IPCS Special Report

Obama's Afghanistan Policy

A Review of Literature

93

JULY 2010

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Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies

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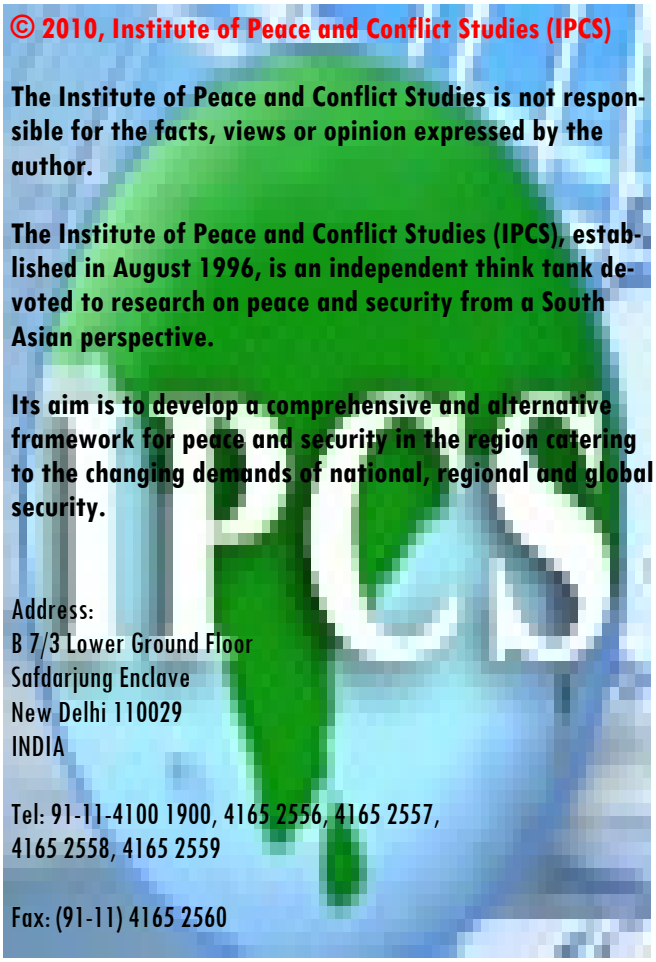

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OBAMA'S AFGHANISTAN POLICY

A LITERATURE REVIEW

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End of 2009, President Obama, came up with his "Surge" policy, whereby, he decided to send 30,000 more U.S. troops into Afghanistan. The President planned "to deploy and pull out troops quickly—a "surge" similar to the one that his Republican predecessor had executed in Iraq, but with a fixed date to begin withdrawals."[1] There has been an amalgamation of both positive and negative reactions in a myriad of articles published in some of the leading newspapers of the USA. The "surge" strategy would increment the total US military force in Afghanistan to nearly 100,000 by the mid- 2010.

I
THE SURGE STRATEGY

The primary focus was categorised into two sections: "The Thumbs Up," which discusses the reasons as to why the surge strategy should be conducted. Under this section, the report focuses on the need for peace in Afghanistan, the mistakes the US had committed in the past, and the necessary measures taken by the US to attain peace. The report also pays importance to the promises that Obama had made to the people of his country and studies the Pakistan factor, which had influenced the surge strategy to a considerable extent. "The Thumbs Down," report focuses on the limitations of the surge strategy, which include lack of support for the US, skepticism regarding the strategy, institutional weaknesses, Obama's helplessness and the lack of appropriate identifiable solutions.

[1] Anne E. Kornblut, Scott Wilson and Karen De Young, "Obama pressed for faster surge," *The Washington Post*, 6 December 2009.

