

July--December, 2020

A Peaceful Withdrawal of U.S and The Need for Negotiations with Taliban:

By

¹Bahadur Khan, ²Para Din

Abstract:

Afghanistan remained a war zone since the 1970s and the law and order situation was further deteriorated by Soviet invasion. After Soviet withdrawal, a civil war broke out among the Mujahedeen. Taliban emerged as a hope for the security of Afghanistan in the early 90s. However, till 9/11 incident they got the control of 85% areas of Afghanistan. In 2001 Taliban Government was overthrown by the USA and the Allies. American and the allied forces fought in Afghanistan for at least 19 years but the situation instead of moving for stability further deteriorated as they cannot control the security situation in Afghanistan. This paper aimed to find the US and the allies' miscalculation regarding the security landscape of Afghanistan and also for withdrawal from Afghanistan. This research paper examines the Taliban while knowing the ground situation, cultural values and economic capabilities of Afghanistan adopted a strategy to bleed America and to let the Northern Alliance for the rift. They accumulated themselves with the culture and environment and with accordance to need of public and situation. Furthermore, the research paper also highlights the American withdrawal from Afghanistan would further create a power vacuum which

¹MPhil Scholar Department of Area Study Centre University of Balochistan Quetta Pakistan Email: bahadurk203@gmail.com

²Dr. Para Din, Assistant Professor, Department of Area Study Centre university of Balochistan Quetta Pakistan Email: Paradin1965@gmail.com

could be filled by the Taliban easily. The study concludes that the peaceful withdrawal of American will not pose any considerable threat to America.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Taliban, Insurgency, America, Negotiation and Withdrawal.

Introduction:

The collapse of King Zahir shah's throne and the establishment of Afghanistan as a republic paved the way for the creation of the Taliban Movement in Afghanistan. In the same way, Daud's reforms related to socio-economy utterly rejected by the people of Afghanistan particularly the tribal people who joined hands with various parties in toppling Daud's regime. In 1978 People's Democratic Party (PDP) removed Daud from the thrown violently and started controlling the affair of Afghanistan (Annaim, 2008). For the development of Afghanistan, PDP introduced the Saur Revolution which was intended to bring socio-economic reforms and aimed at secularizing the Afghanistan society which took its roots from the fundamental Islamic faith. The introduction of policies by the Saur revolution polarized the party into two factions which were known as Khalq (radical) and Parcham(Moderate). Parcham faction headed by Noor Mohammad Tarkai and Khalq headed by Hafeezullah who succeeded in overthrowing the Noor Mohammad Tarkai from the headship of Afghanistan and controlled the affair of Afghanistan (Annaim, 2008).

However, Hafizullah's anti-USSR speeches and conflicts with Parcham faction invited USSR to attack Afghanistan in 1979 and Babrak Karmal appointed as a head of the state. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan culminated in the formation of Islamic Resistance Movement which was against the illegally military intervention of USSR. Furthermore, the USSR invasion provoked the Khalq faction to join hands with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the USA against USSR in Afghanistan (Ihsanoglu, 2010).

Therefore, Mujahidin with help of foreign military aid succeeded in defeating the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Resultantly, the withdrawal of Soviet Union from Afghanistan triggered a civil war in the country. The civil war ended Dr. Najeebullah regime in 1992(Ihsanoglu, 2010). The

downfall of Dr. Najeeb regime created a political gap which was filled by the Taliban; emerged at that time as a politico-religious force in Afghanistan. As the matter of fact Burhanuddin, the president of newly established Islamic state after USSR withdrawal, was able to maintain law and order in Afghanistan. In contrast, the Mujahidin from other factions started resistance against his rule which finally led to anarchy in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Mullah Mohammad Omer from Kandhar led the other factions of Mujahidin to establish peace under the shadow of strict Islamic sharia. In 1994, Omer occupied the city of Kandahar and some other provinces adjacent to it (Borujerdi, 2016).

However, Mujahidin emerged on the surface of Afghanistan in the name of the Taliban. Taliban rule continued from 1994 till the invasion of USA in Afghanistan after 9/11. On the other hand, the global community allegedly suspected of Pakistan that she backed both Taliban and Al-Qaeda by providing military training and weapons. After the nine-eleven attack, Pakistan ensured international communities that she halted her support to the Taliban Government in Afghanistan (Acemoglu, & Robinson, 2012).

