



Fragile Afghanistan and Fear of Narco-Terrorism for India: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract: Afghanistan is a neighbouring country of India which is going through political instability after Taliban has taken over the capital Kabul. Taliban government has not been recognised by most of countries of world. Such fragile state, which has also been part of Golden Crescent of Narcotics, in neighbourhood of India, is definitely a cause of concern for India. Narcotics linked with Terrorism are making it serious threat for world in general and India in particular.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Narco-terrorism, India.

Introduction

Afghanistan with official name 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' is situated at historic silk route with immediate neighbors as Uzbekistan in north, Turkmenistan in north-west, Iran in west, Pakistan in south and south-east, China in north-east and Tajikistan in north-east. Its strategic location has been reason for invasions by various rulers like Alexander the Great, Arabs, Mongols, Britishers, Former USSR, USA etc. Because of its hard terrain and multiple ethnic groups, it has been difficult to maintain victory over it. That is why, many historians have rightly called it the 'Graveyard of Kingdoms'. Major ethnic groups are Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmen, Baloch etc.

In the modern era, Afghanistan was ruled by Durrani. Later on, Britishers tried to capture it with great difficulties, but it became free in 1919. Monarchs ruled for many years after which the Republic was established by Mohammad Daoud Khan. Changes were brought by the republic regime. Women were allowed to participate in public life to a greater extent. They were allowed university education and job opportunities. Afghanistan and the former USSR became close friends with time. Social changes were not liked by ultraconservative ethnic leaders and insurgencies started in the countryside. Towards the end of 1970s, policies changed and Islamic principles became central to administration. To battle the Soviet-backed government, guerrilla movement Mujahadeen was created. The USSR invaded Afghanistan on

December 24, 1979 to bolster the faltering communist regime. By early 1980, the Mujahadeen rebels had united against Soviet invaders and the USSR-backed Afghan Army.^[1] In 1992, mujahadeen took control of Kabul. In 1995 Taliban, an Islamic militia came to power which was supported by war-torn people. Islamic values were upheld and women participation in public life was curtailed. Education was denied to them. But the Taliban was continuously resisted in the north by Masood and in the South by Hamid Karzai. In 1998, the USA started attacking Afghanistan on the issue of hiding Osama-Bin-Laden there. Fight continued and finally in 2001 there was a fall of Taliban and an interim government was formed under Hamid Karzai. In 2003, NATO took over security amid increasing violence. New constitution and presidential elections were great achievements of 2004. In 2013, all military and security operations from NATO forces were taken over by the Afghan army. In February 2019, a peace deal was signed between the USA and Taliban which paved the way for U.S. withdrawal from the country by May 2021. In April 2021, complete U.S. troop withdrawal by 9/11 was announced by President Biden. On August 15, 2021, Taliban took over Kabul again.

Afghanistan again under Taliban

The Taliban government has not been recognised by most of the countries of the world. It has announced enforcement of Islamic law. Afghanistan has been going through a tough phase. Chaos is everywhere in Afghanistan. It is very difficult to maintain law and order and to carry out administration efficiently. According to the United Nations 2020 Human Development Index, it ranks 169 out of 189 countries.^[2]

Afghanistan's economy is about to collapse. Nearly 80% of the previous government's budget came from International community.^[3] Such huge dependency on foreign money has made Afghanistan's economy vulnerable to even slight change in foreign attitude. Industries are going through a cash crunch. The central bank is in liquidity crisis. Currency is losing its value. Inflation is on rise. Exports are suffering from all this and foreign exchange is shrinking.

Amid Covid-19 crisis, the situation is definitely grave. Health care services are collapsing which in turn will affect human capital and drastically ruin the economy. Malnutrition, hunger, poverty will prevail. WFP's latest phone survey found an estimated 98 per cent of Afghans are not consuming enough food, a worrisome 17 per cent increase since August.^[4]

Society as a whole will be the ultimate sufferer. Unemployment is at its peak. People are ready to sell their organs. There are grave humanitarian crisis. People are fleeing to border nations and there are chances of refugee crisis. Supporters of the American attack are also in fear of revenge from the Taliban. Women who constitute half of the population fear drastically reduced public presence. Although the Taliban has allowed education but not co-education, there will be partition among male and female students.

Taliban has been a firm believer of Islamic law and its hard interpretation. There have been bans on music, cinema in its previous term. Thieves were given punishments of hands cut and adulterers were

beaten with stones. Everyone is fearing of such things again. Only time will disclose what is there in Afghanistan's future.

Narco-Terrorism in Afghanistan

Golden Crescent is the name given to Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan which are supplier of heroin in the world. Afghanistan is world's largest opium producer, accounting for about 87 percent of global production.^[5] According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report in 2020, there is 37% increase in Afghanistan in land allocated to poppy cultivation. Almost 75-80% of heroin supply of comes from Afghanistan.

