



The United States Policy Contours in Afghanistan

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Received: September 1, 2014

Accepted: November 13, 2014

ABSTRACT

The contour of US engagement policy in Afghanistan revolves around various factors as neutralization of the Afghan Taliban threat by military means, training and arming the Afghan National Army and the Police, to strengthen the capacity of the Kabul government to govern effectively. This article highlights the influence of the US political engagement on the Afghan power dispensation and to illustrate the US foreign policy parameters in the regional political dynamics. The initial policy parameter has been shifted to reconciliation options in order to secure peace in Afghanistan but the success of which demands some basic agreements among power contenders and stake holders inside Afghanistan.

KEYWORDS: Policy, Reconciliation, government, power, ethnicity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The contours of US engagement policy in Afghanistan are described differently by various military officers and diplomats. For example, Brig. Ghazanfar, former Director ISI, is of the view that US wanted War on Terror for global peace; to weaken Al-Qaeda by dismantling, disrupting and destroying its infrastructure and to destroy Al-Qaeda's alleged safe-haven inside Pakistan. The underlying contours of US engagement policy were, firstly, to watch over Pakistan nuclear assets, secondly, to contain China, thirdly to monitor Central Asian Republics. (Ghazanfar, 2013) Colonel Zahurul Haq, described it that US wanted to operate militarily in order to avenge AL-Qaeda for their attacks on New York and World Trade Centre in 2001 which later on become war on terror against Taliban. The US intends to gain a firm foothold in the region for CARs. It intends to check the advancing influence of China in the region. It aims to build up India in Afghanistan for the same objective. It intends to keep Pakistan away from Afghanistan being an ally of China. (Haq, 2013) Former Ambassador to Afghanistan, Rustom Shah Mohmand has illustrated US policy contours in this way; US wanted to have military presence in Afghanistan, to have access to the Central Asian Republics (CARs) in order to exploit oil and gas resources of Caspian Sea, to encircle China based on China containment policy; to intimidate Iran into submission; to retain military bases in Afghanistan from where Pakistan nuclear proliferation could be observed and checked. (Mohmand, 2013) According to Brig. Javed the contour of US engagement policy in Afghanistan is aimed at physical occupation; to operate intelligence operations; to involve the regional countries, as Pakistan was involved to provide logistic support and assisted US with bases inside Pakistan and to instigate neighboring countries to destabilize Pakistan. (Lodhi, 2013) Overall policy has remained consistent and changes have occurred only on operational level.

Former Secretary of FATA, Brig. Mahmud Shah observed that US engagement comprised political and economic aspects as well to build its institutions, to stabilize the society, to enable its government to run the State as per rule of law, to make it a financially viable, to liberate the people of Afghanistan from an authoritative regime of Taliban and War Lords to replace it with a democratic government and so on and so forth. (Shah, 2013). Former Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azam Khan, opined that the underlying policy of US engagement and America's main motives were Central Asia-focussed oil and gas-led Great Game. The Afghan war was a clear manifestation of America's concern over the growing influence of China in the Central Asian Republics. The security of East Asia is shifted, US is still hegemon, is also being gradually balanced by the rapid rise of China which is using its phenomenal economic, political and military influence as a major factor of regional and global stability. (Khan, 2013)

The major worry for the US currently is the rapid growing resurgence of Islam, particularly the militant extremist ideology which they preach. As the leader of the western world the US perceives this as grave threat to the western culture and belief leading to a clash of civilizations. We can see what is happening presently in

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Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Syria etc. The US is looking for excuses to attack these countries and bring about a regime change of its liking. (Ibid)

