

Soviet Afghan War: Challenges for Pakistan

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Abstract: *The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has affected Pakistan’s foreign policy. Both the states are sharing common border and cultural ties. The attack on Afghanistan soil was a treat for Pakistan’s territorial integrity. Pakistan adopted policy of partnership with US in order to withdraw the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. The paper aims to explore Pakistan’s role in Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Secondary data has been collected from books, articles and newspapers. The findings of the study suggest that Pakistan faced serious challenges due to its active role in Soviet Afghan war.*

Key Words: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Soviet Union, US Role, Soviet Afghan war

Introduction

Afghanistan being a neighbor state of Pakistan has always affected Pakistan’s foreign policy. Both the states were antagonistic towards each other since independence of Pakistan. During the cold war era, Afghanistan was playing Soviet and Indian cart against Pakistan. However, Soviet invaded Afghanistan in 1979 which became a turning point in Pakistan’s foreign policy. Pakistan took it as a threat against its territorial integrity. The partnership of Pakistan with USA and Afghanistan resulted in tough time for Pakistan. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 was a major cause of worldwide anxiety and a turning point in international politics. The Soviet expansionism created a challenge to the security of Pakistan, and the country emerged as a 'front-line' state .

The Pakistan-US alignment during the Afghan crises was the mutual agreement the two unequal powers who need each other for

the fulfillment of their objectives. Pakistan was in need of economic assistance and strong military and the United States took advantage of Pakistan’s this weak position and fulfilled its desire of containment of Soviet expansionism. Pakistan was also benefited by the United States on economic and military grounds. In this way Pakistan was able to counter Indian rising military power but such benefits were not cost free.

Soviet Air Attacks and Terrorist Activities

Pakistan was badly affected by Soviet retaliation against Pakistan’s support for Afghans mujahideen. It was charged for establishing 30 bases and 50 centers in Pakistan that are training the Afghan mujahideen for insurgency within Afghanistan. The Soviet also criticized the Zia regime as an unsuccessful government failing in tackling the internal issues in NWFP and

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Baluchistan (Hughes, *The Soviet–Afghan War, 1978–1989: An Overview*, 2008).

The Soviet was provoking the Baluchi's nationalist feelings against Pakistan and was successful to some extent. Many of the Baluch leaders were welcoming the Soviets for intervening in the internal affairs and to make Baluchistan an independent state (Ross, 1982). The cross border military fights, bombings and air attacks also adversely affected Pakistan particularly NWFP region.

Pakistani territorial integrity was compromised as there were continuous violations of airspace and bombings. It was estimated by the US Department of state that round about 574 air and 517 artillery attacks hit Pakistan from Afghanistan. Moreover, there were 574 terrorist incidents in different regions by Afghanistan. (Grau, 2009).

Sectarianism

Sectarianism is one of Pakistan's most serious challenges and threats to its domestic security. Zia Islamization and the US approach of using religion as a tool against communism gave sectarianism a boom to a large extent. In this connection, the US spent enormous amounts of money. The number of established religious institutions in Pakistan shows a high level of religious influence in the country. In the 1950s, Pakistan had 137 traditional Sunni madrassahs, in addition to a few Shi'a madrassahs (Collins, 1984).

There were nearly 900 madrassahs in 1971, with about 3000 teachers and over 30,000 regular students. In the 1980s, instead of officially 4000, the number of madrassahs grew to 45,000-50,000. The autonomy of traditional religious organizations and Zia's Islamization of Pakistani society filled the country with the gradual toxins of religious sectarianism, fanaticism, and intolerance, putting sect against sect and region against region. Punjab was one of the hardest impacted provinces in the 1990s, with over 2000 people killed and 561 injured in 234 sectarian attacks. The sectarian wave has spread to the Northern Areas, Karachi, and the Northwest Frontier Province, with 529 men killed and hundreds injured in 864

different attacks. Bombings of mosques and Imam bargahs (Shia community gathering places) have grown commonplace in this regard. Tragically, all extreme groups lack tolerance and have perverted religion into a source of war. They are keen on resolving their issues with the barrel of a rifle. (Reuveny & Prakash, 1999).

