



US SURGE IN AFGHANISTAN

*K. N. Tennyson**

President George Bush, in his address to a Joint Session of the Congress on September 20, 2001, stated that America's war on terror will not "end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."¹ He further added, America will use, "every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war" to defeat and eliminate global terror network.² Since then, seven long years had passed and America is still struggling on war against terrorism. The US, despite utilising its state of the art technology, did not seem to have succeeded much, except the fact, that the Taliban regime has been dethroned. Despite the establishment of democratically elected Karzai government and the presence of large numbers of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan,³ peace still seems to be a distant dream for the Afghans.

Military Might is not the Ultimate Solution

Since, the war does not seem to come to an end, newly elected US President Barack Obama pledged to deploy about 17,000 additional military troops to Afghanistan; as he feels, more troops will help in stabilising the situation in Afghanistan.⁴ But, the question is, will more troops help in stabilising Afghanistan? It is true that there is shortage of military personnel in Afghanistan to counter "resilient" insurgency. However, what American political and military leaders fail to understand is that it is not the shortage of military personnel but, flawed strategy which seems to be failing their operations.

It is true that there is shortage of military personnel in Afghanistan to counter "resilient" insurgency. However, what American political and military leaders fail to understand is that it is not the shortage of military personnel but, flawed strategy which seems to be failing their operations.

According to the US Department of State, figures, Pakistan have received about \$ 3,105 million economic related aid for the FY 2002-2008, which includes the Coalition Support Funds, Development Assistance, Economic Support Funds and Food Aid.

Therefore, bringing in more military forces will not solve the precarious political situation in Afghanistan. Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman, US Joint Chiefs of Staff, in his address to House Armed Services Committee in September 2008 clearly stated, "No amount of troops in no amount of time can ever achieve all the objectives", the US seeks in Afghanistan.⁵ A month later, expressing similar view, Kai Eide, the United Nations special envoy to Afghanistan, remarked at a news conference in Kabul (October 2008) that war in Afghanistan cannot be won through the use of force, but can be won only through political means.⁶ By "political means," he meant "political engagement." Kai Eide urged the US and international community to directly engage in dialogues with all the relevant conflicting parties in Afghanistan including the Taliban to bring about political change in the war-torn country.

The US Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan lacked a holistic approach. A clear example is that the US policy makers, despite knowing of the involvement of Pakistan in the rise of Taliban, overlooked Pakistan's true role and the aim to acquire huge military and economic aid for cooperating in the war against terrorism. According to the US Department of State, figures, Pakistan have received about \$ 3,105 million economic related aid for the FY 2002-2008, which includes the Coalition Support Funds, Development Assistance, Economic Support Funds and Food Aid.⁷ Taking advantage of the political development in the region,

*K. N. Tennyson is an Associate Fellow at the Centre For Air Power Studies, New Delhi

Pakistan politically joined hands with the US in the war against terrorism, but at the same time covertly supported and assisted Taliban financially and militarily.

Further, OEF was carried out without taking into consideration the socio-economic, political, security and humanitarian realities of Afghanistan. Thus, one witnessed the indiscriminate shelling and destruction of life and property in Afghanistan by the US-led coalition forces. Stephanie Nebehay (quoting UN reports) reported that "More than 2,100 civilians were killed in Afghanistan in 2008," recording an increase of 40 per cent (figure stood at 1,523 in 2007).⁸ The large civilian casualties have aroused a strong resentment among the Afghans, which in-turn has provided opportunities to the militants to exploit the sufferings of the locals to strengthen their positions.

What is more ironic is the fact that, the US political leaders openly praised Pakistani leaders for their cooperation in the war against terrorism, but on the other hand, U.S. Gen. David D. McKiernan, Commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan rebuked Pakistan government for failing to take adequate measures to control the activities of the insurgents in Pakistan. It is imperative for the US to note that it should adopt a more realistic policy toward Pakistan because Taliban was created by Pakistan's military leaders (ISI) as an "instrument of its government's jihadi policies" in Afghanistan in the early 1990s.⁹ Since terrorism is supported and promoted by Pakistan's ISI, its reforms must form the minimum conditions for further US support.