By contemplating these contours of the US engagement in Afghanistan it is clear that under lying policy options were catered for access to oil and gas rich region. Oil is like blood running in the veins of American's economy. In 1994 Washington was jolted away by the fact that Central Asian region has enormous potentiality and reserves of hydrocarbon. The US was following policy guidelines for this region, to contain Russian hegemony over Central Asian energy resources leading to Caspian Sea basin. To overcome Iran's impressive status to lower level, the US recommended supply lines to Turkey aimed at countering Russian dominancy. (McCauley, 2002, p. 139). Afghanistan is at the world focus since 9/11 with international cooperation towards reconstruction and development but it has given birth to chaos and miseries only. There are numerous factors responsible for this instability as highly centralized political system, demarcation of internal stake holders (most probably warlords) due to controversial background, connecting ongoing insurgency and terrorism with 'Pashtun alienation' and interest oriented usage of this notion by self-seeking politicians, inadequate international aid has exacerbated already worst insecurity. (Qassem, 2009). Since 2002 Afghanistan government is keen to convert 'landlocked' Afghanistan image to 'landbridge' among Central Asia, South Asia, Middle East and Far East. (Vielkind, 2003) This will generate enormous revenue and can be capable to stabilize the country. (Manila Asian Development Bank, 2004, pp.19-22)

2. Formulation of Government

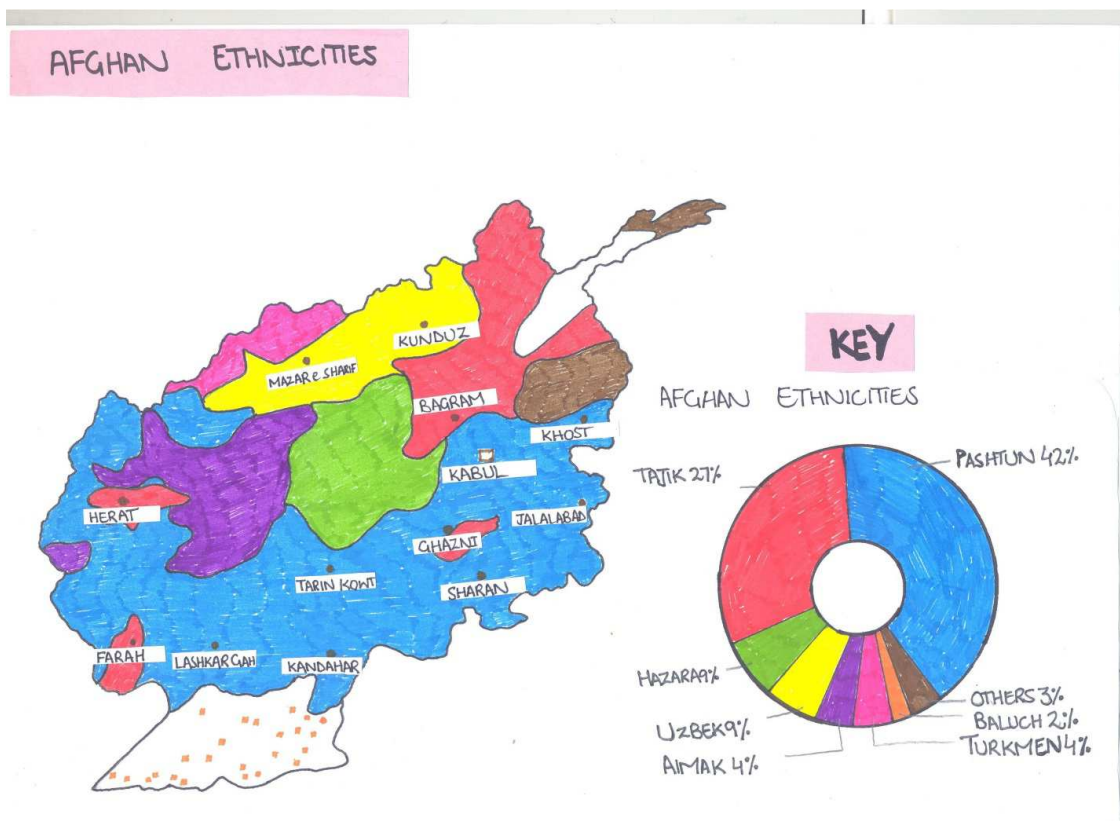
a. Representation vis-a-vis ethnic composition of Afghan population. Afghanistan as a state came into existence in 1747. It was founded by Ahmad Shah Abdali. Afghanistan has population of approximately twenty million, dividing into twenty ethnic groups more than fifty in all. People speak one of official languages Pashto and Dari. There are thirty different languages in Afghanistan due to myriad factions. (Ewans, 2001, p. 3). Pashtun are aboded in the east and south of Afghanistan and same ratio of Pashtun are across the Durand Line on Pakistan side. There are two subdivision of Pashtun as Durrani, who lives in between Herat and Kandahar. Abdali is a sub-tribe of the Durrani tribe which is ethnically Pashtun. In its initial days, Afghanistan was structured around the Durrani tribes' prowess and it consisted of territories inhabited by the Durrani tribe or where the influence of Durranis and their control prevailed. Ghilzai, who are between Kandahar and Ghazni. These tribes lived at south of Afghanistan with not ending confrontations and enmities. Eastern hills comprised Wazirs, Mohmand, Mehsuds, Afridi, Khattaks, and Shinwaris. They are famous for their aggression and were known to British army for skirmishes over north west frontier. (Ibid. p. 5) Tajiks are one fifth of population who are concentrated in Badakhshah around Kabul, Herat, Kohistan and Panjshir. They have major role in country's administration. (Ibid. p. 7)

