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US/AFGHAN WAR: GREAT-POWER POLITICS

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Abstract

The Neo-realist Kenneth Waltz is convinced that the structure of the state develops international relations therefore states are all the same in culture, constitutions, and ideologies. The capability of the state would enhance a rise and soon the state which possessed varying capabilities would take over international politics. These political philosophers also describe the conditions of the anarchical-states in a globalized era where hostility and scarcity may lead its conflicts to the final situation of war. Keeping in view the neo-realists perspective, the US/Afghan war is great power politics where Afghan anarchical structure shapes the conflictual behavior, and the US as great power takes advantage of September 11. This act is a sign of unipolarity of the US in international politics. It is a comfortable move for great power but it is difficult to cope with Afghanistan as a small and weak state. The US has a dominating stance and Afghanistan that was already weak in political and military standings could not deter. In the 1980s the United States secured the support of Mujahideen of this weaker state to wage a holy war against the Soviets. ISI trained Afghan mujahideen with money from the CIA. It was during the Afghan war that the birth of al-Qaeda took place. In reality, Osama Bin Laden was an American ally during the first Afghan war. The study aims to examine power game in neorealist paradigm.

Introduction

Afghanistan is situated in south-central Asia and the Middle East. It shares its borders with Pakistan, India, Iran, China, and the independent states of Russia. This place is landlocked and connects central Asia to the Middle East. According to the Central Statistic Organization Afghanistan (CSO) in the 2019 population of the country is 37 million and the official language is Pashto and Dari. Kabul is the capital and the largest city of Afghanistan. The maximum population of the state is Muslim. Afghanistan is an Islamic Republic State where the political system is presidential before the 9/11 Taliban was the ruling system but after the incident Taliban had been removed from the government by force. Ashraf Ghani is the president of the country who is the first time elected on 20 September 2014 and in September 2019 re-elected in elections.

However the US-sponsored resisting group (al-Qaida) kept tolling the bell in the pentagon. After 9/11, America invaded Afghanistan without much resistance. There US hegemony was visible in 1980,s as well as in it was clearly visible in 2001 as a great power. So neo-realists believe it is an anarchical state that pushes power-states to act defensively, as in the case of Afghanistan the USA did. The terrorists' attack of September 11, 2001, brought Afghanistan into the light. The USA a liberal democrat has led a military campaign against Afghanistan and destroyed the headquarters of al-Qaida and removed the Taliban government by force (Hassan & Dzakiria, 2020).. However, Afghanistan is more of a size of Texas. It has been taken twenty years for the USA to understand the loss they received in the face of 2,400 military and countless civil casualties. The white man's burden is another sign of unipolarity for landing there. For this power-politics show millions of dollars have been spent and now America wants to leave the country though insurgency is yet not over and rebuilding weaker state yet not accomplished. But the US does not want to waste million-dollars on war instead of intends to end the conflict to serve the peace (Hassan, & Aziz, 2019). This study aims to examine US hegemony over Afghanistan. This study finds the failures of US strategy which forced great power to dialogue and end the war.

Research problem

This study aims to find the US contradiction as a liberal democrat in the context of Afghanistan that transformed the relations from a friend to foe. This study finds the reasons behind defensive measures that compelled the powerful state (USA) to go for war against the anarchical state (Afghanistan). Now the defensive strategy is changing for peace-process after a long war. Moreover, this article aims to study liberal and capitalist superpower acted aggressively against a weaker state that could barely secure itself to gain power in international politics. The current shift for the peace process with the Taliban is one of the research problems of the current study. This study implores those push elements between these two different structured countries.

Research questions

1. Why the US is a liberal democrat who has led a war on a weaker state Afghanistan either for hegemony or gaining power in international politics?

2. What were the goals the US as great power achieved with or without war in Afghanistan?
3. Who has remained victorious between great power and a weaker state despite the immense loss of man-power and economic expenditure?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frame work of this study is based on the hegemonsonic design of the USA against Afghanistan while War or Peace dialogues are parallel options. The power politics of the USA is playing an independent role in the formation of this study and a small state under war/peace is its dependent key factor.



Figure#1: theoretical framework

The structural hegemon on small unstructured states is either for war or peace because in all the conditions the small state has to accept the hegemony of great power. The theoretical foundation of the study is neo-realism.