Real Success in Afghanistan ?

One of the defining characteristics of Afghanistan is the complexity of its ethnic, linguistic, religious and tribal identities. In this context, the US and NATO political and military leaders need to understand the political situation of Afghanistan and formulate their policies accordingly. History has shown that military action has never brought about any amicable solution in Afghanistan. The goal of thwarting the militant might does not lie in using military force but by winning the hearts and minds of the Afghans. And one such way to win over the population is to provide them with certain measure

It is imperative for the US to note that it should adopt a more realistic policy toward Pakistan because Taliban was created by Pakistan's military leaders (ISI) as an "instrument of its government's jihadi policies" in Afghanistan in the early 1990s. Since terrorism is supported and promoted by Pakistan's ISI, its reforms must form the minimum conditions for further US support.

of security and strengthen local governance. Without adequate security and strong local-self government, developmental work can never take place.

After nearly three decades of armed conflict Afghans are weary of militant's activities. The storming of "Zagai and Tora Kopai centers of local Taliban on fire" by the tribal Lashkar in October 2008 "after the expiry of the deadline given to them for leaving the area" is a clear manifestation of the growing

discontent with the Taliban.¹⁰ The US should take advantage of growing Afghans wariness with the Taliban and regenerate its resources on developing local capability, because, as Brian Michael Jenkins observes, "It will not be American or NATO forces that ultimately prevail over al Qaeda and the Taliban, but Afghan forces."¹¹ The US war against terrorism in Afghanistan will not go on indefinitely; it's a matter of time, sooner or later US and NATO forces will be compelled to withdraw from the state.

Criticising the lopsided policy adopted in Afghanistan by the Afghan government and international policy makers, Oxfam stated, "Despite the evident importance of building peace at the local level, so far national and international responses to insecurity have focused on military efforts and on high-level of political initiatives rather than grassroots work." This is one of the reasons why "[e]xisting high-level measures to promote peace in Afghanistan are not succeeding," says Max Waldman, Oxfam International's policy adviser in Afghanistan.¹²

It's a sad reality that many countries participating in the war against terrorism began to express skepticism regarding the ability of the US and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to deal decisively with the Taliban militants. However, the US of late, began to realise the negative effects of the use of military power. Lt. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, designated American commander in Afghanistan openly acknowledged errors of the US air strike, on June 2, 2009, and vowed that reducing civilian casualties was essential to US credibility on war against terrorism, signaling a paradigm shift in US foreign policy.¹³

The US should take advantage of growing Afghans wariness with the Taliban and regenerate its resources on developing local capability, because, as Brian Michael Jenkins observes, "It will not be American or NATO forces that ultimately prevail over al Qaeda and the Taliban, but Afghan forces." The US war against terrorism in Afghanistan will not go on indefinitely; it's a matter of time, sooner or later US and NATO forces will be compelled to withdraw from the state.

The perpetrating internal political crisis and external invasion has completely devastated the socio-economic and political fabric of the Afghans. On May 19, 2009 Noorullah Stanikzai reports on the prevailing pathetic conditions of the Afghan's internally displaced people, said, poor sanitation is threatening the lives of about "a quarter of a million" displaced people living in makeshift camps across the country.¹⁴ Five days later, on May 25, 2009, Masooma Mohammadi reported, "Seven out of every 10 inhabitants of Kabul City do not have access to clean drinking water."¹⁵ What is more disconsolate is the fact that Afghanistan officials expressed their inability to absorb those Afghan refugees (above 220,000) due to lack of resources, whom the UNHRC wanted to repatriate from Pakistan.¹⁶

The government's resources are severely strained and the state machinery is on the verge of collapse. Afghanistan is in need of urgent help. Afghans need to be helped not only to stabilise the wobbly political situation and security of the state but also to improve the social and economic conditions of the people.

