Structural Deficiencies in the Political System of Afghanistan and Major Irritants in Pak-Afghan Relations

Zahid Yaseen
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
GC Women University, Sialkot
Correspondence: Zahid.yaseen@gcwus.edu.pk

Imran Khan
Ph.D. Scholar
Department of Political Science and International Relations
GCUniversity, Faisalabad

ABSTRACT

Political stability of Afghanistan is an essential component for peace and harmony in South Asia and has deep influences on Pakistan. Afghanistan's political setup and security situation definitely impacts on the security of Pakistan. Terrorism and civil wars in Afghanistan from 1979 have extremely spoiled the governmental institutions of Afghanistan and produced huge damages, both in human lives and infrastructure, generally in the border areas. In 2014, NATO has planned the drawdown their forces, an atmosphere of insecurity emerges large on the administrative prospect of Afghanistan, by the anxieties communicated that this state may fall once again into the depth of violence and disorder. This research indicates intentions at concentration of Afghanistan's current political structures and a danger of their endurance after drawdown the NATO forces, moreover examining the present resistances between Afghanistan and Pakistan on several matters.

Keywords: *South Asia, Political stability, Afghanistan, Pakistan*

Introduction

It is the greatest misfortune of current scenario that the government of Afghanistan and its public have been boiling under continuous administrative and political disorder, terrorism and social miseries for the last four decades. Afghanistan is almost a conflict ravaged and disorganized state. Many Afghan generations have been observing nothing but terrorism, violence and disorder in their country, both when they were struggling against Soviet Union and now when they are involved against NATO forces. The political and security system of Afghanistan directly affects upon the security situation of Pakistan. Both the countries share a long border, extending over 2591 KM, without any active investigation arrangement, which develops a main cause of cross-border movement of militants and offenders. Since the NATO forces programmed drawdown is firm approaching, reservations and anxieties appear huge on our nationwide prospect about likely outcomes of

Afghanistan's uncertainty and resistances. It is expected that the Afghanistan's political and security structure of has a direct association with the political stability and security situation of not only Pakistan but also the whole South Asia. (Abbasi & Islam, 2014)

The primary assumption of this article is that the political condition of Afghanistan has a direct connection with the political and security situation of Pakistan. The main outcomes of this research are that political systems and security situation of Afghanistan have too delicate organizations, which are deeply reliant on foreign support. Afghanistan could not improve reliable relations with bordering countries, predominantly Pakistan, by eliminating many nuisances. The Afghanistan Government needs to work out in cooperation with Pakistan for the betterment of an active border supervision and investigation appliance, to wipe out the arrangement of drug-traffickers, ecowarriors and militants from both sides of Durand Line. The global community needs to effort in South Asia for peace, harmony and prosperity, and also the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan deserve much needed relief.

Defining the Criteria of Political Stability of Afghanistan

The issue of political stability is one of the supreme in flexible ideas in contemporary theoretical discussion. (Qassem, 2009) Hurwitz explains political stability as *"the absence of violence, governmental longevity, the absence of structural change, legitimacy and effective decision-making".* (Hurwitz, 1973) According to Hurwitz, the main indicators of political stability and determination would be:

- Legitimacy

- Governmental durability

- Absence of violence

- Effective decision- making

- Absence of structural change

A number of experiential studies were directed consequently to additional purify the refrains associated to political stability. The main common subject, linked to gradation of violence and conflict and their concentration, was assumed by Russet and Bunselmayer, in which they recycled a very elementary technique of counting the figure of losses directly as an outcome of inter-group violence per 1,000,000 units of population (Russet & Bunselmayer, 1964). However, this method was dignified as an unsatisfactory indicator to evaluate political system and their stability, because there could be several political activities that may not effect in the damage of life but which can be harmful to the firmness of any state. (Qassem, 2009)

Ake explained this idea further by witnessing that citizens of any society fortify or destabilize political structure to the level that they follow or violate the rules formed by that political system. Respect to the law establishes administrative behavior just as far as through elections. He also describes, *"If the incidence of violations of law continues to increase, political authority eventually atrophies; that is axiomatic."* (Ake, 1975) Another investigation was directed by Ivo K.

