

New Changes in Afghanistan and Its Impact on National Security of Iran (After September 11, 2001)

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Abstract: To answer the main question of the research which is? “Has the advent of new conditions in Afghanistan under the occupation of the US caused new security threats for the Islamic republic of Iran?” first of all , the concept of security and national security and various threats which might challenge national security has been reviewed. Then the concept of national security in different eras will be briefly discussed from the era before the cold war to the era after it until the incidents of September 11, 2001. In next steps, it is tried to introduce Afghanistan more, with regard to its strategic conditions and position such as being the neighbor of the Islamic Republic of Iran, geographical proximity to Russia as the only conduit for threatening Russia, ideological ethnic tendencies due to ideological vacuum, economic attractions such as original underground resources and cheap labor and good markets which have encouraged regional and world powers to increase their influence in this region. After September 11 attacks, the US tried to take advantage of the threats made against its interests and national security as an opportunity.

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1. Introduction

In determining and implementing their foreign policies, governments as the main actors in international relations will directly and indirectly have positive effects on national interests of other countries through realizing their interests or negative effects through threatening interests. Afghanistan is an amazing land, a museum full of antiques in the form of various ethnics, tribes, religions, languages and cultures, a country with soaring mountains as long as 600 km and as wide as 100 km, stretched from northeast to west and south with guerrilla passages which have surrounded more than half of the country, so that Kabul and Kandahar and Herat feel safe. A thirsty land which is mixing the sweet dream of connection to the sea with the bitter nightmare of obstruction. However, it is able to link two sovereign countries, Iran and Pakistan to three super powers that is Russia, China, and India. It is an original land whose mines have remained virgin in the shadow of ethnic and racial conflicts so that nobody knows the exact amounts of its mines of gas, oil, copper, lapis, manganese, bauxite, gold, nickel, chrome, ruby, marble, mercury, lithium, aluminum, tin and etc. The land which has been the field of wars and conflicts between various tribes and races since one century ago when it got separated from British protectorate and became independent until now. Regional changes after September eleventh and the presence of cross-regional and NATO forces led by the US in Afghanistan , have generated new security paradigms in the region and this military –

security transformation will become more significant when it is linked to strategic influences of Islamic Republic of Iran in the region. So that , The US military campaign as the leader of global coalition against terrorism , might raise concerns related to security and national interests of Iran , more than other countries.

1.1. Theoretical perspectives and issues

National security is a term composed of two terms “security” and “national” which is literally a complicated concept. Scholars of political science and international relations have offered many definitions for this term which in spite of some commonalities indicate their different point of views. According to classical texts, it can be said that national security is a multifaceted concept.

1.1.1. Definition of national security

In definition of national security “Richard Cooper” says, “National security is the capability of exploiting and promoting values and culture (MAIER, CHARLES S.1993).

“Walter Lippman” , American author and researcher believes that a nation is secure when it doesn’t sacrifice its interests to avoid war and is ready to fight to keep its interests in case of any conflicts (MAIER, CHARLES S.1993). Other definitions by some theorists are briefly stated here:

“Penelope Hartland – Thunberg” believes that national security is a nation’s ability to pursue their interests successfully, everywhere in the world the same way they believe themselves.

(Brown, Harold (1983). "Laroni Martin" defines security as ensuring future welfare and prosperity.(Rezaee and Eskandari , 2004 : 7).

"John Hertz" in early 1950s posed that in security puzzle governments try to satisfy their own security needs. (Brown, Harold (1983).

Some people have defined security as:

"Preserving territorial integrity, upgrading the country's vital resources, no serious threat" (Seifzade , 1999 :160).

"Frank N. Tragov and F.N. Simon" believe that national security is that part of policy which aims to provide favorable political, national and international atmosphere to keep or expand national critical values against the potential enemies. (Brown, Harold (1983).

In general, two types of research could be done on security:

A: Researches which basically consider national security around maximizing national power in the form of military act.

B: Researches which care about international cooperation and increasing the power of international institutions and decreasing national power and arm races (Jablonsky David, 1997).