II
THE THUMBS UP: SIGNIFICANCE OF PEACE AND MISTAKES OF THE PAST

Scott Wilson and Rajiv Chandrasekhars' article "Obama makes personal diplomacy part of Afghan strategy," elaborated on how President Obama had made 'diplomacy' a part of Afghan strategy. The war in Afghanistan is "a war worth fighting" and is also "fundamental to the defense of" the "people of the US." 2

The insurgency in Afghanistan was a long process, and it would be a longer process to "defeat" it. Mathew Kaminski has highlighted in his article "Obama's Foreign Policy Paradox"3 that the foreign policy of the US has been a success in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Afghan insurgent's military chief was arrested. The Taliban stronghold in Marjah was captured.

The highest-ranking Democrat, Skelton, had also supported the notion of sending more troops to Afghanistan. Skelton had clarified that the deviation from the mission in Afghanistan to Iraq was a strategic error that could not be continued. Top Obama advisers have also insisted that the administration should remain committed to the goal for the war in Afghanistan-that is to disrupt al-Qaida and prevent the terrorist organization to have a safe refuge in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The defence review is taking a "top-to-bottom look" at the priorities of the

[2] Scott Wilson and Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Obama makes personal diplomacy part of Afghan strategy," *The Washington Post*, 9 May 2010.

[3] Matthew Kaminski, "Obama's Foreign Policy Paradox," *The Wall Street Journal*, 10 March 2010.

Americans and their "posture".[4] The "conventional wisdom needs to be questioned, "rethinking old dogmas and challenging the status quo".[5] A lot of analysis would be required about the forces needed and the weapons to be bought.

According to Obama, the resurgence of the Taliban and the prolonged existence of al-Qaeda across the border in Pakistan are like a "cancer" on the region.[6] Obama felt that this was a direct threat to the Americans, and he needed to take action. Unnecessary funding to the Karzai Government would not be encouraged any further by the former US General, McChrystal who had also clarified that the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan could only be improved, if the Americans committed to protecting the Afghan people, and help them establish their own government. The US also needs to be cautious of the fact that the Taliban did not seek an opportunity to overthrow the government, which had been established.

In the article, "Obama's Surge Strategy in Afghanistan", Robert Diamond, a former officer in the Navy, had said that sending 30,000 troops would put the "insurgency on the run", "provide a security umbrella for the development and allow the Afghan government to continue to extend its reach".[7] But 30,000 troops would not be enough to defeat the insurgents permanently, and so, it's important that the US train the Afghan Army. Thus, President Obama had focused a major part of his surge strategy on training and developing the country's military and police forces.

[4] Michael D. Shear, "Obama Defends New Tack in Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, 18 August 2009.

[5] Michael D.Shear, "Obama Defends New Tack in Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, 18 August 2009.

[6] Afghanistan, *The New York Times*, 11 May, 2010.

[7] "Obama's Surge Strategy in Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, 30 November 2009.

The situation in Afghanistan is "serious and deteriorating" according to the former General, McChrystal. The Americans would be "starting from zero after eight years of war".[8] The President wanted to "reach consensus" rather than concentrate on troop numbers and other recommendations. This was coined as "Shinseki Legacy".[9] Obama wanted a strategy to be prepared which would give them the idea of the strength of military required.

III
MEASURES TO ATTAIN PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN

Douglas Macgregor's analysis says that the plan could have had some positive impacts on Afghanistan. It could "transform the Taliban's fight with President Hamid Karzai's corrupt narco - state into a Pashtun war of liberation, against the unwanted American military presence that supports Mr.Karzai".[10]

Obama had called for a better regional outlook and a more narrow focus on Afghanistan policy, which would set priorities among the counterinsurgency and also the development goals. According to a senior administration official, Obama had given his best effort in trying to provide guidance about the operation.

According to Leslie H. Gelb, it was evident that the President and his advisers had "adopted a strategy already- the counterinsurgency one."[11] Leslie also believed that the United States had no crucial interests in Afghanistan, but they

[8] Anne E.Kornblut, Scott Wilson and Karen De Young, "Obama pressed for faster surge," *The Washington Post*, 6 December 2009.

[9] Anne E. Kornblut, Scot Wilson and Karen De Young, "Obama pressed for faster surge," *The Washington Post*, 6 December 2009.