Feierabend and Rosalind Feierabend, who presented a degree of 0 (extremely stable) to 6 (extremely unstable) grades of eighty-four countries over time duration of seven years (1955-1961). They explained the thoughts of constancy and insecurity as:

"The degree or the amount of aggression directed by individuals or groups within the political system against other groups or against the complex of officeholders and individuals and groups associated with them. Or, conversely, it is the amount of aggression directed by these officeholders against other individuals, groups or other officeholders within the policy." (Feirabend & feieabend, 1966)

These writers discourse that violent behavior of citizens is produced by 'system frustration', which develop the reasons of instability. System frustration curtails from a system's incapability to realize public demands as against 'social wants'. The political system should have the capacity to encounter the anxieties and the requirements of the society, particularly from its capability to adjust to the fluctuatingsituations. (Duff & McCamant, 1968) A vital interpretation drawn by Feirabends is that violent actions might be repressed by coercive approaches, such as punishments; but, a society where coercive approaches are the key methods of deciding the issues is not a stable society. A stable polity would be skillful of releasing structure frustration through beneficial approaches. A number of governmental, administrative, commercial and other mechanisms would be accessible in a stable polity to encourage peaceful and constructive behaviors. (Feirabend & feieabend, 1966)

If the situation of Afghanistan's political stability is examined according to the first indicator, proposed by Hurwitz, there can scarcely be any rejection that Afghanistan is the most unsteady state in the globe. The internal politics of Afghanistan have been categorized by violent and coercive ways of problem resolving in most part of current history. (Qassem, 2009, p. 5) The influence of this violence on the citizens of Afghanistan and, also on Pakistan is a main focus of this paper.

According to the definition of Hurwitz, the second part of political stability is the permanency of the administrations. There is an excessive deal of theoretical discussion about this standard to critic the stability and firmness of any political system. (Russet & Bunselmayer, 1964) The dictatorial governments, for example in Middle East, have very extended periods of rule, while, the elected governments commonly change. Thus, Hurwitz proposes that difference should be made between legal and illegal sequences of the heads of the states. Submission of this standard to evaluate political stability in Afghanistan may complete also simplistic, as only 17 heads of the country changed in Afghanistan since 1919. Then how these regimes were transformed is a more appropriate interrogation with orientation to the study of political stability of Afghanistan than the enquiry 'how often'. Edmund Burke, therefore, justifiably discusses that *"a state without the means of some change is without the means of conservation."*(Hurwitz, 1973)

As regards the legitimacy of a political system, as a criterion of its stability, some writers believed that it was an important an element for sustainability of any political structure. The stability of a system is related not only to its legitimacy but also to its effectiveness, as opined by many writers. (Duff & McCamant, 1968)

Ernest Duff and John McCamant state, *"In a stable political system, the members of the system consider it to be both legitimate and effective."* (Duff & McCamant, 1968) In the words of another writer, Martin Lipset, *"Legitimacy involves the capacity of the system to engender and maintain belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate one for the society."* (Lipset, 1960) But linking legitimacy with political stability has been criticized by a number of writers as well. The application of legitimacy criterion to Afghanistan reveals that there was hardly any period in history of Afghanistan when all powerful leaders and common citizens could have accepted the legitimacy of the political system. Afghanistan remained in most part of history the hub of foreign interventions and internal strifes. In recent times, the Governments were frequently changed on gun point and the rulers were assassinated. Each successive ruler challenged the legitimacy of the previous one.

Yet another criterion to the study the concept of political stability is the 'basic structural arrangements in a society and their durability'. Hurwitz accepts the relevance of this criterion, but also highlights imprecision in its application. He also questions as to what is meant by basic structures and to what extent the changes should occur, which might determine that the structures had been changed. (Hurwitz, 1973) The concept of structural arrangements crystallizes through the study of Dessauer's analysis of 'foundations of a society': *"stability has to depend on the actual changes being few, slow and not fundamental".* (Dessauer, 1949) It can be inferred from this discussion that the frequent changes in the fundamental structures or the foundations of the society indicate its instability and few, slow and infrequent changes indicate the inverse trends. Once tested on the anvil of this criterion, Afghanistan emerges conspicuously as a country, which has witnessed frequent changes in its political structures. Prior to 1919, Afghanistan was under the British suzerainty, followed by Amanullah's Government, which was reformist in nature. Thereafter, a succession of bloody changes, including PDPA's communist regime, Islamic State of Afghanistan after Soviet withdrawal, Taliban's extremist government and now the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, all indicate towards frequent fundamental changes in the structures of Afghan politics.

