

A History of the Afghan War (2001-2021) from a Defense Diplomacy Perspective

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Abstrak

Tulisan ini membahas jalannya perang asimetrik di Afghanistan sejak 2001 hingga 2021 antara Amerika Serikat (AS) dan Taliban berdasarkan perspektif diplomasi pertahanan. Tujuan pembahasan ini untuk mengidentifikasi strategi perang asimetris yang terjadi serta mengevaluasi proses diplomasi pertahanan untuk menciptakan perdamaian. Metode penelitian yang diterapkan adalah metode kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data sekunder dari buku, dokumen, dan jurnal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan diplomasi pertahanan berhasil menuntun AS dan Taliban yang telah berkonflik selama hampir 20 tahun itu untuk menyepakati perdamaian di Doha pada 29 Februari 2020. Namun, proses penciptaan perdamaian ini tidak mudah karena faktor penghambat lebih berperan daripada faktor pendukung diplomasi pertahanan. Kekuatan militer yang dimiliki AS serta dukungan dari *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (NATO), Pakistan dan beberapa negara lainnya, bukan merupakan jaminan bagi AS untuk mencapai tujuannya berperang karena strategi berubah-ubah dan tidak tepat dalam implementasinya. Kegagalan AS memahami entitas politik Taliban terutama dalam aspek politik, sosial, dan budaya merupakan faktor penghambat utama bagi tercapainya tujuan perang serta kelancaran pelaksanaan diplomasi pertahanan.

Kata Kunci: amerika serikat, taliban, diplomasi pertahanan, perang afghanistan.

Abstract

This paper discusses the asymmetric war in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021 between the United States (US) and the Taliban from the perspective of defense diplomacy. The purpose of this paper is to identify asymmetric war strategies and to evaluate defense diplomacy process to create peace. The research is based on qualitative method using secondary data from books, documents, and journals. The study indicates that defense diplomacy had successfully led to the peace agreement, signed in Doha on February 29, 2020 between the US and the Taliban, which had been in conflict for nearly 20 years. However, the peace creation process is not easy due to the inhibiting factors which play more significant role than the supporting factors for defense diplomacy. Although the US, a super power, is supported by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Pakistan and several other countries, it is not a guarantee for the US to achieve its war objectives. The US goals and strategy continuously changed over time and imprecise in its implementation. The US's failure to understand the political entity of the Taliban, particularly in the political, social and cultural aspects, is the main obstacle to achieving the US' war goals and the ease implementation of defense diplomacy.

Keywords: united states of america, taliban, defense diplomacy, afghanistan war.

INTRODUCTION

The 9/11 terrorist attacks generated international reaction to confront the terrorists, known as the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The United States (US) initiated this war by inviting all state and

non-state actors around the world to confront terrorism. The US conducted GWOT by attacking Afghanistan. The US accused Al Qaeda, commanded by Osama Bin Laden, as the mastermind of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the US also accused

the Taliban, Afghanistan's dominant regime since 1996, as the supporter of Al Qaeda. In November 2001, the United States deployed troops in Afghanistan to hunt down Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda.

The gradual deployment of US troops between 2010 and 2012, the number of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) troops in Afghanistan totaled approximately 130,000, with approximately 100,000 of them being US military forces. Despite the increased number of US forces in Afghanistan, this asymmetric battle did not result in the US as the winner of the war. The US confronted with numerous challenges in winning the war with the Afghan administration which was considered as a corrupt regime (Gilmour, 2018).

The United States has been criticized for pursuing an overly ambitious goal in the war with Afghanistan. The failure of the US goal has been linked to its military ineffectiveness. The three areas of ineffectiveness are: failure to reconcile internal inconsistencies in the training effort, failure to integrate political issues with military activities, and inadequate strategic and operational or tactical integration (Brooks, 2022). In addition, the US failure in the long war with Afghanistan can also be explained through the perspective of strategic narratives. The US adopts collective national or public-level stories around traumatic events for a group, in this case is the

trauma of 9/11 tragedy. The narratives of the goal of the war is to safeguard liberal political order outside the US and to protect US interests abroad, and to promote liberal peace. The narratives can serve as the supporting reason for the US government to continue the war (Walldorf Jr., 2022).

