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STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES ON AFGHANISTAN, IRAN, IRAQ, PAKISTAN AND INDIA

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Listen to what “the Father of the Constitution” of America, one of the “Founding Fathers” of America, and the fourth President of America (1809-1817) James Madison said about the consequences of war:

“Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes...known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few....No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.”(James Madison, Political Observations, 1795. He was known as the “the Father of the [U.S.] Constitution”; he was one of the “Founding Fathers” of America and the fourth U.S President [1809-1817]).

Thesis Statement is organized around two ideas: (1) U.S. does not need long-term military investment in Afghanistan, but it does need to give long-term peace, stability and security in South Asia and Middle East a real chance; (2) Taliban (generic name for the Afghan resistance forces) do not seek jobs from the foreign-installed regime, but they are disgusted with the corrupt and exclusionary structures of the current system and oppose foreign troops in their country.

Introduction

Soon after the U.S.-British installed Shah regime (1953) in Iran was replaced by the Islamic Republic in 1979, the U.S. CentCom (Central Command) was created, and the Middle East became the “area of responsibility” of this military establishment. See L.T. Michael DeLong with Noah Lukeman, Inside the CentCom: The Unvarnished Truth about the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Regnery Publishing, 2004). The two confessions of Islam are called Sunnis and Shiias. Sunnis are minority in Iraq and Iran. While Shiias make up the majority of Iran’s and Iraq’s population, Sunnis encompass the majority of Afghan population. The United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran both wanted to abolish Saddam Hussein’s Baathist regime (Baathism is an Arab political ideology-a mixture of socialism, nationalism and military dictatorship). From U.S. perspective, the status of Iraq has always been, more or less, important to the strategic challenge of Iran. Until the U.S invasion of Iraq in March of 2003, regional stability was expected to be founded on the Iraq-Iran balance of power. Also, U.S. and Iranian governments wanted to destroy the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. In both U.S. invasions of Afghanistan(October 2001) and Iraq (March 2003), the Islamic Republic of Iran somehow collaborated with Washington, but for different reasons. U.S. was destroying the Sunni Taliban regime in connection with Osama-911 catastrophe, and the government of Shiite Islamic Republic was happy about that. Internationally acclaimed scholars Professor Noam Chomsky and Professor Gilbert Achcar said in an interview that in 2001 the United States and Pakistan “overthrew the Taliban in alliance with other enemies of democracy, the Northern Alliance Mujahideen warlords....a bunch of warlords and terrorists. Abdul Haq (a former Mujahideen commander) and others were pretty serious guys of whom the West would have approved. They might have been able to defeat the Taliban from within. They thought they could do it, but the United States didn’t want them to.” (Chomsky and Achcar, Perilous Power, The Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy: Dialogues on Terror, Democracy, War, and Terror.Paradigm Publisher , expanded edition, 2007, pp.44 & 78).

Afghanistan in the Pipelinstan Great Game

A resourceful American researcher and author on Afghanistan Bruce G. Richardson reminded me of the pre-existing U.S. plan for war on Afghanistan: The failed pipeline negotiations between Taliban and the U.S.-led UNOCAL consortium in 2001 brought about America’s war in Afghanistan which was not related to the so-called “war on terror”. A few weeks before 911 attacks, in July of 2001, Taliban were threatened by President George W. Bush administration when negotiations between them and UNOCAL broke and seemed to favor the oil and gas holding company Bidas in Argentine. At an UN-sponsored conference on Afghanistan (Berlin, Germany, July 2001) U.S. officials advised Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary Niaz Naik that “we will attack Afghanistan before snow flies in October”. Niaz Naik was Pakistan’s illustrious diplomat for backchannel diplomacy (He was found dead-most probably killed-in his Islamabad residence in August of 2009). According to Richardson, Naik’s “impression was that the U.S. sought regime change [in Afghanistan] to advance the UNOCAL pipeline project.” To this effect, Richardson points to a former CIA officer, Christine Rocca, who “told

