

Rise of Taliban and Security Implication on neighboring countries

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Abstract: Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in 1980s and the subsequent rise of Taliban led to the new wave of terrorism globally. Fighters from different countries came to help the Mujahidin groups in Afghanistan. Religious based terrorist activity came into existence after that with a goal to spread their agenda in their respective countries. Al-Qaeda took the lead here and financially helped these groups initially. This paper delves into detail about the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is strategically important place which is geographically to link to South Asia, Central Asian States and China. Recent development in Afghanistan where Taliban took the office to govern, has kept everyone skeptical about their future endeavor not to support any terrorist organization. For this reason, this paper seeks to know the formation and goals of Taliban which is required to know their future actions. On the other hand, this study only focuses on the security implications towards its neighboring countries as China, Pakistan, India and five central Asian states because of linkage of Taliban with different terrorist organization in those countries. Study about the recent development in Afghanistan is out of the scope of this paper as it only focuses on understating the profile of Taliban and security implications on its geographically adjacent countries if its continues to keep linkage with terrorist outfit.

Key Word: Taliban. AL Qaeda, Pakistan, India, Central Asian States

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I. Introduction

Global scenario has been changed after 9/11 attack on world trade center. The blame went to AL-Qaeda and its host Taliban in Afghanistan. Since then Taliban became a badly known organization to the international community. The rise of Taliban is not overnight. It has a history. The organization came out of the cloud with specific intention and ideology. Middle-East is the badly affected region by the western power tackling terrorism. Afghanistan was not out of their lust. This very intervention from time to time by the outsiders made the country a home for radical movement that gave rise to Taliban. Besides, its strategic geographical location made the country vulnerable to intervene by others. On the other hand AL Qaeda has a strong affiliation with Taliban. Osama Bin Laden, the leader of Al Qaeda came to Afghanistan after 1996 from Sudan as a guest of Taliban government. He associated himself with the rise of Taliban and its spiritual leader (Hussain, 2007, p 31). Hence, rise of Islamic extremism in this country has security implication for its neighbor states and also to other concerning states. Taliban in Afghanistan has spread their effect on Pakistan, China, Central Asian States, Iran and India. Besides, states are vulnerable those who have likeminded people. Taliban has become of the causes of insecurity in its neighboring states because of its religious extremism, objectives and linkages to them for their sources of income. This study has incorporated the formation of Taliban organization, their sources of income and objectives to explain the security implication in the region. For this it has endorsed the linkages of Taliban with different groups across the border that forms the cloud of insecurity.

II. Taliban: Organizational formation, objectives, actions and leadership

Taliban became an organization from a very small group within a short time. The members are religious students who expressed their anger against the group fighting for the power of the city and took action to end the corrupt practices. But they took the method of terror act. In the meantime they got support from the Pakistan, USA and Saudi Arabia. The combination of outside support and their willing made it possible for them to emerge as an organization (Marsden, 2002, p.26). Taliban came in front to establish peace and justice in Afghanistan in accordance with Sharia law (Sial, 2009). They got the wider attention in 1994 capturing Kandahar. Several incidents and causes pave the way for their rise in Afghanistan. Three army personnel from Pakistan and United States in their assessment emphasized on some causes that gave rise to Taliban as an organization: Culture of Afghanistan, Fight by Mujahidin in Soviet invasions in 1979, warlordism and civil war following soviet withdrawal after 1989, initial acceptance of Taliban by the wider community in the country as

the savior of peace and the religious ideology (Afsar, Samples and Wood, 2008). These causes worked as an influence that paved the way for their formation.