Many developmental works and projects like the construction and repairing of roads, schools, dams and hospitals, etc. by the US and NATO-led ISAF have been completed or are on the verge of completion. NATO reports, dated June 2007, suggested "\$26.8 billion has been (given) to Afghanistan since 2001, including \$10.5 billion pledged at the London Conference in 2006," for the reconstruction and developmental work, he further stated, that, by early 2007, 83 percent of the Afghans have access to medical facilities as compared to 9 percent in 2004.¹⁷

Incongruously, the massive inflow of foreign aid for the reconstruction and development work in Afghanistan has brought about new challenges. One such appalling challenge is the mismanagement of funds and corruption. Dr. G. Rauf Roashan pointing out one such example said, "Billions of the green mighty Dollars were spent on military equipment, support services for keeping troops in a foreign country ... (Seven) years into the game, almost all of the needs of the needy remain unmet and the exorbitant amounts of money spent under the infamous title of security have yielded the opposite. Money has bought insecurity."¹⁸ Anne Applebaum is

Pakistan, despite being an ally in the war on terror did not sincerely cooperate to eliminate the terrorist groups operating on its soil. Rather, its leaders continue to covertly assist the Taliban militants, militarily, as well as, financially. Subsequently, Taliban spread its influence in many parts of Pakistan like Swat, Kurram Agency and North and South Waziristan.

of the opinion that the failure of development in Afghanistan "lies not in greater funding but in more intelligent use of the massive resources available."¹⁹ There were reports of conflicting agendas, overlapping projects and mismanagement of funds and rampant corruption. Therefore, this requires, prudence in planning, reformation of governance, wiping out of corruption and a reexamination of where the money is spent.²⁰

Conclusion

Afghanistan is in urgent needs of peace and development. However, to bring about peace and development in the state, al Qaeda and its ally Taliban's organisational structure must be curtailed and eliminated. Marvin stated, "To defeat the Taliban will require a long-term commitment of the international community to Afghanistan's security and a Pakistani government more willing and able to deny anti-Kabul forces (Taliban) safe haven."²¹

Pakistan, despite being an ally in the war on terror did not sincerely cooperate to eliminate the terrorist groups operating on its soil. Rather, its leaders continue to covertly assist the Taliban militants, militarily, as well as, financially. Subsequently, Taliban spread its influence in many parts of Pakistan like Swat, Kurram Agency and North and South Waziristan.

US needs to develop more pragmatic approach to curb al Qaeda activities because "most of the al Qaeda facilities and most of the foreign troops under their control in Afghanistan (were involved) with the civil war there," remarked Carl Conetta. He reiterated that "Most of the organization's capabilities to conduct far reaching terrorist acts resided in and resides outside of Afghanistan, and thus fell beyond the scope of Operation Enduring Freedom."²² There is no denying the fact that unilateral action from the US alone would be Herculean task to bring about any amicable political solution. There is a need for

greater participation from international civilian agencies and communities especially from Afghanistan neighbouring countries (Pakistan, India and Iran) to help in stabilising the country and rescue Afghanistan from further collapse.

The critical element for success in Afghanistan is Pakistan's full and active cooperation, and its military holds the key. It may not be able to take firm military action against al

The critical element for success in Afghanistan is Pakistan's full and active cooperation, and its military holds the key. It may not be able to take firm military action against al Qaeda /Taliban in view of over 22% Pathan/Pashtun troops in the army. But, greater focus is required for reforms in the ISI, the organisation that actually supports and promotes terrorist groups.

Qaeda/Taliban in view of over 22% Pathan/Pashtun troops in the army. But, greater focus is required for reforms in the ISI, the organisation that actually supports and promotes terrorist groups. Little success in US surge or expanded military operations by US can be expected without urgent and substantive changes in ISI's organisational command structure, as well as, at its strategic level, in the pursuit of its political-ideological goals inside as well as outside Pakistan. In fact, without this step it is difficult to see tangible progress and stability within Pakistan leave alone Afghanistan. It is useful to recall that the elected government in Islamabad had tried to curtail the "political" role of ISI; but had to cancel announced policy within a week under pressure from Rawalpindi where real power resides.

To sum up, US policy success would have some chance of success only if:

1. It conditions tangible reforms in ISI in return for further military assistance to Pakistan
2. Reduce visible military action especially inside Pakistan territory to contain if not reduce anti-US sentiments in Pakistan and the Muslims across the world.
3. Ensure more robust socio-economic reconstruction in Afghanistan.
4. Engage the tribal leaders across Afghanistan for their support in reconciliation process in the political arena that is not based necessarily on western democracy. Some lessons for Najibullah rule worth emulating.

