

Protracted Afghanistan Crisis, 2001-2019: A Critical Re-Evaluation

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Abstract

The name Afghanistan is synonymous with crisis. Any news which begins with Afghanistan, perhaps, ends with war, throwing the landlocked Central Asian country into deeper poverty. Today, the world sits on the time-bomb of Afghanistan crisis. This cannot be ignored as it borders on global peace and security. The crisis acquired international dimension between 1979 and 1989 when U.S.-assisted Mujahideen forced Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan. Prior to and after Soviet invasion, Afghanistan has played a buffer to foreign and regional powers contending for the soul of Afghanistan. In 2001, the Taliban with a large sectarian interest determined to chart an alternative path for Afghanistan. Seeing no difference between communism and capitalism, the Taliban rejected America's conditions for a pipe-line oil project from Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indian Ocean (TAPI). Compounded by Taliban's refusal to handover Osama bin Laden after "9/11" 2001 attack on U.S., the crises have remained unabated. The protracted nature is an indication of more underlying factors than meet the eye. Adopting descriptive research design, this paper investigated protracted Afghanistan crisis to unravel the root cause(s).

Keywords: Protracted Crisis, Afghanistan, Taliban, TAPI Project

Introduction

The protracted crises in Afghanistan have become increasingly interesting and disturbing. It is interesting because the crises have become a "holy grail" of scholars and statesmen scrambling to find peace options that would entrench lasting peace in Afghanistan. It is disturbing in that the undercurrent variables produce intrigues that make the crises dangerous and threaten international peace and security. To trace the root of the crises and place the study in proper perspective requires a historical background.

Afghanistan has significantly remained crisis personified. Its history is dotted with lines of insurgency, rebellion and sometimes full-pledged war. In many occasions, it was reduced to a "melting pot of great power politics", a buffer country without home-grown policy (<https://www.historyofnations.net/asia/afghanistan.htm>). In other words, Afghanistan had been, and still is the bride of contending forces. For instance, it was the fear to lose this "buffer zone" to America in particular and the West in general that ignited Russian's invasion of Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 (Clarke, 2004). Ever since, Afghans have seen blood-letting and death to the extent that life appears to them less-sacrosanct. Thus, as a "melting pot of great power politics, Britain, Russia, the United States of America, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, etc., have at one time or the other sowed seed of discord in Afghanistan.

For Soviet Union, (now Russia) its interest in Afghanistan began as soon as Britain signed the treaty of Paris in 1809 with Shuja Durrani of Afghanistan. Soviet's push for "an advantage in the Afghanistan region" culminated in its invasion of Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989, afraid of British permanent occupation in Central Asia. It was also for the same reason that Russia instigated Iran to invade Herat, Afghanistan's western gateway to block Britain from that flank (Foster, 2009). For Iran, its interest in Afghanistan began with the desire to open its trade channel to the outside world through Afghanistan, and at the same time prevent the "flow of Afghan drugs" which it considered to be illegal (Nasser, 2011). For Pakistan, its suspicion that India maintains secret agenda against its policies in Afghanistan led to the intensification of its desire to take control of Afghanistan's future (Mc Dermott, 2005). For Saudi Arabia, its interests in Afghanistan have been defined by three elements- Religion, Culture and Land (Hal, 2011). For the U.S., its interest in Afghanistan was initially guided by

economic ideology which led her to assist the Mujahideen forces of Afghanistan to oust the invading Russia in 1989 (Clarke, 2004), and much later America’s desire to embark on an oil pipe-line project from Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan to Indian Ocean (TAPI) (John, 2009).

Based on the foregoing, scholars concluded that Afghanistan protracted crisis was the result of struggle for sphere of influence and resource control. For instance, Frank (2001) argued that “defence of these energy resources... will be the primary flash point of global conflict for decades to come”. But Afghanistan is landlocked (John, 2007 in Sydney & Ejitu, 2009). Consequently, the misconception surrounding Afghanistan’s crisis especially between 2001 and 2019, requires critical re-evaluation. What this means is that a country may not necessarily have natural resources deposit to be a source of bitter and protracted confrontation. In other words, there is need to look beyond national entitlement rights and resource control in Afghanistan protracted crises between 2001 and 2019. That is the essence of this study.

