Asia, but peace in Afghanistan cannot be traced without the help of Islamabad (Owais, 2019).

Taliban Narratives (The Use and Power Stories in The Afghan Conflict) by Thomas H. Johnson. The writer has explained in his book the effectiveness of the Taliban on the ground level. The Taliban have masses of support in rural Afghanistan. The communication system of the Taliban is up to the mark. The Taliban have more powerful than America and the present Afghan government. The author believes that the Taliban are getting support from the common public of Afghanistan. The writer also discusses the American defeat in Afghanistan (Jhonson, 2018).

What We Won (America's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-89) by Bruce Riedel. In his book, he described the success stories of intelligence-based operations in Afghanistan. The writer put great stress on the mindset of the local people. People often comment on such things which they have seen, but on the other hand, they do not have enough knowledge to describe the successful operations. In this book, the writer focuses on how difficult it is to manage such operations. This book has different stories about intelligence-based operations in Afghanistan conducted by the Central intelligence agency in the 1980s. The author has discussed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and cooperation between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the US. The role of intelligence agencies was also discussed in this book (Riedel, 2014).

The Taliban Shuffle by Kim Barker is a unique book to understand the events after 9/11. She discussed her arrival in Kabul when there was no electricity, foreign funding was meagre and institutions were destroyed. She said the Taliban would set itself in the different parts of the country; American and NATO forces could not eliminate the Islamic insurgency. Kim Barker explained the miseries of war-affected areas of Afghanistan. This



book is an excellent addition to the researchers who want to know maximum knowledge about Afghanistan after 9/11 (Barker, 2011).

Researchers have written several writings on Afghan issues, but little work has been done on the US's role in the Afghan peace process. There is a need to report on the American role in the Afghan peace process.

US Role in Afghan Peace Process:

Afghanistan is strategically state of great importance and a gateway to energy-rich Central Asia. After reading the pages of history, it unveils that Afghanistan has been an essential patch of land for the world powers. In its peak times, Kabul defeated the British empire after the Soviets went empty-handed and now America will withdraw its forces. To vanquish Afghanistan has lasted a dream for the world powers, but the consequences differed. But after 9/11, the US military defeat is a phenomenal historical incident. Since the beginning of the war in Kabul, the order America wanted to initiate and force over Kabul could not assist (Mirza & Malik, 2019).

After the withdrawal of Soviet forces, a vacuum was created and someone had to fill this vacuum. Massive destruction had done by Soviet troops in Afghanistan. A large number of refugees fled to neighbouring states like Pakistan and Iran. America took it as a chance to eliminate the Soviet's influence in Afghanistan. With the help of Pakistan, America started service to Afghan Mujahedeen to enhance its influence. America had already funded Mujahedeen fighters against Soviet forces. A large number of NGOs started working in Afghanistan to protect the interests of America. Later in 1996, the government of the Taliban was established in Afghanistan with the help of Pakistan and America (Diplomatic Discourse, 2010).

America had been engaged with Taliban leaders from the late 1990s. American Presidents Clinton and Bush negotiated with the Taliban to favour American companies. American companies wanted to Construct gas and oil pipelines from the Central Asian States. United Nations also officially announced negotiating with the Taliban, but these efforts were dissolved in 2000 after the Cole attack. America also had been contacted by Taliban leaders even after the attacks on US embassies in Africa. American officials met with the Taliban in March 2001 and even in August later this year before the few weeks after the 9/11 incident (Borger, 2004).

After 9/11, President Bush announced, "No state can talk with terrorists." President Bush had more aggressive policies than his successor President Obama. President Bush wanted



to win the Afghan war through military means. Obama administration soon realized the facts and announced to talk with modern elements of the Taliban when he came to power (Perry, 2016).

President Obama started to provide money to the foot soldiers of the Taliban to achieve America's interest. First, Obama adopted a reintegration policy toward the Taliban. The Obama administration wanted to neutralize the Taliban militants through its reintegration policy. After the ceasefire message from Mullah Omer on the eve of eid in 2010, America decided to come one step forward and changed its approach from reintegration to reconciliation. America decided to bring Taliban leaders to the talks table with the Afghan government directly (Tarz, 2010).

President Obama was much aware of the flawed strategies of the Bush administration to handle the Afghan war. Due to the wrong approach of Americans, the Taliban had secured about half of the country's control between 2005 to 2009. This war was becoming harmful to Americans' interest in the region. Obama knew about the importance of Kabul and Islamabad in the region. But this war would become a "White Elephant" for the American economy. The cost of the war increased by about 100 billion dollars from 2005 to 2009 (Cordesman, 2009).