US diplomacy in the Afghan War did not emerge at the end of the conflict, but lasted during and after it. Throughout the war, peace attempts were conducted, but the effects were insignificant in terms of lessening the level of violence in Afghanistan. However, the US continued to engage defense diplomacy in order to prevent future unrest and attacks (Shaffan et al., 2020).

In early 2018, US and Taliban representatives met in secret in Doha. There were talks on reducing US forces in Afghanistan in exchange for the Taliban agreeing not to use Afghanistan as a base for terrorist movements. On February 29, 2020, a historic peace accord was finally signed. The withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan as a result of the Taliban-US discussions marked the beginning of the end of the US presence in Afghanistan. In this case, Taliban is the winner of the war. Since 2001, Taliban has been attempting to drive US and coalition troops out of their country. The United States has spent \$141 billion of its budget on sustaining security and achieving goals in Afghanistan (Tariq et al., 2021). After

the final US withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, the issue faced by Afghanistan is how to build the war-torn county. The emerging discussion is on how to focus on and incorporate indigenous Afghan people and women in poliyc-making to create sustainable (positive) peace in the (Abawe et al., 2023).

Diplomacy and conflict in Afghanistan are like two sides of the same coin. This study aims to demonstrate that peacemaking efforts continued during the war through defense diplomacy. The focus of this work is on two research questions. First, what is the trajectory of the Afghan war from 2001 through 2021? Second, how are conflict and peace in Afghanistan can be understood through the lens of defense diplomacy from 2001 to 2021.

METHOD

This qualitative research study of the history of the Afghan war (2001-2021) employs a historical approach and a defense diplomacy perspective. The goal of using qualitative methods is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon through three stages of research: description, categorization, and linkage. The description stage is carried out by describing the researcher's findings. Following that, the information is reduced to determine whether data can be classified as important data and related to the research's focus. In order to gain a

grasp of the research focus, the researcher subsequently built connections by establishing linkages between categories (Sugiyono, 2021). Secondary data gathering was used for this investigation, with information acquired from official US government records as well as journal articles and novels.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Course of the War in Afghanistan (2001-2021)

The chronology of wars during this period can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Chronology of the War in Afghanistan (2001-2021)

Time	Event
1-9-01	Terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, New York.
12-9-01	The United Nations passed Security Council resolution No. 1368 on the steps that need to be taken to deal with the September 11, 2021 attacks.
12-9-01	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) agreed to use Article 5 for the first time since NATO's founding in 1949 for a strategy to deal with terrorism attacks.
14-9-01	The US Congress passed a Resolution to use military force against any country, organization or individual that planned or aided the September 11, 2021 terrorist attacks.
28-9-01	The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed resolution 1373 on enhancing international cooperation and developing strategies to seize financial assets and economic resources of those who support terrorist activities.

7-10-01	President George W. Bush began Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the official term used by the US government for the Global War on Terrorism. The 21st Century Afghan War is a US war against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The US force consisted of about 1000 troops and the involvement of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operatives. The purpose of this operation was to help the Afghan forces against the Taliban. The strategy used by the US was to conduct airstrikes on the Taliban. Furthermore, about 1300 marines were deployed to suppress the Taliban in Kandahar province.	27-3-09	President Obama announced a comprehensive strategy for the deployment of an additional 21,000 US troops.	
		9-8-09	General McChrystal announces that the purpose of the US military in Afghanistan is to protect the population, not to attack the Taliban. It is determined that there will be 44,000 additional US troops.	
		1-12-09	US President Obama announced that the US presence in Afghanistan is not to occupy Afghanistan but to provide support and improve the efficiency of the Afghan Government.	
6-11-01	US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld calls for multilateralism in peacemaking in Afghanistan. The coalition involves the UN and NATO in the Afghan war.	10-11-11	The US under the leadership of President Obama attended secret meetings for peace in Afghanistan. Two rounds of meetings were held in Munich Germany. The meetings were attended by Tayyab Agha, the delegate of Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader. These meetings were organized by Germany and the royal family of Qatar. The next round of meetings took place in 2011 in Munich and Qatar.	
9-12-01	Taliban regime ends, Taliban leader Mullah Omar and other Taliban leaders head to Kandahar.		1-1-12	The Taliban group established a political representative office in Doha Qatar.
20-12-01	The establishment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) by the US and NATO countries approved by the UNSC. ISAF is a coalition of about 51 countries that will create security in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan.	1-5-12	The signing of the enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between Afghan President Hamid Karzai and US President Barack Obama. Discussed the Afghan government's demands for prison control and the importance of night raids by the US.	
1-3-02	The UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) was established by the UNSC to organize UN humanitarian activities and post-conflict reconstruction.	13-11-12	A Bilateral Security Agreement was signed between President Ashraf Gani and the US Government. This agreement does not outline the build-up of military forces in Afghanistan but provides a foundation for the parameters and objectives of the US military mission and gives the US access to Afghan bases.	
1-5-03	The US declared the end of major combat.		27-5-14	US President Obama announced the US military exit plan from Afghanistan.
1-6-03	US intelligence analysis is driving the coalition's increased intensity against the Taliban insurgency group.			
2006	ISAF provides support to the Afghan government's military, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), to support security operations, reduce insurgency levels and create good governance for the foundation of socio-economic development.			