Uzbek are semi-independent under begs or amirs. They were conquered by Afghan Amir. They are mostly farmers, horse breeders and karakul sheeps. Hazaras are of mongol origin and are descendants of Genghis Khan as flocks of thousands arrived in the same era. Some people opined that they have been migrated from Central Asia. They are mostly sheep breeder. (Ibid. p. 9). So basically it was a tribal state and its borders in the Northwest and Southeast were not internationally demarcated as such. There is representation of all major ethnic groups in Afghanistan's administration as for instance president, foreign minister and finance minister are all Pashtun, vice president and defense minister are Tajiks, second vice president is of Hazara, minister of mine is an Uzbek besides others. (Flourney, 2013). In order to understand the ethnic strife in Afghanistan it is better to depict the background, which stretched to the treaty of Panjdeh and treaty of Durand Line due to which Afghanistan was transformed from tribal state to national state status. In 1887 in the Treaty of Panjdeh, Afghanistan and Czarist Russia demarcated Afghanistan's North Western border with Central Asia which by then had fallen under Russian control. In 1893, Ameer Abdul Rehman the ruler of Afghanistan under the agreement of Durrand Line demarcated Afghanistan's border with British India. With set and internationally demarcated borders Ameer Abdul Rehman initiated the process of transforming Afghanistan from a tribal into a national state. But his task was not easy.

More so since under the Treaty of Panjdeh, significant chunks of Tajik and Uzbek territory had become part of Afghanistan. And under the Treaty of the Durand Line some major Pashtun tribes like Yusufzais, Khattaks, Mehsuds and sizeable portions of Wazirs, Shinwaris, Mehmunds and Achakzais had come under the control of British India. Besides, the Hazara tribes in central Afghanistan mostly Shiites and of Mongol ethnic origin had also become Afghan nationals. So, this process of transforming a Pashtun tribal state into a national state did not succeed much. It only papered over the cracks or reality of a multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian polity. However, by establishing a delicate balance of intra-Pashtun and inter-ethnic (Pashtuns

versus Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras) tribes following a policy of strict neutrality which contributed to regional power equilibrium, Afghan rulers were able to acquire a degree of stability for their country.

That intra –Afghan tribal and ethnic balance and regional equilibrium was disturbed by Sardar Daud who toppled the monarchy of King Zahir Shah in a military coup in 1973. Sardar (President) Daud’s government in turn was also toppled five years later in a military coup by General Abdul Qadir Dagarwal and the Afghan army gave power to two little known leftist parties: Khalq (mostly Pashtun dominated) and Parcham (mostly Tajik and Uzbek dominated). While Sardar Daud had disturbed the delicate tribal balance inside Afghanistan and regional equilibrium by adopting a proactive irredentist posture against Pakistan, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (28 December 1979) completely destroyed the balance and equilibrium enjoyed by Afghanistan as a non-aligned neutral state. In Afghanistan there are myriad factions besides transitional government. There is ethnic strife between Pashtuns mostly Taliban and minority comprised Tajiks and Uzbeks of North of Afghanistan which has hampered integration. Trade of Opium has also intensified this ethnic dispute. Besides ethnicity this unity has been muddled by external actors in order to access and exploit oil resources. Disintegration is apprehensive not only to the local Afghan population but regional countries and above all international community are also at dismay about Taliban brutalities of their recent past regime and even the ongoing insurgencies. (Marine Barracks, p. 23)



Sources: Maps website, Institution of strategic Studies United Kingdom books and Journals.