[10] The Editors, "Obama's Surge Strategy in Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, 30 November 2009.

[11] Leslie H. Gelb, "Obama's Befuddling Afghan Policy," *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 September, 2009.

could not leave the war and come back. The President needs to provide the Afghan allies with proper training to fight the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Leslie had also crafted a strategy, which is as follows:

- Surge two additional combat brigades, or roughly 10,000 troops, to lift the U.S. total to about 78,000 from 68,000.
- Deploy an additional 5,000 to 10,000 troops strictly for the purpose of training and supporting Afghan police and armed forces, and embedded US advisers with heavy intelligence backup. As important as increasing troop numbers is, changing the American attitude toward the war is equally important. Our armed forces can't continue to treat most problems as American problems, and they must begin to turn over the real authority to the Afghans.
- Provide support to leaders in Kabul and tribal leaders around the country who will oppose the Taliban and fight for their independence.
- Put money on the table to divide Taliban from the Taliban, and Taliban from al-Qaeda. Many of them respond to financial, as well as, security-inducements.
- Build alliances to contain the Taliban and other regional extremists. Focus on India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, China, and yes, even Iran, which cooperated with Washington at the outset of the Afghan war. These states share common interests with America in combating al-Qaeda, terrorism, and the drug trade.
- Set up tough and credible deterrence capabilities. It's particularly critical to retain special operations forces in Afghanistan with the ability to fire from drones and perform other operations. Capabilities for missile and air attacks launched from beyond Afghanistan need to be honed as well. Token attacks won't be enough.

Leslie had clearly stated that, in order to avoid failure, the war should be Afghanistan's war and not America's. It would be obvious that the Afghans would try their best to wear out the American soldiers, and would ultimately frustrate them to the extent that they pull out. That would not be conducive, as then it would leave the Afghans unprepared to fight the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

In late 2009, while there were debates about sending more troops to Afghanistan, former General, McChrystal made it clear that there was a necessity of more troops in Afghanistan, if Obama intended to provide security in real terms in the region.

IV
OBAMA'S PROMISES

In a speech on 1 December, 2009, Mr.Obama had not only announced the increase of troops in Afghanistan, but had also promised to bring the American forces back home from Afghanistan by the middle of 2011. He had said that the United States could not afford, and did not think it necessary to bear an open-ended commitment. Mr. Obama had also promised that he could "bring this war to a successful conclusion."[12] He strategised in a way that would "seek to reverse Taliban gains in large parts of Afghanistan, better protect the Afghan people, increase the pressure on Afghanistan to build its own military capacity, create a more effective government, and step up attacks on al-Qaeda in Pakistan".[13] Obama has also told the Americans that the main goal of the US is to defeat the Taliban completely, and to be able to stop the return of al-Qaeda into either Pakistan or Afghanistan. Obama believed that it would be important for the Americans to draw an

[12] Afghanistan, *The New York Times*, 11 May, 2010.

[13] Afghanistan, *The New York Times*, 11, May, 2010.

"exit strategy"[14] so that the soldiers there can be brought back.

V
THE INITIAL SILVER LINING

General David H. Petraeus, the Head of the U.S. Central Command, referred the battle fought in Marja to be an "initial salvo" in a military campaign that could last for 12 to 18 months. "In late March, the representatives of fighters loyal to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who represents a major insurgent faction, presented a formal 15-point plan to President Karzai and other Afghan officials, the first concrete proposal to end hostilities since President Karzai said he would make reconciliation a priority after his re-election."[15]

The US is also worried about the spread of the Taliban and al-Qaeda across Pakistan. The "Af-Pak," as it has been called by the administration, would be time consuming. The Obama administration had criticised Mr. Bush for his deviation from Afghanistan to concentrating in Iraq. Afghanistan and Pakistan cannot be distinguished as two different platforms of conflict and diplomacy. Maintaining stability in Afghanistan can become a more important priority for the US than to establish democracy in Afghanistan. As for the US and Pakistan's relation, Pakistan would continue to be US betrothal.