15-10-15	President Obama plans to reduce the number of US troops in Afghanistan to only 10,000 by the end of 2016 and to 5500 by post-2016. The US will continue to support the ANDSF and fight Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups.
1-8-17	US President Trump stated the new Afghanistan strategy of political settlement and effective military effort, but he did not elaborate.
1-2-18	President Ghani offered negotiations with the Taliban without any conditions. However, there were no significant results of negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government.
1-7-18	Direct negotiations between the Trump administration and the Taliban without any representation from the Afghan government. These negotiations were held in Doha.
1-1-19- 12-3-19	A series of negotiations were conducted by representatives from Afghanistan for the reconciliation process. Zalmay Khalilzad stated that the Taliban is committed to preventing Afghanistan from becoming a platform for the international development of terrorist groups. In return, US troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan.
1-7-2019	Special Representatives for Afghanistan reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad held direct talks with the Taliban to end the US military effort. But the Taliban refused to negotiate with representatives of the Afghan government.
29-02-20	The Peace Agreement was signed in Doha Qatar (between the US Government and the Taliban). It was agreed that within the next 14 months, there would be a gradual withdrawal of US troops in Afghanistan.

Phase One: Implementation of a Counterterrorism Strategy to Target the Taliban

During the George W. Bush administration, the United States launched an attack on Afghanistan. The attack's goal was to destroy Al Qaeda, which was viewed as a terrorist threat, to bring down the Taliban regime, which was viewed as undemocratic, and to prevent terrorist atrocities like 9/11 from happening again (Khokhar et al., 2021). At this point, the United States' approach was counterterrorism. This technique worked well in the early phases of the conflict, as Afghanistan's security situation gradually improved as the number of militants fell.

However, the US has failed to recognize that the insurgency in Afghanistan is a collection of loosely linked networks rather than a single organization. The Taliban, Al Qaeda, Haqqani, the Hezb-i-Islam, some foreign fighters, armed militia organizations, and criminal gangs are among the Afghan resistance groups (Salt, 2018). Even the Taliban, the major focus of the US offensive, lacks political cohesion (Kuehn, 2018).

Second Phase: Counterinsurgency Implementation in Afghanistan's Nation Building

The second stage is when the US implements Afghanistan's national building strategy to transform the country into a

modern, democratic one. The US method for achieving this goal was to enlist countries to send NATO soldiers to Afghanistan.

However, the United States appears to have been slow in implementing the nation-building strategy in Afghanistan, and the decision-making process linked with this process appears to have been slow as well. Unlike in the early stages, when the US deployed a light-footprint method (using air force power), the US implemented a counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy or a heavy-footprint approach (conventional military technique, ground soldiers undertaking extensive counterinsurgency operations) at this stage. Because the implementation of this strategy did not guarantee the US success in Afghanistan, President Obama proposed removing US forces in July 2011, which was followed by the termination of the NATO troop support operation in December 2014 (Salt, 2018). This concept is undoubtedly linked to one of the US accomplishments following the assassination of Al Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden on May 2, 2011. Special forces from the United States with swift mobility and specialized expertise raided and murdered Bin Laden in his refuge in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

After NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, President Obama tended to use a light-footprint policy, meaning that air force was no longer

deployed in the conflict to assault opposition organizations. Instead, air power was deployed to attack Al Qaeda's principal bases, to help the Afghan Government's war commanders' air power, and to defend NATO forces still in the battle zone. President Obama's administration launched three main strategies in Afghanistan, namely involving global institutions, seeking support from the European Union and NATO, and coordinating with all countries, particularly Afghanistan's neighbors, including Pakistan, India, and China.