Drugs Trade

The Afghan war in the late 1980s culminated in Pakistan producing around 70% of the world's high-grade heroin, which was managed by an estimated 40 drug gangs. The problem began when the CIA pushed mujahideen groups to engage in poppy cultivation (opium production) to earn funds to fight the Soviet Union with weapons. The drug trade improved the mujahideen's financial capabilities, allowing them to become self-sufficient between 1983-86, creating formidable private armies and owning weapons in clandestine marketplaces. Many mujahideen leaders made large amounts of money. As a result, they fight fiercely to protect their valuable territory. This business also developed a strong arms and drugs mafia in Pakistan, resulting in the spread of heroin and weapons across the country. The mujahideen sold the opium harvest to Pakistani heroin refiners, who were backed by NWFP Governor (Retd) General Fazal-ul-Haq. By 1988, the NWFP region alone was somewhere between 100 and 200 heroin refineries. By 1987-88, the drug traffic was raking in at least \$4 billion per year, more than all of Pakistan's legitimate exports collectively. Drug addiction was pretty much unknown to Pakistanis in the 1980s, and the poppy was never extensively grown in the country, yet the number of drug addicts grew from 124,000 to 450,000, including 5000 heroin addicts, between 1982 and 1987. In Pakistan now, there are over 3.5 million drug addicts.

Kalashnikov Culture

The increase of Kalashnikov culture was one of the crucial blows of the Afghan war over Pakistan's social setup. The creation of this

social evil has its origins in the U.S. weapon supply through Pakistan to the Afghan Mujahideen. The supply of arms gave chance to the people in Pakistan to start the business of illegal arms in NWFP (Hilali, 2010). Dara Adam Khel Village of FATA in NWFP slowly and gradually emerged as one of the larger illegal arms markets. Several experts and labor worked in these markets in 2600 arm shops and 5 gun factories which have the potential to produce 100 AK-47 daily. This region, which is dominated by Afridi tribes, has developed into a leading hub for the production of indigenous weapons. Kalashnikov automatic rifles, hand grenades, and anti-aircraft guns manufactured in China and the Soviet Union are for sale. In these markets, everybody can find arms and ammunition of any kind from Japanese pen pistols to rapid-fire guns and communications equipment, missiles, anti-aircraft weaponry, hand grenades, rocket launchers, and anti-tank ammunition. (Jalali & Grau, 1999).

The United States' use of Pakistan as a front-line state for more than a decade, an estimated \$8.7 billion of weapons funding for Afghan mujahideen inevitably caused an outbreak of violence and corruption in the country. (1986-90).

These weapons, which have now entered the country into the hands of militants, criminals, and ethnic and sectarian organizations, are posing a danger to state forces and encouraging the separatist forces within the country. (Hughes, *The Soviet-Afghan War, 1978-1989: An Overview*, 2008).

Corruption in the Distribution of US Weapons

The CIA and the ISI shared administration of the Afghan war, and between 1981 and 1988, the CIA provided \$640 million for Afghan clandestine actions. During the Afghan war, however, certain Pakistani army officers, citizens, and mujahideen commanders were more concerned with seizing weapons intended for the resistance than with providing them for the intended purpose. For instance,

in the early 1980s, there was less weapon supply for the Afghans. The shipment landed in Karachi's port, but Pakistani officials denied it because the weapons were not suitable for mountain warfare. Several armaments, including machine guns, vanished and reappeared in weapons bazaars for sale. In mid-1985, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and the US authorities accused Afghan leadership in Peshawar of huge corruption and involvement in the black market of weapons and equipment. The CIA complained about the mujahideen's arms supply being mismanaged and corrupted, alleging that large amounts of the total arms aid were stolen off along the way by local administrators, military authorities, and Afghan mujahideen to parties not involved in the war. According to Newsweek in 1987, Pakistani top officials, both military and civilian, were taking off 30% or more of covert US assistance to the mujahideen, with up to 50% of the weaponry either stolen or sold.

The army's reputation was ruined on April 10, 1988, when a massive explosion occurred at the Ojhri camp munitions dump near Rawalpindi, which was employed as a transit site for US arms for the Afghan mujahideen. Thousands of Pakistani people were killed as about \$100 million worth of rockets and missiles intended for the mujahideen crashed down on the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Reports surfaced that the site was purposely set up as a conspiracy by senior army officers right before a US Defense audit team arrived, to conceal the fact that some Stinger missiles had been sold to Iran and Gulf states. Indeed, covert US arms supplies to the Afghan mujahideen, all of which were distributed through the ISI (Inter-Service Intelligence) with no paperwork and hence extremely little accountability, allowed many Pakistani government officials bureaucrats, army officers, and Afghan leaders to gain financial benefits. Many commanders have been disillusioned by the luxurious lives of some Peshawar leaders, as well as important Opposition leaders in Miami, with residences and vehicles, investments in Pakistan and abroad, and secret Swiss bank accounts.