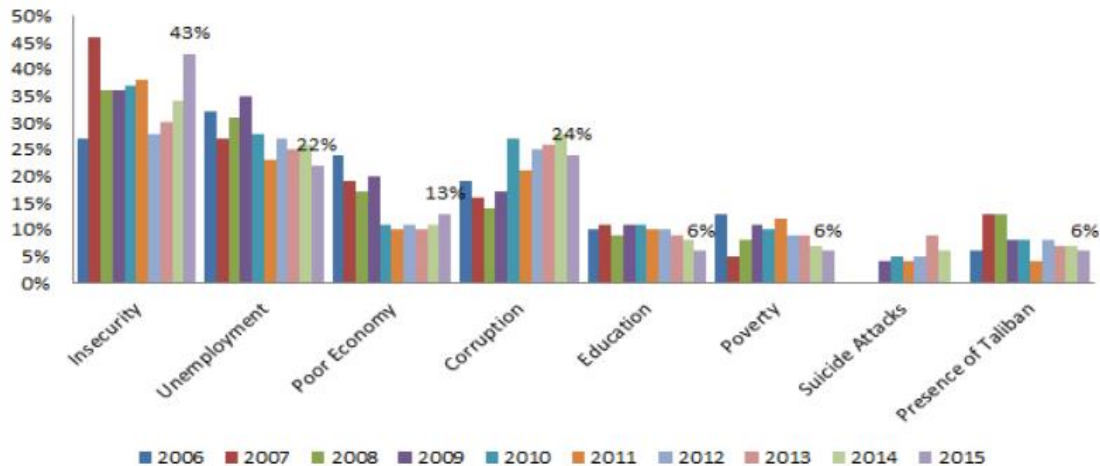
The Problem

Recall that on September 11, 2001, the United States’ twin towers (the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon) were attacked by Osama bin Laden’s AL-Qaeda group from Afghanistan (Wright, 2006). The Taliban’s defiant refusal to turn “over suspected terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden”, was interpreted as utter “disregard” to America’s threat to Taliban’s regime (Michael, 2001). Instead the Taliban insisted that “deporting him without proof would amount to an “insult to Islam”. In the words of Taliban’s ambassador to Pakistan then, Abdul-Salam Zaeef:

If they want to show their might, we are ready and we will never surrender before might and force
 According to Islam, the blood of anyone who spies for the enemy or sympathizes with it in
 time of war must be shed (CNN.com/World, 2001).

That was the type of rhetoric which accompanied Taliban’s refusal to turn over Osama bin Laden. The Taliban’s Grand Islamic Council, made up of “about 600 Muslim clerics, though showed “grief” over the terrorist attack against the U.S. yet gave its own warning, insisting that “if the U.S. attacks Afghanistan, the Taliban would call a jihad or “holy war” against the U.S. and its allies” (CNN.com/World, 2001). Consequently, the U.S-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO’s) attack on Taliban’s regime in Afghanistan began precisely on October 7, 2001 (history.com, October 7, 2001). Thus, insecurity ranked highest at 43% as the biggest problem facing Afghanistan between 2001 and 2019 as indicated by graph below:

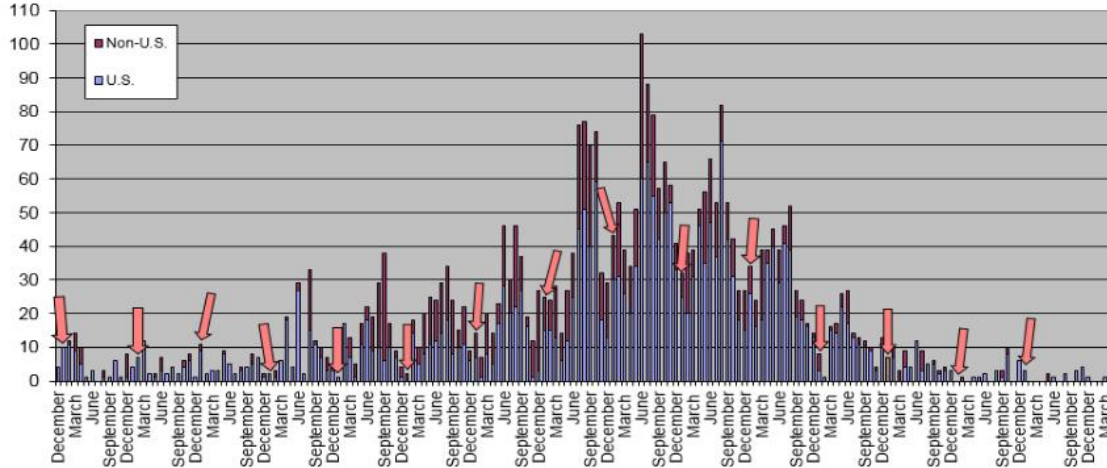
Figure 1: The biggest problem facing Afghanistan as a whole (2006-2015)



Source: Afghanistan Index »<http://www.brookings.edu/afghanistanindex>, May 25, 2017

Consequently, there was high rate of casualties among U.S., coalition troops and non-U.S. troops as shown in the breakdown below:

Figure 2: U.S. and Coalition Troop Fatalities since October 7, 2001



Source: Afghanistan Index »<http://www.brookings.edu/afghanistanindex>, May 25, 2017

NOTE: Due to data reporting, this graph and the breakdowns below include some fatalities from outside Afghanistan, mainly in the Philippines, Pakistan, and other countries associated with Operation Enduring Freedom. In most months, there are no fatalities in locations outside Afghanistan. As of May 25, 2017 there have been at least 2,262 U.S. Fatalities attributed directly to fighting in or non hostile deaths in Afghanistan.

