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THE ANATOMY OF US'S DEFEAT IN AFGHANISTAN

With the long awaited decision by the Obama Administration in regards to the new strategy for Afghanistan, the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated to the point that the US commanders started using the word 'defeat' in their report to Washington. The word defeat has rarely been uttered by military; however, Afghanistan is the exception, where defeat is a realistic outcome. There, defeat is a reality that all invaders have faced since the beginning when Pashtuns have inhabited this region. The Pashtuns' resistance is one of multiple factors characterizing the Anatomy of US's Defeat in Afghanistan, where the inevitability of defeat for the US and NATO appears to be a certainty.

FACTORS OF DEFEAT

American Military underestimated the Afghans (Pashtuns)

When the American troops landed in Khanabad Air Base in Uzbekistan, they were confident that the defeat of the Taliban and take over of Afghanistan was inevitable. Their behavior was typically American characterized with excessive over confidence totally oblivious of Afghan history. Characteristically, they did not expect to suffer significant casualties either; however, much to their dismay, American causality has become quite apparent. The overconfidence of American military was detailed by a reporter of IWPR:

"...in October when the Americans began deploying at the airport, they were gung-ho, telling their Uzbek counterparts that it would take no more than a month and a half to defeat the Taleban..."¹

The report continues:

"Uzbek army personnel working at the air base said scores of US casualties have been arriving there. From November 25 to Decemeber [sic] 2, an Uzbek orderly working with American medical staff said he had witnessed the arrival of four to five US

¹ Afghanistan: US Casualty Spiral http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=162298&apc_state=henirca2001

helicopters - carrying between them 10-15 American casualties - each day."

The wounded soldiers that had returned from Afghanistan were frustrated by the sudden change in their self-perceived invincibility. The frustrations of the wounded soldiers on the base played out in daily occurrences of shouting and name-calling. These were the same soldiers that had heroic mentality before entering Afghanistan.

Similar experiences were reported in other parts of Afghanistan. For example, during operation Anaconda in 2002, America had used massive firepower to subdue a Taliban Commander Saifu-r-Rahman Mansoor in Shah-e-Kot in Southeastern Afghanistan. The Americans thought they could destroy the Afghan resistance by having superior airpower. They learned this to be more a wishful thinking. In the days of the fighting, Pentagon made various extravagant claims of having destroyed Mansoor's defenses and killing more than a thousand (1000) Taliban fighters. The facts were otherwise. The US forces went to the battle with a heroic mind set, but they were bitterly surprised when they sustained heavy losses and had lost 16 helicopters ranging from apaches to Chinooks. The escalation reached a point of no return when 22 American Special Forces were caught alive. The heavy losses coupled with the captured soldiers started to take its toll on the US forces until March 10, 2002 when General Tommy Frank decided to pull back 400 troops to Bagram. The official explanation was that the conflict had ended for the most part while media reported that the troops suffered from battle fatigue. The truth was that the pull back was an attempt at building confidence aimed at convincing Taliban that American military is serious in seeking the release of the 22 Special Forces Commandos. The Taliban Commander, Maulana Mansoor demanded the release of all captives held at Guantanamo Bay in exchange for the 22 Special Forces soldiers.

Meanwhile, as the US forces encountered stiff resistance, it claimed to be fighting against a force of 1000 fighters when in reality there were 100 Afghan fighters, 120 Uzbek, and 30 Arab fighters. The US claimed to have killed 700 of 1000 Taliban/Al-Qaida fighters:

"U.S. military spokesmen estimate 700 out of roughly 1,000 Islamic extremists have been killed in the past nine days of fighting, which has cost the lives of eight Americans and three allied Afghans."²

The number of Taliban and foreign fighters killed stood at 88 (mostly Uzbek including 8 Arabs) while the number of US, British and others were much higher. Different media sources reported different numbers in regards to US losses. For example, the Russian online newspaper Strana.Ru on April 8, 2002, reported that the US lost 100 Special Forces and four Apache helicopters. However, data obtained from the battlefield put the casualty figure at 228 killed. From this figure 186 Americans killed in the battle, 22 prisoners executed when the US refused to release Guantanamo prisoners and 20 British SAS were killed when their vehicles were ambushed. The 186 killed Americans included those that were onboard helicopters. The total number of helicopters shot was 16 out of

² <http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=80079&page=1>

which two Chinook and 6 Apaches were totally destroyed and the remaining crash landed. The Canadians and Australians killed were reported as victims of friendly fire.

