

Liquidation of American Forces from Afghanistan: Its Impacts on the Region

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Abstract

Soviet Union considered military intervention in Afghanistan necessary for her territorial security as well as for the success of her global policies. They wanted to expand their political influence elsewhere in Central Asia. Moreover, USSR did not expect any serious resistance from Afghanistan. However, when Afghan Mujahideen showed such a severe resistance with the help of Pakistan and achieved many successes the USA also paid a serious attention to Afghanistan and provided every type of help to Mujahideen. USA felt that their ancient ambition to become a sole superpower was going to be realized. However, when USSR retreated and America's desire was fulfilled she entirely lost her interest in Afghanistan. This resulted in perdition in Afghanistan. The Mujahideen and freedom fighters were turned into terrorists' militant groups and there started a civil war among them. Then Taliban emerged at the political scenario and soon they were successful to achieve the rule of Afghanistan. However, they tried to enforce their own version of orthodox Islam that created much anxiety in the world. At the same time the incidents of 9/11 occurred and Osama bin Laden and his organization Al-Qaeda was held responsible for the incidents of 9/11. Osama took refuge in Afghanistan and America decided to punish and destroy him and Al-Qaeda. She attacked Afghanistan, again, without guessing the nature of Afghan nation and their retaliation. Therefore, now America has also decided to retreat and liquidate Afghanistan. Whether America will again commit the same mistake of leaving Afghanistan unattended and what will be its impact on the region? This paper tries to probe these apprehensions.

Key Words: Liquidation of American forces, military intervention in Afghanistan, Cold War, terrorism, incidents of 9/11.

Introduction

During twentieth century and onwards the relationship between Russia and America had been tensed and hostile. The rivalry between the two continued from 1940 to 1991, until the fall of Russia. They both did not fight militarily or confronted each other but they threatened each other with nuclear expansion. The

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war between them was cold that defined both countries' foreign policies to contest for allies and to uphold and expand their influence all around the world (Allison, 2008: 1). The world viewed the cold war as war of maintaining power and control between the so called civilized countries of the world: Russia and America. In the worldwide clash between the capitalism and communism, only one could succeed. An everlasting nuclear arms race and vicious technological antagonism from each side was only to gain the upper hand in preparation of the thermonuclear "hot water" which afraid the world that it would be tried sooner or later.

World politics rising from the womb of ashes of two world wars, in fact, the picture of beaten nations: Germany and Japan when as two dominant powers; America and Russia also came out of the scenario, who intoxicated with their superiority established the situation of Cold War due to their mutual tension and they went on increasing military pressure. Although they had been allies during world war I and the World War 2 but after the Second World War they became competitors. World War II was a horrific incident and a darkest phase in the human history. American forces diplomatically entered in the war late when 30,000 Russian soldiers had been killed in the war. First America did not want to fight the Second World War with Russia as an ally but the troops from Germany directly attacked on Russia and it got involve. Then American troops entered in to the war when the war was nearly over and victory was about to come because America wanted to become a sole super-power in the world. After the Second World War the allies quickly turned to the finite enemies. The relationship between them became diplomatic and the disagreements began over the division of Germany. The US had every reason to be anxious about the USSR viewing that Stalin had merged most of Eastern Europe in to his vast Soviet Empire. Throughout the 1960's and 1970's the cold war between USA and USSR intensified because the USSR was firm to become the world's superpower by spreading communism in the South-east Asia, Africa and parts of Latin America.

The cold war era divided the world in to three categories; the US led the West, the Soviet Union led the East and the non-aligned countries, which did not want to be tied with anyone. The world was separated among those who welcomed America as the leader of world forces of social independence and those who considered it an imperialist state. Therefore, all countries of the countries of the world attached themselves to either of them for peace and harmony. America and Russia introduced two approaches of living, that are Liberalism and Communism but the US emerged as "hegemonic power" with a contender USSR. (Alqama & Nawaz, 2010: 7).

Henry Truman, the first US president to fight the Cold War planned several policies. One strategy was to give financial and military aid to countries threatened by USSR. He also joint military group NATO in defense of Russia in 1949. Six years later Russia and its east European allies joint military group Warsaw pact.