Literature review

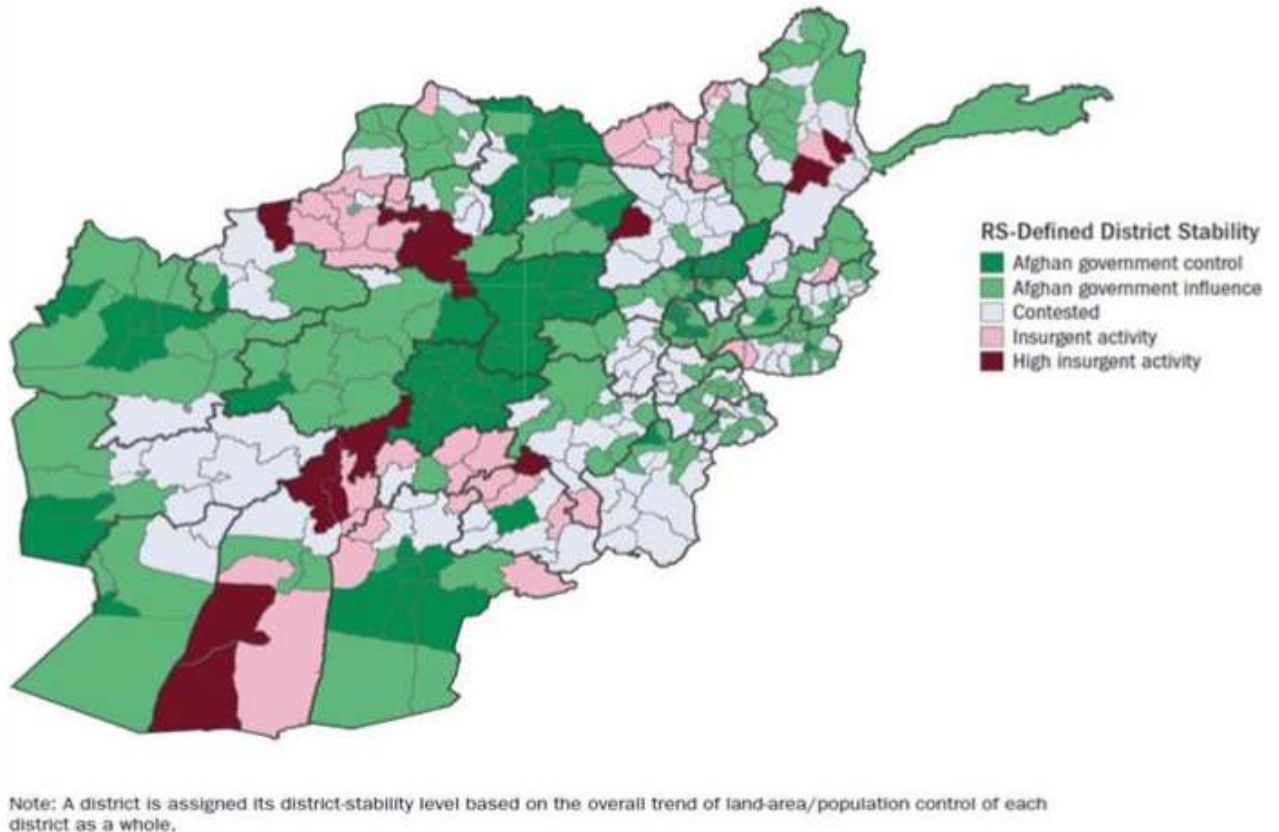
The author in the article tells about the background of Afghanistan where political unrest was since 1978 and soviet occupation that further led to the civil war (1989-1996) left no peace there. The highest record of refugees had been produced by the country in 1990. The country with a poor population and easy access to illegal weapons worsen the condition. The foreign invasion in 2001, on behalf of reconstruction, was limited to areas and the Karzai government was insufficient in providing the balance between ethnic groups and commanders. The process of land allocation led people who were in power to grab land. The process of reconstruction and rebuilding was fade away. (adelkhah, 2017)

Immanuel Wallerstein writes that military muscle was the foundation of the American President Bush regime. The period from 1945, 1967, 1973, 2001 US remained individual as a hegemonic great state in the politics of the world. Success was possible due to the combination of the economy, military, politics, and culture. It was providing the

advantage that no other country had due to the post-world war 2 industrial and economic loss.(wallerstein, 2016)

Bob Woodward wrote in his book *Bush at War* that the CIA under the Bush government was already alert and was speculating threat from al-Qaida. The intelligence that was working in Afghanistan under CIA knew the hideouts of Osama bin laden but they did not kill him due to President Gerald Ford who had strictly banned assassinations. CIA was after him since 1992 and in 1995 they were continuously chasing him in Afghanistan (Aziz, & Hassan, 2018). The September 11 attack al-Qaida was planning for two years in Kandahar and then CIA doubts were transformed into reality. The day was named “zero hour” by Zubayda, one of the members of al-Qaida.(woodward, 2012)