This is what happens when armed forces exhibit patronizing mentality and underestimate the enemy.

American Brutality-Excessive Use of Force and Racist View

The sheer use of excessive force coupled with individual cases of callous murder and torture could be viewed in the dichotomy of intention and reaction. The aspect of intentionality points to the way the military views the targeted population. The US military as an institution and their personnel must consider the people they bomb or murder perhaps less human, otherwise, the excessive use of force, committing murder and tortures would not be wide spread in their ranks. For example, by October 2002, the first anniversary of US invasion of Afghanistan, more than 10000 tons of bombs dropped on Afghan soil. (Socialist Worker Online, October 11, 2002) Imagine the magnitude of carnage and contamination caused by such massacre. While another report by Kate Randall on December 2001, put the number of US bombed dropped at 12000:

"Since the US launched the war on Afghanistan October 7, more than 12,000 US bombs have been dropped on the country. According to the Pentagon, about 60 percent of these bombs have been precision-guided by satellite or laser technology. However, many of these bombs—dropped by B-52s and other aircraft from tens of thousands of feet in the air—have strayed off course, hitting civilian targets." (WSWS, December 29, 2001)

In another report, a year after September 11, 2001, Matt Kelley of the Associated Press put the US munitions statistics as follows:

"U.S. and coalition airplanes have conducted more than 21,000 flights over Afghanistan, dropping more than 20,000 munitions. About 60 percent of the ordnance dropped on Afghanistan has been precision guided, the highest percentage in any conflict."

Similarly the Guardian reported on April 10, 2002:

"More than 22,000 weapons - ranging from cruise missiles to heavy fuel-air bombs - have been dropped on the country over the past six months.... US pilots dropped more than 6,600 joint direct attack munitions (J-dams), the satellite-guided bombs... One in four bombs and missiles dropped by the US on Afghanistan may have missed its target"

The new generations of hard target weapons whose warheads are made of uranium have contributed to the heavy contamination of land, water and general population. The

carnage brought upon by the usage of these Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) would remain essentially forever. Depleted Uranium has a half-life of 4.5 Billion years. This means Afghans would be dying from cancers and other diseases for generations. For the past several years, the rate of various cancers have risen all over Afghanistan, however, the rate of this menace has been highest among the Pashtun people since they are on the receiving end of bombing raids. Imagine the magnitude of carnage and contamination caused by such barbarism.

The individual cases of slaughter are too many to list. However, I need to point out that American military shoots first and asks questions later. Many Afghans are shot on mere suspicion. In many cases, the person would be either going to work or coming from work. The most serious of all the behaviors of the US military is their disregard for the privacy, dignity and lives of the Pashtun People. The behavior of the US military is similar to the South African police of the apartheid era entering Black African and Indian homes with no regard to their privacy. Similarly, American Soldiers enter Pashtun homes without any regard for their privacy and dignity. Moreover, they behave like thieves in the way they attack a residence at night when families are deep asleep. The entrances to peoples' houses are blown with explosives and then men and boys are dragged from bed in full view of their children and wives. More often, before they could drag anyone from bed, they order their attack dogs to attack these families before they could leave their bedrooms. Consequently, many children are bitten to death. In many instances, after the inhabitants are bitten, the soldiers have shot indiscriminately. In Laghman Province, a man recalled the following event:

“At night, the Americans entered our homes, commandeered their attack dogs and then shot my son and my brother. I was asleep; when I woke up; a dog was standing next to me and bit me. Subsequent to that, the dogs pulled the corpse of my brother and son to the ally. We were terrified and abandoned our village.”

In another case in Khost, in mid-December of 2008, the home of Dr. Bilal was raided by the US forces. The US forces mistaken believed he was linked to Al-Qaida network while he worked for the province public health department. The AFP reported the following:

"The Americans entered without warning. They first killed one of my nephews, Amin, who was 14 years old, who was sleeping next to a rifle," says Bilal Hassan, who works for the provincial department of health.

"My brother went out with a gun. He was shot down, like his wife who followed him," he says.

A sister-in-law was hit in the spinal cord and paralysed [sic].

