

Afghanistan a Battle Ground for the Interests of Super Powers: A Special Reference to USA

Idrees M^{1*} and Anwar K²

¹Department of Politics and IR, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan

²Hazara University, Mansehra, Pakistan

*Corresponding author: Idrees M, Department of Politics and IR, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan, Tel: +92 51 9257988; E-mail: idreessehri@gmail.com

Received date: December 29, 2016, Accepted date: April 26, 2017, Published date: May 02, 2017

Copyright: © 2017 Idrees M, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Abstract

Throughout the history Afghanistan remained a battle ground for the varying interests of different powers. Today, the country is under the sway of NATO and USA. The regional and neighboring powers are also mending their axes there. The country is facing great challenges of internal strife, power struggle, unstable governments and lack of confidence of the people and elites upon the governments. The current effort aims at the very important research area 'Interests of USA in Afghanistan.' A descriptive, analytical and historical research has been carried out to keep in contact with main topic.

Keywords Interests; Medieval; Containment; Terrorism; Gripping; Hurdles; Communist

Introduction

Afghanistan has strategically been very important for the major powers of the world throughout the history. Alexander the Great invaded it in 330 B.C and occupied the whole country within three years' time after a great struggle. Buddhism was the main religion in eight century's Afghanistan. Islam came to Afghanistan when the Umayyad Dynasty of Arabs attacked the Persian Sassanid Empire. In the 10th century Afghanistan was under the control of Muslim rulers of Bukhara the Samanid. In the 11th century when the Ghaznavids came to power and the whole of Afghanistan was turned a Muslim state.

The Colonial Age

Baber the grandson of Taimur and Genghis khan was also keenly interested in Afghanistan then turned to India. Baber was also buried in Kabul in Baber garden complex. We saw a great tussle in the 16th and 17th centuries between the Mughal and Safavids of Persia. Herat western Afghanistan was ruled by Safavids and Kabul eastern Afghanistan was under the Mughal. Ahmad Shah Durrani who was Pakhtun ruled Afghanistan in 1747.

Ahmad Shah [1] was commander in Persian army of Nadir Shah but due to lose of his power in Afghanistan Ahmad Shah made his own rule in Afghanistan. Later on we see in 1826 Dost Muhammad Khan consolidated his position in Afghanistan. To challenge British rule in India three Anglo-Afghan wars (1838-1842) (1878-1880). A big lose was inflicted on the British in first Anglo-Afghan war 4500 persons were killed. In the 20th century the Cold War started between the two Super Powers namely USA and former USSR, Amanullah Khan emerged as a strong ruler of Afghanistan. He defeated the British in the 3rd Anglo-Afghan war (1919-1928). At last a treaty was signed

between the British and Amanullah Khan in Rawalpindi (Pakistan) in 1919 to accept his government as independent one.

The Cold War Era

After the death of King Amanullah Khan King Nadir Shah became the ruler. After him Zahir Shah became the King of Afghanistan in 1933 his reign lasted to 1973. His tenure was very long in the history of Afghanistan. He made some social and political reforms like issuing the first constitution of Afghanistan and giving freedom to the women.

Zahir Shah established close relation with the Soviet Union purchasing arms and political interchange. Soviet Union constructed Salang tunnel Bagram Airbase and some roads inside Afghanistan to influence him toward the Communist bloc. It was the era of Cold War in which both the Super Powers wanted to increase their own influence in the region. Soviet Union after stabilizing her position in Eastern Europe was now interested in Afghanistan. She wanted to reach the warm water of the Indian Ocean. For achieving their goals Afghanistan was very important. So the geopolitical position of the country was very vital for both the superpowers [2]. From the geopolitical point the US president Richard Nixon traveled to Afghanistan in 1953, then President Eisenhower in 1959. The United States provided assistance to the Afghanistan in the field of agriculture and constructed Kajak dam in the Helmond province just to reduce the soviet influence in Afghanistan. King Zahir Shah visited USA in 1963 met President Kennedy. When Zahir Shah became ill and went to Italy his cousin Daud made a military coup and finished Zahir Shah Government. A few years later Daud was killed in presidential palace in 1978. Different people who have received education in Soviet Union become loyal to Soviet made a political party called People Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).

