

THE FACTORS PERMEATING AFGHAN CONFLICT

Mansoor Akbar Kundi¹
Musarrat Jabeen²

Abstract: This paper assumes that the Afghan issue has absorbed the dynamics of globalization and vis-à-vis throbbed into the international politics. This paper utilizes the Maximalist approach (Maximalist approach is based on conflict prevention by diagnosing the causes of conflict) to analyze the Afghan conflict in its broader context. This paper intends to discuss the permeating factors of Afghan conflict in its present row of combinations referred to globalization. The factors include: natural resources at the heart of conflict, the predicament of uncertainty, the cultural identity and devaluation of justice and peace values.

Key words: *Afghanistan, Conflict, Maximalist approach*

I. INTRODUCTION

The world has become a global system, whose stability can be jeopardized by the weakness of any of its components, no matter how small they are. Every aspect of the functioning of world community must be viewed from the angle of global security. This approach having been imposed by the course of events looks at the world differently. All human failures be them social, economic, ecological, and cultural cause insecurity not only in the areas where they occur but worldwide (UNESCO, International Symposium, 1996:16). There is a link between conflict, globalization and the emergence of non-state entities, which are sustained by expanding networks of parallel (illegal) and gray (semi legal) economic activity (M. Duffield, 2000:4).

The global scenario is overwhelmed by different international structures that all compete with one another in pursuit of same end to reflect upon conflict of interest, but cooperating with each other due to constraint or

¹ Dean, Faculty of State Science, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan.
Email: dera1955@yahoo.com

² . Associate Professor, International Relations Dept., University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan. Email: mussaratjabeen7@yahoo.com

common interest. Conflicts may crystallize around identity issues, nonetheless, the underlying driving forces are political and economic.

All persistent networks of Afghan war economy provide a fertile terrain of any type of conflict practices including the conventional war and the new strategies of terrorism, depending on the triggering and accelerating factors of external actors. This very factor gives Afghan conflict an international dimension- a conflict system seeping into the global system by eroding its defense. Afghan Diaspora is multifaceted as the Afghan war economy has given rise to a pattern of regional economic activity and associated social and political networks. The Center for Afghanistan Studies Report 2000 highlights the development of region-wide Afghan Diaspora largely due to the dependence of Afghan leaders and population on politically motivated humanitarian aid, destruction of rural economy through counter-insurgency; and consequent creation of refugee-warrior communities in Pakistan and Iran, and the modernization of the war economy (Center for Afghanistan Studies Report, 2000:34).

The supporting components of the situation are: advancement of means of transportation and communication, the development of neo-cultural kinship; the socio-economic ties between Afghans and all the neighboring societies; opening of the borders and the lack or loose control of customs enforcement in many areas, and the increase in opium production and other contraband activities. The Afghan conflict becomes a strategic conduit to play the regional economic politics, and with its superfluous international dynamics as follows:

A. Natural resources at the heart of conflict

In at least three clear ways natural resources lie at the heart of conflicts that hold potential for mass violence through the deliberate manipulation of resource shortages for hostile purposes (for example, using food or water as a weapon); competing claims of sovereignty over resource endowments (such as rivers or oil and other fuel deposits); and the exacerbating role played by environmental degradation and resources depletion in areas characterized by political instability, rapid population growth, chronic economic deprivation, and societal stress (Klare, 2001:44). In 1980s Russia persisted in Afghanistan to approach hot waters of Arabian Sea; but was resisted by the other countervailing force (United States of America) of cold war. In 1990's the Central Asian oil had emerged as the point of strategic and economic attraction. In fact the economic opportunities created because of Soviet Union disintegration have caused the rift among the competing groups, specially the Jihad groups once strengthened by

American led coalition ---now considering themselves the righteous owners of natural wealth of Central Asia.

In Afghanistan, the economic agendas with global perspective have created wide- spread destitution which has led to economically motivated violence. Afghan national culture has been knitted with awareness of complex interplay between, *greed and grievance*. It is due to countries in the developing world, oil wealth is usually a disaster . Though Afghanistan does not possess oil but she is a route to oil (Dyer, 2003).