The defeat of Taliban has led to the Afghan society’s polarization and most probably it is better to state that it get bisected into Taliban and anti-Taliban with two different streams of abiding. Tajik and Uzbek were domineering in comparison of Pashtun. The resistance against foreign forces was waged by Taliban and diverse factions and the strain on the US was further intensified by warlords. (Yunas, 2011)

There are various factors which have destabilized the political structure of Afghanistan as ethnic strife, poor governance, no viable connections of central government with the people, moreover there is no impartial political dispensation at the local level. Worst of all vested interests have been with due weightage in quite

illegal way. To cap it all, the share of common Afghans is negated and their desire for peace and stability is also in dire straits by both Taliban and local power broker. (Felbab, 2013)

By political engagement the US aim was to change people's mind set so that to deviate them from traditional abiding to Taliban and to spread the western influence and culture there. This strategy has been working in Afghanistan and Obama is steering his way in an adventurous type mode, without consideration of factor that his administration has faced more losses than gains. (Hilaly, 2012) He does not evaluate tactical retreat until and unless the strategic environs turned into his favor. The underlying political objective of America is to impede Russian, China and Pakistan entry to Afghanistan so that to have control over natural resources of both Afghanistan and CARs which comprised oil and gas. (Ghazanfar, 2013) The US has established Karzai's Government as puppet there. Albeit Karzai has been played in this chessboard but now he has sensed that after the US pull out and in security quagmire only Taliban can be ultimate rulers consequently Karzai is more favorable to the former now.

Afghanistan's main apprehension is ethnic strife which is capable to dismantle the political settlement. Stability cannot be ensured in Afghanistan with increase in size of Afghan forces unless and until people get secure at local level as well. On the eve of withdrawal both security and political stalemate can be happened. (Brown, 2013) After western exit, the major stock holders in Afghanistan will be Kabul regime, Taliban and northern alliance supported by Afghanistan's neighbours. (Mir, 2013) On the eve of exit the US needs Zalmi Khalilzad like persons to carry out the US policy, sponsored by CIA in Afghanistan, where they will not physically present. Aftab Sherpao, the former interior minister, Rustam Shah Mohmand, the former Ambassador to Afghanistan, and Hasan Askari Rizvi, Defence Analyst, conceded that After ISAF/US/NATO pullout there will be The Kabul government, various groups working as the Afghan Taliban, tribal chiefs and local Taliban commanders as main power holders. (Sherpao, 2013) Regional stakeholders will be Pakistan, Iran besides Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Russia, USA, UK and Saudi Arabia. (Munir, 2013) The level of control of present Afghan Government over the country is moderate and after US pull out is likely to be minimal. The Afghan Taliban are likely to control large parts of the country more so in the South even if Kabul does not fall to them in quick time. (Mir, 2013)

b. Composition and effectiveness/ influences. The US influence is spreading to whole world in shape of its economy and culture. Transnational politics is at forefront which has reduced distances and the US has to include its interests in realm of its foreign policy. She is grappling to eliminate illegal criminal activities as drugs trafficking and terrorism across the border. The US is now to set priorities and to adapt feasible options that what it has to perform for strengthening its domestic politics and to maintain its image to outside world as well. For this purpose it will require coalition to part with and work for stability of democracy, social values and economic growth. Goseph Nye debated on power and divided it into soft and hard power, former dealt with economic and military while latter with cultural and ideological perspective. Both are for coercive and co-optive stances respectively. For him soft power fascination is in international trade and institution that work for it. Soft power is more powerful and obliging than hard power which is compulsive. It was the soft power attractions of hard currency commerce that played a dominant role in bringing down the Iron Curtain and shaping the post-Cold War world. (Nye, 2002) Both powers are indispensable for each other as in arena of world politics and especially foreign policy is game of intermingling both soft and hard powers. The US in order to accomplish her policy options, has spread its tentacles to Afghanistan political setup by both soft and hard powers. According to United Kingdom's ambassador to Afghanistan, Afghanistan is not a failed today as things have changed over the last ten years, particularly over the last three years, provincial governance in places like Helmand is very effective, every district has district governor, there is prosecutor, schools are opening and moreover, Afghan people have stake in governance. (Patey, 2013)