Table 1: Breakdown of Total Fatalities from October 7, 2001 to May 25, 2017

	ALL FATALITIES	HOSTILE	NON-HOSTILE
U.S.	2,392	1,897	495
Non-U.S.	1,130	939	191
TOTAL	3,522	2,836	686

Source: Afghanistan Index »<http://www.brookings.edu/afghanistanindex>, May 25, 2017

However, indication shows that insurgency has not subsided in Afghanistan up till 2019 as is indicated in the table below:

Table 2: Number of fatalities among Western coalition soldiers involved in the execution of Operation Enduring Freedom from 2001 to 2019

Year	Total	U.S.	UK	Other
2001	12	12	0	0
2002	70	49	3	18
2003	58	48	0	10
2004	60	52	1	7
2005	131	99	1	31
2006	191	98	39	54
2007	232	117	42	73
2008	295	155	51	89

2009	521	317	108	96
2010	710	498	103	109
2011	563	415	46	102
2012	402	310	44	48
2013	162	128	9	25
2014	75	55	6	14
2015	26	22	2	2
2016	15	13	0	2
2017	17	15	0	2
2018	19	14	0	5
2019	26	24	0	2

Source: Afghanistan Index »<http://www.brookings.edu/afghanistanindex>, May 25, 2019

The two major outcomes of NATO’s war in Afghanistan were- ouster of the Taliban in late 2001 (Farhad, 2006) and killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan on May 2, 2011 which was confirmed by Al-Qaeda on May 6, 2011 with a vow to “avenge the killing” (Dodds & Baldor, 2011). With the death of Osama bin Laden, the expectation was that both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda groups’ bases would have gone into permanent oblivion. Scholars and opinion leaders had predicted that: Bin Laden’s death will ... reverberate in Afghanistan, likely demoralizing at least some of the Taliban and international salafi fighters there (Vanda, 2011).

On the contrary, eight years after Osama bin Laden’s death, and eighteen years after Taliban’s ouster, “Al-Qaeda is still a global enterprise pursuing violent jihad and remains dedicated to attacking its “far enemy”, the United States” (Brain, 2016). In other words, though the Taliban had been ousted, Osama bin Laden killed, and Al-Qaeda wounded, the zeal to fight has not ceased. What this means is that as war is never fought and won until the zeal to fight ceases, their decapitation neither ended Al-Qaeda’s “armed jihad” nor terminated the United States’ “high-value targeting counterterrorist strategy”. The big questions are ‘why is America the “far enemy”’, ‘why did Osama bin Laden launch attack against the U.S. from Afghanistan’?, ‘why is the war not abetting?’

Several efforts had, and are still being made to find lasting solution to Afghanistan protracted crisis. First, after NATO’s withdrawal, another NATO-led Security Mission, with the name International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was mobilized based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1386 in December 2001 as an aftermath of the Bonn Agreement (www.UNSCR1386, 2001). ISAF’s mandate was initially to secure Kabul (the Afghanistan Capital) from “the excesses of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda so that the Transitional Administration of Hamid Karzai would be established”(www.UNSCR1386, 2001 in Nwakanma, 2019). Yet, after 13 years of peace enforcement in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014 by ISAF crises still persisted. Second, the United Nations Organization (UNO) successfully passed more than 36 resolutions to resolve Afghanistan crises to no avail (www.un.org/news...). Third, in 2014, a Presidential election, which brought Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah to power was successfully conducted (www.afghan-presidential-election-2014). Moreover, recent developments and internal dynamics in Afghanistan crises have transformed into new forms with President Ashraf Ghani extending an Olive branch. First, he pledged to treat the Taliban as “legitimate political party”, as well as offer Taliban members Afghan passports (Andrew, 2018). President Ghani also offered to release 1,500 Taliban prisoners before Afghanistan peace talks but the Taliban insisted on the release of 5,000 captives. If President Ghani consented, it would have amounted to a “violation of the deal struck between the insurgents and Washington in Doha (The Defense Post, March 11, 2020). In terms of cost, the U.S. lost more than 2400 soldiers, and expended \$137 billion on reconstruction in Afghanistan (<https://crsreports.congress.gov>. 2020). In February 2020, the U.S. Taliban Agreement was reached but “conditions-based” (<https://crsreports.congress.gov>. 2020). The validity of the agreement is in doubt because Afghanistan representatives were not participants in the U.S-Taliban talks. Moreover, there is political crisis