In October 1994 the Taliban became a handy instrument for strategic market of oil discovered in the Caspian Sea, by Pakistan and America undertow of UNOCAL project. Within three months, Taliban took over 12 out of 31 provinces of Afghanistan. In September 1995, they entered Herat, effectively clearing the road from Pakistan to Central Asia. The following month, the American oil giant, UNOCAL signed an oil pipeline deal with Turkmenistan. The whole exercise gave birth to the Taliban phenomenon, was originally designed to convince and persuade UNOCAL to go ahead with the project by guaranteeing safety of the route for laying of the 1,000 mile oil pipeline, which Pakistan was also to greatly benefit from. According to one estimate, Pakistan was to earn \$ 8 billion in transit fees, and get its oil at half price. Later, American policy makers perceived Taliban as an instrument for furthering US aims in the Caspian basin and Persian Gulf, and placing increasing pressure on China and Russia (Bokhari, 2001:9).

But a major deterrent has been the lawlessness, chaotic conditions and internecine strife. The oil company wanted a single administration in the whole of Afghanistan before it could invest millions to realize the cherished pipe dream. Unexpectedly, the Taliban emerged as possible solution.

Four years later the link stood broken when the Taliban chose to protect Usama bin Laden, the Saudi fugitive who had taken refuge in Afghanistan after having launched *Jihad* against the United States and was wanted by Washington, rather than to protect the pipeline and get 15 cents per 1,000 cubic feet from UNOCAL for the service. So, the pipeline dream went sour and the Taliban became a pariah regime. After 9/11 President Bush declared global war on terrorism as America's answer to the unthinkable attacks on New York and Washington, with top priority being getting hold of Usama " dead or alive", and dismantling of the Taliban regime.(Bokhari, 2001:9) Afghanistan is as indispensable to the regional control to the US and the transport of oil in Central Asia as Egypt was to the West in the Middle East, in the 1950's (Monbiot, 2001:11).

Halford Mackinder, the British founder of geopolitical theory (The Heartland of Eurasia), had once said, "He who controls Central Asia controls

the world." This fabled competition has been turned on its head by the US-led war on terrorism. For centuries, this region has been a buffer between Russia to the north and the British, and now Americans, to the South. The Caspian oil reserves are estimated at about 270 billion barrels, some 20 per cent of the world's proven reserves. The key to huge profits lay in transporting oil from this land locked region to the world markets. The Daulatabad oil field in Turkmenistan, just north of Afghan border is well positioned to be connected to Pakistan National Network via pipeline through Herat and Qandhar to Balochistan, and then to entire South Asia.

B. The predicament of uncertainty

"The enemy is uncertainty, the enemy is unpredictability."

US President George Bush, 1991

This reality of international system dominated by the loss of genuine loyalty where the actors, individuals or entities with economic and political agendas or states, are pursuing the material ends as the ultimate goal--embosses the of events culminated in the fall of the Taliban, when on September 9th, Ahmed Shah Massoud, a leading military commander of the United Front, was assassinated by suicide bombers in North Eastern Afghanistan; attacking of the twin towers allegedly by Al-Qaida. The die had been cast for Taliban as the military strikes began on 7th October 2001, with the twin objectives of destroying Al-Qaida networks and undermining the Taliban's military capability. On 9th November, Mazar-e-Sharif fell to the United Front, followed by Kabul, the capital and the main provincial cities, with Kandhar being the last in early December 2001. This marked the defeat of Taliban.

The underlying causes of Afghan conflict include; the competing agendas of regional powers, the continuing Talibanization of Islamic groups in Central and South Asia, an expanding war economy, the crises of states within the region, and deepening poverty-interlocking crises (Atmar, and Goodhand, 2001:23). The Islamic Jihadis (holy war fighters) are mounting a new challenge to one of the United States' most important allies (Pakistan) in the war on terrorism. According to the *New York Times* a Western diplomat predicted: "You will have more and more of terrorist attacks. It's open season against not only foreigners and Christians but also against Musharraf" (Dawn Daily, August 10, 2002).

All segments of working economy in Afghanistan are supported and protected by armed activities; aid acquisition, aid distribution, drug related agriculture and trade practices such as smuggling---total practices are co-opted with uncertain regionalism and internationalism.