Afghanistan Security Situation after the Fall of Taliban:

A terrorist group on 11th September 2001 attacked America by destroying its World Trade Centre. The American government headed by George W. Bush accused Al-Qaeda of this attack. He put pressure on the Taliban government to hand over Osama Bin Ladin who was the head the Al-Qaeda to America. Taliban stubbornly declined his request, thereafter America joined hands with his amicable friends like the United Kingdom, Canada and NATO Alliance to kick off Operation Enduring Freedom against the Taliban government in Afghanistan. In this context, USA flooded military aid to Shah Masood and Abdul Rashid Dostum for the suppression of Taliban. Soon Kabul thrown was recaptured from the Taliban. United Front aided by USA forces established a new interim government under the leadership of Hamid Karzai in 2003. However, this coalition failed to defeat the Taliban, which destabilized Afghanistan in the name of Islam (Acemoglu, & Robinson, 2012).

Taliban's Version of Sharia:

The Taliban imposed their own version of radical Islamic Sharia. The newly interpreted version of Sharia by Taliban in Afghanistan aligned to the people who were asked to grow beard and women were forced to wear the veil (Burqa). Further, the Afghan masses were denied the right of basic education and if anyone found guilty of any crime like adultery or murder the accuser was ruthlessly punished before the public. The Taliban regime was considered as a real criminal regime for providing safe heavens to Osama Bin Ladin and Al-Qaeda. Now for the USA, it was a compulsion to oust the Taliban with the help of United Front in 2001 (Annaim, 2008). After the removal of the Taliban from power, in 2003 the Taliban reorganized its movement and started a guerrilla war against US-led coalitions forces in Afghanistan. As the Taliban were highly skilled in Guerrilla war tactics which assisted them to destabilize the region. Hence it compelled the international and local think tanks to provide a permanent solution to this war by negotiating with the Taliban. Furthermore, the current government led by Ashraf Ghani on and off blame Pakistan for her support to the Taliban. Pakistan wholly refused such frivolous allegations as she stopped her military and financial assistance to the Taliban after 9/11. It is high time for the USA and his allies to stop hiding its failure against the Taliban and seek the way forward to Afghan Question by initiating negotiations with the Taliban which would ultimately help establish a coalition government in Afghanistan (Annaim, 2008).

The Upheaval of the Taliban in Afghanistan:

It was observed that only Guerrilla warfare was not enough to strengthen the Taliban position in Afghan politics. They were supported by Islamic ideology and unstoppable financial aid from Muslim groups which strengthened the Taliban's position (Barker, 2000). Taliban unity primarily relied on the interpretation of Jihad and its importance in Islam by the Deobandi school of thought. Majority of the Muslim population of Afghanistan is Sunni who drives their fundamental beliefs from Deobandi sect. This helped to recruit more and more people in the Taliban movement against foreign invaders (Annaim, 2008).

Afghanistan a Landlocked State:

Being a landlocked country, Afghanistan shares its boundaries with central Asian states, China, Iran and Pakistan. It consisted of roundabout three million populations while Pashtuns are in majority by sharing 45 per cent of the total population of Afghanistan. Pashtun's twenty per cent population dwelling in cities and eighty per cent in villages. It is pertinent to mention that the Taliban movement grossly relied upon Pashtun tribe mostly inhabitants of countryside regions which are more backwards in the sphere of education, health-related facilities, infrastructure, development and civic sense (Magnus and Eden, 1998).

Afghan's Fragile Economy:

Since ages, Afghanistan inherited a fragile economy as it has no modern technology-based economic sources such as industries and factories therefore it solely depended on an agricultural economy. To strengthen their economic muscles, people prefer to live in villages for utilizing agricultural land by producing heavy crops which help Afghan traders to export it to neighbouring countries to generate enough money for their survival. Besides, the rural people breed animals particularly sheep, goats and cows to boost the economy of their country. Whereas, the traders belonging to urban imports goods from Pakistan and Iran. More than 55 per cent of the population lives below the line of poverty so the overall economic picture of Afghanistan is gloomy (Nojumi, 2002).

Afghan's Decentralised Governance System Based on Pashtunwali Code:

Afghan village has a key role in the governance system of Afghanistan as it decentralized the power of the state. So, it is necessary to understand how the Taliban strengthen its position in this system of governance. Further, the centre helped the local government in any field (Nojumi, 2002).

Moreover, Pashtunwali is an unwritten code of Afghan people that works as a centrifugal force for unifying Afghans. It remains the icon of peace which regulates Pashtoon jirga and non-Pashtoon shura for resolving their differences. Thus Pashtunwali played a prominent role in Afghan's history by maintaining peace in the pre-Islamic and post-Islamic era. Additionally,

village structure depends on three main pillars consist of Mula (religious scholar), Jirga (Council of Elders) and Lashkar (Village Security force). In the same way, this system in villages led to the establishment of a political system in province and State (Annaim, 2008).

Similarly, the rural society of Afghanistan inspired by the same political setup in which Mula not only succeeded to be the part and parcel of Jirga but also the controller of Lashkar. Mula used the power of Lashkar against the invasion of the Soviet Union in the form of Mujahidin who defeated USSR successfully (Annaim, 2008).