VI
THE PAKISTAN FACTOR

In an interview with New York Times Obama said, "At the heart of a new Afghan policy is going to be a smarter Pakistani policy."[16]Senior administration officials describe Pakistan as an important US partner. Pakistan is on the verge of an internal deterioration which is threatening for the US, but, the US's Pakistan policy would be time consuming and would require a lot of money. A new review by the Joint Chiefs of Staff also agreed that there was a necessity for broader approach to the region and more well defined objectives in Afghanistan. There was a need for a strategy, which would be more comprehensive, and a road was needed to be built to reach towards this. The administration had already given a green signal to the on going CIA operated attacks by the unmanned Predator aircraft to fight against the al-Qaeda and Taliban targets in western Pakistan. The Pakistani government has also agreed to these strikes in spite of the public in Pakistan disapproving of it.

VII
THUMBS DOWN

James Jamison had clearly mentioned in his article "The Taliban's Response to Obama Afghanistan Policy"[17] that neither the people in the US nor in Afghanistan, were happy with Obama's Afghan policy. The details of the plan are below:

1. Rather than 40,000 troops surged to the war zone as his former general's request, Obama will "dribble" in 30,000 over the next twelve months.
2. As soon as the 30,000 extra troops are finally on the ground in Afghanistan next year, Obama intends to begin withdrawing them.

The article also reflected the loss of support for Obama's plan from the Democrats like Nancy Pelosi and Anna Eshoo. There was no support from anti- war groups like Code Pink also. Many Republicans were also not pleased with the "plan." The essence of the strategy showed that the needs and wants of the American

[14] Mike Allen, "Obama's Afghan plan will include exit strategy," *Politico*, 11 December, 2009.

[15] Afghanistan, *The New York Times*, 11, May, 2010.

[16] Barry Grey, "Obama's New York Times interview: Military aggression and attacks on democratic rights to continue," *World Socialist Web Site*, 10, March, 2009.

[17] James Jamison, "The Taliban Response to Obama Afghan Policy," *American Thinker*, 5 December, 2009.

people had been overlooked during the framing of this strategy, and it had been formulated under the pressure of (Army) Generals in the Pentagon, the American Neo-conservatives and wealthiest few in America for the protection of their interests, hence, it's strategy of colonialism. He intended to decrease the opposition of the American public (to the troops surge), and encourage his international allies to send more troops, which might not be a success.

VIII
AFGHANISTAN REACTS AND USA INTERPRETS

The Nine-Eleven Finding Answers Foundation, a non-profit counter-terrorism organisation has obtained, translated, and transcribed a statement from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on President Obama's Afghan policy.[18] The excerpts are:

1. The reinforcement will result in (their) fatalities…

2. Throughout the history of Afghanistan, the Afghans not have not been subjugated through deceits, ploys, materials power, or troop reinforcement of the foreigners. Therefore, the reinforcement of the Americans troops and other tactics will not have an impact on the status quo. But the reinforcements will provide better opportunities for the Mujahedeen to launch offensives. On the other hand, it will deepen the crisis of the American economy, which is already in shambles.

3. Obama's assertion to increase and train more soldiers and police for the Kabul Administration is pointless and not results - oriented

4. We neither have the bases in Pakistan nor do we need such bases outside Afghanistan. We have control over vast swathes of land in the country and do not face any problem about our activities and residence…

5. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has frequently said that we have no intention of harming any one. Therefore, the presence of foreign invading forces in Afghanistan has nothing to do with the security of the world. Obama sometimes calls this war, a war of necessity; sometimes he calls it a war for the defense of the West and some times, a war being waged for the security of the world.
   They raise the issue of our residing in Pakistan in order to distract the attention (of the world) from our capability and strong resistance in Afghanistan…

6. The Mujahedeen of the Islamic Emirate have worked out a vast strategy and prepared for strong resistance…The Mujahedeen have high morale and complete readiness and believe that Obama's new strategy will fail like it did previously. It will face fiasco. We deem it necessary to remind the American rulers if you persist in your aggressive policy, America will end up being disintegrated itself, instead of maintaining the occupation in Afghanistan…We want to point out that the Muslim people of Afghanistan want to lay down their lives and properties willingly but are never ready to give up their faith and freedom…you must wait a more severe reaction in years to come.