Russia invaded Afghanistan because it wanted to produce her influence over there with their potential of disputes. Afghanistan in 19th century was the centre of world's attention because it is situated in the central of the globe. It became the victim of rivalry between two imperial powers, Russia and Britain. In the struggle of power and supremacy Britain and Russia tried to narrow down each other's impact on Afghanistan. In the quest of power UK in 1838 assaulted over Afghanistan to counter Soviet Union's influence.

Pakistan was directly affected by the horrible events going on in Afghanistan. It was thought that peace could never be attained until there would be no harmony

in Afghanistan because it was located in the centre of the world. Moreover, Pakistan and Afghanistan both share common religion, ideology, history and geography but they both are having tensed relations since Pakistan's independence. Afghanistan opposed Pakistan membership in UN because of the common porous border they shared, that was Durand Line but Pakistan favored her membership in SAARC even against the will of India. However the hostility and aggression has made their relationship distrustful.

A very renowned writer Rudyard Kipling discussed Afghanistan as a hard pawn and "The Great Game" between the two super powers (Khalid, 2011:4). Afghanistan occupied the place of buffer zone between two imperialist powers. Due to its geographical position in the region it is taken as a route to central Asian states and their rich oil and mineral resources.

The Soviet forces intervened in Afghanistan on December 1979 to create turmoil. Afghanistan fought back apparently to save revolution and resistance provoked among civilians. It was a rapid and unsuccessful attack and the Afghan soldiers fought daringly against the Russian atrocities. The whole scenario enhanced the interest of America in this region. The roots of terrorism and extremism are found in the Cold War between Afghanistan and atheist Russia. In 1979 the troops of Russia entered in to Afghanistan, Pakistan became the major instrument for America to restrict USSR to make advancement in the South Asian region.

Pakistan in this complicated situation opened its borders with the spirit of brotherhood for their Afghani brothers in distress. Pakistan also arranged shelter for 3.2 million refugees and consequentially Pakistan suffered with Kalashnikov culture, drug, territory, ethnicity and instability.

To fight the American war with Soviet Union and take her out from Afghanistan, Pakistan offered all kinds of services and facilities to USA. Pakistan became the base camp for the training of the Mujahideen from all over the world. Pakistan was given financial aid from America. Pakistan indirectly became involved in to the reign of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq and his decision to join the War on Terrorism. 'Pakistan had nearly lost 80,000 civilians and 2,900 armed forces in terrorism in between 2003 to 2009. The areas of NWFP, FATA and Baluchistan directly came under its effects.' (Mazhar & Goraya, 2010:39).

Washington was much concerned with the strategic significance of Pakistan, while it considered Afghanistan a remote, small, poor and unimportant country with a few natural resources (Hammond, 1984: 26). Washington did not understand the strategic importance of Afghanistan. Then America began to fight the war to gain control over the oil and gas enriching states of Asia.

In 1980's the American involvement in the Afghan war and the provided military and economic support to the extremist militants caused destruction. America was afraid of Soviet Union because of the suspicion that Russia might reach to southwards to the warm waters of Arabian Sea. Afghan's jihad against Soviet Union resulted in extremism, sectarianism, religious ethnicity and insecurity in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well. Pakistan gave support and helped the Taliban administration having expectation that she will find a persistent and peaceful neighbor.

The UN made significant efforts for settlement in Afghanistan under Geneva Accords in 1988. The withdrawal of Russian troops happened in May 1988. America provided considerable aid both militarily and economically to the

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militants. After Soviet disintegration, the worldwide situation changed and Pakistan attained a major geo-political victory. The breakdown of Soviet Union astonished the scholars and the politics of the world. It was impossible to think that the Russian empire will almost fall apart.

The downfall of the reformist leadership of Gorbachev was certain because of the disorganized or no systematic planning of the war and the increasing economic gap between the Russia and the West. In the mid of 1980s the Russian leadership acknowledged that they could not sustain their economy and on the verge of instant breakdown. The Russian leaders thought that it would be a diminutive intrusion but it expanded in to a decade long war involving approximately one million soldiers, killing and injuring some tens of thousands of them. It also created ethnicity and turbulence in Russia. The world order which was bipolar became single polar.

