

American Diplomacy on Afghan Soil

Xinyu Zhang^{1,a,*}

¹High School Affiliated Shandong Normal University, Jinan, Shangdong, China

a. xyzzz272022@163.com

*corresponding author

Abstract: Based on the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan in 2021 and the many social issues left behind in Afghanistan that have drawn the world's attention, this paper reviews the performance of the United States in political diplomacy. Focusing on the Afghanistan region and through a case study approach, this paper examines and analyzes the gains and lessons learned by the United States in the war. The paper aims to answer the question, "Why is the U.S. war on terror increasingly frightening?" It deals with the U.S. attitude toward Afghanistan prior to the war in Afghanistan to protect its own interests.

Keywords: War on Terrorism, War in Afghanistan, U.S. National Interests, Gains and Losses

1. Introduction

This paper will analyze the changes in U.S. attitudes toward Afghanistan through the cases of the Afghan War and the War on Terror. In the existing context of U.S. withdrawal, read U.S. diplomatic reports and literature related to the war in Afghanistan in the past to summarize U.S. diplomatic achievements and experiences in the war in Afghanistan, so as to answer the question of whether U.S. interests are maximized in the war on terror. Finally, this paper summarizes what other countries can learn and absorb from U.S. foreign exchanges on Afghan soil. The significance of this paper is to review the history of U.S. diplomacy toward Afghanistan, analyze the diplomatic philosophy behind the war, and summarize the results of U.S. counterterrorism operations

2. Transformation of U.S. Attitudes toward Afghanistan before and after the Afghan War

2.1. Military Help in the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

Afghanistan was located in the middle of Asia and was an important way for the Soviet Union to communicate with the world southward to the Indian Ocean. After the end of World War II, Afghanistan survived profitably between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. But both sides wanted to strengthen their allies and both supported their own power parties in Afghanistan.

In 1978, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) militants, along with pro-Soviet forces, overthrew the Afghan government and formed a new government, with party general secretary Tu7rkey as head of state, who was replaced by his deputy Amin in 1979. After coming to power, Amin tried to get rid of Soviet control, saying he wanted normalization of Afghan-American relations. The country was in political turmoil and the PPP was turning on each other. The Soviet side realized that the Amin regime could not achieve Soviet interests in Afghanistan and decided to implement a southward strategy. From August to October 1979, Soviet troops went to Afghanistan to conduct field surveys and sent

troops to Afghanistan under the pretext of assistance to take control of strategic locations such as Mazar-i-Sharif. At the same time, they seized the light weapons of the Afghan government forces and dismantled heavy equipment under the pretext of weapons inspection. In mid-December, Soviet troops entered the buildup territory to invade Afghanistan on 27. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the international community condemned and demanded the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops as soon as possible. The U.S. government believed that the Soviet sphere of influence and communism were expanding, which had an extremely bad impact on U.S. interests in oil exploration in the Persian Gulf.

On January 23, 1980, Carter issued an even more strongly worded statement, stating that "any attempt by outside forces to gain control of the Persian Gulf will be considered a violation of fundamental U.S. interests, and we will use any means necessary, including arms, to counter such attempts. This is the famous "Carter Doctrine" [1].

In July 1980, U.S. aid to the Muslim guerrillas in Afghanistan expanded to include all types of weapons and military equipment. The amount of aid to the anti-government forces jumped from just over \$500,000 before the invasion to tens of millions of dollars. By the time Carter left office in early 1981, U.S. assistance in the form of weapons and equipment had risen to nearly \$100 million. After Reagan came to power, as he established the strategy of "peace through strength," determined to put comprehensive pressure on the Soviet Union and use Afghanistan as a breakthrough to defeat the Soviet Union, he greatly increased aid to Afghan guerrillas, with aid funding jumping from \$120 million in 1983 to about \$700 million. By 1988, U.S. funding for Afghan anti-government forces had reached more than \$2 billion [1].

From the standpoint of the U.S. government, the Soviet Union's deployment of troops to Afghanistan was not only an unjustified aggression against a small country and a blatant violation of international law, but most importantly, a personal threat to his own fundamental interests in the Persian Gulf, something that the Washington side could never allow to occur. Therefore, both the Carter and Reagan administrations implemented a policy of forcing the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops. However, Reagan not only wanted the Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan, but also to make it pay a huge price to defeat the Soviet Union in an extremely righteous position and slogan.