The steps made by the United States to achieve this goal are divided into four categories. First, instead of a coercive approach, the United States employs soft power. Second, the United States employs a hybrid of soft and hard power known as smart power, which focuses on five important areas: partnerships and alliances, global development, economic integration, diplomacy, and technology and innovation. Third, the United States put in place the 3 D strategy (Defense, Diplomacy, and Development). Fourth, the US is establishing a more powerful, trustworthy, and effective Afghan government. President Obama said that the United States is in Afghanistan to train the Afghan military and the new government to combat security threats that undermine peace and security stability. The process of forming this new administration is done in stages, with the

ultimate stage being the gradual withdrawal of the US troops at the end of 2016. The US also convened an internal Afghan debate with Taliban commanders and internal actors who determine Afghanistan's peace and stability. This internal dialogue resulted in a number of peace treaties. However, future peace discussions with the United States, Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan were halted in mid-2015 due to the Taliban's breaches of human rights in Afghanistan (Khokhar et al., 2021).

Phase Three: US Withdrawal from Afghanistan

Following his election as President of the United States, Donald Trump created three primary parts of US strategy toward Afghanistan that are centered on counterterrorism objectives. To eliminate Al Qaeda and ISIS terrorist networks, these three elements often employ a minimal footprint approach that prioritizes speed, accuracy, and firepower. First, there will be a limited troop increase including US Special Operations Forces (SOF) to combat insurgent and terrorist groups. Second, Pakistan is being pressured to address insurgency and terrorist groups operating on its soil. Third, a shift in policy from nation-building to refocusing on US counterterrorism operations while pursuing a long-term political settlement with the Taliban (Salt, 2018).

On January 20, 2017, the United States declared a shift in tactics, beginning to schedule peace negotiations with the Taliban without the involvement of Afghan government representatives. In July 2018, US personnel met with Taliban representatives at a high level in Doha, Qatar. This was a direct discussion between the US and the Taliban. Finally, on February 29, 2020, representatives from the United States and the Taliban signed a peace deal. The peace deal completed with agreements on: cessation of assaults on the United States, removal of US troops, exchange of prisoners, and internal Afghan peace talks to minimize violence. Peace talks were one of the pillars of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. One of the key grounds for peace attempts is the consideration of significant US costs and losses. As of June 2020, the US had lost 2400 troops, and the US Congress had committed approximately \$137 billion for Afghanistan reconstruction (Khokhar et al., 2021).

The following are some of the elements that have undermined the US war strategy in Afghanistan:

1. Threat Perception does not align with US War Objectives

The US is considered to have misdirected itself in setting war targets because the threat of terrorism was perceived to come from Al Qaeda after 9/11 but the US attacked the Taliban in Afghanistan instead. The former US Secretary of

Defense also admitted that the motivation for the US war against the Taliban was not based on clear objectives as the US war in Iraq. Strategically, the Taliban and Al Qaeda support each other at the tactical level but they have different goals. The Taliban's goal is to fight against the invading enemy, lead Afghanistan and not engage in international terrorism. The bulk of Taliban militants are ethnic Pashtuns, Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, with strong cultural ties to ethnic groups in Pakistan. The Taliban became Islamists in 1994 in response to the Mujahedeen government's failure to restore justice and social order in Afghanistan following the Soviet occupation. In contrast to ISIS, Al Qaeda is an international terrorism group with a global jihadi base. The United States is unfamiliar with Afghanistan's tribal culture and ethnic politics (Gilmour, 2018).