between President Ashraf Ghani and his rival Abdullah Abdullah who was his partner in a unity government. Recall that Ghani was declared winner of the September 2019 Presidential election on February 18, 2020, which Abdullah rejected as “fraudulent”, therefore planned to install himself at the head of an alternative or parallel government. It was not surprising that “between March 1 and 31, 2020 the Taliban refrained from attacks against coalition forces, however, increased attacks against (Afghan forces) to levels above seasonal norms” (Aljazeera, 01 May, 2020, GMT+3). The question is, why the change in approach? The Taliban see Ghani’s regime as a puppet of the West, therefore, unaccepted.

The foregoing had been the character of Afghanistan crises between 2001 and 2019. In other words, the works referred to above have made known the protracted nature of Afghanistan crisis within the period under review. What the studies have not made known however are the root cause (s) of the protracted crises. It is the realization of this gap in knowledge that motivated this study.

Objective of the Study

The aim of this study is to critically re-evaluate protracted Afghanistan crises between 2001 and 2019. Specifically, however, the objective of the study is to identify some of the immediate and remote causes of protracted Afghanistan crises within the period under review. “Some” because this single piece cannot exhaust all.

Research Question

What are the immediate and remote causes of protracted Afghanistan crises between 2001 and 2019?

Significance of the Study

Accounts by scholars on protracted Afghanistan crises (2001-2019) succeeded in reducing facts into fictions because they perhaps did not adopt appropriate theoretical framework to analyse the variables involved. This study is expected to be beneficial to the extent that by adopting a more suitable theoretical framework, protracted Afghanistan crises will be put into clearer perspective. That way, it is expected to be beneficial to students of Political Science generally and International Relations in particular, as well as researchers, who may be interested in further assessment of protracted Afghanistan crises as a rich source of data. For Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Nigeria Institute of International Affairs, it is expected to assist them fashion more appropriate policies towards the regime in Afghanistan. This study is expected to assist countries especially the United States of America to shape its policy towards Afghanistan to bring about lasting peace in the war-torn and poverty-stricken country.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by Psycho-Cultural theory. Psycho-Cultural theorists in Gaya (2006) include Ross (1997) and Horowitz (1998). Psycho-Cultural theorists “blame the building of enemy images based on identity as a factor which leads to social conflict” (Gaya, 2006 in Nwakanma, 2019). The theorists assert that conflicts which are caused by identity and enemy image are not only protracted but also dangerous. Enemy image and identity also featured prominently in Samuel P. Huntington’s (1996) “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order”. According to the theorists, identity is an unshakable sense of worth, which makes life meaningful ... whenever this felling of safety defined as identity is threatened, there is usually a defensive reaction designed to protect one’s identity no matter what it costs (Gaya, 2006).

From the above assertion, violent and protracted crisis erected on the platform of enemy image usually defies resolution because it embodies the content of indoctrination. It works on and captures one’s psychological being thereby produces mainly hawks with few or no doves to a particular conflict. For instance, Jihadist converts are “irresistibly motivated in the cause of Allah to become a “martyr”, by being a suicide bomber. They are promised “seventy-two beautiful virgins willing to fulfill every fantasy as soon as the Jihadists die as martyrs for Islam” (Hal, 2011, pp.6-7).

In relation to this study, therefore, the theory can be used to explain the character of Afghanistan crises when Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network struck America from Afghanistan soil because they had been weaned on the belief that the white-man is their number one enemy that must be eliminated (Wright, 2006). Psycho – Cultural theory also captures the essence of U.S-led NATO war in Afghanistan in 2001 having moved into Afghanistan with a mind set on an enemy, following the refusal of Taliban to turn over Osama bin Laden on U.S. demand. NATO in Afghanistan marked the beginning of U.S. offensive against a perceived enemy (the Taliban and Osama bin Laden/Al-Qaeda network). Psycho-Cultural theory again, captures the protracted nature of the crises because it has produced only hawks, the reason why it defies all efforts at bringing lasting solution to it. Herein lay the very essence and relevance of Psycho-Cultural theory to this study.