Finally, there is a need to make a mention of another approach to study the stability of any political system and that is the relationship between the political structures (rulers) and the members of the society (ruled). Eckstein finds a number of overlapping factors, which contribute, towards stability of any system. *"They include: continuity of the political system including its ability to adapt to changing circumstances, legitimacy of the system, effective decision-making, which demonstrates the political system's ability not only to make consensus-based policies but also implement them competently, and finally the genuineness rather than superficiality of the participatory institutions and processes of the political system."* (Eckstein, 1966)

Structures of Afghan Government – The Weak Areas

The Constitution of Afghanistan was, by all means, an interim arrangement. It is far from being the final document. There are a number of areas which need definite improvement. Some of the structural shortcomings of Afghan political system are being highlighted in this paper.

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Ethnic Divide

The diversity of cultural make-up of nations, on the bases of ethnicity, language and religious, is considered as a normal phenomenon in most parts of the world provided other factors such as common culture and politico economic interests homogenize the populace. At the dawn of modern times, the territory of what is now Afghanistan was inhabited by a variety of ethnic groups, which apart from Muslim faith, had little in common. (Saikal, 2004) Ethnic factor is so strong in the affairs of Afghanistan that it plays central role in the making of political parties, elections, formations of Governments and recruitment and commissioning of public servants. The ethnic groups in Afghanistan are solid, cultural units which have been divided by boundaries and have been engaged in conflict for years. (Mazhar, 2012) Historically, however, ethnicity had never been played up, as it is done today. Most of the top level leadership positions, including kings were held by Pashtuns, who had always been in majority as compared to other groups. The war in Afghanistan has vastly changed the traditional balance and power equation. Non-Pashtun minorities are more dominating today, particularly in post-Taliban Afghanistan, than they were two decades ago.(Mazhar, 2012) Dr. Rasul Bakhsh Rais says, *"the United States, in its war against Taliban after the 9/11 tragedy, tried the time-tested strategy of courting the enemies of the enemy. Northern Front came forward, as the natural ally of the super power, by offering every possible help, as the interests of both the US and Northern Alliance were common in crushing the Taliban, which increased the apprehensions among Pashtuns about their representation in the post-Taliban power arrangements".* (Rais, 2008)

Highly Centralized System of Government

Extensive powers seem to be concentrated in the office of President. The concentration of power is stunning, in fact. There is no oversight of the President's actions, which are unconstrained by any check and balances. (Birkle, Hanlon, & Sherjan, 2011) One can understand the rationale of powerful executive during the times of crises, but for a country like Afghanistan which has dispersed centers of power, based on regional, linguistic, sectarian and ethnic tendencies, the devolution of authority at local levels could be prudent approach. Similarly, a set of supporting institutions like Executive Office of U.S. President would be required to assist such a strong Presidential Office, which Afghan economy can hardly afford.

Electoral Process

Afghanistan's electoral process is highly controversial. Both the presidential elections of 2005 and 2009 as well as the parliamentary elections were criticized for lack of transparency, massive irregularities and manipulations. A major issue of elections was the participation of over three and half million refugees, residing in Pakistan and Iran. Afghanistan's democratic structure lacks institutionalization. (Smith, 2012)

Steward Smith, an expert on Afghanistan, has aptly drawn these conclusions about the election system of Afghanistan: *"Looking back at the significant transformations in Afghanistan over the past eight yearstransformations that have yielded both positive and negative changes – one is stuck by two conclusions: the*

utter lack of progress made in building democratic institutions despite hundreds of millions of dollars spent on democratic processes, and holding of now four elections (including the second parliamentary elections in 2010), and fact that the enduring disconnect between the citizens of Afghanistan and their Government – precisely what democratic democratization efforts were supposed to mend – is one of the biggest factors behind the growth of insurgency. Many discrete tasks have been done well, and the key electoral events have been held, but they did not seem to add up to democratization." (Smith, 2012)

Another report compiled by the experts at BOOKINGS Foreign Policy desk contains the following conclusions by Afghan think tanks themselves: *"In the eyes of most Afghans, elections are being used to legitimize or rubber stamp the control of powerful and elections are compounding the distrust of institution."* (Birkle, Hanlon, & Sherjan, 2011, p. 1)

Judicial System of Afghanistan

Chapter-7 of the Constitution of Afghanistan deals with the Judiciary. There are three tiers of Afghan Judiciary: The Supreme Court (in the centre), Courts of Appeal (in the provinces) and Primary Courts at District levels. These courts in most parts of the country are still in formative stage, for lack of qualified judges and supporting staff. Then, there is a considerable controversy about applications of various sets of laws. Islamic Sharia Laws, Anglo-Saxon Criminal and Statutory laws are applied in the courts. The qualified judges in Islamic Sharia, who can give balanced interpretations of Islamic laws, are hard to come by. The Afghan Judicial system could not develop confidence in the people. Consequently, the disputes are still referred to and adjudicated by local Jirgas and tribal heads. This arrangement allows tribal chiefs to maintain their clout and weld their strong power bases.