Taliban endorse the root of Afghan's cultural beliefs as hatred towards foreign domination, fight for honor, hospitality for outsiders even for the enemies. Taliban are mostly Sunni Muslim Pushtuns. Afghanistan has long history of invaders. From time to time Persian, Arabs, Turks, Mongols, British, Russians and (at present) United States etc entered the country to dominate them. But the Pushtun always fought against foreign domination to defend their homeland. Pushtun cannot accept any form of strict authority. Their culture shows that Pushtun people are always ready to fight for their honor (for family, society or the country), they have a culture to take revenge if any wrong is done against them and they are supportive to one another. Hence, the Pushtun people rally against any foreign threat and make ally to fight against them no matter what happens (Afsar, Samples and Wood, 2008). The new government in 1978 and the reform made the Mujahidin to prevent those. This new government was ally with the Soviet. Soviet invasion in 1979 changed the scenario. The Mujahidin called for Jihad. This war brought about a huge refugee people from Afghanistan to Pakistan. The Taliban grew from the refugee camp in Pakistan. The students of madrassa in the refugee camps were modified and taught conservative approach about social issues. Finally the Soviet withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989 and the following years they fought among themselves for the power. In 1994 Taliban took the control of Kandahar and their leader Mullah Mohammad Omar again the position of charismatic leader who were there to lead not just the Afghan but also the Muslim people (Afsar, Samples and Wood, 2008). They took the control of the country in 1994 but lost the support of the international community and Afghan people for its gender policies and human rights violation. Besides, Taliban has a strong affiliation with Osama Bin Laden and his organization Al-Qaeda. Thus finally after 9/11 attack by the AL-Qaeda, Afghanistan became battlefield by the North Alliances. In 2001 Taliban was ousted from the power (Global Terrorism Index, 2016, p 54). But they have risen up again to conduct terror as the foreign power is still on their land.

Taliban is confined to pre-Islamic beliefs and tribal customs. Their main interest is to establish Caliphate. Thus their objectives include- mobilizing the Pushtun people to fight against the government, to defend the country against Northern Alliances and to free the country from them and to establish their version of Islamic Caliphate with Pakistan. To do this the organization maintains several level of leadership that ranges from village to regional level. But the decision making is autocratic taken by the top leader of the organization. Top leaders make the policies and direct it to regional leaders and then to village cells. They target the madrassa students for new recruitment motivated by religious beliefs, for revenge and financial problems etc.

III. Taliban and Impact on Regional Security

The geographical location of Afghanistan is strategically important for many states that fuel the terrorism in the country further. Here the culture of Afghanistan describes much of their position behind taking such terrorist actions. Taliban who became very powerful taking control 95% of the country within the year 1997 is the cause of insecurity for surrounding countries (Afsar, Samples and Wood, 2008, p.60). Afghanistan has its border with Pakistan, China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Iran. Besides, India also has its headache over any changes within Afghanistan because of the Kashmir problem and the historical connection they feel with them. The civil war in Afghanistan has polarized the region where Pakistan and Saudi-Arabia taking the side of Taliban and Iran, India, Russia and Central Asian States support Northern Alliance (Rashid, 1999). Because of this polarization they feel insecure for any happenings in Afghanistan centering Taliban. On the other hand, Afghanistan connects the ancient trade routes between Iran and India as well as Iran and China (Singh, 2001, p.3). Hence, all the parties have some interests on Afghanistan and Afghanistan became the target of intervention and occupation for many times.

From the discussion above some points come out that can explain the reason of insecurities of the surrounding states for the rise of Taliban within Afghanistan. Taliban is fighting to defend the foreign domination and to secure Islam for their part. They want to spread Islam in the region and trying to make link with Islamic groups through their porous border. Besides, Taliban depends on opium and heroin smuggling for their finance source that makes annual revenue US\$400 million (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016, p.55). They sold these drugs to surrounding countries and for this reason they have a liaison with them. Hence, all these causes make the scenario very difficult and insecure the countries specially the Central Asia and South Asia. To explain the security impact of the rise of Taliban in the region it is important to know the links they have made with the other groups across the border. It would be easy to connect those linkages with the causes of their terror acts.