"Then they released their dogs," the doctor remembers. The dogs attacked the bodies and bit off some of the fingers, he says. Then they bit the wounded woman and a child of five. "They took our savings, all our guns, used for self-defence [sic], and even papers for some of our properties.... Why did they do all that?"³

³ Similar events happened one too many times

<http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2009/february/feb22009.html#3>

The question is why are Pashtuns specifically targeted? One of the answers could be the racist mentality of the American military. However, the most likely explanation is that Pashtuns are the custodians of Afghanistan and they have defended Afghan independence throughout history. As long as the Pashtuns remain a potent force, US-NATO alliance would not only succeed but also face a realistic prospect of utter defeat. In all fairness, other militaries exhibit dreadful behaviors as well. However, the US military appears to be one of the worst violators among the so-called democratic societies.

American over Reliance on Tajiks and Other Minorities

In the aftermath of 911, the Afghan Tajiks who were affiliated with the brutal and rapist organization of Northern Alliance⁴ or were supporters of these criminals stepped forward to the Bush Administration to accomplish two things. First, it was an opportunity for them to undermine the Pashtun (Afghan) majority of the country. These Northern Alliance elements were toppled by Taliban in 1996 after they carried out some of the most gruesome atrocities ever committed in Afghan history. The Northern Alliance was formed from war criminals, rapist and human rights violators. Thousands of women disappeared during the reign of the Northern Alliance. Second, by offering their services as mercenaries, the Northern Alliance wanted to take advantage of the situation to control the post-Taliban regime. Despite the massive air power and indiscriminate usage of wide array of bombs, the Northern Alliance failed to break through Taliban defenses situated 90 miles north of the Capital Kabul. After 45 days of bombing, Taliban decided to retreat to the countryside.

With the Taliban's retreat, the Northern Alliance forces entered Kabul. The first task on their agenda was the firing of most civil servants that spoke Pashto. The imposition of minorities that constitute roughly 37% of the population on 63% Pashtun created resentment among the Pashtuns. It is worth mentioning that the CIA World Facts Book is grossly inaccurate when it comes to the percentage of Pashtuns in Afghanistan. Dr Zirakyar has traced the pattern of false statistics in this book and presented his analysis as follows:

“Until 1991, this type of “finished intelligence” registered Pashtuns as majority of the Afghan population (50% as ethnic group and as language group). Almost a year later in April 1992, the Northern Alliance (Masood-Rabani group) took over the power in Kabul. The World Factbook 1992, considerably lowered the statistical significance of the Pashtun ethnic group and their language (Pashto): 38% as ethnic group, and 35% as language group. In World Factbook 2009, statistical data for Pashtuns shows improvement as ethnic group (42%) but remained the same as language group (35%).”

⁴ Anti-Taliban alliance composed of Afghan minorities

He established the true number representing the percentage of Pashtuns in Afghanistan by tapping into the research of Wak Foundation:

“For the record, a six-year survey and research project (1991-1996) was conducted by WAK-Foundation for Afghanistan, the results of which was published in 1998 (1377 A.H.). According to this source, from the total population of Afghanistan, Pashtuns make up 62.73 percent as ethnic group and 55 percent as language group.”⁵

Based on the pattern of falsehood illustrated in the CIA World Facts Book and consistently presenting false information about the Pashtuns, it would not be far fetched to state that there is an international conspiracy against the Pashtuns. That is why; Pashtuns are killed in Afghanistan and in Pakistan.

In the post US invasion, Pashtuns were cleansed from many areas in Northern Afghanistan, where majority of the minority Tajik population is living. Pashtun lands were confiscated, forcing more than 300,000 Pashtuns to become refugees to neighboring Pakistan. This group of people formed the backbone of Taliban insurgency against the US and their mercenaries of the Northern Alliance.

Incidentally, the Afghan Tajiks and other minorities were lining up to become translators and falsely claiming to speak Pashto. These individuals intentionally while others due to ignorance of Pashto language labeled every Pashtun the Americans arrested as member of Taliban and Al Qaida. That is why; the youngest inmate in Guantanamo Bay was 11 years old. The unfair mentality of the American military and the animosity of the Tajiks and other minorities toward the Pashtuns resulted in many tragedies. Many innocent Pashtun men were tortured and killed in Bagram.

The reader might ask as to why Tajiks have this type of animosity toward the Pashtuns. The answer is Tajiks were mostly artisans, musicians-entertainers and refugees from Central Asia ungrateful for the life they had in Afghanistan. Similar to most minorities in different parts of the world, they also wanted to occupy the power in the country. However, they desired power at the expense of Pashtun majority.