The above excerpt had raised the eyebrows of many experts on Afghan Policy. James Jamison stated in his article that the "enemies understand" the US "much better" than the Americans understand the enemies.[19]

IX

[18] Jane Jamison, "The Taliban's Response to Obama Afghanistan Policy," *The American Thinker*, 5 December, 2009.

[19] James Jamison, "The Taliban Response to Obama Afghanistan Policy," *American Thinker*, 5, December, 2009.

SKEPTICISM AND BAFFLEMENT

There have been a lot of debates about sending troops to Afghanistan. Many people in the Administration were not convinced about sending more troops to Afghanistan. In the early phase of the plan, Obama was also skeptical about sending more troops to Afghanistan, as many American troops had lost their lives there, especially in August 2009. But a senior military official had said that to step up air strikes would not be easy and would impose a lot of risks without additional forces. After a lot of debates about the "plan," both the Republicans and some Democrats demanded that former General, McChrystal needed to educate them on the situation in Afghanistan, to justify his request for more troops, and to make them familiar with the strategy adopted to go after al-Qaeda.

Terron Sims II, a former army officer, had supported the "plan", but was not pleased with the operation being called "surge". He felt that "surge" was used in Iraq, which was not the same strategy used in Afghanistan. He was skeptical though, about how efficient the Karzai government would be during the operation of the American soldiers, as that would determine the US's success.

In "Obama's Befuddling Afghan Policy" by Leslie H. Gelb, he had focused on how dubious the entire Obama "plan" was. On one hand, Obama had pledged to "defeat" al-Qaeda in Afghanistan by transforming the country's political and economic infrastructure.[20] He planned to train Afghan forces and increase US troops there. Obama had also "proclaimed Afghanistan's strategic centrality to prevent Muslim extremism from taking over Pakistan - an even more vital nation because of its nuclear weapons."[21]

Yet, later, Obama had mentioned that the troop increase would be a "deliberate process."[22] The decisions on resources needed to be looked into. He had also laid stress on the fact that unless and until the strategy was perfect, there could not be any decision made about the resources. The latter statement had left the reporter bemused as if the President had a clear notion about the strategy when he had made the first statement.

Obama had not mentioned what the consequences would be if the Karzai Government failed to deliver what it had promised to do. This has left many confused.

Karl Eikenberry, the retired general whom Obama had appointed as ambassador, does not have good relations with Karzai. Eikenberry does not share good relations with former, General McChrystal too. He had opposed McChrystal's tactics of forming local militias, and to engage in some rapid development projects in Kandahar. To add fuel to the fire, the Americans have no clue how to reciprocate Afghanistan's request for an improved strategic partnership, which would include a guarantee of security from the US.

X
INSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESSES

According to The New York Times Report on 11 May, 2010 - the largest obstacle to the success of the plan, was the weakness of the government led by President Hamid Karzai. A week after Obama announced his intentions of increasing troops in Afghanistan; Mr. Karzai had made it clear that Afghanistan would not be in the state to pay for its own security until 2024. This is due to the fact that the state has been under continuous turmoil for the past three decades, mainly due to the Soviet invasion. In Afghanistan, Karzai was subjected to

[20] Leslie H. Gelb, "Obama's Befuddling Afghan Policy," *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 September, 2009.

[21] Leslie H. Gelb, "Obama's Befuddling Afghan Policy," *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 September, 2009.