In the outcome of the Cold War Afghanistan turned out to be the combination of different factions. Afghanistan was left unattended by America and the prepared force of Mujahideen or friends were left by America. After the departure of Russia from Afghanistan, the state was confronted with post-war fighting between various groups. The internal stability was collapsing because of Afghan Civil War. The different jihadist groups determined their areas and ran a semi-government system. These non-governmental elements ended up by making a Taliban administration in the area.

The Taliban government preached and practiced narrow Islamization. The seven parties of Taliban government banned anti- religious and anti-Islamic activities. Some of them also arose in the opposition of un-Islamic activities of America. They had orthodox ideas about religion and they wanted it to be practiced in Afghanistan as it is in practice in Saudi Arabia. Taliban not only took control in Afghanistan but they involved in religious activities, politics and growing insurgency. American's led attack drove them out of power. These Mujahideen were also provided safe haven to Al-Qaeda and its leader Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan. These extremist Islamic groups took control of the Afghan government in 1996 and ran the administration until 2001.

- They banned television.
- They burned the statue of Buddha in Bamiyan
- They restricted women to wear veils from hand to tow
- They imprisoned the men whose beards are too short
- They publically executed people
- They outlawed the education of women
- They banned un- Islamic activities (www.rawa.org/rules.htm 1).

In these dire circumstances the Taliban government surprisingly appeared and took the regime. Pakistan in this chaotic situation supported Taliban government in Afghanistan and helped in the formation of *Tahrik-e Taliban* although America opposed their government and their narrow islamization. Pakistan at that moment in time wanted to have friendly relationship with its neighbor country Afghanistan.

In 1989 the USSR left Afghanistan and then US lost its concern in South Asian region and left without taking care of the damage done by the war. America only intended to deteriorate Soviet Union and for that very objective it assisted Pakistan. The relationship and trust between US and Pakistan also broke with the imposition of Pressler and Glenn Amendment by United States.

With the changed situation after 9/11, Pakistan again occupied an important place for the US. Pakistan again decided to fore front the US War on Terrorism. Pakistan who supported earlier to the Taliban government now gave assistance to United States. The Bush administration involved Osama in the terrorists' attacks of 9/11. The US government forced federal government and ISI to trace its roots in Pakistan. The border had been the cause of great trouble for Pakistan. The US' demolishing attack after 9/11 on Afghanistan resulted in to the downfall of the Taliban government. A large number of Al-Qaeda and Taliban getting advantage of the border came in to Pakistan. Pakistan had become the front line state to counter terrorism.

Pakistan is vulnerable to the instability of war on terrorism in Afghanistan. Hussain (2010:211) says that, "this is not a war in Afghanistan: it is a war in Afghanistan and Pakistan".

The government of Musharraf took a U-turn and made a decision to break the relations with Taliban and made alliance with America as he was trying to make Pakistan a progressive and secure state with stable economy. He banned Jaish-e-Muhammed and Lashkar-e-Tayyeba and several other militant groups. He stopped the funds and closed 500 of their offices in Pakistan but after the Russian departure a very large number of trained mujahideen in madrassas in Pakistan came back to Pakistan and joined various radical organizations and involved in territory. Madrassas at that time were spreading hatred and violence.

US President Barack Obama in March 2009 described, the region had become 'the most dangerous place in the world... a safe-haven to hide, train terrorists, communicate with followers, plot attacks, and send fighters to support the insurgency in Afghanistan' (Schofield, 2010:9).

The terrorist attack of 9/11, 2001 changed the situation of the globe. After the incidents of 9/11, the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan became complicated and difficult. America turned towards Pakistan and placed the pressure on it to find Osama Bin Laden who ran the network of Al-Qaida because it accepted the responsibility of launching the terrorist attack. The other reason was that the Afghan Taliban was at the door step of Pakistan.

This region of the world affected severely. American intelligence agency had done drone 342 attacks in FATA, KPK, Baluchistan, and in South and North Waziristan from 2005 to 2013 to stop mujahideen from insurgency in which 2540 people died and more than 301 injured. A great number of innocent citizens including women and children died or injured in the drone attacks but US did not change its policy. The politico-economic condition too in Pakistan has become unstable although, Pakistan has given all physical and moral support to Afghanistan to counter terrorism.