Rangelov & Theros say that Afghanistan had a tumultuous background and had been the victim of various political games. It had seen British-Russian political rifts and state remained unfortunate in rebuilding. Afghan people had seen atrocities of communist overcome (1978-1979), Soviet seizure (1978-1989), civil war (1989-1996), a period of Taliban (1996-2001), and American invasion from 2001. In all these years humanity had been severely affected violence prevailed for a longer period then peace. A great number of casualties had been observed and in that situation, a massive displacement occurred. This was not less than a great violation of human rights on a larger scale that seven million people of Afghanistan had to become a refugee and they remained internally displaced for more than three decades due to instability. Even the United Nations showed great concern for the Internally Displaced People (IDP) in 2010. (Theros, 2012)



Source: SIGAR, January 30, 2019, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress.

Clyton Thomas in his annual report Afghanistan: Background and US policy gave the details that after September 11 terrorists attack Operation Enduring Freedom took place on 7 October 2001. The military operation was conducted under CIA & Special Forces to support Afghans with a coalition of North Alliance who were also against al-Qaida and Taliban. In Kandahar American forces had resistance from the Taliban but till 9th December USA took over the Afghan government and controlled the south, north, and east of Afghanistan and set a provincial government in May 2003. The battle against terrorist attack was ended, officially declared and due to insurgencies, US forces kept supporting Afghan forces. In 2005-2006 violence was heading again due to the Taliban then the operation was cast by NATO and they controlled till 2006-2008 but the increase in combat was noticeable in these years. The process of rebuilding was affecting badly so US officials suggested increasing the military strength in Afghanistan (Hassan, & Dzakiria, 2019).

In the tenure of President Obama Afghanistan was one of the top concerns but efforts had been made on a lighter note and an increase in the number of troops would be observed in Afghanistan by 2013. The NATO-Afghan forces were successfully doing a security job. In 2012 Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) passed between Afghanistan and the USA for taking under control the detention centers and late-night raids on insurgents from US forces. Later both states signed the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) in 2014 that would

be functional till 2024 and it could prolong. This agreement was for US legal access to the Afghan bases, state, and population for any civil and military offense.

However, President Trump's government announced a new strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia in 2017. Trump said in National address on August 21, 2017, "***we will not talk about numbers of troops or our plans for further military activities.***" President's stance had been immensely liked because of that US troops would be back to the country and for troops' withdrawal, peaceful dialogues needed.

United States put all efforts into raising the Afghan National Army (ANA) since 2002 comprised of 190,000 army personals to date. Moreover in 2010 8.4 billion-dollars had been used for Afghan Air Force.

The meetings between the US and Taliban were arranged many times like in 2010 US officials met with the Taliban for the official opening of political office in Doha and the relief of prisoners in US custody. Then things collapsed in 2012 later in 2013 due to violation of agreement rules that immediately Qatar government closed it within a month of opening Taliban office in Doha embassy. Then the next spell started in 2017 in Trump administration and preferred political settlement and it came out even stronger when US officials started working on direct dialogues instead of the Afghan government and dialogues started in Doha 2018. Then Khalilzad as ambassador met and described that in the current situation Taliban were ready to be a part of nation rebuilding so foreign terrorists could not use their land. (thomas, july 18,2019)

John J. Mearsheimer the founder of offensive realism in his book Tragedy of Great Power Politics says that the US enjoying the status of power state for approximately a hundred years and there is no one to compete in the western hemisphere in military capabilities. The USA with the help of its army has gained powerful status all over the world. Despite all US could not set the coin as a hegemon in Europe and North-East Asia. The politics behind the curtain are that the US expanding its power and controlling far-off regions basically for water access. The intention behind that is not to let japan, Russia, and Germany gain regional supremacy. In such a case any one of the countries takes over regional power then the next step of that would be to challenge international superpower. So for avoiding that it has a strategy to keep these states engage. (Mearsheimer, 2001)

Sean Yom says in his article that President Trump administration is withdrawing the USA from the Middle East politics and tensions. There are various elements involved in the anarchical situations of Central Asia and the Middle East which can be a potential threat to the security of great power. But in all this America won't leave the place completely but naval fleets and bases will stay behind for surveillance and offensive realist theorists predict that it is an old strategy with the new name.

(Yom, 1 . February 2020)

Hypotheses

H1: IF a powerful state is well structured then small states can be challenged any time.