Donors -Dependent Economic Structure

One of the major concerns expressed by the experts about post 2014 Afghanistan is the sustainability of its economic structure, which is totally dependent on donations. How this huge political, security and administrative structure would be maintained, once the international donors pull out, is a big question mark. The widespread corruption from top to bottom further compounds the problem. Although a number of donor countries pledged to continue their financial aids, at least through the years 2015 and 2017, yet there is no likelihood that Afghan economy would stand on its own feet in the foreseeable future. It does not auger well for a sovereign nation. It is, perhaps, the reason that the successive governments in Kabul are ready to become willing stooges even to the states like India, which have hardly anything common with the people of Afghanistan, except the vested interests of power elites. *"Afghanistan's transition from armed conflict to a stable, secure and developing society depends on its capacity to overcome a fundamental conundrum: economic development cannot take place in the absence of a secure environment, at the same time, a secure environment cannot long be sustained without progress in economic development."* (Gleason & Krambs, 2012)

Administrative Arrangements

State of Afghanistan has 34 provinces (Walayat, plural Walayaat)) and over four hundred Districts (Ulaswali). The elections to District Councils could not be held so far, due to serious controversies about district-boundaries. It entails, in turn, the

non-completion of Mashrano Jirga (Upper House) of the National Assembly, where district Councils are required to send their representatives. Similarly, the Chairpersons are ex-office members of Loya Jirga, which also remains incomplete in the absence of elections of the district councils. There is also a disconnecting between elected provincial councils and the nominated Governors. Provinces and districts are primary units, which need to take care of public welfare, maintenance of law and order and as well as developmental work. But existing Government structure of Afghanistan seems to converge on the precincts of Kabul. Whereas, there is hardly any influence of the central Government on far flung areas, which still remain under the influence of tribal warlords and clergy.(Abbasi & Islam, 2014)

The Major Irritants in Pakistan and Afghanistan Relations

Once Afghanistan is known as one of the bases of insecurity for the peace of South Asia, it may not be a cautious strategy for the U.S and NATO to unrestraint this unstable region once again, without showing any seriousness or commitment for durable peace in the long run. It needs to be appreciated and understood by all regional and global players that stability and peace in South Asia would remain a far cry, if real irritants among South Asian nations, particularly Pakistan and Afghanistan and Pakistan and India, are not removed. This paper will particularly focus on major irritants between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The following are the major issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan which cannot be settled without active role of U.S, NATO and U.N.O: -

Durand Line Controversy

The Durand Line Agreement was reached between the Government of Afghanistan and Great Britain in 1893 and was signed by the then Amir of Afghanistan Abdul Rehman Khan and the British Representative Sir Henry Mortimer Durand. (Katzman, 2004) Pakistan inherited this Agreement on its independence in 1947, which stands recognized by UN and all regional and global countries, including US, UK, NATO and ISAF countries as well as successive Afghan governments, barring a few. It was, in fact, a part of series of agreements reached between the Great Britain and the Tsars of Russia, which resulted in the creation of modern state of Afghanistan. Today's Afghanistan owes its identity to those agreements. (Hopkins, 2008) The attitude of Afghan rulers has been described well by Ahmad Shayeq Qassem: *"The processes which determined the Afghan borders are all open to controversy, yet the Afghan Government has only challenged its border with South Asia. The selective way in which the Afghan government treats borders is related more to considerations of domestic politics and transit trade with an impact on the country's political stability rather than the validity of its case".* (Qassem, 2009) Durand Line treaty was ratified by successive Afghan Governments in 1905, 1919 and 1930. US, ISAF and NATO Forces recognize this border as an international one, but could not convince the Government of Afghanistan to give it a 'dejure border' status. (Khan, 2013)

The Government of Afghanistan needs to realize that it is better to play on 'positives' rather than on 'negatives' to negotiate the issues of transit-trade and make a serious effort to help itself and Pakistan secure their borders. It also needs to understand that 'securing border' does not imply 'closing of borders'. *"The*

modern world requires secure borders, but does not require closed borders. In the 21st century, international investment, and the cross border movement of ideas, people, goods and services are necessary components of both economic and political development in any country. In landlocked Afghanistan, relations with neighboring countries define in many aspects the interactions with the outside world as a whole". (Gleason & Krams, 2012) The cost of this unnecessary controversy is not being paid only by Pakistan and Afghanistan but the whole world. The so called 'safe havens' for terrorists are located in the areas, which fall on either side of Durand Line. Afghanistan needs to share the responsibility of these safe havens, if it is not ready to make Pakistan-Afghanistan border secure, by fencing and developing effective joint surveillance system, clearly demarcating the mutually agreed exit and entry points. The earlier it is done the better it would be for the peace of the world in general and South Asia in particular.