Literature Review

A number of scholars have studied the protracted crises in Afghanistan since it acquired international status in 1979. However, only a few of those studies were empirical in nature and content. Nasser's (2011) examined the "Prospects for Peace and Stability in Afghanistan under ISAF". The study had four objectives. Data used in the study were secondary and primary data. Findings of the study revealed that after years of invasion and occupation by "Us-led coalition forces, Afghanistan is suffering from insecurity and underdevelopment". The study attributed the situation to the fact that both the "ideological, financial and logistical bases of the insurgents are located in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia", both major allies to U.S in Asia. Nasser's study and the present study share a common interest in that both are interested in the causes of protracted crises in Afghanistan. They, however, differ with respect to the extent Saudi Arabia and Pakistan double standard influence the protracted nature of Afghanistan crises.

Muhammad's (2011) assessed "Security Implication of ISAF exit from Afghanistan on South Asia". The objective of the study was to examine the challenges Afghanistan was likely to face when ISAF withdrew in 2014. Data used in the study were questionnaire-based interviews of some randomly and purposively selected respondents from Central and South Asian States. The findings of the study revealed that Afghanistan's "geography, proximity to energy rich Central Asia..." make Afghanistan not only important to South and Central Asia, but the world in general. Muhammad's study and the present one are related because both consider "geographical location" as a major factor causing protracted crises in Afghanistan. However, while Muhammad was more concerned with the struggle for resource control as the central bone of contention in the protracted Afghanistan crises, the present study intends to establish "conceived global Islamic rebirth" which chose Afghanistan as the best theater for Jihad against America and her allies as the root cause of protracted Afghanistan crises between 2001 and 2019.

Methodology

This study is a historical research therefore adopted a qualitative technique. The essence was to study the implication of past events so as to interpret the facts and explain the cause of events and their consequences on protracted Afghanistan crises (Laxmi, 2017). That approach provided the critical contextual link of past Afghanistan experiences to the present. The adoption of historical research methods enabled the study to explore the phases and characteristics of each phase in protracted Afghanistan crises between 2001 and 2019. Consequently, the data used were from secondary sources such as books, unpublished theses, internet materials, government publications, etc. Being a qualitative study that depended on secondary sources of data, it used content analysis of the variables involved in order to fill the gap in extant literature.

Analysis of Research Question

Immediate Causes of Protracted Afghanistan Crises, 2001-2019

) Geographical Location

Afghanistan is geographically located at the centre between Central and South Asia. It shares boundaries with six countries. Its longest border is the "Durand Line" with Pakistan which has continued to be a source of strained relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The reason is that the "Durand Line" separates the

“Pashtuns tribes of the region between Afghanistan and Pakistan.” Since its creation in 1898, the “Durand Line” has continued to cause much disaffection among Afghans, and at the same time “political tensions” between Afghanistan and Pakistan with the latter always seeking to control the future of the former (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>). Each time there was conflict between Pashtuns of Afghanistan and other tribes, the Pashtuns of Pakistan would cross-over to Afghanistan to fight in sympathy for their kit and kin in Afghanistan, worsening the situation in the process. Below is the location of Afghanistan between Central and South Asia

Map 1: Geography of Afghanistan:



Source: *Geography of Afghanistan* <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>.

From the map above, Afghanistan is strategically located at the crossroads of major trade routes which is why it has attracted “a succession of invaders” of Afghanistan (United States: Library of Congress Country Studies, 2008). As the neighbouring countries seek trade routes, they seek to plant regimes that would be sympathetic to their interests thereby causing instability in Afghanistan. Recall also that prior to 2001 attack on U.S by Al-Qaeda group, Afghanistan’s location led to a face-off between her and the United States as the latter targeted Caspian Sea, therefore, campaigned for a pipe-line project from Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan to India Ocean (TAPI), to avoid Iran and Russia (John, 2009), which the Taliban rejected.

Terrain

The characteristic distribution of vegetation and the mountains that litter Afghanistan’s terrain cannot be ignored in the analysis of protracted Afghanistan crises. Afghanistan’s terrain is virtually “low plateau with deserts” (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>). Scholars attest to the fact that:

Terrain has a profound effect upon the strategy and tactics of any military engagement and has consequently played an important role in determining history. In addition, the landscape of battle, and the geology which underlies them, has helped shape the cultural iconography of battle ... (Peter & Matthew, 2002).

Peter and Matthew (2002) maintained that terrain includes both “the physical aspects of the earth’s surface, as well as the human interaction with them”. In other words, the Hindu Kush Mountains which run across the country (Afghanistan) is “the physical aspect” being emphasized here, while the “Money and Koran” which Muslim volunteers from across Muslim nations who were mobilized by U.S powerful propaganda machinery to help fight Soviet Union in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 came along with (Clarke, 2004) are the “human interaction”. Recall that Osama bin Laden was one of the volunteers that fought alongside U.S-led Mujahideen against Soviet Union in Afghanistan!