The present Afghanistan government is totally dependent on the US. There are continuous desertions from the Afghanistan army and police. The Afghanistan President is often referred to as the "Mayor of Kabul" The central government has hardly any control over rural Afghanistan. (Khan, 2013) Many parts of Afghanistan are not under the effective control of the Kabul government at the moment. This control is expected to decline after 2014 when the Afghan Taliban will become more assertive. (Rizvi, 2013)

But as stated by Aftab Sherpao, former interior minister, that Karzai government has been right from historical point of view because all kings and president had control over Kabul and provinces were under command of Warlords and chieftains. (Sherpao, 2013)

Albeit Karzai has welcomed the entry of peaceful Taliban to join key position in his government on condition to obliged the provisions of constitution. (Gall, Abrashi, 2007) He proceeded to include Mullah

Omar and Hekmatyar in his government but Taliban are indifferent and have bad taste for political system. They opposed the government backed by US, UK and UN and put forwarded their own notion of constitution based on 'Islamic doctrines. (Wilkinson and Ali, 2007)

To sum up, Karzai was committed to handle sleaze with iron hands but the matter has gone otherwise. As it has been revealed from one case in which Karzai come to the rescue of person being imprisoned on corruption charges in interrogation into 'hawala money transfer businesses, comprised distortion of billions of dollars from Afghanistan. Karzai has dismissed the deputy attorney general, Fazel Ahmad Faqiryar, who had sanctioned that arrest and taken the interrogation process in his control.(Nordland and Filkins, 2010) Karzai administration is nefarious for sleaze. After the US decade long engagement Afghanistan is the third most corrupt country after Somalia and North Korea. (Transparency Report, 2011) According to United Nations report in February, 2012 Afghan Locals had greased the state official's palms with approximately \$3, 9. Moreover, for taking projects of Afghanistan's rebuilding, Western companies had paid \$1 billion to Afghan concerned officials.(Bobkins, 2013) According to Center for American Progress (CAP), the US think tank , which have closer links with the US government have commented after studies that main reason for Afghanistan bad governance are the overwhelming influence of the US and NATO at the costs of Local Afghans views. (Carlstrom, 2013)

c. Capabilities- Running the affairs without US assistance?

Corruption menace has eaten the fabrics of Afghan political system as according to the Head of Anti-corruption office of Afghanistan Azizulla Ludin, there existed main reason of people resentment and reservation against Karzai government which has alienated them. There are rampant corruption cases and government is unable to curb these. (Afghan Online, 2011)According to New York Times report the biggest source of corruption in Afghanistan is the US. The CIA has poured ten millions of dollars in cash to Karzai, and Karzai has conceded with this report. Karzai has confessed that it had been since last decade, this money was given to Afghan warlords in an attempt to secure stability before the foreign forces exit. (Buying Peace, Video on Aljazeera, 2013) According Glenn Carle, former CIA Deputy national intelligence officer, this is not the entirely new story because ghost money or likely assistance are behind the scene intelligence diplomatic functions. (Ibid)



Corruption in Afghanistan by distribution of money

The Karzai government main interest is power politics. Albeit Karzai has claimed to relinquish presidential powers as soon as his second term terminated in 2014. But the question is that whether till that time this chaotic political setup would persist? The Kabul Government has been damned for its corruption ridden nature, where lay person is deprived of all basic amenities. As one analyst has described in 2010 that

“The corrupt dysfunctional and nepotism nature of Karzai government is well documented. Karzai has instituted a system of governance dominated by patronage, unsavory, strongmen, ethnic, entrepreneurs and incompetent policymakers. (Saikal, 2010)