2.1.1 Characteristics of national security

1. Security is all relative: In today's world, it is impossible to achieve absolute security. Insecure situation that occurred in the US on September 11, and what happened in England before and after it, indicates this fact.

2. Security is subjective: Basically, the feeling of security or lack of it is a subjective concept that is rooted in moral, religious and cultural beliefs of people and leaders of a country.

3. Security is inseparable: It means that when there isn't security in one spot of a country, this situation will affect all its affairs and issues.

3.1.1. Changes in the concept of security

Changes in security particularly after the cold war can be discussed under three waves which are called "national security" , "international security" , and "world security" .(Ann M. Florini and P.J. Simmons, 1998). The first wave is after the cold war and is more in the form of security frame and is named national security. The second wave which is referred to as "international security" , emphasizes the cooperation between governments on the basis of a set of principles, procedures, rules and norms and the governments are called to converge in some ways. This wave appeared in early 1980s concurrent with new realism theory in international relations. The third wave occurred in 1990s with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Like terrorism, human rights, democracy, education, economic poverty, overpopulation and environment, it is of special importance and is discussed in and requires global

determination. Today, if Afghanistan becomes the home of terrorism, the US will be threatened on the other side of the world and its people won't feel secure, as the incident of September 11, 2001 approved of it.

In this approach people are emphasized rather than governments. (Katzenstein Peter J, 1996).

4.1.1. Threats to national security

Threats to national security could be divided to foreign threats and domestic threats; however, it should be immediately noted that it is sometimes difficult to draw a certain border between foreign and domestic threats; for they are often interrelated. (Roshandel , 2006 : 138 -158).

Foreign threats include	1. Military attack	2. Military intervention	3. plot or conspiracy	4. abolition
Domestic threats include	1. guerrilla war	2. economic threat	3. social threat	4. ethnic conflict

2. A brief review of the history of Afghanistan

The land which is now called Afghanistan was initially called "Ariana" or "Aryana" or "Arya" and "Airia" which was founded by "Ahmad Shah Abdali" in 1747AD, in the eighteenth century. But in late 19th century Afghanistan was mapped in its current borders by "Abdorahman" who was remembered as "Iron Amir". Before that, Afghanistan was a part of Iran territory and it is impossible to separate its history and events from Great Iran, because its history has always been the same as Iran's and all its stuffs have been linked and tied to Iran. In January 26, 1857 England and "Doost Mohammed Khan" (father of Naseredin Shah) signed a treaty in Peshawar according to which Afghanistan became British protectorate, thus it entirely separated from Great Iran territory. (Esfandiari, Golnaz (2005). Afghanistan got independent after three wars against Britain in 1921. "Saur Revolution" of 1978 caused the establishment of a close relationship with the Soviet Union. But the Soviet invasion caused civil war. In 1989 the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan and left the cities to the government and the rest of the country to Muslim guerrillas. In 1999, Muslim guerrillas captured Kabul and formed a provisional government, but the conflict between different factions –which is mainly ethnic, continued. After several years of civil wars, Taliban came to power, this government was collapsed by the US army after several months and then the president of Afghanistan was elected by domestic election. Of course, American forces are still in Afghanistan and there exist scattered conflicts between American army and local and Pro-Taliban forces and others. (Esfandiari, Golnaz (2005).

1.2. Iran and Afghanistan relations

Iran's foreign policy towards changes in Afghanistan has been affected by the strategy of the whole regime in the framework of the Islamic world events and issues. (O'Rourke, Breffni (2007)). In this period of time, Iran tries to emphasize the inefficiency of military approaches in ruling and controlling Afghanistan. The best course of Iran's diplomatic success in Afghanistan can be considered during Rabbani's government. But with the rise of Taliban this era came to an end. During the government of Taliban, Islamic Republic of Iran made the fate of Taliban ambiguous in international meetings by showing its unacceptable and violent nature and through political, military, and advertising dimensions. Iran didn't recognize Taliban and expressed its opposition and hatred towards Taliban and even its supporters. (Sappenfield, Mark (2007)). After electing Hamed Karzai as the first Islamic president of Afghanistan in the second half of 2004, Iran and Afghanistan relations resumed as well with regard to Iran's cooperation in implementing commitments which was given to beneficiary countries in Afghanistan by Ben Conference. In 2006, Hamed Karzai traveled to Iran in charge of a supreme political and economic board. He met with and talked to Ayatollah Khameneie, the leader of Islamic revolution, and Dr. Ahmadinejad, the president, and other officials. In his meeting with Hamed Karzai, The supreme leader of Iran counted the development of relations between Iran and Afghanistan as the supplier of common national interests of both countries.