Taliban official when the negotiations in favor of the US-led consortium were faltering that ‘you either accept our offer of gold or we will bury you in a carpet of bombs’.” (Bruce Richardson’s e-mail to me, May 6, 2010, Thursday, May 6, 2010, 5:56:20 AM). Also, see “U.S. ‘Planned Attack on Taliban’”, by the BBC’s George Arney/BBC News, World: South Asia, (Tuesday, 18 September 2001, 11:27 GMT/12:27 U.K.); Jean-Charles Brisard and Guillaume Dasquie, *Forbidden Truth: U.S.- Taliban Secret Diplomacy and the Failed Hunt for Bin Laden*, 2001, Hardcover). Critics point to some factual errors in this book. Brazilian Pepe Escobar is journalist, author and political analyst. An important question “why Afghanistan matters” does not relate to the liberation of Afghan women, but in part, “because the idea that energy and Afghanistan might have anything in common is verboten[prohibited]” in Washington, he believes. Escobar writes that Afghanistan “sits conveniently at the crossroad if any new Silk Road [blue gold: gas]” as well as connecting four nuclear powers: China, Russia, India, and Pakistan. (Pepe Escobar, “Blue Gold, Turkmen Bashes, and Asian Grid”, *Huffington Post*, May 12, 2009). While Helmand and Kandahar provinces of Afghanistan are important to U.S./NATO, Afghanistan’s security and stability are important to Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Members of this intergovernmental mutual-security organization are China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, while India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan are observers. Sri Lanka and Belarus are its dialogue partners, and Afghanistan, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States/former Soviet Republics, formed at the break up of the Soviet Union) are guest attendances. The need for stability and security in the near future will force Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Kashmir, Pakistan, Pashtunkhwa, and the Arab Middle East to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Middle East, including Israel, shall be a zone free of nuclear weapons.

Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Gulf Arabs

The leadership of the anti-Pashtun Northern Alliance was connected to Iran, Russia, India, and the United States. Iran and U.S. both were interested to marginalize the majority Pashtuns in Afghanistan (See Rahmat Zirakyar, “Pashtun-Bashing in Kite Runner: A Psychological Operation?”, December 9, 2009, electronic version). After the U.S. and Great Britain established military bases in Afghanistan, the Iranian leaders lost their sense for pleasure. The American deBaathification program in Iraq pushed the Sunni community and Baathists into resistance against the U.S. occupation and Iranian influence in the government. This way, the war among three factions (the Shias, the Sunnis, and the American military) drove Iraq into chaos and, thus, destroyed the balance of power with Iran. From this chaotic situation, the U.S. emerged as the only counterweight to Iran. From U.S. perspective, one may argue that in the chaotic climate of post-American invasion of Iraq an unrestrained Iran signifies a great strategic threat to the balance of power in the oil-rich Persian Gulf region, which provides Iran with a major audience. Iran would like to demonstrate to the Gulf Arabs that America is not a reliable and trustworthy friend. This way, the Iranian leadership would try to reduce their confidence in the United States to protect them and compel them to consider an accommodation with Iran. While retaining a residual force of approximately 50,000

personnel in Iraq, the United States needs to withdraw its combat forces from there this summer because they are needed in Afghanistan.