Due to US engagement in Afghanistan the situation has turned from bad to worse and the political and security set up has become so intricate and it became a nightmare that what could be the post withdrawal scenario as the US is not leaving Afghanistan altogether and will keep minimum presence. This presence will not let Afghan government to decide according to their own will. The US who is staunch advocate of Human Rights, must give a chance to the Afghanistan to develop their political set up. No doubt that Afghan history is abounds with scintillating examples of political chaos but recent turmoil has turned Afghanistan a horrible, ethnic strife ridden soil, where Afghans are tormented by Foreign occupants and has infested insecurity in the region as well. The US is pouring money in Afghanistan for securing her own purposes in the garb to win people minds but all this political engagement has been proved as moth eaten for Afghan society.

3. Political challenge: The US intervention has caused disparity and discontent due to undue national and provincial power distribution short of public preferences and interests. It has excluded Pashtun from key power position for the sake of Tajiks and Uzbeks. There is dominancy of military power and weak civilian control in Kabul has trembled security. Karzai has even no control on all Pashtun factions. (Harrison, 2009) Afghan’s military has no independence from Northern Alliance in accomplishing any task and to vanquish militants. (Yunas, 2011) There existed major retaliation from Afghan population by excluding Taliban from mainstream.

Karzai government’s objective is to increase central government control over the country which could be nearly impossible after exit. Neither Afghan national army nor police is capable to have state writ in areas where even US has been succumbed. Karzai is eager to access India for providing additional political and economic assistance in this regard. India’s help regarding military and police training would enhance further in subjugating both Afghan militants and Pakistan supported Taliban. (Hanaur, 2012, p. 54) Karzai is tilted towards India at the expense of Pakistan as Indo-Afghan strategic partnership has also been signed in October, 2011. India disbursed huge aid to Afghanistan for transport, infrastructure, education, reconstruction and development. It has also provided aid for ANSF and national police. (Ministry of External Affairs, 2011)

Whatever Karzai strive but could not subdue Taliban from Pakistan life line hitherto he puts an end on poppy cultivation, corruption and to legitimize Durand Line, all these are herculean tasks for him to be accomplished. Taliban should be compelled to negotiation and should be empowered on key position by Karzai. There can be no segregation of non-Pashtun because Tajiks are interspersed and have been posted in security sectors. (Harrison, 2009) There are enormous Tajiks officers in ANA and non-commission corps. (Younossi, Truelsen, Vaccaro, Stalinger and Grady, 2009)

Afghanistan political set up has been infested with so many murky factors as sleaze, grave crime, illegal occupation of land and resources, favor to the kith and kin, lawlessness so on and so forth. Afghans have been anguished by prevalent criminal mafia system henceforth, they are longing for a transparent and accountable system. They hope for steadfast leadership and security for all and sundry.

Meanwhile Afghanistan has myriad ethnic groups and rugged geography so it seems arduous to establish central government writ firmly. For Karzai to have stable central government within short timeline is impossible. Without flourished on the ethnic reality no army or police can control this diverse armed population. (Ahmad, 2011)

Ethnic fissure is troubling not only at the present but it loomed large for forth coming election because head of the departments of current administration are Panjshir (Tajiks) while pathans are second in ranking, so contesting factions will be active in that eventful scenario. Regional stake holders will come to the forefronts by all means possible to defend their concerned factions as Iran has always sided with Shia community, Russia leverage in the shape of Khalq and Parcham will come into ruling echelon as recently Karzai has taken them in ruling ambit.

4. Engaging Taliban in talks, efforts VS achievements. President Obama’s AfPak strategy was based on the recognition that military force alone was not a solution to the problems in this region. He had also been saying that military force would not end the war in Afghanistan, and that an “exit strategy” with a broader approach involving an effective coordination of military, diplomatic and developmental efforts would be needed for resolving the conflict in Afghanistan. After prolonging the military conflict at huge cost in lives and dollars, Obama has acknowledged that its quite impossible for peace to have a chance in the land which has perpetually remained strewn with wars unless and until political set up is not stable.