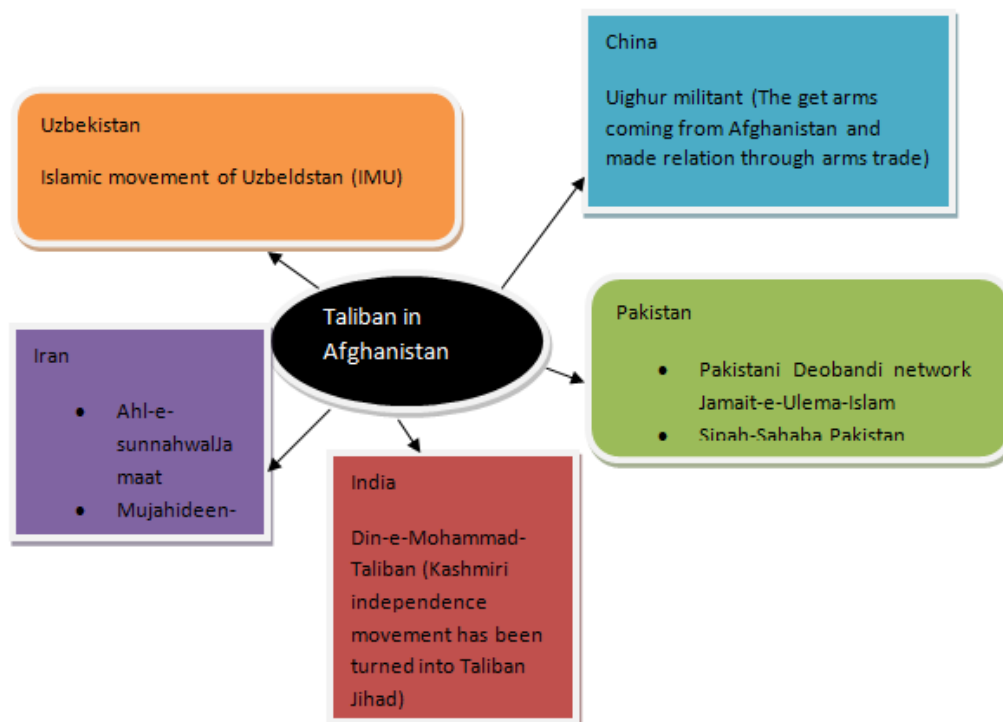


Figure 1: The linkages of Taliban with the militant groups across the border¹.

The figure 1 above shows the linkages of Taliban with different radical groups across the border. Here, Taliban remains in the circular box and the arrow signs towards China, Pakistan, India, Iran, and Uzbekistan show the linkages between Taliban and mentioned groups. This liaison makes the respective countries insecure. Hence, the explanation of these links will show why the countries have security implication for the rise of Taliban.

Members of Taliban got education in the refugee camps in Pakistan. Thus, their interpretation of Islam has come from the Deobandism which is a branch of Sunni Islam. Pakistani Mullahs spread this version in extreme form with the aim to reunite Muslim society struggling within foreign colonies. They made a political party in Pakistan naming Jamait-ulema-e-Islam (JUI) who is anti-American. This political party became very active to recruit people to fight for Taliban (Rashid, 1999). Thus the strong links between JUI and Taliban is from the beginning and it has made Islamic revolution in Pakistan even greater. The porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the Pushtun belt made it easier for drug trade. This link has increased gun culture, drug trade involvement and religious fundamentalism even further. Besides, some other groups supporting Taliban for their vested interests which may increase the domestic turmoil (Singh, 2001). In addition, Taliban got support from two other extremists groups naming Sipah-Sahaba Pakistan and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi who killed many Shiite Muslims in Pakistan and tried to assassinate Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Hence, the support towards Taliban by the Pakistan has backfired (Rashid, 1999).

Iran is dominated by Shia Muslim and Afghanistan by Sunni Muslim. Hence, Iran is always against the Taliban rule in Afghanistan and a supporter of Northern Alliance. Iran is in competition with Taliban for influence in Central Asia for oil. For any domestic problem in Afghanistan that creates refugee, Iran gets the first blow. Thus refugees are increasing in Iran for civil strife in Afghanistan and it has direct impact on the spread of gun culture and drug smuggling. The relation had worsened after the Taliban atrocities in Hazarat, Herat, Mazar-i-sharif against Shia community. On the other hand, Iran gave support to Shia groups in Afghanistan and Northern Alliance economically and militarily (Singh, 2001). Besides, Taliban extended their support to Sunni Iranians opposing the government naming Ahl-e-Sunnah WalJamaat and another opposition groups naming Mujahideen-e- khalq who visited kandaher to get provided by training base (Rashid, 1999).