Production areas in Afghanistan are not accessible easily due to rough topography. After the Taliban takes over, administration is also weak. Politically unstable states are not capable of handling narcotic traffickers. They are there to take advantage of weak administration and political turmoil. Non-democratic political structure and presence of various conflicting groups make the situation even worse. This situation has two fold effects: on one side promote growth of drug trade and on other side make anti drug programmes less effective. Honest officials found it extremely difficult to do their job. Drug dealers establish close contacts with higher officials and politicians. It is easy for them to make a system in their favour. Delicate ethnic peace is also at stake because of this instability in the environment which is also a golden opportunity for drug traders. These tribes are mostly self-governed. Some of them have their own armed persons. Lack of effective central control also makes the work of drug traffickers easy.

Economic scenario is worse in Afghanistan. Various countries have denied any help to it. The USA has seized its money. Exports of various commodities are decreasing, but opium is an option to be taken by farmers because of its high prices which seems lucrative in such poverty. Economic hardships might perpetuate drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan. Economically compressed Taliban government might support drug-trafficking in order to avenge non recognition and economic problems. Narco-political linkages have great chances to develop in such scenario. It is the worst situation that may affect the world at large. Lack of livelihood options for Afghans, poverty, inflation will turn them to drug production and trafficking.

Drug trafficking is a source of quick money without any paperwork. It is processed with fast speed as the paperwork hurdle is removed. Because of this, there is no record of any transaction. Without a record, it is not easy to catch it, if caught, not easy to prove it before any court and thus not easy to curb it like any other regular crime.

Money earned through drug trafficking is invested in many institutions, which moves them in favour of traffickers and hampers anti drug operations. Traffickers make close contact with officials, corruption makes it easy for them and they become successful in manipulating the system in their favour. This further helps them to flourish, they further invest in the system and this loop continues making the system ineffective.

Drug money is not easily processed in government institutions legally. So to invest it in terrorism is attractive option for them. Terrorism is not a cheap business. It requires a huge sum of money to recruit and train militants, to conduct operations and to acquire weapons. For drug traffickers it is lucrative to be financial supporter in this terrorism which intern helps them with their power aspirations, provide them safe passages and make authorities fearful in anti drug operations.

Fear for India

World in general and India in particular is suffering from the menace of narco-terrorism. India is located between the Golden crescent and Golden Triangle. So, there is high possibility of menace of narco-terrorism causing pain to India. In narco-terrorism, close linkages between drug traffickers and terrorists make situation even worse. From last three decades terrorism is bleeding India. In 2015, law-enforcement agencies had arrested 708 people involved in drug trafficking in J&K, which rose to 1,672 people in 2020^[6]

At political level, terrorists can cause instability making government paralysed. Government institutions and processes might be hampered. Election can be manipulated which is backbone of democracy. Close political connections if established by terrorist organisations, then legislative wing of state will not do its job fairly. Laws against narcotics and terrorism might not be passed, or if passed may be weak in letter and spirit. Thus entire process of anti-narcotics and anti-terrorism may be hampered.

Terrorist attack panic people which can disturb law and order in the state. If law and order is deteriorated then administrative functioning will be hampered. It will cause multi dimensional effects. Lack of peace in the state will harm all political, economic, social and cultural aspects. Economic implications of narco-terrorism are even worse. Terrorism hit areas suffer from investment shrink. Major investors fear from investing in such areas because of uncertainty. Returns are low or even negligible. Labour crises are also there. Workforce generally migrates from areas which are frequently under terrorist attack. Material supply is also affected by attacks on roads, railways which are major transportation supports. Imports & exports from such areas also suffer from a shadow of uncertainty. Businesses are also found shifting to other peaceful areas.

Social fabric is also vulnerable to narco-terrorism. Drugs affect individuals, families, communities and thus the entire nation. Drug affected people have comparatively very less stamina for any physical and mental work. They also create extra burden on healthcare services. Young people who should be productive assets for the nation become consumers of its assets. Family income suffers a lot which in turn affects education of children, health and productivity of family. Community at large falls prey to it. Women addicted to drugs may become prostitute to pay their drug charges. It causes further health disasters in the form of communicable diseases in the community. Male addicted to drug may turn towards crime like theft, murder etc. to pay their drug charges. These crimes may increase ethnic tensions in society to which Indians are more sensitive. Thus social fabric of India might be torn by narco-terrorism.

The security of the nation is also not untouched. Narco funding can cause anti state elements to be more successful by providing money to recruit persons, train them, collect weapons and become functional against the state. If not curbed effectively, they can go up to demanding a new state against India. This can cause problems for Indian sovereignty, unity and integrity.

Conclusion

All these possibilities make it necessary to handle the Afghanistan situation in a more mindful and delicate way for the world in general and India in particular. Humanitarian assistance should be provided at the earliest. Arrangements for food, health facilities should be made as soon as possible. Educational facilities should be continued with great zeal otherwise this cycle of poverty, uneducation, unemployment and narcoterrorism cannot be stopped. This is not only a matter of Afghanistan but also whole south Asia. Regional peace and prosperity ultimately contribute to world peace and prosperity in today globalised world.

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