[22] Leslie H. Gelb, "Obama's Befuddling Afghan Policy," *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 September, 2009.

criticisms for lack of economic progress and for the corruption in his government. Washington also did not consider him to be trustworthy, but they were helpless because they needed Karzai's support.

According to the editorial in The New York Times, "The Way Out", the major problem in Afghanistan is the lack of "institutional trainers"[23] to train the Afghan security forces. In November, the United States and NATO opened a new integrated training mission. There was an effort of revamping the Afghan Army leadership program and to standardise the police instruction. Although, the numbers of trainers were increased, there were still challenges that the Americans had to face. NATO forces were not able to live up to their commitments. There were a lot of shortcomings in the training campaign. Most of the soldiers did not feel it to be their job to train the Afghan soldiers. Americans and NATO officials also have to think seriously about creating a "standing corps of combat advisers". [24]These combat advisers should be well trained and well equipped to be able to develop "indigenous national security forces in overseas conflict zones".[25]

However, there had been some progress. The new initiatives like pay rise and compulsory literacy training should be able to "improve professionalism and competency".[26] But, all this would not be a success if there was not enough NATO forces to train the Afghans on how to fight the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

According to Karen De Young, in his article "Obama Seeks Narrower Focus In Afghanistan War", the "U.S. government departments are poorly organised to implement the strategic outline that Obama presented last week to his National Security Council and the Joint Chiefs of Staff".[27]

The problem that arises is "how to fill in broad strokes while fighting a war that, by all accounts, is going badly."[28] A senior official had made it clear that it would take a long time to study all the aspects of the operation. Defence Secretary, Robert M. Gates had said that the war would be "a long slog", and there would be no certainty of the outcome. In spite of the additional forces in Afghanistan, the force seemed to be pretty insufficient to secure the country, and also to train the Afghan forces. There was dire need of money and manpower to be able to train the Afghan National Army.

XI
THE US'S MISTAKES AND CHANGING STRATEGY OF THE TALIBAN FIGHTERS

Even as the USA invaded Afghanistan post 11 September, their challenges were many. The Americans faced stiff resistance from the Afghans who resorted to guerrilla warfare. The Americans later diverted their attention to Iraq, which enabled the Taliban to regroup and extend their influence in the southern part of Afghanistan. The opium trade was a major source of their funding. Faced with stiff resistance, the Americans were forced to cede many parts of the territory to the Taliban. There were massive casualties in the American and NATO forces. The Taliban also started spilling over into Pakistan. Thus, Afghanistan became a major concern to American and its allies. This concern had bothered both Mr.George W. Bush and his successor, Mr.Obama. In addition to troop increase, President Obama had also appointed Richard C.

[23] The Editorial, "The Way Out," *The New York Times*, 4 May, 2010.

[24] The Editorial, "The Way Out," *The New York Times*, 4 May, 2010.

[25] The Editorial, "The Way Out," *The New York Times*, 4 May, 2010.

[26] The Editorial, "The Way Out," *The New York Times*, 4 May, 2010.

[27] Karen De Young, "Obama Seeks Narrower Focus In Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, 4 February, 2009.

[28] Karen De Young, "Obama Seeks Narrower Focus In Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, 4 February, 2009.

Holbrooke, a former United Nations ambassador, as special envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan. General David H. Petraeus took charge of the U.S. Central Command in October 2008, for military operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Military operations were a primary tool to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan. The American forces, with the help of NATO forces, had carried out a number of operations to clear insurgents from the towns and cities. But, after the operations, they have not often held on to the location by placing enough soldiers or police officers. This is the reason the Taliban got the opportunity to return to those places from where they had been evacuated.

The Marja section in 2010 was the largest offensive on the part of the Americans and the NATO forces since 2001. The Americans and the Afghan commanders had planned to bring about a change in Marja, specifically an Afghan government and police force, but the American and British troops would stay to support them.