2. The US did not consider the character and socio-cultural conditions of the people in Afghanistan

In terms of the peace plan, the US did not examine Afghan society and socio-cultural conditions, as well as Afghan society's history since the Soviet Union invaded the country in the 1980s, as part of its strategy design. Instead, proposals from military circles suggested that the US consider increasing its military strength. While Afghan society has a tribal character, the spread of Western-style

democracy through gun violence is difficult to accept. Furthermore, the Taliban society has a strong character since it builds its life on Islamic religious beliefs and a strict interpretation of the Qur'an and Sharia law. The Afghan people, known for their fortitude and tolerance, could not tolerate any external meddling in their motherland. Even the Taliban were thought to be astute when it came to negotiating with the US. US President Joe Biden declared three months before the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan that the Taliban would not be able to dominate Afghanistan. This comment fueled the Taliban's efforts to seize control of Afghanistan, resulting in the demise of the US-backed Afghan military (Ben-meir, 2021)

3. Battlefield geographical challenges

Because of the geographical limitations of the battlefield, the US strategy of battling the Taliban in Afghanistan is widely regarded as a failure. The immensity of Afghanistan, along with the fact that 80% of the Afghan population lives in rural regions, makes monitoring difficult for the small number of coalition personnel. As a superpower, the United States is less capable of dealing with these situations in Afghanistan (Shaffan et al., 2020).

4. Afghanistan's Domestic Political Instability

Increased US military operations in Afghanistan has exacerbated internal political instability and even given the

Taliban a propaganda boost. People of Afghanistan's 34 provinces identify with the Taliban and appear to favor centralized control over the US-established administration, which is meant to be more democratic. Taliban organizations rule various provinces or districts while continuing to administer their own administrations, collect taxes, and elect local leaders (Gilmour, 2018). Corruption was rampant among high-ranking bureaucrats and military commanders in the new government founded by the US, and various social projects were also neglected (Ben-meir, 2021).

War and Peace in Afghanistan (2001-2021)

The war that lasted almost 20 years in Afghanistan was finally ended through the Peace Agreement between the US and the Taliban signed in Qatar on February 29, 2020 witnessed by US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo and a delegation of representatives of neighboring countries including Pakistan. On the same day in Kabul, the US Secretary of Defense and the President of Afghanistan issued a joint statement stating that the US provides support to the Afghan government and the Afghan government is willing to carry out talks with the Taliban. The contents of the agreement include: a) US commitment to withdraw 5,000 troops within 135 days , b) Withdrawal of the entire US military force

within 14 months, c) Prisoner of war exchange between the Afghan government and the Taliban, d) Removal of international sanctions against the Taliban leadership until August 27, 2020 as a preliminary stage of intra-Afghan dialogue (Thomas, 2019).

The peace process can be divided into three stages: initiating conversations, leading to negotiations, and implementing negotiations. The Taliban were offered a ceasefire, the reduction of sanctions, the release of prisoners, recognition of the Taliban as a political party, and, most crucially, the evacuation of US forces from Afghanistan. The Taliban ultimately agreed to US demands that all terrorist bases in Afghanistan be destroyed, and the US agreed to remove its soldiers (Shaffan et al., 2020).

The process of establishing peace in Afghanistan was difficult due to the following obstacles:

1. The United States hard line stance
Although the United States employs soft power and even smart power, the implementation of these methods is less exact. This is demonstrated by George W. Bush's policy, which continues to rely on hard force and non-negotiable norms because it is still founded on his unilateralist principles (Khokhar et al., 2021).
2. Failure to employ a carrot-and-stick approach in defense diplomacy

The US failed to use the carrot and stick strategy in defense diplomacy. Actually, the US might have guaranteed the Taliban financial support in exchange for the Taliban implementing more human rights standards, particularly against children and women (Ben-meir, 2021).

3. Restrictions on the representation of

Afghan ethnic leaders in negotiations

Another failing factor was that the US government did not include ethnic leaders in Afghanistan, despite the fact that these leaders can have a bigger influence on their ethnic groups. The outcome of the peace agreement would have been different if the US had included ethnic leaders in Afghanistan (Ben-meir, 2021). Pushtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and other ethnic groups make up Afghanistan's population.

