

The Legality of Intervention of NATO in Afghanistan

Faramarz Shirvani¹, Dr. Hedayatollah Shenasaei²

¹PhD Candidate, National University of Malaysia (UKM)

² Corresponding author, Legal Researcher, China University of Political Science and Law (CUPL)

Abstract: The use of military attacks on the sovereign state of Afghanistan was illegal as none of the Articles of the United Nations authorized NATO and United States to use force on the government of Afghanistan and its citizens. It was clear that United States and NATO acted out of provocation and in line with the spirit of fighting terrorism but they would have used other peaceful means of handling such situations instead of using force on Afghanistan. The opponents of the presence of the troops from NATO argued that it is unnecessary for NATO to send its troops to Afghanistan as it actually fuels the violence in the country, led to unfortunate death of the civilians and reduced the popularity of NATO in Afghanistan and many other parts of the world. Under the Article 51 of UN Charter member states have no inherent right as an individual state or collective self-defense if an attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the UN Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. This article analysis the legality of intervention of NATO in the Afghanistan.

Keywords: NATO, Interference, Afghanistan, Legality.

I. INTRODUCTION

The formation of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was on the basis of signing the Brussels and Washington Treaties (April 1949) as a regional treaty under Article 51 of Chapter 7 of the UN Charter which stipulated that there will be impaired rights of parties or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the UN, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. The Article 51 served as the legal basis guiding the establishment of the Washington Treaty self-defence and could also be seen as the legitimacy of the collective defence. The most important part of the treaty is enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty which stipulated that an attack on one or more of the member states should be considered as an attack on all member states and all the member states should defend collectively. The need for the invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty created room for the interference of NATO and US into Afghanistan to ensure that the Taliban and al Qaeda network stopped using Afghanistan as their base for future terrorist attacks against United States and other countries. The question which this study attempts to answer is ‘‘are there legal justification and implications for NATO’s interference in the security, economic and political structures of Afghanistan?’’

II. POLITICAL AGENDA IN ERA OF TERRORISM

The political history in Afghanistan has it that the unpopular reign of the Mujahideen forces created opportunity for the emergence of the Taliban group which claims that there is need for the introduction of Shari’a law (Islamic law) in Afghanistan. Majority of the citizens were in favor of the Islamic doctrine as Afghanistan is one of the Islamic states in the world with majority of its entire population being Muslims¹. The Taliban group took over the control of Afghanistan government from the Mujahideen without encountering any resistance from the Mujahideen. The Taliban led government was accepted in majority of the parts of Afghanistan but did not gain world recognition rather only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates recognized them as the government in power in Afghanistan. Another faction known as the Northern Alliance formed opposition to the Taliban led government as the opposition group maintained an Islamic State of Afghanistan and recognized by the United Nations. The non-participation of the Taliban led

¹ Jazayery, L. (2002). The Migration-Development Nexus: Afghanistan Case Study. *International Migration*, 40(5), 231254.

administration to the United Nations activities and the consequent support being received by the opposition groups in Afghanistan from the United Nations made the Taliban to have a strong ill-will against the United Nations and the member states of United Nations. This led to the refusal of Taliban led government to resist the attempts of United States to arrest and prosecute the al Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden. United States requested the Taliban led government to desist from harboring the al Qaeda after bombing of the United States Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. When it was crystal clear to the United States and United Nations that Taliban cannot stop harboring the al Qaeda Leader, United Nations imposed sanctions against Taliban and Afghanistan as a nation².