2.2. United States and its policy towards Afghanistan

The root of the US presence in Afghanistan and its support of Mujahedeen go back to 1980 when "Carter" signed the first secret instruction of CIA in Afghanistan. (Subhash Kapila (2009)). So far the US has played role in Afghanistan twice as the international main star:

The first stage was during the Cold War and the intensification of competition between the US and Russia over influence in Afghanistan. This competition led to violent change of power in Kabul and finally the Soviets occupied Afghanistan and The US supported the oppositions and finally, Russians were expelled from Afghanistan. The second stage was after September 11, and the invasion of Afghanistan by us army due to the refusal of Mullah Mohammed Aziz, the leader of Taliban to hand over Osama Bin Laden. In case of presence in Afghanistan and central Asia, the US is able to supervise Russia constantly. Therefore, supervising Russia, which might have acceptable political behavior for the US, has become more significant than before in the policies of the US, central Asia

and South Asia; on the other hand, the US has targeted not only the benefits and national security of Russia, but also those of China, India, Pakistan, and most of all, the Islamic republic of Iran. These countries are somehow getting loss because of the invasion of Afghanistan by the US. (Subhash Kapila (2009)). In March 27, 2009 "Barak Obama" as the 44th president of the US posed a new policy under the title of "Af-Pak" (Afghanistan and Pakistan) which is considered as his government road map in dealing with Afghanistan. After long preparation and broad advertising Obama finally announced the final strategy of his government in last solar year. In this procedure, he declared several major points as the main goals the most important of which are:

Eradicating terrorist networks in Afghanistan and Pakistan through massive attack to them and reducing their power by attracting their forces and decreasing their number; Strengthening and developing a powerful responsive and effective government in Afghanistan; Developing and expanding independent military and security forces in Afghanistan; Accompanying international community and the UN to gain immediate support in Afghanistan.

3. The effects of Afghanistan recent changes and development on national security of the Islamic republic of Iran

Afghanistan changes and developments in new conditions, contain strategic and security considerations about surrounding area of Iran which is associated with the national interests and the security of the country. "Homan Conn" believes that like many of its neighbors, Iran is exposed to vulnerability. Thus interests and security are both internal and resulted from cross-national economic – political pressures. Therefore the security environment of Iran in an integration of internal and international factors.

- With regard to the content of the word "threat" and a general look at recent condition of Afghanistan after its capturing by the US and NATO, it could be said that the possible threats of

The Islamic republic of Iran by Afghanistan changes and development could be as follows:

1. A threat from the presence of The US and NATO in Afghanistan (external threat)
2. A threat from Afghanistan (internal threat)

1.3. Threats from the presence of the US and NATO in Afghanistan (external threats)

Efforts to stabilize presence in Afghanistan and to impose a geographical Blockade on Iran

- Providing conditions for the presence of the Zionist regime of Israel in Afghanistan
- Expanding the activities of terrorist groups Al Qaeda and Taliban in western borders to exert pressure on Iran
- Creating a Neo-Taliban in the region and empowering Taliban again
- Preventing the reconstruction of Iranian – Islamic culture school in Afghanistan

2.3 Threat from Afghanistan (internal threat)

- Growing and expanding drugs and their derivatives and transiting them to Islamic Republic of Iran
- Federation of Afghanistan , Baluchistan and Pashtunistan
- Increasing Pashtu tribes' distrust of Iran's policies
- Formation of a liberal democratic government and an armed nation in Afghanistan
- Iran's removal from the oil and gas pipelines of Central Asia
- Hirmand water supplies as a tool to enforce pressure on Islamic Republic of Iran