U.S. Dealing with Iran

The U.S. Army is stretched to its limits by a two-theater, multi-divisional war for seven years. Washington might not be able to be successfully involved in a third crisis. The residual forces along, with sufficient Iraqi military and security capabilities, should be able to control serious internal disturbances and an to deter an Iranian military attack. Also, the presence of U.S. and NATO fighting forces in Afghanistan shall remind the neighboring Iran to think twice and to refrain from an attack on Iraq. Assuming that with the help of occupational forces the Iraqis and Afghans create coherent governments and effective military and security forces, a fundamental question must be answered regarding their primary loyalty: To whom the professionally reconstituted military and security forces owe their primary loyalty, to their respective state or to some (religious, ethnic, political or geographical) faction of their corresponding country? Suppose these trained forces are loyal to their respective state, and their corresponding government has some strategic consensus whatsoever, does it match American/NATO interests? The Iranian leadership is definitely not interested in an Iraqi government that is capable of thwarting Iran's aspirations. To forge and influence a government in Iraq, the neighboring Iran has effective destabilization tools. Iran has continuing relations with any number of Iraqi Shiite groups, as well as with some Iraqi Kurdish and Arab Sunni groups. Similarly, the Iranian leadership would not want a government in neighboring Afghanistan that can halt Iran's ambitions. To shape and influence the Afghan government, Iran can use its religious and cultural destabilization tools against majority Sunni Pashtuns in Afghanistan (Iran has long-standing relations with minority ethnic and religious groups in Afghanistan: Sunni Tajiks, Shiia and Sunni Hazaras, Shiia Qezelbashs, and Sunni Uzbeks. All these non-Pashtun ethnic groups speak Farsi/Persian language). Since early 1990s Iran has been actively involved in creating a cultural community of Persian-speaking countries in the region. I feel confident to say that the American leadership knows about these realities. It is imperative for the American government to know, at least privately, that the creation of cohesive governments in Iraq and Afghanistan enjoying legitimacy and commanding capable and loyal security forces is not an easy task. What should the U.S. leadership do? Maybe America will delay withdrawals of its forces (In Afghanistan the U.S. withdrawal, scheduled to start in July of 2011, will be gradual and "condition-based". Yet more important and imminent is the Obama team's December 2010 re-evaluation of its strategy. The U.S. plans to withdraw its combat forces from Iraq by this summer but leaving behind nearly 50,000 noncombat troops there). To halt withdrawals of its combat forces, American leadership must have some clear conception of what advantage the delay would cause. Delaying the withdrawal of combat forces constitutes significant challenges. Washington will need to some accommodation with Iran, especially in the case of completing the withdrawal. To lower price in negotiations for the deal, American leadership will resort to some show of power. But bombing Iran's nuclear facilities will create more problems for President Barack Obama whose country is left without forces for a strategic reserve. He should know that the problem is not nuclear but conventional.

Washington's Problems in Afghanistan

The “counterinsurgents” (Orwellian doublespeak for U.S. and NATO occupying forces in Afghanistan) must remember their advantages and weaknesses: Their advantage is concentrated in their fire power in the air and on the ground. U.S. and NATO forces are suffering from timeline problem. They are short of time in Afghanistan, and most probably their military timeline cannot compete with the political timeline in America and the NATO countries because the public support for war is wearing away. In addition, the counterinsurgents have problem of intelligence gathering (bad intelligence). They cannot differentiate valid from invalid information, especially in Afghanistan, where America and NATO were allied with the anti-Pashtun infamous Northern Alliance warlords. Mostly, they have been relying on the intelligence received from agents who are loyal and connected to the Northern Alliance and belonging to minority ethnic groups in Afghanistan. These agents are illiterate in Pashto (the language of the majority Pashtuns). They will provide American intelligence services with information that is adapted to the interests of the anti-Pashtun Northern Alliance. These anti-Pashtun agents from Northern Alliance network (translators, advisers, liaison-officers, assistants, security officers, soldiers, informants, etc.) will fill the U.S./NATO intelligence pipeline with misleading information. According to Pashtunwali (the Pashtun Code of Honor, or the Pashtun Lifestyle), arrogance is repulsive, spying is despicable, and an intelligence agent is considered treacherous and very base. Another characteristic of Pashtuns is their “Gleichheitsbewusstsein” (egalitarian conscience, egalitarian mindset). When the very young Pashtun poet-leader Ahmad Shah Baba (Father Ahmad Shah) established modern Afghanistan in 1747, he was respected as “Dur-e Duran” (The Pearl of the Pearls) equaling to the principle of “primus inter pares” (First among Equals). The Pashtun egalitarian conscience and feeling of independence are reinvigorating each other. Good intelligence is connected to loyalty, which in turn is based on mutual reliability and respect, not indiscriminate killing of innocent Pashtuns (women, men, children), continuing dreadful night raids on homes, tampering with evidence to cover the blunder and cruel actions from the international attention, violating women, gun butting or kicking detainees, and “hauling family members to unknown detention sites for weeks or months.” (Erica Gatson, a human rights lawyer/The New York-based Opens Society Institute, in “Strangers at the Door”, Afghan Journal, April 6, 2010). If this is the new counterinsurgency strategy to protect the Pashtun population and to win their “hearts and minds”, how would you define terror from your own civilized point of view?! From the very beginning, you “the good guys” have been marginalizing Pashtuns, tampering with their statistical significance in Afghanistan(See Zirakyar, Pashtun-Bashing in Kite Runner: A Psychological Operation?, December 9, 2009, electronic version). Recently Dr. Nabi Misdaq has drafted a letter “Discrimination against Pashtuns”, which he plans to send it to the U.S. administration and Congress. Herein he writes: “We want to bring to your attention that majority student population of Afghan society which happens to be Pashtuns is not receiving its fair share of the scholarships offered by countries friendly to Afghanistan. This policy affects all Pashtuns by category and irrespective of where in Afghanistan they domicile-in the south or in the north and west of the country. We are concerned that this type of discrimination in education will further create social and

