

A Report on

Implications of US Troops withdrawal from
Afghanistan on India

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By

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Under

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An online internship programme

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THE RISE

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I perceive as this opportunity as a big milestone in my career development. I will strive to use gained skills and knowledge in the best possible way, and I will continue to work on their improvement, in order to attain desired career objectives. Hope to continue cooperation with all of you in the future.



THE RISE

Abstract

On 29th February 2020, An Accord was signed between the United States and the Taliban. It was a landmark accord in the US foreign policy. As per the Accord, "the U.S. troops are expected to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2021". If the accord is successfully carried out, the Taliban could play a major role in Kabul politics. And, this will be troublesome for New Delhi. Consequently, there will be a huge impact on New Delhi's continued presence in Kabul.

The first impact that India has to concern over i.e. the threat of terrorism (International and Regional terrorism). Another impact India may have to deal with is the footprints of Pakistan's ISI, in Kabul, which has a close relationship with the Taliban, particularly the Haqqani group. In addition, India has a great concern over the increasing political instability in Kabul. It is a great Concern to India's long term interests in Kabul. This withdrawal agreement has turned a new page in the Afghanistan Saga.

In this study, the implications of US troops from Afghanistan has been studied.

Keywords: Afghanistan, United States, Troops, Taliban

Work Plan

The internship program will aim at the study of prevailing situation in Afghanistan due to presence of US troops in its territory. The proclamation by US for withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan may have certain implications on India which needs to be assessed.

Objective: Studying the implications of withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan on India.

Work Plan: Weekly Work Plan for each week starting from Monday to Friday will be as follows. The guidance can be sought on email any number of times. The intern has to communicate the progress of work done on each working day by email in minimum 25 words by 7.00 PM. There will be a weekly discussion with the intern as per the schedule notified on email.

Week 1:- Searching the available literature and statistics

(Hints: 2017 policy of USA of enhancing troop presence in Afghanistan and the recent proclamation by USA to withdraw, its impacts on India's strategic interests, etc.)

Week 2:-

- Writing and submitting an article (upto 1000 words) giving insights into the implications of withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan on India.
- Final report writing and its submission for issue of the internship completion certificate



THE RISE

Introduction

On 29 February 2020, An Accord was signed between the United States and the Taliban. It was a landmark accord in the US foreign policy. As per the Accord, "the U.S. troops are expected to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2021". If the accord is successfully carried out, the Taliban could play a major role in Kabul politics. And, This will be troublesome for New Delhi. Consequently, there will be a huge impact on New Delhi's continued presence in Kabul. Some of the major studies made in this regard are detailed below;

1. Making sense of the war in Afghanistan:

From the chaos of civil war in Afghanistan arose a movement of religious clerics, the Taliban, who were ideologically committed to their interpretation of Islam and who promised to restore social order. To consolidate their position they ill advisedly formed an alliance with Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, and following attacks against the US on 11 September 2001, American troops invaded Afghanistan driving the Taliban from power. An internally-backed Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), was set up under Hamid Karzai, recognized and supported by the international community, [Andrew D. Brown] US Special Forces continued to locate and neutralize the vestiges of the Taliban, while assisting the Government in its efforts to rebuild the country. British troops deployed to Helmand, the largest province of Afghanistan, in 2006, as part of ISAF, in order, they said, to advance democracy and women's rights, support the Government, deliver reconstruction and development, and disrupt the narcotics trade. By 2014, the year by which ISAF declared that its forces would be withdrawn, it was unclear that any of the international community's objectives had been achieved: there had been little reconstruction, the economy was still based largely on opium, at a national level the same avaricious warlords had security control of the country, while at a local level in Helmand the same people still wielded guns in the villages.

2. Gaining Trust While Losing Wars: Confidence in the U.S. Military after Iraq and Afghanistan:

A positive lesson for the military is that the confidence of the American public is not as fragile as many would have feared in 2001. When wars become protracted and costly, it is not inevitable that Americans will lose faith with the military—though the public may lose patience with the specific war effort. Kori Schake and Jim Mattis express relief that Americans “no longer blame their military as many did during the Vietnam War.” One might caution there will inevitably be cases where military decisions and performance warrant criticism; affection should not preclude accountability, [David T. Burbach]. What does seem clear is that maintaining competence and ethical standards, and taking care of those who choose to serve, is also a powerful source of public trust. The U.S. military's emphasis on professionalism makes sense in that respect. Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's relatively lower priority on “care of soldiers” issues was probably a costly political misstep for the Department of Defense.