But unfortunately, in spite of efforts for peace talks, the Talks between US and Taliban are not fruitful as the US had never conceded with release of some captives. Taliban have some terms and conditions for talks encompassed to evacuate foreign occupants, flourish their conceived Shariah law, to have power share at provincial and local level, release of Taliban captives and to ensure their stakes in civil and police services with transparent appointments. The Qatar episode of talks with Taliban has remained futile. While the foreign minister of Afghanistan, Zalmay Rassoul was in Qatar during that time and in interview he stated that although Afghan government has not been bypassed in this process but is not directly involved. The approach to Qatar government is crucial for two reasons, one is to talk about peace process and to place in right contact between two governments, second is to work together on other bilateral relations. Afghan government wants “Afghan owned and Afghan led” peace process decided on the conditions of peace Jirga, including the majority of Afghan (females to be included). (Rassoul, 2013) Afghan government conceded with the release of not only five prisoners demanded by Taliban but all of Afghan prisoners from Guantanamo Bay. (Ibid) The US is adamant about their captivity.

Hitherto, High Peace Council is midway in peace deal. Karzai lead peace process is just nominal and has been aimed to secure his ruling. It is also attributed for making rift in Taliban. (Jarveenpaa, 2011) Successful peace process would undermine Karzai powers by giving Pashtun and non-Pashtun Taliban their due. High Peace Council has been established for reconciliation but in spite of all related efforts there is rampage not only in Afghanistan but has been outreached to Pakistan in form of numerous safe havens. Nonetheless how much boisterous the Taliban are but Afghanis can turn into their folds more easily because they have abhorrence for coalition forces, no matter how much the developmental projects have become possible just due to foreign aid.

One thing is clear. Had Obama started the talks with the Taliban immediately after his election for the first term in 2008, by now there would at least have been a clearer direction for the peace process in Afghanistan. Apparently, the ‘Establishment’ in Washington is too powerful even to let the American president pursue his own peace agenda. So the viable solution is that both the US and Taliban must concede with peace deals, on some loss and some gain basis in order to settle the turmoil. As far as the Afghan standpoint is contemplated then according to foreign minister their redlines are very clear encompassing all those who are ready to abide by Afghan constitution, to abandon committing crimes against the state and to detach themselves from Al-Qaeda and any other terrorist group. (Rassoul, 2013)

Offensive realism is the sub-division of neo-realism theory, expounded by John J. Mearshiemer in *The tragedy of great power politics*, where he stated that International system is anarchic where states always coaxed to maximize their relative powers at the costs of other states. This theory is descriptive because it dealt with past events as well as prescriptive as it head on future related foreign policy options. In comity of nation, the maximization of power is the only way possible to escape state failure, consequently it is the primary aim of any state. Mearsheimer, 2001, believes that becoming global hegemon is near impossible so that great power would always wrestle for power. Brandon, 2009, has described the theory as below:

Three Tenets Of Offensive Realism

1. Goal is to maximize share of world power.
2. Ultimate aim is to become the hegemon.
3. Since global hegemony is impossible, the world is condemned to perpetual great power competition.

For power maximization states are ready to offense. (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 3) The United States is a regional hegemon according to Mearshiemer, she is trying to become global hegemon, which is impossible (Ibid. pp. 41, 140-41) so there is perpetual struggle for power. In this pursuit of power struggle and to become a global hegemon which cannot be short of offensive mode as war, turmoil, blood shedding and civilian casualties. According to Mearshiemer the regional hegemon is not oblivion of the aspiring hegemon of other regions and keep watch on them. As buck passing strategy, which signify that regional hegemon remained sidelined and let the local powers to observe the aspiring hegemon and when the need arise then militarily invade the region in order to curb the peer competitors. There is no satiation in power struggle.

This research has tried to explain the US intervention in Afghanistan in the context of Offensive Realism. The US invasion is fulfilling the three major tenets of Offensive Realism:

The US invasion of Afghanistan gives her:

1. Power maximization by Military operations in Afghanistan and her rehabilitation later on and Status of a regional hegemon in South Asian and Central Asian regions.
2. More share in the World Power cake.