It is not surprising, therefore, that Muslim Jihadists saw Afghanistan as a preferred theatre for Jihad against the U.S. (Wright, 2006). Wright (2006, p.52) cited in Nwakanma (2019), observed that the Jihad would have started in Egypt but for its terrain:

The River Nile runs in its narrow valley between two deserts that have no vegetation or water ... such a terrain made guerrilla warfare in Egypt impossible... perhaps Pakistan or Afghanistan would prove a more suitable location for raising an army of radical Islamists (Wright, 2006 in Nwakanma, 2019).

Having chosen Afghanistan as a better terrain, Muslim radicals flood Afghanistan to be part of the vanguard hence persistent crises. The Jihadists maintain semi-conflict situations to attract America into Afghanistan.

Neglect of the STAN States and other Regional Powers

STAN States are countries whose names end with the alphabets S, T, A, N, such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, etc., which are members of Collective Security Treaty Organization. Others are Afghanistan's surrounding neighbours such as Iran, India, Saudi-Arabia and Pakistan, some of whom are members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, "a loose body working largely to counter American interest in Central Asia (Ian, 2011:606). These countries that are predominantly Arabs, traced the clouding of "all Arab agreements with the United States" to the "Egypt-Israel peace treaty" popularly known as "The Camp David Accord" which they consider a mere "cold peace between Israel and its largest Middle East neighbor ..." (Amos, 1992:47 in Nwakanma, 2019). As it were, these Afghanistan neighbours latently did not "share Washington's obsession" over Moscow's threat to the region. Rather, the people of the region preferred Iran's revolution of 1979 by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. To them, Israel (America's ally in the Middle-East) is a major threat than Moscow. Thus, attacking the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan without consulting them was seen as "treating them with unprecedented levity". Such attitude by America was faulted by Robert G. Neumann, the former U.S ambassador to Saudi-Arabia when he said that America's: Strategic conception is guide for politics... look at a region as a piece of territory (forgetting) there are people living on that territory ... (Amos, 1992:46 in Nwakanma, 2019).

Consequently, since the people of the region did not share America's perception of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, and America could not win their confidence, they contributed in engaging America in a war of attrition in Afghanistan.

Predominant Military Approach

It was Graham E. Fuller, a former vice-chair of the U.S. National Intelligence Council that argued against the use of military force in Afghanistan. Fuller had insisted that, "Military force will not win the day in either Afghanistan or Pakistan ..." He maintained that rather than bring peace, "crisis have grown worse under the U.S. military foot-print" (Nasser, 2011). In the same view, Walt (2010) in Nwakanma (2019) argued that U.S. "insistence on defeating the Taliban through the use of superior military strength", without giving consideration to "underlying causes and drivers of the conflict that are linked to the international military presence" in both Saudi Arabia and the region generally, contributed to the protracted nature of the crises. Henry Kissinger, himself a realist who believed in the use of force once cautioned the domination of a region by one country militarily, even if it brings the appearance of order, could produce a crisis for the rest of the world.

The above assertion indicates that military force may not be necessary in all circumstances since the root cause of a crisis should tally with an approach to its lasting resolution.

Remote Causes of Protracted Afghanistan Crises Between 2001 and 2019:

- *Pakistan and Saudi Arabia's Double Standard*

The contending issue in Afghanistan crises since 2001 has been the "tenuous balance between development and tradition" (Amos, 1992, p.42). As the custodian of Islamic tradition, Saudi Arabia would stop at nothing not to be seen as having given "a tacit approval of the Camp David Accords" (Amos, 1992). It has been argued that it was the accord that "polarized the region and isolated Egypt, the region's traditional Arab power centre." Even

Syria was already suspicious of Saudi Arabia's relations with the U.S. As such, since Syria/Saudi connection was important to Riyadh, the Saudis needed to correct the impression. This it did by being one of the countries that recognized the Taliban alongside the United Arab Emirate (UAE), Pakistan and Iran. Recall also that the "Deobandi theological ideologies" of the Taliban "are close to those of Saudi Arabia's Wahhabis" ideology. That was why the Taliban insisted that to be part of any reconciliatory move, they must be led by Saudi Arabia (Nasser, 2011). Furthermore, Islam and land still have value for all Muslims and remain the singular unifying factors between moderate and radical Muslims. Recall again that radical Muslims have chosen "Pakistan or Afghanistan" as the best terrain for jihad against the West generally and America particularly. It is not surprising therefore, that while the U.S. relied on Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (her perceived "allies" in the region) to shape its policy towards Afghanistan, Pakistan was busy sheltering Taliban and Al-Qaeda officials. Thus, though aware that Taliban and Al-Qaeda's demand for strict Sharia in Afghanistan was at cross-roads with that of U.S., Saudi Arabia and Pakistan still went ahead to recognize the Taliban regime (Nasser, 2011).