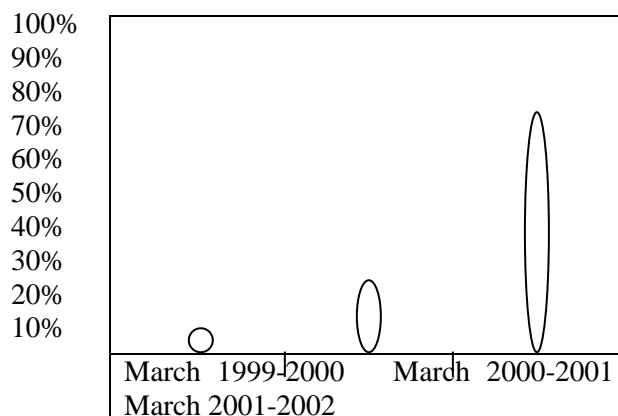
Survival of human beings is at risk, because of food insecurity which has increased sharply in recent years and remains high throughout Afghanistan despite massive relief work, a change of regime and the presence of foreign/peace keeping military forces (See Figure 1). Persistent drought has overwhelmed the capacity of Afghan communities to cope with the loss of agriculture and livestock production, unemployment and burgeoning debt burdens. Food insecurity in Afghanistan is widespread, deep, complex and life threatening. (Sue, and Neamat, 2002:14)

The situation has affected 12m Afghans, 3 to 4m severely, and left the country with a record high cereal deficit exceeding 2.3m tons. WFP spends an average of US\$ 50m on food per year in Afghanistan.

Vulnerability to food insecurity is directly linked to Afghanistan's various sub-economies. Historical legacy of conflict has defined three economies:

- An economy of war and illegal trade of narcotics, weapons and illegitimate commodities;
- An artificial economy of external assistance that is highly variable and unpredictable.
- A struggling economy of legitimate (if often exploitative) enterprises that includes agriculture, livestock production, and small-scale enterprises (such as carpet weaving).

Figure. 1. Households Receiving Food Aid



The connections among food security, ethnicity and political allegiance are important, for instance those who were persecuted under the Taliban regime, such as Tajik and Uzbek supporters of the Northern Alliance

are receiving benefits due to ethnic and/or affiliations with local and national power structures.

The UN Security Council wishes the Loya Jirga to build democratic institutions. Loya Jirga is comprised of 15 Afghanistan based national groups with 1500 representatives, designated to appoint the provincial leaders to frame the constitution writing and organize national elections in Afghanistan (World Food Programme Report 2002: 33). According to CNN Televised Report (2002) Loya Jirga was convened in June 2002 to implement the Bonn agreement of November 2001. Some armed groups intended to take the decision making process (decisions about parliament and powers of ministers and powers of different commissions), out of Loya Jirga. One hundred non- elected members were included into Loya Jirga, they were the governors of 32 provinces-most of them were previous War Lords. Before the Loya Jirga was convened, ministers for interior and defense were nominated to activate the, "National Security Directorate", named "KHAD" to probe into the delegates participating in Loya Jirga. These developments inhibited the participants to express their mind freely. Simultaneously the lack of management inhibited the election of new leaders of judiciary and of other institutions; the Jirga also lacked an established agenda (Basit, 2002: 2).

As the existing regime is supported by external factors, knowing this the internal forces may try to gain benefit out of the situation.

Foreign Aid in Afghanistan has fed the war economy, eroding the social contract between government and population, legitimizing warring groups and undermining local coping strategies. Humanitarian aid made it possible to survive, but not necessarily to live, nor to live in peace. Simultaneously effective peace building requires coherence across the full range of external policy instruments---managed by international institutions and donors. The policies must also cohere with the challenging reality, e-g; cost of recovery from war, and changing reality, e-g; refugee movements, effecting the core and peripheral areas of conflict.

In 2001-2002 Afghanistan has witnessed more than 1.7 millions refugees return from neighboring countries, and 400,000 internally displaced people could go back to their homes. Little was done to prepare for the influx and the sheer number of returnees- over whelming the country, which had little to offer in the way of shelter, water and sanitation systems. International donors have also failed to meet their commitments to start the rebuilding projects, as promised in (2001) at a Tokyo Summit government officials complain. Donors promised to invest about \$1.8 billion in 2002, but the country has received only \$300m. Because of the agencies funding

shortfall, the wheat allocations have been reduced from 330 to 220 pounds for a family of six. CARE- International, which was building water and sewer systems in Afghanistan as well as housing, had sharply scaled back its operation. And the target of rebuilding 7,500 houses was reduced to 5,500. (Rubin, 2005:13).

C. The cultural identity

Cultural identity factor cannot be ruled out in the existing international system. It was rather a source of rivalry between two economic ideologies of communism and capitalism---but the focus was on the economic gains. The evolutionary process of present cultural identity has been entwined with global vision of the West---being the powerful and proactive.