4. Political schisms in Afghanistan's domestic environment

The peacemaking process did not proceed easily and was delayed after the peace agreement in September 2019 since it was still unknown who was entitled to keep power five months after the execution of the Presidential election. With this leadership vacuum, the Taliban is finding it difficult to continue internal Afghan discussions since it is unclear who would represent the Afghan side, Ashraf Ghani or Abdullah Abdullah. Furthermore, the Afghan government is not involved in the US-Taliban accord, which poses a legal challenge to the peace treaty (Tariq et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, the success of the peace process is heavily influenced by four interconnected issues. First, the US leadership's shift in combat strategy has resulted in a determination to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan. Second, the high expense of the US war in Afghanistan motivates the next US administration led by Joe Biden to promptly withdraw US soldiers from the country. Third, the peace talks were successful in reaching an agreement on a power-sharing mechanism that was accepted by the Taliban in exchange for the Taliban ceasing attacks and bloodshed. Fourth, neighboring countries such as Pakistan and other countries that seek peace in Afghanistan do so because it can affect regional security stability.

The following factors contribute to the implementation of defense diplomacy:

1. The influence of changes in US policy toward Afghanistan

President Donald Trump declared in his first speech as President that the US policy in Afghanistan had moved from counterinsurgency to counterterrorism. Trump also stated that the US presence is there to hunt down terrorists, not to reform the country. "We are not nation-building again," Trump said, "but we are killing terrorists." The US counterinsurgency strategy was shifted to a counterterrorism approach, with the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC)

and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) playing a limited role (Gilmour, 2018).

2. Pakistan's, China's, and regional countries' support for peacemaking
Pakistan has played an important and helpful role in promoting peace in Afghanistan. Prior to the US strike, Pakistan had also played a role in the conflict resolution of Russia's intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, during the time of Russian force withdrawal during the Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001. Pakistan has also sustained significant losses as a result of its involvement in the war on terrorism. However, Pakistan is frequently chastised by the international community for interfering in Afghan domestic affairs. Pakistan is interested in participating in the peace process because it wants security and stability in Afghanistan. Pakistan seeks an Afghan administration that will support Pakistan's interests, as well as the Taliban. However, the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is harmed by the enormous number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan as well as on the Druand Line, which separates the two nations (Tariq et al., 2021).

Pakistan contributed to the peace effort both independently and in collaboration with the United States. Pakistan's strategic aim of having safe borders in the West, as well as Pakistan seeking secure peace pathways for its products to be marketed in Central Asia,

drove the desire for mediation in Afghanistan in 2003. When the Mujahideen were in control, Pakistan had a part in mediation efforts and peace deals in Afghanistan, including the Peshawar Accord in 1992 and the Islamabad Accord in 1993. However, Pakistan's role in the war and peace process had a negative influence on the country. Pakistan contributed to the peace effort both independently and in collaboration with the United States. Pakistan's strategic aim of having safe borders in the West, as well as Pakistan seeking secure peace pathways for its products to be marketed in Central Asia, drove the desire for mediation in Afghanistan in 2003. When the Mujahideen were in control, Pakistan had a part in mediation efforts and peace deals in Afghanistan, including the Peshawar Accord in 1992 and the Islamabad Accord in 1993. However, Pakistan's role in the war and peace process had a negative influence on the country (Ejaz, 2018).

Based on the outcomes of the September 27, 2001 meeting, the US Government requested that Pakistan participate in the fight against terrorism in three major areas. First, intelligence sharing regarding the Taliban regime and the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden and other Al-Qaeda members. Second, during the battle against the Taliban, the US got permission from Pakistan to utilize Pakistani air bases, airspace, and ports. This includes Pakistan granting US

intelligence and its allies territorial access to conduct operations against Al-Qaeda. Third, Pakistan offered logistical support, or non-military administrative assistance, to US forces in Afghanistan. During the United States' Operation Enduring Freedom, Pakistan authorized the US to operate in some of its airspace while also terminating contacts with the Taliban regime (Ejaz, 2018).

Pakistan's rationale for playing a big part in the war and, later, in peacekeeping was pragmatic. Pakistan wanted to prevent the Taliban's hardline stance on jihad from inspiring radical Islamists in Pakistan to violence in order to maintain its economic and security interests. Following 9/11, Pakistan had just two options: back the Taliban or join the US-led counter-terrorism fight. There was no way to choose between the two. Finally, after weighing the costs and benefits, the Pakistani government, led by General Pervez Musharraf, decided to join the international coalition fighting terrorism. Pakistan also granted US Special Forces and American investigative agents access to pursue Al-Qaeda and Taliban fugitives (Ejaz, 2018).