3. A Path to Peace in Afghanistan: Revitalizing Linkage in Development, Diplomacy and Security:

The peace in Afghanistan depends on stability in neighboring Pakistan, and that country's relationship with India. "This is what we always do. We always go in with our ideals and we change the world and then we leave. We always leave. But that ball, though, it keeps on bouncing. . . .". outside partners have to focus on both political and bureaucratic efforts to tackle corruption. Without changing this aspect of the Afghan operating system, the counter-insurgency effort is doomed, [Greg Mills and Ewen Mclay].

4. The unintended harms of infrastructure: Opium and road construction in Afghanistan:

This study finds that the construction of Afghanistan's longest highway, a 2,200-kilometer road known as the A1 or Ring Road, led to significant increases in opium production within the country, [Evan Wigton-Jones].

5. Dealing With the Taliban: India's Strategy in Afghanistan After U.S. Withdrawal:

The first impact that India has to concern over i.e the threat of terrorism(International and Regional terrorism). It is one of the major concerns for India that withdrawal of troops might allow anti-India terror outfits to establish safe haven in Afghanistan. Another impact India may have to deal with is the footprints of Pakistan's ISI, in Kabul, which has a close relationship with the Taliban, particularly the Haqqani group. And, when we focus on the concerns of bitterness between Pakistan's inter-services intelligence(ISI) directorate and India, we have enormous examples supporting this argument. As we all know that the Haqqani group is a trained and armed faction in the Taliban. It has a long history of bitterness with India. In addition, India has a great concern over the increasing political instability in Kabul. It is a great Concern to India's long term interests in Kabul. This withdrawal agreement has turned a new page in the Afghanistan Saga. If it has been decided that the US-led troops will withdraw from Kabul and that there are chances of the Taliban being politically represented in Afghanistan, or at least playing a major part in the political system, such a new power equation has to be revised. And, the world sees India, a credible actor, as a part of the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan, [Rudra Chaudhuri and Shreyas Shende].

6. India's Changing Afghanistan Policy: Regional and Global Implications:

Since 2001, Afghanistan has allowed New Delhi an opportunity to underscore its role as a regional power. India has growing stakes in peace and stability in Afghanistan, and the 2011 India-Afghan strategic partnership agreement underlines India's commitment to ensure that a positive momentum in Delhi-Kabul ties is maintained, [Harsh V. Pant].

7. What is Eurasia to US (the U.S.):?

The Eurasian supercontinent is genuinely multipolar; bookended in the West by Europe and the East by China with a number of established and emerging powers throughout including Japan, India, Russia, Turkey and others. It is frankly hard to imagine how in the coming decades China could somehow emerge as a continental hegemon. If China's foreign economic or security policy is viewed as threatening or dominating, states will

likely look both to self-strengthening and balancing relationships as well as multilateral institutions to secure their sovereignty, [Andrew C. Kuchins].

The United States holds a natural advantage as being an offshore balancer in this regard, but its foreign economic and security strategy needs far more calibration and coordination to play this role effectively in an increasingly challenging environment.

8. Afghanistan and Pakistan: One British Commander's View:

Afghanistan is also segmented by its violent history of invasion and resistance, which undoubtedly has left a psychological impact on the people, especially in and around Kabul and Khandahar. In the last 35 years alone, the inhabitants of Kabul needed to flee an invader three times; as a result, people fear that this devastating cycle. The provinces surrounding Kabul (Kapisa, Logar, Laghman, Wardak, Parwan, and Ghuzni) historically have formed the outer defenses of the capital. Whoever controlled them controlled the city. The Mujahideen made control of these areas a strategic objective when they were fighting the Russians during the 1980s. In a society that always lives within compounds, these provinces represent the outer walls of the Kabul compound. If they are breached or infiltrated, then the compound is in danger. It has been believed that the Taliban understood this better than the Alliance did and adopted the same methods as the Mujahideen, [Jonathon Riley].

Conclusion:

It is apparent that the continual engagement in Kabul can not only be inspired by a humanitarian window. Along with, it is pertinent to take efforts in diminishing the spread of radical Islamism and the drug problem in Afghanistan. And, it can be done through security, governance, education and development to areas that have none. This withdrawal agreement has turned a new page in the Afghanistan Saga. If it has been decided that the US-led troops will withdraw from Kabul and that there are chances of the Taliban being politically represented in Afghanistan, or at least playing a major part in the political system, such a new power equation has to be revised. And, the world sees India, a credible actor, as a part of the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan.

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4. What is Eurasia to US (the U.S.)?, Andrew C. Kuchins.
5. India's Changing Afghanistan Policy: Regional and Global Implications, Harsh V. Pant.