political instabilities down the road as some minorities gain social status and income and wealth and then try to impose, with or without foreign support their will on the majority[Pashtuns].” (e-mail dated April 9, 2010; 5:55:04 PM). These operations and policies not only strip the mask off of what U.S. President Obama once called “the right war”, but they create enemies, not friends, and Afghanistan is becoming more and more Obama’s war.

Power Balance with Pakistan and India

Pakistan and India were carved from the former British India in 1947. During the past 63 years of U.S.–Pakistani relationship, Washington’s strategic interest in the region was generally determined by its desire to contain Communism. Pakistan was driven by the desire to acquire military and financial aid and political support for its territorial conflict with the neighboring India, Pakistan’s most hated enemy. Often Pakistan considers itself as the “frontline” country of the West. In December of 1979, the former Soviet Union invaded its neighboring Afghanistan., and once again Pakistan became America’s “most allied ally”. But India sided with the Soviet Union and the Soviet-installed regime in Afghanistan. During a relatively long period stretching between the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979) and the emergence of Taliban power in the country in 1996, India experienced a historical decline in the power balance with the neighboring Pakistan, which enjoyed, now as before, its status as the frontline country of the West.

On September 11, 2001 the United States of America was attacked (911). Before U.S. Secretary of State Collin Powell (2001-2005) contacted then-Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf after 911 attacks, the White House had already addressed this issue to the leaders of Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, Israel, and, most strikingly, India (Pakistan’s archenemy) and secured their support. A potentially devastating U.S.-Indian alignment against terrorism might have made Musharraf’s hair stands on end. Following this tactic, Powell delivered his telephone message to Musharraf in a way, which gave him one choice: to comply with a specific list of what Washington wanted from the Pakistani government. Musharraf’s legal councilor and high-ranking Pakistani army officer Sharifuddin Pirzada noted: “Musharraf saw that for Pakistan it was 1979 all over again.” (Guardian, May 25, 2002).Pirzada was hinting to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, which led to billions of dollars in aid for Pakistan. To achieve Pakistan’s compliance, Washington used coercive diplomacy, which is designed to “initiate behavior” by fear of consequences. Then-Pakistani President General Musharraf , in an interview with “60 Minutes”/CBS TV, said that two days after the September 11, 2001, attacks Richard L. Armitage, then-Deputy Secretary of State, told Pakistan’s visiting intelligence director General Mahmud Ahmed: “Be prepared to be bombed. Be prepared to go back to the stone age,” which Musharraf characterized as “a very rude remark.” To act “in the interest of the nation of Pakistan”(as Musharraf said),within days of 911 catastrophe he cut ties with Taliban and cooperated with American campaign against terrorism. Lisa Curtis, a South Asia specialist with the Heritage Foundation and a former employee of the Senate Foreign Relation Committee, the State Department and the CIA, does not “know the exact contents of the conversation” between Mahmud Ahmed and Richard Armitage, “I do know it was a pretty firm ultimatum.” For seventeen years (1979-1996) India experienced a historical decline in the power balance with Pakistan.