Obama increased military presence in Afghanistan but could not get desired results. The primary strategy of Obama was to bring the Taliban to a peace table with the Afghan government, but the Taliban were not keen to sit with the Afghan government. But in 2016, the Republican regime took over the White House. President Trump took charge as the 45th President of America aggressively. It was a difficult task for President Trump to prevent America from an embarrassing defeat in Afghanistan. After consultation with various dignitaries, the President announced his Afghan policy after six months in 2017. Trump's policy was not different from Obama's policy regarding military presence in Afghanistan. In his speech in 2017, "President Trump talked about political solution of the Afghan war." Trump accepted the proposal to engage the Taliban with direct talks. But on the other hand, the President increased military presence in Afghanistan. This initiative created hope of getting desired results for America in Afghanistan (Lee, 2017).

In his policy about Afghanistan, Trump warned Pakistan to end its ties with terrorist organizations working in Pakistan against the interests of America. Otherwise, America will cut down the military aid to Pakistan by 300 million dollars. President also accused Pakistan of not showing 100% results in its fight against terrorism. On the other side, America encouraged India to expand its presence in Afghanistan. India had already invested billions of dollars in Afghanistan, but India did not want to send its military to



help America against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Trump's policy about Afghanistan was severely criticized by experts in South Asia and America. According to many experts, this policy will help Pakistan establish its ties closer with China and India already had invested a significant amount in Afghanistan. India cannot send its foot soldiers to assist America in Afghanistan. Moreover, Trump's warning to Pakistan will create more problems in America's relationship with Pakistan (Ganguly, 2017).

Trump administration often said that they have everything to get success in Afghanistan. Jim Mattis, Defense Secretary, said the Trump administration could achieve what two earlier administrations could not succeed in Kabul. Jim Mattis was criticized by most the American Military Experts; they think the Trump administration has no clear plans for Afghanistan. Trump wants to win this war through military means, but it is impossible. Trump does not know about the ground realities in Afghanistan. In 2018, Trump's Afghan policy will show its result, as said by different officials from the Trump administration (Shinkman, 2017).

In 2018 Trump decided to engage the Taliban directly without the presence of the Afghan government. These peace efforts were welcomed, but it put a question mark on Trump's policy about Afghanistan to win the Afghan war through the military. Even a surge in American troops in Afghanistan and cut-off military aid to Pakistan could not stop the Taliban momentum (Jaffe & Olivo, 2018).

President Trump wants to withdraw his forces at any cost from Afghanistan to secure his next term in the White House. For this purpose, President Trump appointed Zalmay Khalilzad his advisor to Afghanistan. Zalmay has served America in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the United Nations as the ambassador of Washington. His main task was to bring the Taliban and Afghan government to the peace table and secure the interests of America in Kabul (Kelemen, Hadid, & Romo, 2018).

America has spent almost 1 trillion dollars and lost approximately 2400 soldiers in Afghanistan. President Trump wants to save his subsequent election to end the longest war in American history. The American public does not want to continue this war in Afghanistan anymore. Most Americans think the Afghan war is not in favour of the United States; we are fighting a blind war no one knows the end of this deadly war (Johnson, 2020).

Pakistan is the most crucial country in the region. Soon after President Trump's threat to cut down military aid to Pakistan and knowing about the role of India in Kabul, President Trump wrote a letter to Prime Minister Khan to seek Pakistan's help in the war against the



Taliban in Afghanistan. Prime Minister Khan assured President Trump about his help in the Afghan peace talks. It was a dramatic change in Trump's behaviour regarding Pakistan. Two weeks earlier, Trump bashed Pakistan for providing safe havens to terrorist organizations in Pakistan. President Trump soon realized that the withdrawal of American forces could not be possible without the help of Pakistan (Janjua, 2018).

On the other hand, prosperity and stability in Afghanistan directly proportionate the weight of pressure the Washington administration put on the Taliban militants to stop their actions. Trump's policy of reconciliation was warmly welcomed by the Afghan government and other prominent Afghan leaders. The Afghan government also included the idea of modernization of Afghan military forces. The Afghan government thinks it will defeat Taliban militants in a long war (Rahi, 2017).

From October 2018 to September 2019, nine rounds of talks were conducted in Qatar between the Taliban and America. Different issues like withdrawal of foreign forces, commitment from the Taliban to protect its soil from terrorist organizations, and power-sharing formulas were discussed. Both sides were confident of ending the longest war of history soon (Qazi, 2019). After an attack in Kabul that killed one American soldier, Trump cancelled the talks with the Taliban. President Trump said he had planned a meeting with Taliban leaders and Afghan President Ghani at Camp David. But after the killing of American soldiers, it is impossible to continue peace talks (Farmer, 2019).