Pakistan Economic Policy

Economists generally agree that economic development and growth are influenced by four factors; human resources, physical capital, natural resources and technology. High developed countries have governments that focus on these areas. Unfortunately Pakistan was insecure from east and west since inception. Kashmir and Pashtunistan issues were to be death by Pakistan as both legacies of imperialism. For a newly born country it was very difficult to face hostility on two borders at the same time and consolidates its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Pakistan was facing big problems regarding to bring stability in country due to weak economic and industrial infrastructure (Grau, 2009). For a newly independent country it was very difficult to handle economic issues and improve its infrastructure in these circumstances. Furthermore, the ideological differences and geo-strategic rivalry between US and Soviet Union has affected the regional and international politics. It has pressurized the weak third world states. Many of the third world countries gain favors from the super powers particularly economic support and ensure its political and economic stability. Pakistan was also from the third world country that supported US in the cold war against Soviet Union and got many aid packages before and during afghan war to bring stability in its economy and infrastructure (McMichael, 2002).

Pakistan's partnership with the USA against Soviet Union in Afghanistan has resulted in economic assistance and military advancement for Pakistan but it has also deteriorated the infrastructure and political stability. The institutional development and political growth stops which causes to enhance the democratic attributes in a country. Thus a huge gap developed in the leadership which fancied the chances of corruption and improper running of organizations leads to the decreasing in currency and thus economic condition of Pakistan did not improve (Jalali & Lester, 1995).

Pakistan's Economic Dilemma

It is fact that strong and loyal political leadership and political government reflects the economy of a country but in Pakistan, strong and independent political government never developed due to many reasons, which affect the economy of the country. Pakistan's economy was highly affected due to its long period of instability. Pakistan economy did not strengthen due to ups and downs in US-Pakistan relationship before and after the Soviet Afghan war (Grau & Jorgensen, 2004).

Pakistan was alternately victim and beneficiary of developments on the international scenes before Soviet Afghan war, and they were in a need of economic assistance, so when US offered financial aid for supporting in a war against Soviet Union, Pakistan accepted it for its survival. US was always a dominant actor in Pakistan's economy even before the Soviet Afghan war, so their relation was always on unequal basis. The America has always think of their own interest and adopted opportunistic approach. Pakistan's economy suffers most in 70s because the world economy was going under crises. There was hike in oil prices which resulted in decline in the industrial sector. There was increase in Import prices which paved way for inflation and indebted the country. Furthermore Bhutto government in 1972 distanced itself from West which affected the industrial sector. Pakistan also faced ire from US over nuclear program and Bhutto's policies of nationalization slowed down the economic development of Pakistan (McMichael & R., 1989).

Economic Situation of Pakistan from 1979-1989

When man power of Pakistan was moving to the Middle East in 1975, its economic condition began to improve. It also improved by US support in 1979 against Soviet Union. The US support had enabled Pakistan to tackle inflation and payments deficit in 1984. These ten years, period Soviet-Afghan war, brought significant transformation to Pakistan's economy.(Hilali, 2002). The Gross National

Product (GNP) increased from Rs 46 billion in 1977-1978 to Rs 86 billion in 1987-1988. As a result, the annual growth rate was approximately 7%, a remarkable achievement. During this time, Pakistan was successful in overcoming the most acute forms of poverty. (Reuveny & Prakash, 1999).