But the U.S. response to the 911 catastrophe introduced new blood to the game of balancing the power in the region. With assistance from Pakistan, Washington removed Taliban from power in Afghanistan and replaced them to a large extent with the warlords of Northern Alliance allied with India, United States, Iran, Russia, and Afghanistan's northern neighbors. This course of events gave India an enormous chance to get back on the track of dominance of the subcontinent. Also, Pakistan's compliance with Washington created another homegrown problem for Pakistan, namely the emergence of Pakistani Taliban with international orientation and transcontinental operational capability. Certainly, India cannot be happy with the five-year, \$7.5 billion U.S. aid package to Pakistan approved in 2009, which is a third 1979 for Pakistani establishment.

What to Do in the Region?

U.S. cannot afford to have unlimited military and economic commitment to Afghanistan with a hostile geography and pertinacious and committed resistance forces. America's current effort at Afghanization of the conflict, which is based on corrupt and imbalanced structures, could create a military reality which would wither away with the full withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. Does Washington want to go back to square one where politics was dancing on September 10, 2010? America need five things to do: **First**, end its escalated war against a destitute Afghan people by passing a bill for a timetable for military withdrawal from Afghanistan. Also U.S. needs to withdraw its unlawful combatants (Blackwater is the U.S. private military contractor and security firm. See: Jeremy Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, Nation Books, 2007; Scahill, "secret Erik Prince/Blackwater tape exposed", thenation.com [May 5, 2010]). These actions will show Washington's goodwill toward peace talks with the Afghan resistance forces (generically called Taliban). Dr. Osman Rostar Taraki, who was jailed by the Soviet-installed regime in Afghanistan, is an Afghan legal scholar, a distinguished political analyst, and the founder of "Commission for Peace and Liberation for Afghanistan". His plan will ease the transition to peace talks with the Afghan resistance and create a provisional government supported by major segments of the Afghan public opinion and recognized as a responsible member of the community of sovereign nations. **Second**, America shall give regional peace, stability and security a real chance: Kashmir and Pashtunkhwa (the Pashtun Country misnamed in 1901 by British colonial power as "North-West Frontier Province" to destroy its Pashtun identity and weaken Afghanistan) shall be become independent countries. India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Kashmir, Pashtunkhwa, and Afghanistan shall sign a regional friendship and defense organization (this will eliminate the need for strategic depth). The high contract parties shall have a regional center of the UN on preventive diplomacy with its headquarters in India and a branch in Pakistan or vice-versa. **Third**, al-Qaeda does not need to have headquarters in Afghan-Pak region because it can launch its transcontinental attacks from Africa and/or the Middle East. Thus, Washington does not need long-term military investment in Afghanistan. For nearly nine years al-Qaeda has been unable to successfully launch its attacks in the United States of America. To contain al-Qaeda's possible operations from Afghan-Pak region, U.S. government can use its covert

capabilities of intelligence and Special Operations Command in the region or elsewhere (its mission is to “defend the United States and its interests”, as well as to “synchronize



planning of global operations against terrorist networks”). **Fourth**, after the end of the Second World War, U.S. launched its Marshall Plan (named after the U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall) to restore the economic infrastructure of the badly damaged Europe and to contain communist influence in the region. In the interest of political stability and stronger security, a primary program of U.S. and European NATO countries for rebuilding and creating a stronger economic, educational and security foundation for Afghanistan is urgently needed. U.S. and NATO countries shall commit themselves for such recovery program. An Afghan-U.S.-NATO recovery coordination agency shall be established to manage the program. **Fifth**, U.S. and NATO countries shall create a special fund for the victims of depleted and un-depleted uranium in the Pashtun heartland and other areas of Afghanistan. The use of uranium munitions sentenced the entire Afghan nation to a perpetual death as Dr. Daud Miraki has exposed. <http://www.rense.com/general35/perp.htm>. The illegality of the uranium munitions was established with the International War Crime Tribunal in Japan in 2004 where Dr. Miraki served as one of the main witnesses against George W. Bush. President Bush was found guilty on 13 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/TOK403A.html> Dr. Daud Miraki’s knowledge, academic training, experience and research and honesty can be very useful to such a project. More photos of uranium munitions victims are available at Dr. Miraki’s website: <http://www.afghanistanafterdemocracy.com> or <http://www.afghanistanafterdemocracy.com/page10html>