3. Since global hegemony is impossible, It's better to be a hegemon in more regions for a leading world power

The US invaded Afghanistan after 9/11, in order to use pre-emptive power mode, to use force before imminent threat happened to the national interests. (Ibid. p. 12) The US as major power is militarily engaged in the minor state, Afghanistan. The 9/11 was pre-text for the US to invade Afghanistan, because Afghanistan was not directly connected to that incident. The contours of US military engagement policy was to defeat, disrupt and dismantle Al-Qaeda. The operational mode of policy remained in constant state of flux, encircled not only Al-Qaeda but also Taliban in its ambit. Then Obama strategy emphasized on reinvigoration of military engagement but simultaneously came to the reconciliation and talks to the Taliban. It seems the Afghan war is now all about American politics. Obama could have certainly made the peace move two years ago. He could have averted the violence, bloodshed and displacement in Afghanistan produced by the surge, as well as the huge cost involved in the exercise. The strategy of reconciliation has been with no fruitful outcome so the US is to exit from Afghanistan, leaving behind nine military bases. (Mohmand, Sherpao, Ghazanfar, Munir Interviews, 2013) NATO will remain in Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif in order to serve the US underlying objectives, to control Iran and China from those bases. The US is also on alarm from Russia and China as stakeholders in Afghanistan. As the US has realized this threat and perhaps this can be one of the reasons for its draw down from Afghanistan soil and to be shifted towards Asia Pacific to have access to Thailand, China, Malaysia, Singapore. If contemplated about the remaining troops, then majority of the troops will be of France and UK who are closest ally of US. Australia and Canadian are in lower number now. In Kabul there will self protected system so that in emergency they could protect themselves by using air and will have fortress or cottage like dwellings. (Ghazanfar, 2013)

By analyzing the US engagement in Afghanistan's turmoil, it stretched to the John Mearsheimer's theory of Offensive realism from the very nature of offense being inflicted by the US in order to maximize her power, to reach the status of global hegemon. The minor state Afghanistan has been destabilized in security, political aspects. Afghanistan security situation, which has been upset by the US military engagement for more than one reason, by rising insurgency, weak central control, corruption, poor law and order situation and hatred and acrimony against the foreign occupation. No doubt the Afghanistan as minor state has no concern with hegemon status or to maximize power, the more it seeks is to focus on its Boundary defense, refugees issue and how to exploit the natural resources. The US according to Mearsheimer is in struggle to become global hegemon and that is impossible due to geography and water are main obstacle in this regard. The US in the past has remained offshore balancer in Europe and North East Asia by deploying military troops there and developed logistical infrastructure so that to ensure the US bases there. (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 389) The US is using buck passing and offshore balancer strategies against China, Russia, and Iran on Afghanistan ground. The US engagement in the region is not only Afghan centric but focuses on South Asia, Central Asia and East Asia as well. In fact, after exit strategy from Afghanistan, the US pivot will be in East Asia – Pacific to contain China. The US also seeks Pakistan – India amity while building up India against China. In Central Asia, the US seeks to increase its leverage while blocking Russia and China.

5. Conclusion: The United States of America engagement in Afghanistan is a long war that served no purpose. American media is with feeling that Afghanistan invasion was an irrational decision because in spite of huge expenditure to economy there is no apparent omen of victory. Washington concedes that US invasion has just intensified extremism, militancy and Taliban's momentum in this region. America is the ultimate sufferer with in the shape of lives, money and civil liberties lose. It has tarnished our (Washington) promise to stand for dignity and grace of human.

But was it an honest mistake? Did President Bush and Vice President Cheney declare war because they genuinely believed it was the best way to guarantee the safety of the American people? Or did they do it in a premeditated attempt to seize greater political and economic power? These are questions that history will answer. For now, at least, one thing is clear. The US invaded Afghanistan on the pretext of 9/11 by waging an unrelated "war on terror" which is now generally considered as the 'wrong war.' No other nation has done greater damage to its own global prestige and credibility because of its misdirected policies and misplaced priorities. The offenses of the US have perturbed the security of Afghanistan with uprising in insurgency, Taliban and warlords are fighting with their own agendas in order to strengthen their power holds. The US sponsor government has led to corruption, ethnic strife and instability.

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