2009 was the bloodiest year for the Americans in Afghanistan. Even in 2010, it seemed that the conflict would not ease up, which has further jeopardised the situation for everyone - the policy makers, soldiers and the Afghan people. The Taliban are usually from the rural areas. Most of the American troops are deployed in small outposts because the war usually does not spread to the urban areas. Presently, the Taliban are spreading the fight even across the cities, thus, spreading the message that no part in Afghanistan could be regarded safe. Yet, the United States and the Afghan government were able to negotiate a political settlement. The Obama administration gave a green signal to Karzai's attempts to reach out to the Taliban leaders. But, the administration was also quite skeptical of this. They felt the plan had many political risks at home.

XII
PAKISTAN UNHAPPY WITH THE CIA

The Pakistani officials had complained off late about the inefficiencies of the U.S. intelligence. The civilians were being the main casualties in the CIA operated attacks. There was also no confirmation on whether Obama had "reissued" a "covert action" "finding", which was signed by Mr.Bush that had authorized ground raids into Pakistan by military Special Operations unit working with the CIA.[29]

XIII
HELPLESS OBAMA

The problem of sending more troops was that the President was capped at 30,000 according to Robert Diamond, a former officer in the Navy. There were slightly more than 55,000 soldiers in active duty Army, and about 200,000 active marines. Not everybody was in frontline combat troops. The entire Army and Marine Corps could not be deployed at once. Also, more than 100,000 of the soldiers were in Iraq and 68,000 troops in Afghanistan. The rest of them were back home. So it was decided that 30,000 troops would be deployed which was however, not enough for a permanent end to the insurgency in Afghanistan.

XIV
THE RIGHT SOLUTIONS ARE NOT IDENTIFIED

Douglas Macgregor, a retired Army Colonel, had said that the situation in Afghanistan could not be improved. The heroine trade could not be stopped as there was nothing that the Americans had to replace it with. He had also said that none of the generals could stop Pakistan from heading closer to its nuclear showdown with India. The present plan would further worsen the situation. It would unnecessarily drain out the resources from the United States, and tire its soldiers, and result in an unending war. The economic condition of Afghanistan would not improve

[29] Karen De Young, "Obama Seeks Narrower Focus in Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, 4 Februay, 2009.

at all, and would remain what it had been before the Americans had come to Afghanistan.

Celeste Ward Gventer, a senior defence analyst at the RAND Corporation, was also not in favour of the plan. According to her, the plan would be very "exorbitant" and also "difficult" if not "impossible".[30]The USA would need to be involved in building a nation from scratch. She had also said that the solution to the Afghanistan issue was not a military one. The USA should involve India, China, Russia and others in order to reach some political conclusions.

Thomas H. Johnson had brought out a cost analysis of maintaining 30,000 troops. According to Pentagon's own calculations, the annual per capita cost of the soldiers and Marines participating in the surge is US$1 million each. To maintain the escalation forces, it would cost US$30 billion annually. The cost of maintaining the forces per year is US$75 billion a year that would mean huge tax increase, which would be exorbitant to afford.

Clare Lockhart, a co-founder and chief executive officer of the Institute of State Effectiveness, has also not been supportive of the plan. She has said that the USA needed to make "smart choices" that could help in the development of Afghanistan so that it can govern itself properly.[31] There should be a "framework for peace building" in the country.[32] The fastest way to develop Afghanistan would be to educate the youth and provide them vocational training.

A number of suggestions were put forward that the plan should be changed from "Af-Pak" strategy to "Pak-Af" strategy. Pakistan is the sole reason of worry for the Americans. George Bush had once said that that the main goal of the Americans is to make Afghanistan a free region and a zone of peace. There should be reforms and democracy should be established in the region to prevent the region from falling into the hands of fanatics and terrorists. But this would not be an easy task. It would require a lot of effort from both the Americans and the Afghan government, not to forget the NATO forces. Obama, on the other hand, had a different goal for Afghanistan whereby, he did not want Afghanistan to be used as a base to attack against the United States. It would not be the most important agenda for the United States to make Afghanistan a democratic, poppy free state. Pakistan could be more grievous concern for the USA. This is also because Pakistan is a nuclear state, and is susceptible to fall into the hands of al-Qaeda. The covert operations of the USA in Pakistan no longer remained a covert operation, it was well publicized. This made it impossible for the USA to gain the support of the Pakistanis.