After Sept. 11 attacks the topmost priority of America was to capture Osama and to destroy Al-Qaida network. Osama took refuge in Afghanistan. After Sept. 11 attacks west offered to hand him over to America but the Taliban government refused. It apparently worked for the welfare in the region but the hidden motives were to introduce NATO to the world and to take control on Afghanistan and keeping check on Iran, China and Russia. Pakistan also offered the supply route to NATO forces and their reinforcements. It also wanted to roll back the nuclear program of Pakistan.

America and the Western Allied forces in order to punish attacked Afghanistan. In the attack the Taliban were overwhelmed and the government of

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Al-Qaeda dismantled. Under the military action of America in Afghanistan, the Taliban government was expelled. The collapse of Taliban administration resulted in to the formation of interim government in Afghanistan under Bonn Agreement signed in Germany on December 5, 2001. Hamid Karzai took the charge and was confronted with tough challenge of rehabilitation of a ruined land by war, hostility and starvation. President Hamid Karzai paid official visit to Pakistan to renew the bilateral relations between the two countries. Pakistan provided the aid for reconstruction and deployed troops at Pak-Afghan border areas for refuge and stability and sustaining peace in war-ravaged nation state.

The government of Pakistan has taken concrete steps to meet with the issue of terrorism but the task given to Pakistan to fight against terrorism is never accomplishment since Pakistan joined the War on Terror started. Pakistan entered as a frontline ally in the war on terrorism launched by USA.

The Bush administration has now changed in to Obama. Barack Obama pressurized Pakistan to discover Osama in Pakistan and there was operation Geronimo held in Pakistan. Osama was found in home in Abbottabad in daily routine life. Pakistan suffered the most in the War on Terror but America is continuously complaining that ISI is not trying hard to counter terrorism and it still wanted Pakistan to “do more” (Mazhar & Goraya, 2010:39).

Obama on March 2009 announced “a comprehensive New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan” says,

“As president, my greatest responsibility is to protect the American people... we are in Afghanistan to confront the common enemy that threatens the United States, our friends and allies, and the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan who have suffered most at the hands of violent extremists. So I want the American people to understand that we have a clear focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to stronger, smarter and comprehensive strategy”. (http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-pakistan/).

The withdrawal of the international forces left the unpleasant effect on Afghanistan and the region. Now America has changed its policy and says that they will leave Afghanistan in 2014 but the situation will be worse than it was before in 2001. US exit from Afghanistan will also not be possible without the help of Pakistan. The new government will not be established successfully without the US led coalition. After the American withdrawal the three challenges will confront the Afghan regime are; security crisis, economic crisis and the administration problem.

These are the future apprehensions for the Afghanistan after the departure of American forces:

- The Afghan regime may collapse.
- The Taliban like government may take over Afghanistan again.
- There is also present the fear that there may be a long civil war again.
- The non-governmental actors may active and become part of terrorist activities (Dorrnsoro, 2012: 14-18).

America before taking leave should establish the Afghan government or there should be negotiations with Taliban government. The aid should be continued for the rehabilitation of a new government.

USA after her retreat wants India to be the inspector in the region that's why India becomes involved enthusiastically. It donates 10 million dollar to the Afghan government and 0.2 million dollar rehabilitation fund. For the last five years, it is supplying medicine that expenses 67 dollar per annum. It is also providing 1 million tons wheat annually (A Research Journal of South Asian Studies, 2010: 54) The US undersecretary of defense for policy appreciates India's role in Afghanistan and says, "We highly value India's role and frankly the sacrifices India has made in support of this mission in building economic and social opportunities in Afghanistan". State department spokesman Mark Toner says, "India can play a constructive role in and in the region. And we could certainly welcome their involvement. (India can play a constructive role in Afghanistan, 2011). .