In addition, this village system added an important role in the political history of Afghanistan because it was very difficult for the government to breach the frontline among the controller of this system. For instance, if the head of the Afghan state intended to bring reforms for the development of Afghan society without the consultation of Mula (religious Scholar), they were ousted from thrown and forced to flee from Afghanistan once forever. Amanullah Khan, Dawood, Baberk Karmal, Nur Mohammed Tarkai and Dr. Najeebullah were dethroned due to the introduction of new progressive reforms without consultancy of this political setup (Rosen, 2010).

Miscalculations of the U.S in Afghanistan:

The political setup in villages and its economy invigorated Taliban position in the war USA and NATO forces. Though the Taliban lacked technology in every field of war against the US forces, yet the Taliban gained the influence of the Afghan people living in Villages. Despite having the most modern weapons in the war field against Taliban still USA and NATO forces disappointed to defeat them. Because the USA ignored the social structure of Afghan society who has been providing moral, mass and economic support to the Taliban. More importantly, they also overlooked the strong religious side of Afghan society which worked as a backbone for the Taliban's triumphant. So all these abortive strategies channelled by US and NATO forces increasingly benefitted the Taliban in this unending war.

When Trump came into power as a new President of the USA he introduced a new policy for the Afghan war. He increased the number of soldiers but this policy brought no fruitful results for Trump administration. On the other

hand, the Taliban succeeded in bringing more people in the mainstream of Taliban Movement. They enrolled more than seventy thousand militants into the Taliban's forces and this figure further increased to one lac at the end of 2019. Thus, it is crystal clear that the Taliban succeeded in gaining the will of the Afghan people by adding a large number of masses in the Taliban force.

Trump's policy of increasing the soldiers in US forces badly backlashed as it instilled a concept of colonialism among the ordinary public of Afghanistan. This concept of colonialism compelled the village people to support the Taliban by providing extravagant human resources to the Taliban. The Taliban became more vibrant force than that of the US. In the time of the Obama administration, US generals who were fighting against the Taliban submitted a report regarding Afghan war to the White House which clearly exposed the failure of US strategy against the Taliban in the war field. They asked for reviewing of old strategies and devising new for US peaceful withdrawal from Afghanistan.

It was wrongly assumed from 9/11 attack that the Taliban had a threat for the USA when Al-Qaeda's attack on the World Trade Centre but it unmasked the failure of the CIA's recruitment policies. The report stated that the CIA recruited like-minded candidates for last forty years before the 9/11 assault. This fault paved grounds for Al-Qaeda to pose a continuous threat for American security once revamping its recruitment policies such attacks in future would be avoidable. So if the Taliban recaptured Kabul's throne it would not pose any serious threat to American security. However, it might pose threat to America if it left Afghanistan with negotiation with the Taliban. Thus for Afghan peace settlement negotiation with the Taliban is unavoidable.

In case if the Taliban succeeded in capturing Kabul throne again it would not pose any threat to regional security. Afghanistan shares its border with Iran, Pakistan, Central Asian states and China. Pakistan has been having good ties with the Taliban. While Iran might have an issue as the Taliban has been supported by Saudi Arabia but before Taliban Afghan people had a tendency towards Saudi Arabia since both shares common sect that is

Sunni. If the Taliban came in power, it would create no room for threats to central Asian states which contained a Sunni majority population. Thus, one can scrupulously conclude that Taliban re-emergence would not affect regional security.

Moreover, it was keenly observed, if USA forces left Afghanistan after negotiations with the Taliban, it would boost drugs production particularly opium. This observation by some scholars miscalculated as the regime of the Taliban in the 1990s. Frankly speaking, the Taliban sternly banned on producing any kind of drugs in Afghanistan. Hence, if the Taliban succeeded to form the government, the people living in villages and cities must go for another source of income to support their families.

Some scholars observed that the rise of Taliban might endanger women's rights. As previously when they came in power they strictly instructed women to observe veil (Burqa) in public. History might prevail again so this Burqa system would be re-introduced in Afghanistan because the traditional values cannot be neglected. So if the USA and international communities pay heed to this issue the risk can be minimised.

If negotiation succeeded with Taliban USA and his allies must continue their untiring support for the stability of the country. Prior withdrawal they have to persuade the Taliban to work on education, health and women rights keeping in view the rich culture of Afghan society as well as international standards of living. If Taliban implemented the true Islamic spirit without much relying on regional obsolete cultural values it would obviously ensure a society based on justice and peace where women will also be protected morally, socially politically and economically (Musa, 2003).