Cross-Border Movement of Terrorists

A natural effect to the border controversy is the cross – border movement of terrorists, saboteurs and criminals. Hundreds of kilometers of border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, passing through extremely rugged terrain / mountains, are free for all. Making this border secure is really a herculean task, but nevertheless, it has to be done, if these both the countries and the world at large want an enduring peace. The hideouts and terrorist network of all known Al-Qaeda and TTP elements have been reported to be located on either side of Durand Line. It is beyond comprehension, why the international community did not impress upon Afghanistan to help Pakistan secure this border and, thereby, secure the borders of both the countries.

Indian Factor in Afghanistan

The presence of a widespread network of Indian intelligence agencies, in the garb of trainers and contractors / builders, is a matter of serious concerns for Pakistan. No country can understand the Indian hegemonic designs better than Pakistan. Indian policy-makers could not and would not rise above their jingoism, to evolve the policies which may be directed to integrate this entire South Asian regime into a peaceful and prosperous place in the world to live in, as the Europeans leaders did. Instead, India is still playing up with the militarist and coercive politics, which the European leaders of 1890s were passing through. Indians just want to surround and strangulate Pakistan. Their presence in Afghanistan bespeaks of nothing but this fact and the Government of Afghanistan needs to understand it. (Abbasi & Islam, 2014)

Narcotics

Afghanistan is the world largest producer of opium, which is around 80% of the total global production. The criminal gangs, drug-traffickers and terrorists thrive on black-marketing and sale of opium. It has been reported that 1, 54,000 Hectares of land were filled by opium- poppy crops by the farmers in the year 2012, more than 131,000 hectors in 2011. It is amazing that the Taliban regime had been remarkably successful in eradicating the drugs from the society, whereas, the NATO and ISAF Forces kept a blind eye to this menace, for obvious short term military gains. Their belated actions now are yielding no positive results. 177 attacks have been reported so far on the Afghan Security Forces, who tried to

destroy poppy crops, killing 102 soldiers. (Iqbal, 2012) Narcotics are easily being infiltrated to various parts of the world. Pakistan is the worst victim of this menace, as a large number of Pakistani youth are fast turning into addicts. The effective border management and monitoring are a few of the means to eradicate or at least control this menace, which is extremely dangerous for the humanity as a whole.

Refugees

One of the irritants between Pakistan and Afghanistan, but not the least important one, is the presence of around three million Afghan refugees in Pakistan. These refugees, who entered Pakistan after Soviet invasion of 1979, did not return back to Afghanistan despite the lapse of more than three and half decades. Majority of them still lives in refugees' camps. They are a big source of cross- border movement of criminals, narcotics, arms and ammunition. Their continued presence has badly impacted the societal set-up of KPK and FATA in Pakistan. It is time that the government of Afghanistan should make effective arrangements for their repatriation.

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Conclusion

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Pakistan and Afghanistan are close neighbors, which cannot be dissected by any machinations. The political stability of each of these neighbors is contingent upon each other. No other country in the world has suffered, in terms of losses to men and material, more than Pakistan, due to continued spade of violence in Afghanistan for last three and half decades. The proliferation of narcotics, arms and ammunition to each nook and cranny of Pakistan is the gift of successive Afghan wars and civil wars since 1979. Now, when the final drawdown of NATO and ISAF is fast approaching, Pakistan's worries about the political stability of Afghanistan are but natural. The central argument of this study is that peace in South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular hinges on political stability of Afghanistan. Similarly, the peace and political stability of Afghanistan cannot be realized without effective collaboration of its neighbors. It is, therefore, logical that Afghanistan and all its neighbors should sit together, to honestly address the irritants and work out pragmatic recovery, re-construction, economic development and security plans, in which all of them find 'a winwin situation', and in turn, the people of this region live in much needed peace and tranquility. Afghanistan cannot be stabilized by quick fixes. A long term commitment of U.N.O, NATO and particularly neighboring countries would be required for an enduring political stability of Afghanistan.

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