In 1988, Powell went to Moscow as President Reagan's national security advisor, along with the then secretary of state, George Schultz, on the threshold of dismantling the Soviet Union. Gorbachev peered into Powell's eyes and said, "General, I am ending the cold war, and you are going to find yourself a new enemy" (Oren, 2001:75). In 1996 the book was published titled, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, written by Samuel Huntington. The argument was that in a post cold war world, the crucial distinctions between people were not primarily ideological or economic, but cultural being reconfigured along cultural lines, with new patterns of conflict and cooperation replacing those of the cold war. The hot spots (i-e Kashmir, Palestine, Bosnia) in Muslim world politics were on the fault lines between civilizations, and those on the borders of Islam represented the greatest danger to the world peace. From eighth to eighteenth century, the leading civilization on the planet in terms of *spread* and *creativity* was Islam. Since two centuries the sense of loss, the belief that the Muslim Ummah created by God has special status, movements of Islamic revivalism- aim to revitalize Islamism.

On December 8, 1991, the USSR ceased to exist and six new independent states were established, namely, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azarbijan and Tajikistan, and within them, the growth of Islamic movements started. Of these, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) in Tajikistan, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT)), in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (originated in the Middle East and has its goal, the unification of Central Asia, Xinjiang Province in China and the entire Islamic community under a caliphate), and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) are the three biggest parties. More dangerously perhaps in the view of events surrounding 11 September 2001, these movements began

to identify with the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan as well as Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda, both of them espoused the most repressive version of Jihad in the name of Islam. Now Central Asia is the repository of the world's last great natural energy reserves: an estimated 270 billion barrels of oil. It has the potential to become the setting for the next 'Great Game' between Russia, United States and China (Robinson, 2001:4).

Due to the clash of interest "holy war" became "unholy war" and ultimately terrorism. The United States spent \$51 million on a project to supply Afghan school children with textbooks filled with militant Islamic teaching. These were published in the early 1980's under the USAID grant as an American covert operation to spur resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The Taliban used the same text books-but after erasing the human faces in keeping with their strict interpretation of Islamic injunctions. What seemed like a good idea in cold war is being criticized as a crude tool that steeped the generation in violence (Tazai, 2002:63).

The planners of war in Afghanistan do not realize the misery of millions of displaced in the dun-colored tent cities in the dust, hunger and drought, the ruin of subsistence agriculture and, above all, the bitterness and resentment of a new generation, so many of whom have witnessed the death of their parents, the maiming of siblings, the humiliation of their people. The parched fields of a pulverized agricultural production may go to waste, but the fertile terrain of hatred and, alas, enriched and fertilized by the instrument of heavenly vengeance would not go (Monbiot:2001:12).

D. Devaluation of justice and peace values

As recognized by UNESCO justice and peace are public goods and values---the most devalued in international normative context.

The Geneva Convention explicitly states that civilians should not be objects of attack and that acts that are designed to promote terror among civilians are prohibited. The war in Afghanistan has been in violation of the Geneva Convention (The Guardian, February 12-19, 2001:6).

While there is some truth in the dictum that terrorism is often the weapon of the weak, terrorism is also a frequently used tool of the powerful. The resentment, which the Muslims and the Arabs feel against the Americans, stems from its policy against Iraq and support for Israel's occupation of Palestinian West Bank and Gaza. Terrorist attacks serve to accelerate the agenda of militarization, regimentation, reversal of social democratic programs, and undermine democracy in any meaningful form (Chomsky, 2002:51).

The greater Jihad involves a personal inner struggle to be good Muslim; only the lesser Jihad sanctions rebellion against an unjust ruler, whether Muslim or not. But by radicalizing the use of lesser Jihad, the extremist 'fundamentalists' have distorted the image of Islam as exemplified by the life of the Prophet. The processes which the people have gone through and the structures facing since 23 years of war and war economy, the people have mostly the choice of lesser Jihad.

The existing international order has given rise to the impression among the oppressed people and nations that the existing world order is not based on justice and fairness. The Gallop Survey conducted from September 14-17 (2001) in thirty countries; with question- do you think American foreign policy has a positive effect on your country? , There were only two countries (Israel 61%, Lithuania 50%) where the response was positive. In Pakistan 6% supported the US policy. In another survey conducted by Gallop after attack on Afghanistan, the survey results showed that, while 51% people in Pakistan were supportive of government policy on the crises, an overwhelming majority (83%) sided with Taliban against America (Gallup Survey, 2001:3).