American scholars and think tanks are of the view that more resources can bring about abrupt transformation and stability in Afghanistan but candidly speaking 19 years was just wastage of the USA and his Allies resources which failed to bring any eminent victory so far. It would be wise for USA and International Community to review their policy towards Afghanistan by having a negotiated withdrawal with the Taliban. Negotiations with the Taliban would help the USA to carry out transformation with fewer

resources. Without successful negotiation with the Taliban, American policy will be a fiasco and he will also lose his credibility in the region. In case America had negotiated withdrawal on his terms and conditions with Taliban, it would no doubt turn his failure into victory and ensure stability and peace in Afghanistan as well as in the region (Musa, 2003).

Conclusion:

USSR and USA invasions of Afghanistan resulted in a massive amount of mass migration of Afghan people who took refuge in its neighbouring states, particularly Pakistan. Afghan Refugees Camps set up inside Pakistan gave these Afghan People a platform to exchange their political ideas vis-à-vis Kabul government and their foreign protectors and supporters. They considered that the foreign invaders are responsible for their miseries who snatched from them their home, wealth, land and honour. Now for them it's imperative to crush these invaders by supporting their Mujahid brothers who have been waging jihad against them.

Similarly, both superpowers smashed the centuries-old system of governance and ousted the prime stakeholders which created a power vacuum that never had been filled again. The USA believed in a military solution of Afghan Question by flooding money to strengthen and stabilize his selected government at Kabul, whereas, for rural society keeping in view their Pashtunwali code it's a sign of humiliation to unanswered such aggression. Those stakeholders who had been removed from power started organising guerrilla war against the US and his allies which posed a perpetual threat to the Kabul Government. Hence the US belittled the ideological and cultural importance of Afghan society which created bottlenecks for Kabul Government for smooth governance.

It is high time for America and his Allies to reconsider their failed policies in Afghanistan. The US created a political gap by overthrowing of the Taliban's Government and to fill that vacuum it demands to hold table talks with Taliban who controls almost 85 per cent territory of present Afghanistan. A peaceful negotiation with the Taliban is indispensable to reach a permanent settlement of Afghan conundrum. After reaching an agreement, the world community needs to hold Intra Afghan Dialogue to

chalk out the future constitution, political setup, and policies of Afghanistan. In a nutshell, America-Taliban negotiation is inevitable for the country and regional peace.

References:

- A. A. Annaim. (2008). *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Sharia*, Cambridge MA, and London: Harvard University Press.
- Acemoglu, D. & Robinson, J.A. (2012). *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*. New York: Crown Business.
- Borujerdi, A.H. (2016). *Development of Arab-Iranian relations*. Tehran: Publishing house of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- E. Ihsanoglu. (2010). *The Islamic World in the New Century: The Organization of the Islamic Conference, 1969-2009*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- El-Arian, M. (2016) *The Only Game in Town*, New York: Random House Publishers
- G. Kepel. (1994). *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Goodarzi, J.M. (2013). Syria and Iran: Alliance Cooperation in a Changing Regional Environment. *Middle East Studies*, 4 (2), 31—59.
- J. Casanova. (1994). *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago University Press, Chicago.
- Keynoush, Banafshe. (2016). *Saudi Arabia and Iran: Friends or Foes?* London: Palgrave and Macmillan.
- Magnus, Ralph H. and Eden Naby. (1998). *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Musa Khan, Jalalzai. (2003). "Taliban and the Post-Taliban Afghanistan. Quetta: Sang E Meel Publishers.

- Nojumi, Neamatollah. (2002). *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan: Mass Mobilization, Civil War, and the Future of the Region*. New York: Palgrave.
- R. Hirschl. (2010). *Constitutional Theocracy*, Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Rashid Ahmed Khan. (2008). *Implementing Kashmir Study Group (KSG) Proposal*, Islamabad Policy Research Institute.
- Rosen, N. (2010). *Aftermath. Following the Bloodshed of America's wars in the Middle East*. N.Y.: Nation books.
- Roy, Olivier. (1990). *Islam and resistance in Afghanistan*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rubin, Barnett R. (1995). *The fragmentation of Afghanistan: State formation and collapse in the international system*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- S. Khan. (2001). *Reasserting International Islam: A Focus on the Organisation of Islamic Conference and Other Islamic Institutions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, Christian. (1996), "Introduction: Correcting a Curious Neglect, Or Bringing Religion Back", in *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Action*. New York: Routledge.
- Turan Kayaoglu. (2013). *A Rights Agenda for the Muslim world: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Evolving Human Rights Framework*, University of Washington, Tacoma.
- Weber, A. (1909). *Über den Standort der Industrie (Theory of the Location of Industries)*. University of Chicago.
- Yurtseven, C. (2012) *TURSAB Sectoral Report. Economic Impact of the Tourism Sector*. İstanbul.