- ***Lack of In-depth Perception of Prevalent Cultural Background of Afghans:***

The invasion of Afghanistan by the Arab Caliphate in 565 A.D-1709 A.D (Adam, 2009) no doubt sowed seed of "enhanced sectarian conflict" in the country between Pashtuns and Tajiks (Ukessays.com, 2014). In Pashtun culture, there has "always been a history of resistance of foreign influence which flow from Islamic religion" (Bruno, 2010:3). That was why Pashtun's areas of the south and east were exactly where the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) had the fiercest resistance. According to Bruno (2010), the Pashtuns have as "right of passage to be a good fighter...". With Islam as their code therefore do not take kindly to modernization. Consequently, the U.S. presence in Afghanistan provided an opportunity to prove that value. King Amanullah, who was deposed for attempting to modernize Afghanistan, is quite illustrative here. Hal (2011) concurred to the lack of understanding of the characteristics of the Pashtuns (who formed the bulk of the Taliban) in particular and Muslims generally part of the reason for protracted crises in Afghanistan. Hal (2011) maintained that:

Our efforts in...Afghanistan has stalled because we have failed to understand Muslims' beliefs and practices. We have set as our goal to turn these Islamic countries into democracies, even though a western-style democracy is totally contrary to the kind of government taught in Koran. In Islam, religion and government are woven together, and both are inextricably patterned after the tribal culture of the seventh-century Arabian Peninsula. This is why Islamic nation have such a hard time fitting into the modern world (Hal, 2011:9).

The above assertion is the reason why the Pashtun who make up 42% of Afghanistan population persist in the struggle for the Taliban to be reintegrated into the mainstream of governance in Afghanistan because they see the Taliban as "an instrument of Pashtun" (Bruno, 2010) nationalism leading to protracted crises in Afghanistan.

▪ **Islamic Scholars' Treatises**

This is the epicenter of both the immediate and remote causes of protracted Afghanistan crises between 2001 and 2019. This conclusion is underpinned by the axiom that "the pen is mightier than the sword". Consciously or unconsciously, "scholars have by their writings created and recreated societies and civilizations" (Nwakanma, 2019). The writings of Karl Max, John Locke, and so on were cited as instances. Similarly, Nwakanma, (2019) has argued that Islamic scholars have used their writings to paint "the picture of a race so cheated, short-changed, marginalized, undermined and so reduced to the level of underdogs by people of other races especially the West and America in particular that they cannot forgive". Thus, the Arab intellectual universe wasted no time in constructing impressive theoretical bases for the spread of hatred among Arabs against America, Jews and the rest of humanity (Jonathan, 2010). Jonathan (2010), has argued that the Arab League formed in 1945 was in "response to concerns about post-war colonial division of territory, as well as strong opposition to the emergence of a Jewish State in Palestine". Therefore, in pursuance of this objective, "the League ...undertook to represent the Palestine Arab case before the Western world and to seek to persuade the (Super) power to deny the achievement of Zionist goals" (Jonathan, 2010). Consequently, the new generation of Arab youth "Israel's

existence as symbolic of Arab humiliation at the hands of a superior power relying on Western technology that they were denied". That was the genesis of "...a desire for revenge. The Palestine issue continues a catalyst for the collective Arab action", Jonathan, (2010) concludes.

That was the platform on which the enemy image by Islamic jihadists was erected against the Jews and America (accused of shielding Israel). The enemy image however was amplified by the writings of scholars like Sayyid Qutb. In his book, "The Looming Tower, Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11", Wright (2006) quotes Sayyid Qutb, in an article titled "The world is an undutiful boy!" as having said;

Egypt was a civilized country when people were living in forests. Egypt taught Greece, and Greece taught Europe. When the undutiful boy grew up, he threw out his nurse, his kind nurse! He struck her trying to kill her...when we came here ... to appeal to England for our rights, the World helped England against Justice. When we came here to appeal against Jews, the World helped Jews against Justice. During the war between Arabs and Jews, the world helped Jews too. (Wright, 2006: 25 cited in Nwakanma, 2019).