H2: IF great power has capitalistic capabilities then small states have to agree on their terms related to building and development.

H3: IF an anarchical state lacks sovereignty then the great-power state can behave defensively.

Neorealism theory-linkage to power politics & war

Kenneth Waltz the founder of neo-realism wrote in “*The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory*” that the theory is a systematic study of international politics where states work as units and units are components of a system. The thing that classifies the vital form of the unit is anarchy which disturbs the system. The disturbance and abnormality in the system are developed by many great powers to develop anarchy and unrest. (Waltz, (1988).)

It is the structure that matters not personal lust for power. Great powers sometimes show their power internationally to ensure their security. While the state which is weak and in anarchical conditions peace is difficult to prevail there instead war is the ultimate future. However, in past times for the balance of power adjustment flexibility, turn policies strict and options for settlements are less. While the new age adjustment flexibility between two powerful states give options to set policy and commitment. (Waltz, (1988).)

Internationally state to state relations is the reason for the generation of neorealism theory. The element of opportunity and preference assumes the behavior of the states. States prefer self-defense and for the execution states take the help of defensive or offensive strategy. However, it is not the assumption in this regard that states always take survival as an option or offensive strategy as a contrast. All the states seek material power that supports their structure. At the end of the cold war the world has recognized the possession of the material power has its worth and this transforms states into powerful and weak states. States after acquiring great power invest in skills in politics and develop a foreign policy which takes state to the peak however this won't be the same for small or weak states. US post-cold war strategy has turned to gain military power at maximum and with that help, American military invasions threatened the Middle East and oil supplies. Although there are no such verifications that could justify the US business and economic gain that is supposed by theorists of imperialism. (telhami, 08 Sep 2010. Publisher: Routledge)

In international politics, the US has the status of great power and the US keep involved in the matters related to the hegemon. After world war US involvement in Vietnam, the Gulf war, Soviet war, Arab spring, Afghan war, Iraq war, and the Syrian war reflect its hegemon internationally. So in the context of the theory, the US hegemon is to maintain unipolar status and security at the same time. In this, it exploits the political issues and accelerates the temperature of regional issues. Those fragile states are unable to cope with politics and ultimately reach from anarchy to war. In the particular case of Afghanistan US smartly invaded the fragile state after a terrorist attack and developed regional unrest and threat to other neighboring small states of Afghanistan. Pakistan also received implicit effects after the US attack on Afghanistan and the same wave had been felt in other neighboring countries of the region. The military presence in Central Asia was one of the security threats for other states of the region.

Research design

The scope of the current study is qualitative. Although, subjective strategies are particularly helpful in assessing individuals, events in a qualitative research design (Neuman, 2014). More specifically, historical or archival research is employed in this study under a qualitative research design. Historical research is the research technique used by the researcher when the past account of events artifacts and circumstances in a society or a culture are brought under examination (Neuman, 2014). For the sake of the current study books, Journals, Databases, and electronic searches were adopted.

The subjective research techniques utilized for this examination are portrayed further beneath and included literature regarding the USA as a superpower, neo-realism, and small state. The literature which involved the incident of September 11, 2001, to policy and politics till 2019 was brought under review however the literature extending from the history of the post-cold war era to September 11 and their reviewed analysis to date were considered. In particular, the grounded theory utilized for linking the events regarding the US/Afghan war, foreign policy, power politics of great state and small state, is the “Kenneth Waltz, neorealism and foreign policy”.

Analysis & findings

The nature of neorealism theory embodies the threat of war in the arena of international relations. The neorealism studies the structure of the state and dispersal of power. The capability of the state enables it to rule in the international politics. This theory works in the foundation of the current study where super power occupies the structure and the potential of military and economy. The capability of the state has not been challenged in the western hemisphere after cold war and USA is enjoying since long time the status of unipolarity. The scope of the study is built around three main research questions and can be recapitulated as under;

- Why USA being a liberal democrat has led a war on a weaker state Afghanistan either for hegemony or gaining power in the international politics?
- What were the goals US as great power achieved with or without war in Afghanistan?
- Who has remained victorious between great power and weaker state despite of immense loss of man-power and economic expenditure?

The following section provides a systematic analysis of the research question raised and build a mechanism to identify and understand the associated dynamics of the fragile state. This study is based on neorealism associated with the great power politics in case of Afghanistan.