6. The unintended harms of infrastructure: Opium and road construction in Afghanistan, Evan Wigton-Jones.
7. A Path to Peace in Afghanistan: Revitalizing Linkage in Development, Diplomacy and Security, Greg Mills and Ewen Mclay.
8. Gaining Trust While Losing Wars: Confidence in the U.S. Military after Iraq and Afghanistan, David T. Burbach.



APPENDIX

Article

A New Withdrawal Playbook and Implications for India

On 29 February 2020, An Accord was signed between the United States and the Taliban. It was a landmark accord in the US foreign policy. As per the Accord, "the U.S. troops are expected to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2021"(Chaudhuri and Shende). If the accord is successfully carried out, the Taliban could play a major role in Kabul politics. And, This will be troublesome for New Delhi. Consequently, there will be a huge impact on New Delhi's continued presence in Kabul.

The first impact that India has to concern over i.e the threat of terrorism(International and Regional terrorism). It is one of the major concerns for India that withdrawal of troops might allow anti-India terror outfits to establish safe haven in Afghanistan. On a closer look, " the joint declaration between the United States and the Afghan government includes "guarantees to prevent the use of Afghan soil by any international terrorist groups or individuals against the security of the United States and its allies"(Chaudhuri and Shende). But there is ambiguity on How these promises will be carried out. And, when we focus on the concerns of bitterness between Pakistan's inter-services intelligence(ISI) directorate and India, we have enormous examples supporting this argument. As we all know that the Haqqani group is a trained and armed faction in the Taliban. It has a long history of bitterness with India. This group has taken responsibility for the attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul. And, it was reported that ISI had helped the Haqqani group in carrying out this attack. It is a valid argument that this group will always carry out its anti-India rhetoric with the Help of the ISI. There are examples that show the threat of terrorism. In March 2020, An attack was carried out on a gurdwara in Kabul. And, Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) has taken responsibility for this attack. It was believed that one of the IS-K operatives who attacked the gurdwara was from the state of Kerala in India. Consequently, these are proven examples of the real terrorism threats to India's presence in Kabul.

Another impact India may have to deal with is the footprints of Pakistan's ISI, in Kabul, which has a close relationship with the Taliban, particularly the Haqqani group. "They are our powerful watchmen" is how the Taliban summarized its relationship with the ISI (Chaudhuri and Shende). And, the growing influence of the Taliban, in Kabul, is highly unlikely for India.

To fully comprehend the problem, it is pertinent to understand the historical angle. And the history tells us that "the Taliban's aim has been to re-establish its medieval style of rule and its severe interpretation of Sharia law. To accomplish this, its first goal was to force NATO and other international forces from Afghanistan; or if it could not force them out, to wait them out. And the Taliban possesses a very different view of time than the Western need for instant gratification. While people look at their watches, they view the calendar and exhibit great strategic patience. It knows that the

government of Afghanistan is very vulnerable without NATO forces. At the same time, it seeks continually to undermine the Kabul government. The weaker, more ineffective, and more corrupt the government looks, the better the alternatives offered by the insurgents appear to the population"(Riley).

In addition, India has a great concern over the increasing political instability in Kabul. It is a great Concern to India's long term interests in Kabul. And it is highly likely that "a power-sharing agreement signed between Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and former chief executive Abdullah, on May 17, 2020, it is clear that such alliances cannot be taken at face value" (Chaudhuri and Shende.). This agreement could be taken as the threat to the political stability in Afghanistan. And, India has to entail its strategic path and not depend on the Afghan's way of reconciliation, which entails the huge risk of competitive politics. If India wants to focus on the Afghanistan policy. It has to focus on "The insurgency narrative by which The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)made sense of the situation in Afghanistan was associated closely with six key interleaved 'strategies' in Helmand: (i) to support and strengthen The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and state apparatus (notably the police) and to promote good governance; (ii) to neutralize the Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants; (iii) to provide security for the civilian population; (iv) to rebuild Afghanistan and its infrastructure; (v) to disrupt the narcotics (specifically opium) industry; and (vi) to win the hearts and minds of the people Based on '...almost zero knowledge of the environment they were operating in"(Brown).

The continual engagement in Kabul can not only be inspired by a humanitarian window. Along with, It is pertinent to take efforts in diminishing the spread of radical Islam menace and the drug problem in Afghanistan. And, It can be done through Security, governance, education and development to areas that have none. This withdrawal agreement has turned a new page in the Afghanistan Saga. If it has been decided that the US-led troops will withdraw from Kabul and that there are chances of the Taliban being politically represented in Afghanistan, or at least playing a major part in the political system, such a new power equation has to be revised. And, the world sees India, a credible actor, as a part of the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan.

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