1.1.3. Efforts to stabilize presence in Afghanistan and imposing a geographical blockade on Iran

Following the occupation of Afghanistan and then the attack on Iraq in east and west of Iran, the US is now somehow in the neighborhood of Iran. Moreover, the US has an indirect but effective presence in Pakistan, Persian Gulf, Turkey and Azerbaijan. Thus, it can be seen that Iran is facing The US on all four sides. For example America is using two important military base in "Herat" and "Bagram" in north of Kabul at the moment to transport its troops and fighter aircrafts. On the other hand, the airport of Shindand is about 150 km away from the eastern borders of Iran. And it could be used in case of any possible attack on Iran.

2.1.3. Providing conditions for Israel's presence in Afghanistan

Experience proves that Israel takes the maximum benefits from the smallest possible opening, and will have the full support of the US in this way. This fact is evident to everyone that Israel tries to be present in the countries which have common border with Iran such as Azerbaijan and Turkey in north and west and also central Asia and Afghanistan. Simultaneous with the US attack on Afghanistan, the strategic position of Israel and its relations with the US strengthened more than before. With creating fear from the nuclear plan of Iran in the region , Israel tries to encourage the US to attack on its nuclear plants .There is also some evidence that Israel itself might

use the space of the countries of the region against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

3.1.3. Expanding the activities of terrorist groups Al Qaeda and Taliban to eastern borders to exert pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran.

One of the issues threatening the Islamic Republic of Iran after the invasion of Afghanistan by the US is the movement of terrorist groups like Taliban, towards the borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran. At present, The US is trying to endanger the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran through disturbing the eastern borders of Iran by this group. The US, with its satisfactory silent against this group, tries to place Iran in bottlenecks and not to allow that cultural and political activities of Iran in middle Asia lead to its increasing influence in the region (King Laura, 2010).

4.1.3. Creating a Neo-Taliban in the region and empowering Taliban again

Taliban's coming to power again and creating a new Neo-Taliban will cause certain challenges for Iran in political, security, economic, and cultural dimensions. The most important challenges are:

1. Increasing the influence of Pakistan (Iran's regional rival) in Afghanistan
2. Increasing the influence of extremist and fundamentalist Pashtu and weakening the position of Persian speakers and Shiite Muslims in this country
3. Taliban's coming to power again, which will cause more instability in eastern borders and consequently drug trafficking, hostage taking, terrorism, etc., will increase on the border with Afghanistan.
4. The spread of Islam phobia and influence in Afghanistan government will attract the residents of eastern borders who are mainly Sunni to Taliban and will grow fundamentalism and even separatism (Mokhtar A. Khan.2009).

5.1.3. US dominance over Afghanistan an obstacle to the reconstruction of Islamic – Iranian culture in Central Asia

The presence of cross-regional and western forces in Afghanistan can lead to the development of non-native culture and the gradual transformation of Islamic culture among the Muslims and also the fading of original cultural-Islamic values in Afghanistan. On the other hand, before the presence of cross-regional forces in Afghanistan, Dari Persian was considered as a common language between The Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan. However, the unexpected inclusion of English among Afghan children might change the next generations'

viewpoints and draw their attention away from this national common language in future which could be the background of security challenges of both countries. (Barnett R. Rubin.2008).

2.3. Threat from Afghanistan (internal threat)

1.2.3. Growing and expanding drugs and their derivatives and transiting them to Islamic Republic of Iran

Since Iran is the closest and the most inexpensive way to transport drugs to Europe and Central Asia, it is more vulnerable than other countries in the region. (Barnett R. Rubin.2008).