After the Saur Revolution

After the Saur Revolution, Nur Muhammad Taraki became president but his tenure was very short one year after Hafizullah Amin

killed Taraki and became president in September 1979. Babrak karmal another Soviet puppet became president. In Afghanistan When the USSR felt a serious threat from the Mujahedeen (the Holy worriers) of Islam, she entered 120,000 troops to capture all the important places to safeguard their interest in Afghanistan. The main purpose of Soviet invasion was to have access to Pakistan's warm water and develop a communist designed Asia [3].

Tug of War between the Super Powers

A tug of war started between the two superpowers on the soil of Afghanistan. USA did not directly participate in the war rather put the guns on the shoulder of Pakistan and Afghan Mujahedeen. The US provided military and economic assistance to Pakistan. Pakistan's intelligent agency ISI would distribute it in seven Mujahedeen fictions fighting against the invader. The question is why did Pakistan get involved in a war of others? The answer is simple that on the eastern border Pakistan had enmity with India so Pakistan had no other option but to stop the Soviet army. So Pakistan joined hands with the US in their proxy war against the Communists in Afghanistan. The US provided sophisticated weapons to Afghan Mujahedeen including stinger Missiles which were used against the USSR. In this war Russia received heavy loss both in men and kinds. According to estimates almost 13,400 soldier were lost in the war.

Geneva Accord

In 1986 when Mikhail Gorbachev became the president Karmal was replaced by Najibullah. With the efforts of UNO an agreement was signed between the Russia, Afghanistan and Pakistan in April 14, 1988 in Geneva which is known as Geneva Accord. Due to this the Russian forces withdrew from Afghanistan within a year. After the disintegration of USSR in 1991 there capability to provide aid to the Communist blocs of the third world was hampered. In the wake of this situation both the Super powers cut off their aid supplies to Afghanistan. Eventually, a weak government was formed with Najibullah. So a tug of war started in Afghanistan between different groups of Mujahedeen till the end of 1996. During this four year time the Afghan society became much polluted in the moral and ethnic values. The warlords used to immoral activities in daily life.

Rise of the Taliban

So a new force was coming out of the ashes of Afghan Jihad called Taliban. They were ethnically Pashtun learnt in the Islamic Theological Schools called Madrassas. So within the span of two years they captured almost 90% area of Afghanistan and consolidated their position. Muslim countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and UAE officially recognized the Taliban government. Pakistan wanted a friendly government in Afghanistan to expand her trade with the central Asian Republics. On the other hand Russia Iran and India joint their hands with the Northern Alliance which was controlling about 10% area of Afghanistan. So after the 9/11 incident occurred in the USA the responsibility was put on Saudi millionaire Osama Bin Laden. The USA demanded the Taliban government to hand over Bin Laden to USA. Denying which brought another devastating war on Afghanistan. USA with the support of coalition forces of NATO attacked on Afghanistan. After a little resistance the Taliban fled away of Kabul and started guerrilla war. Hamid Kerzi was installed as the President and all the key governmental positions were given to Northern Alliance [4]. According to the early history of Afghanistan different

players were interested due to geopolitical and economics situation. But the main actor this time directly involved was the USA.

The USA Interest in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is strategic hub for the three continents of the world. It is like a so called golden sparrow for the big powers and also for the neighboring countries. It was the first country in the world which remained free of the colonial influence in the nineteenth century and played the role of buffer state between USSR and the British India. After consolidating her position in Eastern Europe USSR attacked on Afghanistan to capture it and increase her influence to the warm waters and also take the control of its minerals resources. Since then the USA takes interest in Afghanistan.

Containment of China and Gripping the Resources of CAR's

One of the most important goals of US in Afghanistan is the containment of China. For this purpose, she signed a new agreement with the Afghan government to secure her presence there for the next ten years, so to keep an eye on China. China is becoming an economic Super power of the world [5]. Monitoring her is the most important purpose of NATO and USA.

The second main interest of US in Afghanistan is to reach the oil and energy resources of CAR's because the region is full of crude oil and natural gas resources. As we know that Afghanistan is the strategic hub for the world because it has shares its borders with China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and CARs states. These countries are rich in mineral wealth so the resources can reach to western market through crossroads and pipelines which would pass through Afghanistan.