India provides logistical support to Afghanistan through training and assisting Afghan armed forces. India has spent approximately \$3 billion on different projects and infrastructure to decrease Pakistan's impact and boost India's influence in Afghanistan, particularly in

border areas (Tariq et al., 2020). Iran, which has an interest in defending Afghanistan's Shia population, supported peacekeeping and recognized the Taliban's existence. However, the war in Afghanistan has pushed Iran to lend support to the Taliban, its erstwhile adversary. In 1998, Iran and Taliban forces engaged in direct combat. Iran's cooperation for the US includes allowing US humanitarian aid for Afghans to cross through Iranian territory. Iran has also aided the Afghan government, which worked with the United States at the Bonn Conference in December 2001. However, since 2012, Iran has maintained diplomatic relations with the Taliban, after the Taliban was granted permission to open a representative office in Iran. The issue of Afghan refugees in Iran, which number roughly 1 million registered refugees and 2 million unregistered refugees, frequently influences the two countries' positive ties. (Thomas, 2019).

Meanwhile, Russia aided peace efforts by hosting the Moscow Peace Talks multilateral peace conference in November 2018, which was attended by Taliban representatives as well as delegations from Pakistan, India, China, and the Afghan government. Although the conference did not result in a substantive agreement, it did establish an atmosphere suitable to meeting between the Afghan government and the Taliban (Ullah et al., 2020).

China's involvement in the Afghan war is more likely to open economic connections with the country while still pursuing its geopolitical goals of decreasing US influence and establishing market mechanisms in the region. China has also participated in a number of global initiatives aimed at achieving a political settlement and facilitating reconciliation between the Taliban and the Afghan government. China's participation in this peace process is undoubtedly linked to the shifting influence of the US and China in the area. When the Trump administration suspended discussions with the Taliban in September 2019, China planned to convene an internal summit in Beijing involving Afghan political forces in October 2019. However, this conference was also unable to be arranged (Tariq et al., 2021).

Although China and Pakistan did not involve in the peace deal on February 29, 2020 in Doha, these two countries in strategic bilateral relations have supported the Afghan peace process. They have concern on security in Afghanistan because they also considered about safeguarding their own interests. Security in Afghanistan is important for the stability of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Therefore, China has changed its approach

to Afghanistan from indifference to engagement (Ali, 2022).

Persian countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar, have also made efforts to create security stability in Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia acknowledged the Taliban administration by providing funding to Taliban factions. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, plays a role in negotiations between the Afghan government and moderate Taliban officials. The UAE recognized the Taliban government while simultaneously sending a small contingent of troops to help NATO with its security mission in southern Afghanistan. Qatar hosted significant meetings between the United States and the Taliban (Thomas, 2019).

Defense diplomacy carried out primarily by the US in Afghanistan has substantially realized the objectives of executing defense diplomacy, based on hindering and supporting components of the Afghan peace process. The United States does not want to win the conflict or dominate the other party through diplomacy. The US has attempted to build trust through bilateral talks with both the Taliban and the Afghan government, including summits and secret diplomacy. Diplomacy is being utilized by the United States and Afghanistan's neighbors to help Afghanistan achieve security stability.

CONCLUSION

The fact that US soldiers are stronger than the Taliban does not guarantee that US military objectives in Afghanistan (2001-2021) will be fulfilled. The lengthy Afghan War was caused by a shift in war objectives, which affected the shift in war strategy, particularly in terms of military deployment and the eventual departure of US troops. Furthermore, the dynamics of the war are determined by the US's lack of commitment in Afghanistan. The process of peacemaking in Afghanistan is difficult because hindering forces outnumber helping aspects of defense diplomacy. The US conflict with the Taliban (2001-2021) demonstrated that the US democratic system could not be properly enforced by military force in a multi-ethnic country like Afghanistan. The Afghan people are accustomed to living in a political and socio-cultural framework that differs from that of the United States. Diplomacy combined by a persuasive approach through development and cultural approaches would be a more acceptable step for the US to adopt. As a result, the nearly 20-year-long asymmetrical combat should have been prevented.

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