Economic Burden of about 4 Million Afghan Refugees

Migration of refugees actually started from 1973, when King Zahir Shah was removed from his office by his own Daoud Khan. Total around 2000 migrant sought asylum in Pakistan. The second migration of refugees started after the Marxist revolution of April 27th 1978 and its number reached 109,000 by June 1979. This number of refugees increased to 193,000 in September 1979, and when Soviet was invading Afghanistan on 27th December, 1979, the Afghan refugees were almost 386,916 in Pakistan. After Invasion when Pakistan opened its border for refugees, within 4 years the numbers of refugees were counted as 2.9 million. By the middle of 1986, the refugee's number raised to almost 4 million. So for a country like Pakistan which were fighting for the development of its economy, the 4 million refugees management was very difficult task. The Pakistan economy was blooming at that time, but suddenly the influx of 4 million people into the country started to affect the economy, because there was no plan to limit these refugees into camps. There were many lapses in the controlling authorities that most the refugees went into cities and towns. The refugees in the camps were only registered. Most of the refugees settled in cities like Peshawar and Quetta, the population of Peshawar was estimated to triple by reaching 900,000 and in Quetta total of 800,000 refugees got settled which created a lot of problems to the local residents. The influx of Afghan refugees, affected the Pakistan's economy in different sectors, some of which are discussed here (Grau L. W., 2009).

Burden on Grazing Grounds and Water Resources

Afghan refugees brought large number of cattle and livestock with them; it was very difficult to provide fodder, grazing grounds and water for the livestock by government officials. As most of the refugees were in Balochistan and NWFP, where already there was scarcity of grazing lands, as most of the grazing land was privately owned in NWFP, and in Balochistan it was of government property, but that was insufficient for feeding all cattle, therefore government allowed refugees to go other provinces too, which was then very difficult to manage these refugees and the eventual repatriation of them creates big problem for Pakistan. Many of refugees hide themselves in big cities of Pakistan which affect the currency of Pakistan in future (Hilali, 2002).

Ecological Problems

Afghan refugees were using chopped up trees for cooking and heating so they were cutting trees from them in NWFP and Balochistan, where ecological problem arose. Thus deforestation began in a large scale. In order to overcome the ecological problem and to save the environment and natural resources government started to provide potable water supplies, tube wells, wells, mono pumps and hand pumps etc., which costs too much for government, thus it was also a burden on economy of Pakistan (Grau L. W., 2009).

Purchasing of Immovable Property

Afghan refugees used unfair means to purchase immovable property because they were not allowed to purchase it. So the wealthier afghan refugees got nationality of Pakistan by illegal ways, they also provide big money to invest in different commercial zones. Afghan refugees were providing big money for rents of buildings which open the door in corruption and phenomenal rise in property prices. (Grau & Jorgensen, 2004).

Afghan Control on Transportation Sector

Afghan refugees also brought their transport

vehicles with them. The enterprising Afghan transporters were taking relatively low fares which attracts many passengers, but at the same time they also breaching the traffic rules and regulations which create big issues. They took over this business sooner which affects the local transport business. The afghan also began to dominate in the heavy vehicle sector such that almost all heavy vehicle was controlling by afghan refugees, which affect the locals and thus economy of the country rapidly affected (Collins, 1984).

Cheap Afghan Labor and Unemployment of Locals

Afghan refugees were working on very less wages especially labors, which increased unemployment among locals. They dominated in the agriculture and construction industry, where the ratio of unemployment among local arose scarcely, which affected the economy of Pakistan, because unemployment always have severe impacts on the growth of economy (Grau & Jorgensen, 2004).

Money Laundering and its Impacts on Pakistan's Economy

Money laundering is the process in which criminals or mafias attempt to hide their assets of illegal means. They earn this money through drug trafficking, bank robbery and tax evasion and know all the means and sources to whiten this dirty money. As there were many cash inflows for the assistance and support of Afghan refugees through different NGO's and organizations which temporarily enhance the economy of Pakistan at the start, but when corruption and hiding of this money starts then the mafias also introduced many ways of whitening their money by all illegal means, which affects the economy of Pakistan once the crime rate increases for hiding this money. The decade of 1979-1989 was historical for the Pakistan's economy growth, but was not continued in the long run (Grau L. W., 2009). The illegal and hide money greatly expanded which leads to the trade of heroin in country. The Afghan war influenced the parallel and illegal economy which was not in Pakistan

before (Hilali, 2002).