So there is need of peace and a friendly government which will cooperate with the USA. According to the New York Times, "a report was published by US Geographical Survey and USAID which says that Afghanistan has deposits of Iron, Copper, Gold, Cobalt and Lithium estimated worth one trillion dollars." So the US has made the plan to send this raw material to his own factories to change in furnish goods [6].

War against Terrorism

One of the most important interests of US which has compelled her to stay there is the War against Terrorism. Just to counter Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in this region. After the 9/11 incident the Bush administration started a war against Al-Qaeda and Taliban. According to the US government, "we must root out the terrorist which is not only a threat to us but to the whole world. But they are not fully successful to implement their plan. With the passage of thirteen years they did not eliminate terrorists in the world. Now they are trying to bring the insurgent groups including Taliban to the negotiating table. Because after experiencing their combat strategy which bore no fruits they understood that their interests could be only fulfilled by making unity government in Afghanistan of which Taliban must be a part.

Hurdle in the Way of USA in Afghanistan

One of the main hurdles which halt the US interests in the region is Shanghai Cooperation Organization composed of China, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. So she smells a

threat of another Communist bloc in the region. US is trying to encircle Russia and Iran to decrease their influence in Afghanistan so that they may be in control not create problem in Afghanistan.

US also interested to install a secular type government which should be accepted by the Afghan people and also given due share to all ethnicity in Afghanistan. which is promote his interest in Afghanistan, in the form security situation and also peace in the country which will insure works to the US company in the region in energy sector and also oil and gas pipeline which will cross through Afghanistan if there would be peace and stability. Because in the past we have seen that US Company works in CARs and wanted to build a pipeline through Afghanistan but the Taliban government did not give the permission. So they wanted a puppet government with in Afghanistan which will promote his interest [7].

The US was also jealous of rapid bilateral relation between Pakistan and China in the field of defence and economic. She needed a watchdog role from the Afghan government so she signed an agreement with new Afghan government which granted permission to her stay for the next ten years. They also allowed different agencies to carry out their most dangerous agenda in Afghanistan, which included Indian Intelligence Agency RAW, Israel Mosad, and US firm Black Water. Their activities are becoming fatal and injurious for Pakistan.

To check the flow of Narcotics and other drugs smuggled to western countries from Afghanistan. The money is mostly used by the terrorists for their activities. Michel Chossudovsky in his article "Heroin is good for Your Health" told that occupation forces support Narcotics Trade in Afghanistan. He described that the USA had used the money from Narcotics in the war against Soviet Union in 1980. He also mentioned that in the present war in Afghanistan, the US and NATO forces earn about \$200 billion annually from the trade of Narcotics and Heroin to western market. So they are receiving much of their expenditure of war from the trade of Narcotics.

According to an analysis the USA is using sophisticated and modern arsenals in Afghanistan against terrorists just to receive the attention of world for their business purposes. For example war against terror in

Afghanistan the US used the B-52 bombers which flew very high and also the use of Drone which is a new technology to the world. Some rapid changes are coming in the world political and economic spheres. In the Middle East a New Great Game has been started by the world powers. On the world stage Russia and China are rising as game changers. Now in the current situation if the USA wants to influence and control the world politics she must provide a space to the rising powers by saying good bye to the sole Super Power tendency.

Conclusion

In the present world order Afghanistan's geo strategic position has become very important for the world powers especially for The USA. She wants to maintain her permanent presence in the region either herself or through her watchdogs like India and Afghanistan. She is here with different goals like containment of the rising China for which she is expanding her defense and security cooperation with India. Also, she wants to have an access to the energy rich Central Asian Republics to quench her energy thirst in the near future. Also, she wants to have a check upon Pakistan the sole Atomic and Missile power of the Muslim world. So, all these interests keep the USA in touch with Afghanistan.

References

1. Kenneth K (2017) Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy. Congressional Research Service.
2. Ibid. 7.
3. Mohibullah D, Ashraf k (2009) Pakistan-Afghanistan relation; Historic mirror. The Dialogue 4: 25-64.
4. Asifa Jahangir (2013) Changing dynamics of south Asian balance-of-power. Journal of South Asian Studies. 1: 50-58.
5. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-war-is-worth-waging-afghanistan-s-vast-reserves-of-minerals-and-natural-gas/19769>
6. Asifa J (2015) Pakistan - China Strategic Relationship: A Glorious Journey of 55 Years. Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan 52: 157-183.
7. Ibid p. 57.