2.2. The War on Terror after 9/11

Immediately after 9/11, the Bush Jr. administration made the largest adjustment to the U.S. national security strategy since World War II, a strategy centered on strongly advancing democracy and freedom; ensuring the strength and security of the United States; forming effective alliances; and using the war on terrorism as a banner to redraw the world into camps for or against the United States. The most prominent enemy of this strategy at the time was the so-called "axis of evil", consisting of Iran, Iraq and other countries mentioned by President Bush Jr. in his State of the Union address on January 30, 2002.

On September 11, 2001, the U.S. government discovered that problems originating from failed and oppressive states 7,000 miles away could bring murder and destruction to the United States. Dictatorships harbor terrorists, breed resentment and radicalism, and seek weapons of mass destruction. Democracies replace resentment with hope, respect the rights of their citizens and neighbors, and join in the fight against terrorism. Every step toward freedom in the world makes America safer, so we will act boldly for the cause of freedom. Far from being a hopeless dream, the progress of freedom is the great story of the American era [2].

At the start of 2006, more than half the people of our world lived in democratic nations. And we do not forget the other half - in places like Syria and Burma, Zimbabwe, North Korea, and Iran, because the demands of justice, and the peace of this world, require their freedom, as well. No one can deny the success of freedom, but some men rage and fight against it. And one of the main sources

of reaction and opposition is radical Islam -- the perversion by a few of a noble faith into an ideology of terror and death. Terrorists like bin Laden are serious about mass murder, and all of us must take their declared intentions seriously. They seek to impose a heartless system of totalitarian control throughout the Middle East, and arm themselves with weapons of mass murder [2].

But with the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and Saddam's regime in Iraq, the growing influence of al-Qaeda, civil unrest in Iraq, and Iran's aggressive nuclear buildup, the Bush administration gradually defined the real enemy as "Islamic extremism" from a specific country. It emphasized the righteousness of a large-scale, non-state-specific war on terror.

After the ordeal of the Iraq War, Bush Jr., who was accused by the world and domestic opposition, slowly portrayed his war on terror as a battle between "good and evil, freedom and tyranny," from fighting terror to confronting terror, with the roots of American hegemony wrapped up in the middle. In front of more than 3,000 veterans in Salt Lake City, Utah, Bush Jr. said, "The war that America is engaged in today is much more than a military conflict; it is "a great ideological showdown" of the 21st century." "As veterans, you have seen these enemies of our past, these extremist enemies of today, as the successors to the fascism, Nazism and other totalitarianism of the last century. History has shown what consequences they will have for the world." Bush Jr. added, "The United States is winning a century-long battle against the forces of Islamic extremism."

What remains constant on the U.S. side is acting in a way that is fundamental to the defense of its interests, becoming a means to defend them and an explanatory rhetoric for the outside world. This is the first time Bush Jr. has explicitly raised the concept of "Islamic extremism" in public. This shows that the war on terror is not only military but also an ideological and spiritual confrontation with extremist forces. Bush Jr. has labeled the war on terror as similar to the Cold War, and he will enter history as the initiator of the war on terror, although the victory of such a war is far from certain.

3. U.S. Gains and Losses in the War in Afghanistan

3.1. Filling the U.S. Strategic Gap in the Middle East

The root cause of the shift in U.S. attitudes toward Afghanistan is the development of a third high point of idealism. The third culmination came after the end of the Cold War, and there were no obvious signs of this culmination, but the U.S. ideals of promoting democracy and freedom were clearly on the rise. Clinton's "Strategy for the Expansion of Democracy and Participation" and the battles led by George W. Bush Jr. under the banner of "democracy" marked a new stage of American idealistic diplomacy [3]. The United States has maintained this sense of mission in all areas and events in which it has been involved. The United States wanted to maintain political, economic, and military peace and stability, and the 9/11 attacks provoked by terrorism struck the United States squarely. Whether out of political and military counterattack or to advance the face and image of democracy and freedom, the United States' angry attitude and the war on terror are very reasonable attitude action changes.

Afghanistan is in the heart of Central Asia. Throughout history, the region has been the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, and it has always been a coveted region for the United States, whether it was the purpose of the Soviet Union and Russia's resistance or the desire to increase the global sphere of influence as the root. The United States believes that by controlling Afghanistan, it will be able to contain the Soviet Union, Russia, China, Iran and other neighboring countries to some extent.