The five Central Asian States became free from the subjugation of Soviet Union but never got a stable political environment. To increase this woe, the border with Afghanistan shows another problem of increasing religious extremism. These states have a large number of unemployed people and Islamist movements as the

¹ The figure has been made based on the literatures of BRIGADIER GENERAL VIJAY K. SINGH Indian Army (2001), Ahmed Rashid (1999), and Major ShahidAfsar, Pakistan Army; Major Chris Samples, U.S. Army; and Major Thomas Wood, U.S. Army (2008).

only political opposition (Rashid, 1999). Hence, it is obvious for their part to get linked with Taliban across the border having similar ethnic composition and the clan loyalties (Singh, 2001). Islamic movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) had link with Taliban. The leader of IMU, Yuldashev, got help from Taliban to set up a raining base in northern Afghanistan. He was responsible for the attempt to assassinate the Uzbek President and bomb explosion on Tashkent. Yuldashev is also training militant from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizstan and Xijiang. Thus the rise of Taliban is a true headache for central Asian States.

China is already suffering from the rise of militancy and fundamentalism in their region especially in the Muslim majority province, Xinjiang. In this province the Muslim majority is treated badly for their religion and Hans consider them as barbarians. It is normal to get linked with the Islamic groups outside the border. Taliban made this link by supplying drugs and heroin to the growing numbers of addicted people in China (Singh, 2001). Uighur militant got training and fought for Afghanistan against Soviet invasion. Thus they are indoctrinated like Taliban (Rashid, 1999). It is a matter of insecurity for China and Chinese authority is promised to tackle them.

Though India does not share border with Afghanistan, it has security implications for the Kashmir problems with Pakistan. Besides, Pakistan trains the Taliban fighters and for this it is matter of insecurity for India. India refused to support Taliban because they are backed by Pakistan and send mercenaries to Kashmir. Taliban and Pakistani mercenaries attacked the Hindu Pundit Community in Kashmir valley. Taliban sponsored the group Din-e-Mohammed Taliban in Northern Kashmir who set up schools to teach Islamic fundamentalists teachings. Thus Pakistan and Taliban alliance is training and equipping militants for the Jihad in Kashmir which is very dangerous for the conflict between India and Pakistan, two nuclear weapon holder (Singh, 2001).

Hence, the rise of Taliban and their powerful stance can make these bordering states vulnerable for the reasons explained above. Besides, the engagement of two powerful states Russia and United States of America will never make the situation simple in Afghanistan. As long as there is foreign domination within the land of Afghanistan, Taliban will justify their actions of controlling them. Though after American invasion Taliban leaders went underway but they are showing their strength again and increasing their fund rising greater than before. Hence, Taliban has all the support to stand again and it is only need to cut those support to tackle them without going into direct armed fighting.

IV. Conclusion

Since 2013, Taliban has increased their terror attacks. According to Global Terrorism Index (2016), 2015 was the deadly year for Taliban where they committed 1094 terror attacks that killed 4502 people. Police were the major target by them through bombings. They carried out suicide bombings killing 193 people. 20 percent of the terror acts were against the private citizens and 5 percent were against military. Their aim is to dismantle the government and its institutions. The GTI report (2016) says that Taliban is expanding their control further in north of Afghanistan along the border of Tajikistan. Besides, their sources of financial support, opium cultivation increased by 19 percent from 2012 to 2015 and also getting fund from countries like Saudi-Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016). Hence, the rise of Taliban is on the way for their financial support. This drug trade is sources of support for many other insurgency movements like Kashmir and creates insecurity for the respective country.

The aim for the formation of Taliban organization is to defend the country from foreign domination. Pakistan lends their support for their vested interests. But with the course of time it is proved that the support has backfired creating domestic turmoil in Pakistan. On the other hand the narco trade, the main support for the Taliban, has created insecurities for the bordering areas. In addition, the rise of Islamic militants and insurgency movements within India and Central Asian States makes them vulnerable and the links with Taliban has opened the door for insecurities for them as well. Hence, Taliban is the cause of insecurity for bordering states and others for the spread of their version of Islam.

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