Trump also has public pressure to end the Afghan war. Before his election in November 2020, he wanted to end this war. Experts were hopeful that Trump would soon resume the talks with the Taliban. America resumed negotiations with the Taliban after three months' suspension. Trump wants the withdrawal of his 13000 soldiers from Afghanistan. The Taliban are also willing to end this war in Afghanistan. Taliban's main point is the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. State Department officials said the primary purpose of these talks is to reduce violence and build the ground for peace in Afghanistan (Yusufzai, Williams, Luce, & Smith, 2019).

After the nine rounds of talks in Doha, on February 29, 2019 peace deal between the Taliban and America has signed. This peace deal will pave the way toward permanent peace in Afghanistan. Zalmay Khalilzad and Mullah Ghani Baradar signed the historic agreement in Doha. According to this deal, the US will withdraw its forces within 14 months. But within the first 135 days, the US will reduce its troops to 8600 in Afghanistan. Afghan government and Taliban both will release prisoners as a goodwill gesture. Gen. Mark Milley said, "we are thankful to the American soldiers who sacrificed in Afghanistan. The only way to end this long war in Kabul is the way of negotiations.



America is committed that Kabul will never be a safe place for terrorism". America plans to remove Taliban members from the sanctions list to get its aim by May 29, 2020. The Afghan government will talk with the Taliban to establish Afghanistan's future political setup. The most important thing about Intra Afghan Talks is to execute a ceasefire in Afghanistan (Maizland, 2020).

The Trump administration takes credit for this peace agreement. On the other hand, Democrats and some security experts criticize this peace deal. This deal will provide legitimacy to the Taliban terrorists in Afghanistan and the world arena. Taliban killed hundreds of American and allied soldiers and thousands of civilians in Afghanistan, including children and women. If a Democratic President does such kind of deal, Republicans show their regret at the same time. Most Americans think that the 9/11 Attack was worsened by the British in August 1814 in Washington DC. Ultimately the Taliban were part of the 9/11 attack (French, 2020).

President Trump and his team are very confident about bringing peace to Afghanistan. Trump says, "it is time to bring our people back to America. Trump also appreciated his team's efforts to finalize this peace deal. Trump said that the Taliban are also eager to bring peace. President Trump claimed that America has killed thousands of terrorists and now the Taliban to do the same as America did with the terrorists in Afghanistan. Trump also warned if something bad happens in Kabul, then we will be back with more power" (BBC News, 2020).

After the peace deal, President Trump was confident of staying his next term in the White House. Things are not going in Trump's favour in Afghanistan. The election results in Afghanistan are in favour of incumbent President Ghani. Northern Alliance leader and former Foreign Minister and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah called it a fraud election and took oath as President of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is the country on the map of the world which has two presidents simultaneously. This rift between President Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah is not going towards political turmoil. First, there were problems in Prisoner Exchange Program between the Afghan government and the Taliban. On 7th April Taliban suspended talks with the Kabul government about their non-serious behaviour (The Jerusalem Post, 2020).

The second thing is the non-serious behaviour of political leadership in Kabul is also creating hurdles in the way of peace. Zalmay Khalilzad and Foreign Secretary Mike Pompeo visited Afghanistan to talk with both leaders to solve this issue of power-sharing, but things are the same right now. Mike Pompeo threatened to cut down 1 billion dollars' aid to Afghanistan. Foreign Secretary said, "America is ready to review its all



programmers regarding Afghanistan. America feels regret that both leaders could not form an inclusive government" (Pamuk, Shalizai, & Greenfield, 2020).

President Trump is in deep trouble regarding his withdrawal policy from Afghanistan. The non-serious behaviour of Afghan leaders and the Covid-19 pandemic make it challenging to end the long American war in history. Tensions are seen in the statements of American and Nato officials. One of the NATO officials in Afghanistan said, "World is fighting with Covid-19 pandemic, and it is bizarre that Afghan leaders are fighting for power; they should unite for the interest of public health and peace" (Gul, 2020).

The surge in violence, the fight for power, and Covid-19 are disastrous for Afghanistan. The US wants to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, but things will worsen daily.

Conclusion

America toppled the regime of the Taliban after 9/11; still, within two years Taliban gathered under the same umbrella and started to fight against the US and the Afghan regime. However, under the rule of Hamid Karzai, the efforts to start peace talks with the Taliban had begun after several years. Still, the Taliban refused to sit with the Afghan government. The peace process gained momentum during the rule of Dr. Ashraf Ghani. Although, the Taliban refused to talk with the Afghan regime in the early stage, calling it an American puppet regime. The peace process started in two stages; the discussions between the Taliban and US were at the first stage, and they inked a peace deal on 29-Feb-2020 in Doha. The initial lines were to release the Taliban militants and reduction in violence. Although the Taliban have entered Kabul and trying to get recognition from the world community, things are not clear yet in Afghanistan. The Taliban are more robust than before; world powers and neighbouring states must support Afghanistan to stabilize the region, but the Taliban must follow International norms.



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