Notes

¹ "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

² Ibid,

³ CRS report for Congress stated that as of "July 2008, ISAF had an estimated 52,700 troops from 40 countries, with NATO members providing the core of the force." Out of which 14,800 troops were reported to have come from the US; Paul Gallis and Vincent Morelli, "NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance," <http://www.fas.org/spp/crs/row/RL33627.pdf>

⁴ Barbara Starr, "Obama Approves Afghanistan Troop Increase," <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/02/17/obama.troops/index.html>

⁵ Ann Scott Tyson, "Top Military Officer Urges Major Change in Afghanistan Strategy," <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/10/AR2008091001396.html>

⁶ "UN Says Afghan War Not Winnable," <http://www.dawn.com/2008/10/07/top6.htm>

⁷ US Department of State, Defence and Agriculture; US Agency for International Development, as cited in Shalini Chawla, *Pakistan's Military and Its Strategy* (New Delhi: Knowledge World and Centre for Air Power Studies, 2009) pp. 273-74

⁸ Stephanie Nebehay "UN: 2,100 Civilians Killed in Afghanistan in 2008," <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE5123KR20090203>

⁹ Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Afghanistan and Its Neighbours: An Ever Dangerous Neighbourhood," *USIP Special Report 162*, June 2006, p. 11; Full article can be obtained from, http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr162_afghanistan.html

¹⁰ Ibrahim Shinwari, "Tribesmen burn down Taliban Centres in Jamrud," <http://www.dawn.com/2008/09/26/local5.htm>

¹¹ For critical analysis of US counterterrorism programme see, Brian Michael Jenkins "Counterterrorism Wage a Sustainable Campaign," *Rand Review*, Fall 2008, Vol. 32, No.3, pp. 16-17

¹² "Local Peacebuilding urgently Needed to Reduce Insecurity in Afghanistan, Oxfam says," http://www.oxfamamerica.org/newsandpublications/press_releases/local-peacesbuilding-urgently-needed-to-reduce-insecurity-in-afghanistan-oxfam-says

¹³ Eric Schmit & Thom Shanker, "U.S. Report Finds Errors in Afghan Airstrikes," <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/03/World/Asia/03military.html>

¹⁴ Noorullah Stanikzai "Afghanistan: Health and Sanitation Woes in Makeshift IDP Camps," <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=84441>

¹⁵ Masooma Mohammadi, "Afghanistan: Lack of Safe Drinking Water in Kabul," <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=84572>

¹⁶ Masoud Popalzai, "Afghanistan: Refugees To Return From Pakistan-But Can They Absorb Back Home?" <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83472>

¹⁷ "NATO in Afghanistan," http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/factsheets/reconst_develop.html

¹⁸ Dr. G. Rauf Roashan, "Security for Sale," <http://www.institute-for-afghan-studies.org/include/article.php?recordID=73>

¹⁹ Anne Applebaum, "The Smart Money in Afghanistan," <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/23/AR2008092302324.html>

²⁰ Dr. G. Rauf Roashan, n.18

²¹ Marvin G. Weinbaum, n.9

²² Carl Conetta, "Strange Victory: A Critical Appraisal of Operation Enduring Freedom and the Afghanistan war," <http://www.comw.org/pda/0201strangevic.pdf>



The Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) is an independent, non-profit think tank that undertakes and promotes policy related research, study and discussion on defence and military issues, trends, and development in air power and space for civil and military purposes, as also related issues of national security. The Centre is headed by Air Cmde Jasjit Singh, AVSM, VrC, VM (Retd) Centre for Air Power Studies.

P-284, Arjan Path, Subrota Park, New Delhi 110010
Tel: +91 11 25699130/32, Fax: +91 11 25682533

Editor: Ms Shalini Chawla e-mail: shalini@aerospaceindia.org

The views expressed in this brief are those of the author and not necessarily of the Centre or any other organisation.