The Taliban led government was in some cases violating international laws and human rights. The issues of killing, raping, plundering in wars and other sorts of atrocities were committed in Afghanistan by the Taliban government³. The above mentioned ills being perpetrated by the Taliban led government could be traced to be the remote cause of its dethronement by the US to lead Coalition Forces which invaded Afghanistan after the 11th September, 2001 bombing of United States. The fall of Taliban led government was declared within some months of international military forces taking control of Afghanistan. The dethronement of the Taliban was followed by the United Nations led interim administration in line with the Bonn Agreement. The activities of the International Security and Assistance Forces (ISAF) in Afghanistan began with 5,000 troops as few members of United Nations sent their troops to help in formation of ISAF. However, the number of the troops rose to 50,000 after NATO took over the ISAF in 2003 while the security situations in Afghanistan also improved⁴. The United Nations Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) were also assisting and supporting ISAF in rendering international assistance towards the Afghanistan government in the areas of developing good governance to the Afghanistan citizens. The main political mandates of United Nations Missions were to help in preventing and resolving conflicts between government and anti-government groups, building of confidence among Afghanistan citizens on the government in power, promoting national reconciliation among different groups in Afghanistan (ethnic, economic, political and anti-government groups), monitoring and advising government in power on the political and human rights situation in the country and undertaking good offices when necessary to further the peace process. Other mandates include investigating the cases of citizens' claims on violation of human rights and making recommendations towards stopping human rights violations, creating room for dialogue to conflict resolutions among Afghanistan leaders, among political parties, among civil society groups, among institutions, and among representatives of central, regional and provincial authorities as well as recommending corrective actions⁵.

The Bonn Agreement created room for the adoption of a new constitution and democracy thereby making way for the first democratic elections in 2004 in Afghanistan⁶. However, presidential system of government adopted by the United Nations led interim administration in Afghanistan was headed by Hamid Karzai and was enshrined in the Constitution of Afghanistan to become the foundation on which the present presidency has evolved. The adoption of presidential system of government in Afghanistan was championed by the United States. It was favored against the parliamentary system of government which was adopted by most of the nations in Asian region. The United States aimed implementation of its strategic proposals in Afghanistan which favors the presidential system of government but was lacking in other political dimensions. The member states of European Union further assisted by way of joint project in bringing together the U.S initiatives through contributing some drafted systemic reforms for smooth taking off of the presidential system of government in Afghanistan⁷.

III. SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

The 2001 terrorist attack on United States increased the security measures in Afghanistan. The terrorist attack has symbolic value as it touched on one of the world powers thereby checking and threatening the world security. The relationships between NATO and other International Organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and

² Poppelwell, T. (2007). Afghanistan. Forced Migration Online <http://www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo006/>

³ Jazayery, L. (2002). The Migration-Development Nexus: Afghanistan Case Study.

⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). (2009). NATO's Role in Afghanistan. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_8189.htm

⁵ *ibid.*a

⁶ Poppelwell, T. (2007). Afghanistan. Forced Migration Online <http://www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo006/>

⁷ Piotr Krawczyk. (2009). New Strategy for Afghanistan? Political Reform – First! The Polish Institute of International Affairs. PISM Strategic Files.

the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) were strengthened to prevent future occurrence of the terrorist attacks. This is paramount where some members of NATO do not have enough military and other security personnel for protection of their territories. These countries that were threatened by the Taliban and Al Qaeda with terrorist attack need to ally with NATO and other International Organizations as well as trusting on other members of the organizations to prevent such attacks on them⁸. After the 11th September, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, NATO and U.S adopted a fresh resolution and resorted to using military force to pursue their new goals of fighting global terrorism. There was need to reduce or eradicate terrorist attacks from the al Qaeda as well as the Taliban group who are aiding and abetting al Qaeda with military and equipment aids. NATO and U.S reiterated the need to use military force on Afghanistan to maintain their relevance in the fight against threats and security challenges which were seen during and after Cold War around Europe⁹. The terrorist attacks on United States further made NATO and U.S to be prepared for waging war against terrorism and the perpetrators of terrorist attacks such as al Qaeda. To this end, NATO and U.S made majority of their foreign policies to be centered on the fight against terrorism and terrorists by declaring terrorists as enemies of world security¹⁰. In the 2002 NATO Summit held in Prague, NATO member states showed their readiness to collectively fight against terrorist with their military personnel. The NATO member states equally responded positively to the request for 20,000 military personnel to assist in dealing with terrorist threats towards world security and member states¹¹. Despite the stiff resistance mounted by Taliban against the pressure from NATO as the war on terrorism was going on in some parts of Afghanistan, NATO and U.S military forces broke into these parts of Afghanistan being controlled by the Taliban forces¹². The NATO and U.S troops effectively stopped terrorist insurgencies, drug trading and insurgents' attack against the civilians through achieving one of their goals of pushing and seizing the southern parts of Afghanistan which were Taliban controlled districts and where there is little presence of Afghan government¹³. Many nations and individuals supported the opponents' arguments as NATO troops are ineffective at securing the Afghanistan for so many reasons¹⁴.