The U.S. has three strategic goals in the Middle East. One is to encourage Middle Eastern countries to take a pro-U.S. route rather than an alliance with Russia; its second is to curb Iran's infiltration of Middle Eastern countries and guarantee the stability of the Middle East energy base; and third is to take a share in the development of the Middle East's oil and gas resources, or even control their development and utilization. This move will provide unlimited political capital for the United States

in the future. A U.S.-led, the Middle East five countries and Afghanistan as the main members, with the participation of India, Pakistan, the "Greater Central Asia" cooperation program, is to the United States control of the situation in Afghanistan as an opportunity [4].

In terms of content, the "Greater Central Asia Program" is a comprehensive, three-dimensional program of pragmatic transformation, with the previous "color revolutions" and democratic constructs having faded and taken a back seat. The "Greater Central Asia Plan" includes political democratization, economic liberalization, cultural westernization, Americanization of security, and westernization of energy, etc. It is intended to form a new geopolitical block led by the United States with the participation of the five Central Asian countries, Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan through transportation networking and security and energy cooperation: thus excluding China and Russia. It infiltrate by using NGOs to enter the political, economic, cultural, and security spheres of Central Asian countries [5].

If we look at the geopolitical aspects of the "Greater Central Asia Plan", we can see that the "Greater Central Asia Plan" is objectively adapted to the natural needs of security and economic development in the region, and it takes the economy as the entry point, avoiding sensitive issues such as democracy and human rights. The development of transportation, energy, trade, and other goals are also what the Central Asian countries need.

3.2. U.S. Military Industry Reaps Huge Profits

According to the U.S. Department of Defense report, the defense budget reached \$379 billion in 2002, an increase of \$48 billion compared to the previous year. The U.S. used money to turn Afghanistan into a laboratory, a showcase for its own highly sophisticated weapons. With the end of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War and the arms race, the demand for U.S. defense declined and U.S. military-industrial companies merged one after another to survive. And this war in the Middle East and later the Global War on Terror brought new opportunities for the U.S. military industry.

An article examining the Iraq war and the military market shows that the famous Raytheon Company benefited from the Iraq war as its Joint Direct Attack missiles were widely used in the war [5].

Another data shows that, after 9/11, the share prices of almost all industries in the U.S. have depreciated, but only the shares of the military industry have continued to rise, with an average increase of more than 30% [6].

4. Postwar Situation and Lessons from U.S. Diplomacy

4.1. Lack of International Support and High Domestic Anti-war Sentiment

One of the initial purposes of the U.S. war in Afghanistan was to ensure U.S. national security and oppose terrorism, and most countries expressed sympathy for the U.S. performance on 9/11 and supported the U.S. war on terrorism in Afghanistan. But as the war on terrorism developed, the U.S. ambition and desire to intervene in the regional affairs of other countries by means of counterterrorism gradually emerged. In the political and diplomatic arena, the U.S. has been despised and isolated as a result. U.S. allies, who received no war-related benefits, were expected to increase their troops to assist the U.S. in maintaining its hegemonic position, but withdrew when the problem itself was not solved and was drawn into NATO's new strategy that led to more terrorist groups and retaliatory actions. If even its allies no longer support it, it will be difficult for the U.S. to reap the acceptance of the international community when it conducts future counterterrorism operations under the pretext of protecting the interests of other countries.

On October 28, 2011, CNN released the results of a poll showing that U.S. public support for the war in Afghanistan has fallen to a historic low. The poll showed that only 34 percent of Americans

support the war, which has been going on for a decade, down from a previous record low of 35 percent, while 63 percent oppose the war in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, 58% of Americans believe the war in Afghanistan has evolved into a replica of the Vietnam War, an increase of 6 percentage points from the previous year [7].

The main reason why the American people want to end the war in Afghanistan as soon as possible is that it has taken up to ten years (until the time of the poll results), is costly and is borne by the American taxpayers. the financial crisis of 2008 also caused economic problems within the United States and high unemployment rates.

4.2. Bullying only Brings Greater Resistance, and the more You Fight Back, the more You Fear

Different terrorist organizations emerged one after another. Al Qaeda gained a respite, completed its regrouping in parts of Afghanistan, and dispersed some of its key members around the world, showing a trend of basing terrorist organizations everywhere and globalizing al Qaeda [8].

In the course of counterterrorism, the United States also realized that terrorist groups were expanding their operations internationally at an accelerated pace [8]. In the 2006 U.S. National Security Strategy Report, it was stated, "Terrorist networks are now more decentralized and less centralized than they once were. They rely more heavily on small groups based on a common belief and do not take orders from a central command structure as they once did."