Mr. Biden had warned that it would be a nightmare for America if Pakistan became a failed state and fell in the hands of the fundamentalists. Pakistan had an arsenal of nuclear weapons and a population that was larger than Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and North Korea together. Hence, Pakistan should be a matter of concern for the Americans.

Gilles Dorronsoro had clearly stated that the operation would not have any fruitful outcomes. It would not be possible to carry out "real insurgency"[33] as that would require a lot of men, which the US was lacking. It would be the same old operation as had been conducted in the past, adding to more casualties. There were suggestions that the international community should speak to the moderate Taliban, but the major problem was that no body was aware of who the modern Taliban was.

[30] "Obama's Surge Strategy In Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, 30, November, 2009.

[31] "Obama's Surge Strategy In Afghanistan." *The New York Times*, 20 May, 2010.

[32] "Obama's Surge Strategy In Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, 20, May, 2010.

[33] Gilles Dorronso, "Obama's Afghanistan Policy: Q&A with Gilles Doronso," *Web Commentary*, 23 March, 2009.

Further, he had said that Karzai was in a very weak position, but the US had no choice than to accept him. He also claimed that al-Qaeda was not in Afghanistan. The more the US continued to fight in Afghanistan, the more the spirit of jihad would be strengthened. He had suggested that there should be more involvement in Pakistan than in Afghanistan. Unless and until the US is willing to give the resources to fight the war, the war had no military solution. The only solution to the problem is to seal the border, which would require a lot of resources.

John Nagl, President of the Centre for a New American Security, had advised that at some point in time, it be better to be a part of the political process, than to continue with the violence if peace had to be made.

XV
A CRITIQUE

The role of the NATO forces is not well defined in any of the existing articles that were referred to. NATO has a big role to play and it is important that it is also given equal importance as the American soldiers. The articles have not laid stress on the NATO forces that already wanted to leave and come back home. The articles did not stress how the Americans would pursue the NATO forces for this operation.

Most of the articles could not come out with a substantial solution to the problem. While a handful of people believe that the problem has no military solution, many believe that the military solution is the only solution to the problem.

The article "The Real Afghan Issue is Pakistan" published in The Wall Street Journal stressed that Pakistan has more vital interests for the US, but the article did not mention what would be done with Afghanistan, where the US had ventured for a long time and cannot walk out of now. We all know that Pakistan is a grave concern for the US, but that would leave a question in the mind as to whether the Afghan chapter would be closed with no solution. This would be devastating for Afghanistan and also for global security.

There are many senior defence officials who had debated on the Plan. But, sadly, none of them have been able to draw out a proper strategy for Afghanistan.

Clare Lockhart's suggestions are way too utopian to implement. The concept of educating the Afghan people and providing them vocational training is not the ultimate solution. Poverty was not the only reason the people joined the Taliban or al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. There are other factors like ideology, religion, and prolonged injustice that motivate them.

The problem of Afghanistan, according to many, did not have a military solution. But the military could not be completely removed from that place, either. Obama planned to bring the troops home by middle 2011, but the question that would arise in the minds of many would be, "Where would Afghanistan, a failed state, head after the U.S. troops leave?"

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CONCLUSION

It would only be a matter of time to see if the Obama policy proves fruitful or not. The world waits to see how effective the policy would turn out, and how much it would benefit both the US and Afghanistan. Reform is an utmost desideratum in Afghanistan, and the US would need to look into the reform measures. Politics would play a phony role when the US makes a choice between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The world eagerly waits to see if Obama can keep his promises. There is simply no hope left in the failed state of Afghanistan, and it needs the support of the US to save itself from being demonized by al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Peace seems to be a quixotic notion to the people of Afghanistan and without the support of the US.