IV. ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

The cultivation and illegal trading on narcotics was the major source of exportation in Afghanistan. This means that majority of the Afghanistan's gross domestic product comes from the trade on narcotics. The illegal trafficking of narcotics which provides funds for insurgencies of Taliban on the new government in Afghanistan was one of the major impediments to the U.S and NATO missions in Afghanistan. The Southern parts of Afghanistan were at the center point for the production of narcotics. It was revealed that the Afghanistan produces nearly ninety two percent of the world's required narcotics even as highly influential people and top government officials in Afghanistan were involved in the illegal trading of narcotics¹⁵. It was on record that Afghanistan was one of the world's highest producers of narcotics. A survey conducted in 2007 by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) revealed that narcotics production, packaging and distribution to other parts of the world was increasing on annual basis except in the time of outbreak of crop diseases. The report further revealed that no other nation in the world has surpassed Afghanistan in the mass production of narcotics as nearly 3 million out of the population of Afghanistan were directly and indirectly involved in the cultivation, processing, and packaging and trading on narcotics. The Taliban were using the incomes from the illegal trading on narcotics to sponsor the terrorist attacks and other military insurgencies within and outside Afghanistan¹⁶.

The Taliban led government depended on the illegal trafficking of narcotics for the sources of income to the extent there was free trading of narcotics among the Taliban and al Qaeda in other neighboring countries such as Pakistan. However, almost 20 provinces out of the 34 provinces in Afghanistan were involved in the free illegal trading of narcotics. Though,

⁸ Foanne Wright, "International Organizations, the UN, NATO and the EU", in Mary Buckley and Rick Fawn (eds.) *Global Responses to Terrorism, 9/11, Afghanistan and Beyond*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 53.

⁹ Dawn News (Karachi), June 4, 2002.

¹⁰ Jessica Fugata, "NATO in the balance", *The News*, January 9, 2002.

¹¹ <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2004/p04-096e.htm>.

¹² Fazlur Rahim Muzaffary, (2008). "Afghanistan: Regional Security and NATO", *Policy Perspectives*.

¹³ St. Petersburg Times of September 1st, 2010. 6 troops die in Afghan fighting, <http://www.tampabay.com/incoming/6-troops-die-in-afghan-fighting/1118844>> accessed 25 April 2011.

¹⁴ Imrana Begum, *Resolved: NATO presence improves the lives of Afghan citizens*. (2010), *The Forensics Files*, p.3

¹⁵ Daily Times, October 11, 2008

¹⁶ <http://govdocsblog.kentlaw.edu/wordpress/?cat=14>

there was decrease in the production of narcotics in 2010 due to crop diseases, still Afghanistan could turn out 3,600 metric tons of narcotics with sharp decrease of 48% from the productions recorded in 2009¹⁷. Despite the fact that United States focused on promoting the legitimate importation of oil and agricultural products as the chief of the economy for Afghanistan newly formed government, the trading on narcotics continues to spread as the source of income to both the citizens and Taliban groups. The trading on narcotics enriches the Taliban group and citizens of Afghanistan as well as yielding an annual income of almost \$4 billion to the Afghanistan government¹⁸. United States insisted that the government of Afghanistan has to direct its citizens towards engaging in legitimate occupation such as agriculture. The majority of the Afghanistan population lives in rural areas where agriculture sector has been contributing to the boosting of the economy. The economic developments through the agricultural sector in Afghanistan recorded an improvement in gross domestic product with the growth rate of 22.5 per cent between 2009 and 2010. Wheat production doubled up to 5 million tonnes when it was compared with the production of preceding five years which recorded 3.5 million tonnes. However, every aspect of Afghanistan economy such as industrial, manufacturing, construction and mining continued growing geometrically¹⁹.

V. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The bombing of the World trade centers in United States caused one of the worst casualties in the history of attacks and wars. The terrorist attacks hit the targets of the terrorist in Washington and Pennsylvania killing innocent civilians in large numbers²⁰. The linking of al Qaeda network to the terrorist attack of 11th September, 2001 provoked United States which triggered the declaration of war on terrorism by the U.S. The U.S with the assistance of other NATO members such as Canada and Britain went on illegal war with use of force against Afghanistan. It is shown in UN Article 2(4) that members of the organization should refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state or in any other manner inconsistent with the purpose of the UN²¹. It was reported with convincing evidence that against the UN Charter forbidding the members from the use of force or threatening the use of any force in dealing with international bodies or countries, U.S and other NATO members used force and killed ninety Afghanistan civilians, including sixty children. These people were killed in the U.S airstrikes on a village in western Afghanistan. It is also illegal to use force to ouster a government in power and also get involve in killing of non- combatants. The world community considered the bombing of Afghanistan civilians by the United States and its allies in the name of self-defense as the most outstanding crime against humanity²².

It is important to note that United Nations Security Council which was the body responsible for the maintenance of international security and peace hurriedly passed two important resolutions in line with the 11th September, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States by non UN and NATO members. However, none of the resolutions authorized use of force. The resolution 1368²³ of the Security Council recognizes the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense without the use of force in accordance with the Charter while resolution 1373²⁴ of the United Nations Security Council stipulated that the members of the United Nations have the responsibility of preventing and suppressing terrorist attacks and take action against the perpetrators of terrorism in compliance with the standards set in national and international law including the international human rights. The members of United Nation and NATO were not authorized to use armed forces and bombs on the non-member States for self-defense though the member states have the right for self-defense. The UN

¹⁷ UNDOC. Opium Survey 2010. http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afg_opium_survey_2010_exsum_web.pdf

¹⁸ Najmuddin A. Shaikh, "Analysis: Afghanistan in peril", Daily Times, October 24, 2008.

¹⁹ Thirumalai G. Srinivasan. (2010). Afghanistan Economic Update: Policy and Poverty Team South Asia Region. The World Bank, pp.1-12

²⁰ America Government (2006) Five-Year 9/11 Remembrance Honors Victims from 90 Countries, <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2006/September/20060911141954bcreklaw0.9791071.html>

²¹ UN Article 2(4): All Members of the organization should refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state or in any other manner inconsistent with the purpose of the UN.

²² Alison Smale, Afghanistan Is in Its Worst Shape Since 2001, European Diplomat Says, NEW YORK TIMES, Sept. 15, 2008, at A11, col. 2.

²³ See Resolution 1368 of the Security Council.

²⁴ See Resolution 1373 of the United Nations Security Council.

Article 51 was used to give a clearer picture of self-defense among member states of UN and NATO. It stipulated that member states have no inherent right as an individual state or collective self-defense if an attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the UN Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security²⁵. However, member states should take measures in the exercise of this right of self-defense and shall immediately report to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

The United Nations Charter is to maintain international peace, security and justice among the nations of the world and to avoid the use of force in settlement of international disputes or removal of governments in power. But instead of NATO and United States pursuing the maintenance of international peace, security and justice in the case of Afghanistan, they resort to major combats with ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom against Afghanistan and its civilians²⁶. NATO and US declared the 11th September terrorist attack as threats to world peace and security and resorted to the use of all necessary steps to fight terrorist attacks. The United Nations showed its willingness to approve the use of any means to fight terrorism as it established peace enforcement force or the use of force by member states thereby thwarting some of the resolutions of its Security Council²⁷. The major issue arising from the use of military forces by United States and NATO on Afghanistan was to determine whether U.S and coalition forces violated international law by using forces to launch their attacks in the territories of Afghanistan and its neighboring nation, Pakistan. It was concluded that United States and NATO violated international law and resolutions of the United Nations Security Council with the military actions on both countries. Whether in retaliation to the 11th September, 2011 terrorist attacks on the United States or the looking for the al Qaeda network leader, Osama Bin Laden to be arrested and prosecuted, United States and NATO went contrary to Article 51 of the UN Charter which was against using armed attacks by member States to non-member states²⁸.