The above assertion is an indication that Jihadists accuse America of racism against Arabs in preference to Jews. Wright (2006) quotes Qutb to have insisted that:

The white man crushes us underfoot, while we teach our children about his civilization, his universal principles and noble objectives...we are endowing our children with amazement and respect for the master who tramples our honour and enslaves us. Let us instead plant the seeds of hatred, disgust, and revenge in the souls of these children from the time their nerves are soft that the Whiteman is the enemy of humanity, and that they should destroy him at the first opportunity (Wright, 2006, p. 27)

The above pieces of writing have continued to shape "the Arab intellectual universe more profoundly than any other event in modern history", Wright (2006) concludes. Today, Arab politics generally, and Islamic militancy particularly has assumed more chaotic dimension. That forms the reason why:

Muslim children in elementary schools are taught that Jews come from Monkeys and Pigs. Dressed in military paraphernalia, these children learn to shout "Death to Jews!" and "Death to America!" in unison. Teachers applaud these young children, who are taught from an early age to love death, hate Jews, and long for the glory of being a martyr (Hagee, 2007, p. 208).

Having chosen Afghanistan for Jihad because of the advantage of terrain (mountains and vegetation which serve as natural fortress against enemy attack), Jihadist converts rush to Afghanistan, maintain semi-conflict situations to attract, kill and decompose America just as they did to Soviet troops between 1979 and 1989. America is considered the "head", and if taken care of, Israel and the rest of the Judeo-Christian World (that are seen as hands and legs) would not pose any serious threat before they are eliminated too. This desire has divided the Muslim World into "Moderate Muslims" and "Radical Muslims", which led to the concept of "Near Enemy" and "Far Enemy". So when you begin to wonder why Jihadists also kill Muslims, it is because the "Near Enemy" do not agree on total annihilation of non-Muslims. They (Moderate Muslims) are also sympathetic to Islamic course but without force. But the truth remains that whether of the "Moderate" or "Radical" group, Muslims have one thing in common: "mutual hatred of Jews and the desire to destroy the State of Israel..." (and) "mutually perceived threat of the U.S." in foiling that desire (Hal, 2011, p. 129). To all Muslims perhaps, the mere existence of Israel in their "sacred sphere of the earth", having obtained victory in five wars over them, "threatens the veracity of the Koran", which assured them victory over "the infidels". "Islamic life", Yousef and Ron (2010, pp.7 – 12) have argued, "is like a ladder... the highest rung is Jihad". Gabriel (2002: 50) agreed when he said, "Islam is full of discrimination against women, against non-Muslims, against Christians, and most especially against Jews. Hatred is built into the religion".

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing assertions, this study concludes that, Islamic radicals have built enemy image and hatred against non-Muslims especially America, considered to be the custodian of Judeo-Christian World Order. In what Nwakanma (2019) considers as “Conceived Global Islamic Rebirth”, Islamic militants are ready to “...recapture the glory of their earliest and purest expression” (Wright, 2006) which they lost in the fall of Ottoman Empire in 1917 (Hal, 2011). They gain vitality from the declaration of the founder of Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saudi, who said:

We shall never call for or accept a negotiated peace. We shall only accept war- Jihad - Holy war.
We have resolved to drench the lands of Palestine and Arabia with the blood of the infidels or accept martyrdom for the glory of Allah (Hal, 2011, p. 201).

That is the reason every peace effort have been rejected by Taliban in Afghanistan. Appearing to accept peace talks is adopting the “Quraysh Model” since they believe that war is deception (Hal, 2011, p.117). The Quraysh Model relies on an Islamic proverb which says “if you can’t cut your enemies’ hands, kiss it” (Hal 2011) just to buy time until you are ready to strike. Thus, the protracted Afghanistan crises will at best be managed not completely resolved because Muslim Jihadists have chosen Afghanistan to build a Caliphate from where to attack the rest of the world, hence the attack by Osama Bin Laden against the U.S. on September 11, 2001 from Afghanistan soil. Jihadists’ determination to ensure universal allegiance to Allah makes enduring peace in Afghanistan illusive.

Recommendation

Having established the “why” of protracted Afghanistan crises between 2001 and 2019, the West in general and the United States in particular should make proactive policies based on the highlighted “why” in this study. Therefore, since “the faith factor” is involved, there is no need for the use of force; rather adoption of persistent appeal to the conscience of Islamic radicals sensitizing them on inter-faith relations with particular emphasis on religious verses that touch on altruism.

Contribution to Knowledge

From the foregoing, this study has been able to establish a link between what it refers to as “conceived global Islamic rebirth” which chose Afghanistan as the best terrain for Jihad against the “Far Enemy” (America) and her allies and protracted Afghanistan crises between 2001 and 2019. Rather than the struggle for resource control which informed the adoption of Economic theory by previous studies to explain the variables involved in protracted Afghanistan crises, this study deviated to adopt an alternative theoretical framework- Psycho-Cultural theory, which clearly captures the very essence of the choice of Afghanistan as a campaign rallying ground for crusaders of Islamic terrorism built on the platform of “everlasting hatred”.

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