Conclusion

The Soviet Afghan war was of utmost importance for Pakistan due to its geographic position because it's the universal fact that wars destroys the whole generations specially when the war is from the super power of the world. Therefore Pakistan was never in a position to close its eyes on the Soviet invasion on Afghanistan. There were many reasons behind the Pakistan's concerns about the war, but the main reason was that Afghanistan was neighbor as well as an Islamic country, so Pakistan must had to think about its foreign policy related to Afghanistan and should revise it before the devastations of the war. That is why it is imperative for Pakistan to change its foreign policy towards Afghanistan and becomes an ally of US in Soviet Afghan war. US with help of West and Pakistan defeated Soviet in Afghanistan and Soviet were forced to leave Afghanistan in 1989. The Soviet had to be broken into many parts due to this war. The religious and extremist groups were developing strength in Afghanistan. Afghan government fail to get support from US and West after the war, so the control of the religious and extremist groups in Afghanistan began to strengthen, and Najibullah government had to resign and Mujahideen, who were trained and developed by Pakistan capture Kabul and made it an Islamic State.

Foreign policy is of prime importance in the development of a country, so all the countries too much focusing on its foreign policy in order to stabilize its status and sovereignty. Like other countries, Pakistan was also aware of the role of foreign policy importance in the country social and economic development. So when Pakistan came into being, its focus was also in foreign policy especially towards neighbor countries. Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan also emphasized on Pakistan relations with Muslim and neighbor countries and advised for noninterference in the internal affairs of the other countries. But the Indian interference in Kashmir and

Afghanistan refusal of Pakistan in UN and its involvement in Pashtunistan movement enforced Pakistan to revise its foreign policy and should deal with these issues. Therefore Pakistan was very watchful in relations with them, this make the country to revise its foreign policy to these neighbor countries. Furthermore the internal situation of Afghanistan was very intensive which was creating problems for Pakistan. When Soviet invaded Afghanistan, Pakistan was the country which was affecting more, therefore Pakistan become a frontline state and become a US ally in war against Soviet Union.

The geographical situation of Pakistan in a soviet Afghan was of higher importance; therefore its impacts were also severe on Pakistan. Pakistan provided camps for Afghan refugees and training centers for Mujahideen, which induced extremism in the youths because the US aid for the Mujahideen and the word Jihad for fighting against Soviet Union was catalyzer for all the Muslims. Thus weapon culture developed in Pakistan because there were no restrictions on weapon carrying in cities and towns, which developed extremist groups. Hashish and opium was openly smuggling by these extremists in Pakistan which makes it easy for all people to use it. Lots of people become drug adductors, and many were involved in its business.

The migration of almost 4 million refugees during war was very difficult to manage. The economy and infrastructure of the country was affected more because it created many problems for the locals. The Afghan refugees were fluently moving across the country and were doing their own business freely. There were no check and balance on the movements of Afghan refugees and on the calculation of US aid, so therefore the economic condition of Pakistan worsens after war. There was no planning for the adjustment of refugees after war, so when US stops providing aid, all the refugees become burden on the economy of Pakistan which completely destroyed its infrastructure.

When Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, Pakistan was going through very tough period

of time, economically Pakistan was very down and there was political crises as well. So when US invited it to become a frontline state against the Soviet Union, Pakistan had to accept it in order to improve its economy and its worth to the world. Pakistan became a part of this war because of its geographical condition and economic situation.

Involvement of Pakistan in that war improve its economy for the time being, but when the war finished and Soviet withdrew its forces from Afghanistan, the critical period for Pakistan started. Afghan refugee's aid of US was stopped and there was no plan for the going back of afghan refugees, which create more headaches for the Pakistan. Afghan refugees had taken control on most of the business in Pakistan and the extremism was developed among the locals. Mujahideen were fighting inside Afghanistan in the name of Taliban, and US departs its ways with them, Pakistan had to deal with them because Taliban was having deep roots in Pakistan. Suddenly all burden came on Pakistan which affects its economy. The Taliban who were created by Pakistan become enemy of Pakistan after 9/11 attacks on US, because US put all blame and responsibilities on Taliban and their leader Osama bin Ladden. When Pakistan become an ally with US after 9/11, Pakistan suffered most because Taliban start attacking on Pakistan, thus peace of Pakistan disturbed and Pakistan lost many lives in that war.

Pakistan which took part in Soviet Afghan war for strengthening its economy and political condition paid huge price for it. From every aspect of life Pakistan suffered, like the war brought weapon and drug culture to the country, Due to Afghan refugees, local Pakistani faced unemployment, Security issues of Pakistan increases, peace of Pakistan ruined, economy of Pakistan falls down, among all the relation between Pakistan and Afghanistan became more worsen. Overall the Pakistan decision of inclusion in Soviet Afghan war created more problems for Pakistan.

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