The war on terror is becoming more and more terroristic, ultimately because the U.S.-led war on terror has strayed from its initial course. The U.S. has used the war on terror as an excuse to continuously seek global supremacy and individual interests. Afghanistan, on the contrary, has suffered heavy casualties and difficulties in post-war reconstruction, which has greatly deepened the sentiment of Afghanistan and other Islamic countries to hate the West, which will inevitably provoke Afghans to confront and fight back against foreign military forces.

4.3. Diplomatic Behavior Should Not Be based on Superficial Perceptions

The U.S. government does not understand that there are many reasons and root causes for becoming a terrorist. For example, ideological polarization at the ideological level, ethnic rivalry at the social level, and poverty at the economic level breed extremists. The U.S. government simply assumes that terrorist groups are made up of identical individuals and thus takes the simplest retaliatory action of responding to violence with violence, which triggers new ethnic-religious tensions.

The U.S. mistakenly believes that democracy is the cure for terrorism and has applied the post-World War II democratization of Japan and Germany to Islamic countries, attempting to create "democratic models" in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and other countries, which have turned out to be "unsuitable. At the same time, the U.S. simply equates democratic governance with democratic elections, which leads to tribal, sectarian, and ethnic group lines and groupings in these countries, breaking the original national identity and internal balance and further intensifying the confrontation between ethnic groups [9].

4.4. The U.S. Government Can Remedy Existing Wounds

The use of assassination as an anti-terrorism tool involves two major issues: whether assassination of terrorist perpetrators can achieve the goal of reducing terrorism; and whether the U.S. can publicly state that it will "return to assassination" for moral and legal reasons. Through the above analysis, the fundamental lesson that the authors of the cited article draw is that the problem of terrorism can only be controlled but never solved [10].

The U.S. government should not focus its attention and resources only on imminent threats, such as the post-9/11 U.S. government's focus on a single individual like bin Laden, or on large-scale terrorist threats. It is more important to combine localized and worldwide forces aimed at cutting off links between terrorist organizations and their members. In dismantling the global network of terrorist contacts, it is important not only to strengthen foreign laws and increase assistance and training for foreign police and security services, but also for the U.S. to publish complete and reliable lists of terrorists and organizations to the world in a timely and accurate manner.

The U.S. and its allies should be selective in their use of counterterrorism tools, with different policies to address different terrorist challenges. For terrorist organizations, the ideal goal is to eliminate them. But for some organizations, peaceful means are the most effective way to resolve conflicts. Regardless of whether an organization's past terrorist activities have violated U.S. interests, the United States should not refuse to seek peaceful ways to resolve conflicts with that organization.

5. Conclusion

Clearly, the United States has more to lose in the 20-year war on terror. With the fires of terrorist groups still raging, the U.S. has also lost time and energy to focus on its own development and to check the development of other countries, consumed a great deal of money, and lost the trust of people at home and abroad and even of its allies. This paper is limited by not setting case study directions, such as splitting into economic interests, military interests, and political interests. The future performance of U.S. diplomacy on Afghan soil continues to be predicted based on the state of reconstruction in Afghanistan and the level of harmony in the Middle East.

References

- [1] Bai Jiancai. (2011). *On U.S. Policy and Covert Operations in Response to the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*. *Journal of Shaanxi Normal University*, 40(6).
- [2] George. Walker. Bush (2002). *U.S. National Security Strategy Report-George. Report from American government*.
- [3] Wu Yanjun. *An Analysis of the Evolution of U.S. Idealistic Foreign Policy*, 23(2), p. 4.
- [4] Wen Feng (2007). *The "Greater Central Asia" Program and U.S. International NGOs*. *Xinjiang Social Science*, (6), p. 58-63.
- [5] Zhao Huasheng. (2008). *China's Diplomacy in Central Asia*. *Current Affairs Press*, p. 349.
- [6] Luo Zhenxing (2005). *A Review of U.S. Energy Policy in Central Asia-Caspian Region*. *Report of Institute*, (2).
- [7] *Americans' Support for Afghan War Hits New Low - Xinhua*. October 29, 2011. Online: http://news.ifeng.com/gundong/detail_2011_10/29/10250139_0.shtml
- [8] Hong Yan. (2012). *Analysis of U.S. Interests in the War in Afghanistan*. *University Essay*, May 26.
- [9] Yan Yu. (2021). *Interview. Why "U.S.-style counter-terrorism" is getting more and more fearful*. *People's Daily Overseas Edition*, p. 006
- [10] Wei, Zonglei. (2002). *Commentary. Seeking the best combination of counterterrorism and U.S. diplomacy*. *Modern International Relations*, (3).