According to ISCA News Agency, Growing poppy and constructing laboratories to produce industrial drugs in Afghanistan didn't decrease, even with the presence of Obama; but it increased, and this agency has reported the illegal storing of over 10000 tons drugs in this country and a senior military official of Russia disclosed that the US has benefited more than \$50 billion through drug trafficking. Moreover, because of drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Iran, the number of people addicted to drugs has increased in Iran and considerable financial losses and injuries have been imposed on Iranian nation. Drug trafficking and exporting drugs from Iran territory to Europe, is one of the factors causing crisis between Iran and Afghanistan; which is not only imposing heavy economic costs on Islamic Republic of Iran, but also is certainly capable of creating a military-security crisis. (Gavrilis George, 2009).

2.2.3. Increasing Pashtu tribes' distrust of Iran's policies

The Taliban were mainly from Pashtu tribes and "Darrani" branch and The Darrani have historical ties with some Baluch tribes and the removal of Taliban from power reduced the power and influence of Pashtu tribes in the power structure of Kabul. Thus, the Taliban and their fans and supporters among the tribes, blame the governments of Iran and Pakistan and pessimism towards Iran's policies has increased among the Pashtu. Therefore, it is predicted that Taliban pessimism towards Iran will be reflected in lower levels of their supporters in Pashtu tribes. As a result, it could be said that if the US coordinates with the ethnic demands of the Pashtu, even superficially and temporarily, to deal with them; both Iran and Pakistan will face with important security issues.

3.2.3. Formation of a liberal democratic government and an armed nation in Afghanistan

"Richard Nixon" the former president of the US states in his book named "Real War": The idea that the US comes and cuts and sews democracy dress for the countries whose cultures are different from the US culture, is quite crude and childish.

Therefore, one of the security bases of Iraq and Afghanistan for Iran is that, they become the serious rival of Iran in two domains of forming government (governmental model) and designing religious political ideology and that is a kind of threat against Iran. (Gavrilis George, 2009).

4.2.3. Iran's removal from the oil and gas pipelines of Central Asia

In terms of developing relations between Iran and Central Asian countries, this matter is a negative phenomenon which is directly derived from the occupation of Afghanistan and the military presence of the US in Central Asia. Considering the volume of oil and gas reserves in Central Asia, the benefit that Iran could gain in longtime through transiting oil and gas is noteworthy; specially that the known oil and gas reserves of Central Asia have been evaluated after the Persian Gulf to be really noteworthy even if they remain in this limited level. A researcher says in this regard: "The US is willing to transfer fuel energy of this area [Central Asia] through a route other than Iran and Russia's route."

5.2.3. Hirmand water supplies as a tool to enforce pressure on Islamic Republic of Iran

Afghanistan government has always benefited from Hirmand as a tool for solving its problems with the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hirmand has actually been a permanent hostage for Afghans to take benefit from it in their political, economic, and military relations with Iran. This river, which is the tenth longest river in Asia, is the main source of water supply of "Hamoon Lake" and Sistan region. In recent years in spite of our country's efforts to reconstruct Afghanistan and to help its government and nation especially after the US and NATO attacks on this country, many political leaders of this country, due to historical background of differences, emphasize the opinions of their former leaders and think that they are the absolute owners of this river. Unfortunately, the unilateral withdrawal of river water from people of Sistan has had negative economic, political, social, and ecological consequences in this region. (Barnett R. Rubin.2008).

4. Discussions

In this paper, the most important challenging, threatening and opportunity-making factors for Iran through Afghanistan's changes and development have been investigated. This matter is so broad that everybody might have a certain opinion about it and the opinions can't be identical in all aspects. Given that, if we assume that the ultimate goal of the US is to impose power and change on Iran, and does not accept the Islamic system under any circumstances, then undoubtedly, the current situation of both Afghanistan and Iraq will be a serious threat with a high coefficient to Iran; but if it is assumed that Iran

and the US could reduce enmity and might succeed in having normal relations in higher levels, then the range of threat will dramatically reduce. Although this enmity will not disappear completely. In a broader look, it can be imagined that changes and developments in Afghanistan will have remarkable negative effects on the interests and national security of Iran. If we consider the military presence of The US in this country with regard to its opposition to Iran, and assume that the US is going to risk military confrontation with Iran and to enforce Iran to accept its opinions, then the military presence of the US in Afghanistan will sensibly increase the risk factor for Iran.

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