Consequently, Pashtuns whether they agreed with Taliban or not joined Taliban led insurgency to secure their rights. To this end, both Americans and their mercenaries have become their targets. Meanwhile, the Afghan National Army (ANA), which hardly has a national character, is dominated by Tajiks. Majority of the commanders of the ANA are Tajiks.⁶ Equally, the current President, who is from Kandahar, is more than eager to please these criminal elements of the Northern Alliance by instituting their language as the administrative language ignoring Pashto and Pashtuns. It is speculated that Karzai is half-Pashtun, hence, the influence of his maternal uncles, who are qazelbash, on him drew him away from his own language. At this point it is purely speculative; however,

⁵ http://www.sabawoon.com/articles/index.php?page=kite_runner

⁶ http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/KL01Df02.html

Pashtuns are trying to rationalize the indifference of Karzai by presenting various explanations.

This unnatural arrangement and oppression of the Pashtuns inspired Pashtuns to fight against Americans and their installed regime in Kabul.

Americans Lack of knowledge of the Pashtun Culture

Lack of knowledge of Pashtun culture is another important factor ensuring US's defeat in Afghanistan. There are two sources wherein this lack contributes to the permanence of hostility of Pashtuns toward the US and her allies. The first issue is the tribal structure and the cohesion within the tribes in matters of self-defense. When a member of the tribe or sub-tribe is killed, the killer is not only the enemy of the family whose member he has killed, but rather he has gained the enmity of the tribe whose member he has murdered. Thus, the US forces have turned tribes, sub-tribes and villages against them by slaughtering their members in the hundreds and thousands. The second source is a tenet of the Pashtunwali—the Pashtun Code of Honor. This tenet is that of revenge, which goes hand in hand with tribal cohesion. A Pashtun father, brother, and son and tribesmen have to avenge the death of their relative. There is an old saying that after a Pashtun took his revenge after 100 years, he said, “I think I rushed it.” This points to the permanence of hostility.

Surge or the Final Nails in the Coffin of US's Defeat

With the hoopla of surge and new strategy, the US politicians and military leaders lack complete awareness of the Afghan society, especially the Pashtun culture. To the Pashtun people surge means continuation of the indignity imposed on them by the US and her allies. This means more Afghan civilians would die. This also means the continuation of the same pattern of disregard to the privacy of Pashtuns' homes. In essence, Pashtuns view this as affirmation by the part of the political and military leaders that the crimes they have committed for the past 8 years are not crimes, but rather righteousness which adds insult to injury.

Furthermore, this would increase the resolve of the Afghan insurgency and their supporters. Meanwhile, the insurgents are working on obtaining modern Russian Rocket Propelled Grenade launchers. In the past, Afghan Mujahideen used RPG7; however, RPG7 is not effective against NATO armor. Hence, the most effective weapon would be RPG32, which penetrates all NATO and US armor vehicles and tanks. Furthermore, insurgents are also working on obtaining modern version of SAM7 anti aircraft shoulder-held missiles. This would be the final nails in the coffin of US's defeat in Afghanistan.

I have tried in vain to get the attention of the US political and military leaders with my peace proposal to institute permanent peace in Afghanistan. But unfortunately, they

showed no interest for the most part. My proposal ‘White Paper for Permanent Peace in Afghanistan’⁷ is a comprehensive approach to a long lasting peace for Afghanistan.

After receiving cold shoulders from political and military leadership, I came to hypothesize that they must be gaining financial benefits in the form of contracts or perhaps even kickbacks. Otherwise, it would be natural to seek peace than war especially when the insurgency has gained a lot of momentum.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned factors outline a pattern of hatred and killing. This pattern contributed to the permanence of hatred and enmity of Americans and their allies. The violations outlined depict acts of righteousness on the part of the American forces and points to strong conviction on the part of the US-NATO forces to continue committing atrocities.

Finally, President Obama’s speech in Norway by referring to the genocide in Afghanistan as a ‘just war’ is adding insult to injury. The award of the Nobel Prize to the President of a country that is actively murdering Afghans and turning their environment uninhabitable with the continued usage of uranium munitions is a travesty of justice and an abomination that should be condemned worldwide. Moreover, the award of the Nobel Prize is affirmation of support on the part of the Western establishment that the murder and genocide of the Pashtun people is acceptable, and it strengthens the hypothesis that the war on terror is in part an international conspiracy against the Pashtun Nation.

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⁷ www.sabawoon.com/articles/index.php?page=home and www.rense.com/general88/whitep.htm