India tries to maintain its influence on the neighboring countries of Pakistan. India is undermining and marginalizing the role of Pakistan which she has played in stabilizing the Afghan administration and the War on Terror by indulging Pakistan on Western border. Obama's new Afghan policy raises India to supervise the region. McChrystal has stated that, "Increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan is likely to exacerbate regional tensions and encourage Pakistani countermeasures" (A Research Journal of South Asian Studies, 2010: 51). Drone attacks from America have made Baluchistan an easy target for India. Pakistan is shattered by American policy to counter terrorism but America now taking India in to reliance in the matter of new Afghan policy. America hails Indian involvement in Afghanistan.

After 9/11 India has enhanced her role in Afghanistan. Indian lobbies are working in Afghanistan. India's interlink has increased in Afghanistan. Indian agency RAW is training the insurgents against Pakistan in Afghanistan. For several times, America wants Pakistan to assure that India is not Pakistan's adversary but it is the antagonist of terrorists but India behind the scene has hand in hand with terrorists. According to Ayaz Amir, a columnist in an article says, the weapons get hold of in Swat, Baluchistan, FATA, and Malakand are Indians. Fifty-two training camps are being found in Pak-Afghan border (A Research Journal of South Asian Studies, 2010: 51). It is a moment of deep worry for Pakistan that India wants to isolate Baluchistan from Pakistan. Azmi states that "The India factor has always played a decisive and crucial role in the formulation of US policy in the region" (A Research Journal of South Asian Studies, 2010: 67).

After the 9/11 scenario, America attacked Afghanistan with dense bomb attacks. Pakistan and Afghanistan engage to fight with the circumstances, India emerges as chief of the region and in future it will possibly be used against Russia and China and growing the role of India in the region is the real threat to Russia and China.

America has a soft corner for India and it keeps on collaborating and supporting India. China emerges as a strong rival of America in the region and Russia with the help and cooperation of (CARs) Central Asian Republics is attaining strength and examining the role of America in the region after the retreat. There is a competition going on between China and India for dominance.

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India wanted to become regional superpower but she is having hostile relationship with the neighboring countries and common mistrust with China. China's thriving economy is a danger to both US and India. They both confine China's influence on Afghanistan and the region. The other reason is that US wants to be the sole superpower in the world that's why it limits China in the regions and allows India's territorial activities in Afghanistan.

As much as Pakistan is concerned, India wanted to narrow down Pakistan in the region. Pakistan and India have a long past of unfriendly and conflicting relationship with each other. It is trying to unsettle Pakistan's security. Since independence, they have three combats. Kashmir issue is also still unresolved. Kargil conflict and clash over the division of water are the certain clashes between them.

Relationship between Iran and Afghanistan are cold, since the cold war era but when Iran withdrew itself from CENTO and she isolated Pakistan from her, their relationship became somewhat better. Iran wants to construct Iranian port that links to Afghanistan underway and she wants to withdraw NATO forces from Afghanistan. US and India are also against the nuclear plan of Iran.

India is at good terms with Sri Lanka and always favored its partnership. It is the only country in the region it would like all help. India is also not at good terms with Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives and Bhutan. The political parties in Nepal criticize the role India as 'hegemonic and Nepal's condition is dependent on India. There is a dispute over land and disorderly relationship has built between them. Bangladesh shares long border with India and there are several issues that they are focusing on including territory on both sides of the border and the issue of Ganges River. India is also having boundary dispute with Bhutan. India and Bhutan have long communal relationship but Bhutan's diplomatic ties with China are a matter of great concern for India. India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relationship with Maldives. However, bilateral relations took their first major step forward following India's intervention to crush a coup against the Maldivian government in 1988. Maldives relations with India turn into strained.

India wants to achieve the hegemonic position in the region.

Conclusion

America has decided to quit the Afghanistan in 2014. America now should not abandon the region for India's interests or it should not be left unattended by America as in past it was after the defeat of Russia in Cold War. If America will repeat this attitude it will bring catastrophe in the region. Pakistan's due role and services should be recognized and admitted. It will bring disaster if any wrong policy should be adopted by India. Pakistan should be given significant role in the region because of its geographical significance and friendly relations with China and neighboring countries in the region. Generous aid should be given to abolish poverty in the region particularly to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Deprived and have not's forces should be controlled to bring in social set up. America should lessen their depriveness and a civilized government should be established.

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