II. CONCLUSION

Rousseau perceptibly observed security as a relative phenomenon. Fear and its reciprocated behaviors create predicament known as the security dilemma (Herz, 1951:93). The evidence suggests here, that the process of globalization with addition of following premises compounds security dilemma:

1. Spread of Information Technology,
2. Growing number of non-state actors within states- not only affecting the intrastate affairs but interstate interaction as well.
3. Blurring of distinction between domestic and external security.
4. Non-military aspects of security.

The paper establishes that the Afghan conflict is perceived differently by Afghans, Pakistanis and Americans, according to its effects on them. As a sequence of 23 years of war the most effected are the Afghan civilians. They have beaten up ruthlessly by warring governments and factions. They became refugees or displaced, experiencing mass dislocation at social and economic level (See Figure 2).

The war-ravaged country (infested with landmines and controlled by War Lords) bears no comprehensive state structure, comprising legislature, executive, and judiciary to function as a real state to provide services to the nation and enforce the law.

It is found that time and again changes by different structures working in Afghanistan, whether legal framework of governance, International Institutions-National Institutions-Provincial Institutions-Community Institutions, or the vague postures of war economy and its related networks tried to turn the jigsaw of society according to their own interests, by excluding so and so segments of society. Such moves promoted violence with in the society. War economy is perceived as being one of the main sources of insecurity. Social inequities reflect flagrant injustices and are a cause of insecurity because of the reaction, they provoke.

Figure. 2 Crises of Insecurity: Cause and Effect

Lack of law and order, War Lordism, landmines.	←→	Life Insecurity
Drought and Landmines.	←→	Food and livelihood insecurity.
Collapsed state infrastructure.	←→	Socio-economic development insecurity. National, Regional, and international insecurity.
Exclusion.	←→	Socio-political insecurity leading to violence.
War economy.	←→	Migration and organized crime.
Poverty	←→	High risk of conflict.

The existing trends of Afghan conflict would prolong: as long as the regional and global factors are not co-opted to change to construct peace in Afghanistan.

References

- Atmar, Haneef. and Jonathan, Goodhand, 2001, Afghanistan, Lahore, Rogressive Publishers.
- Basit, Saleem, 2001, "*Reconstruction of Afghanistan is not an easy task*", JANG Sunday Magazine, Sept 9, Lahore, Pakistan. p 2.
- Bokhari, Ashfaq, 2001, "*The pipeline of greed*," December 9, Karachi, Daily DAWN.
- Center for Afghanistan Studies Report, 2000, New York, Center for Afghanistan Studies, p 27.
- Chomsky, Noam, 2002, "*Wars of terrorism*", New York, Seven Stories Press, p 51.
- DAWN Daily, 2002, "*Repeated terrorist attacks feared*". August 10, Karachi
- Duffield, M., 2004, "*Aid Policy and Post Modern Conflict: A Critical Review*", Retrieved on Dec 22 from www.eldis.org
- Dyer, Gwynne, 2003, "*The curse of oil*", Karachi, Daily DAWN, July 23 .
- Gallup Survey, 2001, Retrieved on Oct 18, www.gallup.org
- Herz, John. H., 1951, "*Political Realism and Political Idealism*." Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p 93.
- Klare, Michael T., 2001, "*Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict*," New York, Henry Holt Company.
- Monbiot, George., 2001, "*A late colonial adventure*", October 23, London, The Guardian.
- Oren, Harari, 2001, "*The Leadership secrets of Collin Powell*", New York, McGraw-Hill.
- Robinson, Francis, 2001, "*Is this the clash of civilizations?* , London, Lecture at the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, Royal Society for Asian Affairs.
- Rubin, Alissa J., 2005, "*Afghans return home to face stark reality*," Feb 13 2005. www.Eldis.org
- Sue, Lautze and Neamat. Nojumi, 2002, "*Food Insecurity in Afghanistan 1999-2002*," International Famine Center, England, IFC.
- Tazai, Sher Zaman, 2002, "*Terrorist attacks in USA and US attack on Afghanistan*, Nowshera, Kamil Adabi Jirga.
- UNESCO, International Symposium, 1996, "*From Partial Insecurity to Global Security*", Geneva, www.unesco.org March 12, 2005,
- World Food Programme Report, 2002, Islambad WFP.