To address the first research question, it is important to analyze the contextual orientation of such fear that causes war in the first place. It is an American dream to keep its hegemony prevails in the whole world. The status of superpower is clear to America but the fear is not being challenged by another powerful state. Now it has been a long time since the cold war has ended and in that period many other states like Russia, Japan, China, and Germany

have gained the potential of structure and economy. So in this scenario, it is important to stamp its hegemon in the region.

The other perception which supports the research question is that the USA claims itself a liberal state and proclaims human rights and freedom. But this statement seems paradoxical in its self. Freedom and liberty mean everyone has a choice of their own to live a life. Something can be good in one culture and can be unacceptable in other but this does not mean that one should start hating that culture. Keeping in mind this perspective, the USA invades Afghanistan after terrorists attack on September 11 and within two-months not only destroys the headquarters of al-Qaida but successfully terminates the Taliban government too.

The second research question deals with US goals with or without war, for the support of the answer we need to understand the nature of theory that defines that superpower state has to have hegemony, not because of the lust of power but to keep that status prolonged. In the first place, we should understand that the presence of America in Afghanistan is not new but it is present there for a long time. The structure of Afghanistan is weak and fragile that is internationally acknowledged. Moreover, its geostrategic location is a gate to Middle-East at the same time road to South-east Asia. The combination is entirely a blend of weak and strong because the boundary states are China, Iran, Russia, Pakistan, and India. This is not less than an epic that the USA plans that land in the region to achieve the goal to threaten other states in the region so as per plan it puts everyone at audience seat for setting an example of hegemony.

Secondly, it has been ten years of the end of the soviet war. The President Bush administration believes in war strategy and without war hegemon states cannot reflect deterrence. So this is very important for the hegemon to show the power and the USA government successfully achieves the goal to warn emerging China and stable Russia.

Thirdly, again neorealism talks about the clash in the political environment causes disturbance for other border states as well. The USA achieves its goal by disturbing the environment of the region. Last but not the least, it is against the law to build military bases in other state's boundaries but in the case of Afghanistan war America has imposed war on Afghanistan so it has successfully engaged military bases there for the surveillance of the region.

The third research question of this study deals with the victory, for this, we need to know the structure of the state in the first place. Both countries have a match at no point. One of the states involved in war is well structured and economically established and military wise well equipped. USA has industrial and economic stability that has been achieved a hundred years back when the states like Germany, Italy, France, and Britain were engaged in WW2. The USA has the world's topmost weapon industry that supports the state economy and defense. There is no state in the western hemisphere to confront America. Now the case of Afghanistan is opposite, it lacks infrastructure and institutional empowerment. The industry is weak and economically destabilized. The population is less educated. Now in such a case, there is no point of victory that is possible for Afghanistan.

This is the defeat of humanity that one power state takes advantage of the weaker state just to maintain the unipolar order of the world. Millions of people have lost their lives,

property, and internally displaced. One entire generation cannot stay in peace due to such crises. But at the same time, it's a defeat of developed state that in current situation President Trump administration working for peaceful dialogues with Taliban whom they have removed from government by casting war upon them.

There is a general understanding that strengthens to this point that America is on the defeating side. President Trump doctrine is that millions of dollars have been spent on war and thousands of military officials have lost their lives so the rebuilding should hand over to the state. Now the USA wants to withdraw itself from war politics because it is a burden on its economy to work far off places. The public of America is also against this adventure and for a long time forcing the government to end this.

Conclusion

The current study under the theory of neorealism reaches the point that the USA was engaged in power politics in the case of Afghanistan. There is no doubt that the invasion was led after Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida but the strategy has adopted entirely after political gain. As neorealism explains in such a case a fragile state has to surrender in a short possible time as in the current study we have observed Afghanistan responds to the hegemon state. America successfully launched pro American interim government under President Hamid Karzai and the Afghan government has been rolled over. In all this USA is a power state that crushes the culture and will of the fragile state.

The thing which we claim insurgency can be the reaction of the society and its people. That culture of Afghanistan may sound undemocratic but it is the will of the people to live like that. Whether in global times Afghanistan is following stone-age laws but it is the way that the state wants its will. This hegemon structure of the US is dominant and crushing all democratic and liberal norms and rules over international politics with the same stature. However, the current shift in the US stance for peaceful dialogue and withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan is again political move of power state yet the claim of rebuilding is not completely done in Afghanistan. Previous governments of America have been working for power maximizing politics and for that those administrations have not been bothering wars. However, President Trump has a capitalistic approach though not different from previous administrations but currently, the president is not willing to spend billions of dollars in war. Now the economy and budget are not supporting the welfare dream of the state so the USA is at its move from Afghanistan but leaving its basis functional behind so can fully control the regional politics.

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