There is need for consideration of the legality of United States cross- border operation when dealing with the U.S military attacks on Afghanistan. The United States cannot successfully defend its military attacks on the Afghanistan before any inter-States tribunal with the 11th September, 2001 terrorist attacks even the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The International Court of Justice (ICJ) would not likely rule in favor of United States ability to get the needed local and international support for its policies as many countries have called for the trial of crimes of terrorism and use of military force on the innocent citizens of Afghanistan²⁹. It is worthy to note that the International Criminal Court (ICC) was established through the Rome Statute to review and activate the jurisdiction of ICC over the crime of aggression but it is not possible to prosecute the retrospective crimes through the ICC. The crime of terrorism from the al Qaeda networks as well as the mass killing of Afghanistan citizens would have been exposed through the ICC but the ICC was not into existence when these crimes were committed. The Rome Statute which could also bear the ICC treaty is a multi-lateral treaty was initially approved by majority of the countries. However, United States was not in support to the establishment of ICC as it voted against the acceptance of the Rome Statute³⁰. The United States military personnel were engaged in

²⁵ Article 51: Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the UN Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.

²⁶ Barry E. C., (2007). Discussion of the early combat operations in Afghanistan is based primarily on Katzman, INTERNATIONAL LAW 80–84 (5th ed.)

²⁷ Compare the language the Security Council used in Resolution 678, adopted on November 29, 1990, which authorized member States, unless Iraq complied with a series of prior Council resolutions by January 15, 1991, to use “all necessary means” to “uphold and implement” these resolutions and “to restore international peace and security in the area.”

²⁸ For a forceful defense of the proposition that “all lingering doubts on this issue have been dispelled as a result of the response of the international community to the shocking events of September 2001 (9/11),” refer to Yoram Dinstein (2005). War, aggression and self-defense. pp.206–208. (4th ed.)

²⁹ Pakistan might invoke against the United States the 1959 bilateral Treaty of Friendship and Commerce, U.S.-Pak., Nov. 12, 1959, 12 U.S.T. 110, which provides for International Court of Justice jurisdiction when disputes arise. Iran and Nicaragua have both invoked similar treaties against the United States in response to US military or paramilitary operations.

³⁰ Statute of the International Criminal Court, July 17, 1998, 2187 U.N.T.S. 90.

cross-border operations as they committed international crimes³¹. The al Qaeda networks were still threatening terrorist attacks though they fled across the border to nearby Pakistan to avoid much United States military attack on them.

The military attacks on Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan by NATO and United States which were believed to be in response to the horrible 2001 terrorist attacks were not legally justified. Based on Article 2(3)³² of the United Nations Charter, there was the belief, that International Law should be used to guide that retaliation of the terrorist attack and not to be enforced at the expense of the international peace. However, NATO and U.S did not enforce the International Law as they resort to commission of crimes. It is also important for all the member nations to heed to the preamble of the UN Charter which stated that the purpose of the United Nations was to save the succeeding generations of the world from the scourge of war. Despite the legal implications of human right violations in Afghanistan by the NATO and United States, it has the implication of causing deaths on the women and children. U.S and NATO used ISAF troops to attack Afghanistan despite their inability to provide enough evidences showing that al Qaeda networks were working for Afghanistan government for the terrorist attacks on the U.S. It is agreeable that no one can be guilty without trial in a court as only the judge in a court has the right to declare a suspected individual guilty. The use of military force on the Afghanistan was against the Geneva Convention Protocol which absolutely prohibited nations against attacks and threats of attacks on the individuals or civilians of a country. The indiscriminant attacks from NATO and United States on the sovereign state of Afghanistan were in form of attacks either by military or civilian attacks on the Afghanistan military personnel or the citizens. However, other indiscriminant attacks adopted by the United Nations and United States include starvation of peace and material things against the individuals as a method of warfare. Other ways of indiscriminate attacks on Afghanistan include destroying of objects needed for human survival such as food, crops, livestock, drinking water and irrigation system for planting their crops. Whereas the preamble of the Geneva Convention Protocol 1 stated that every nation has the legal duty in conformity with the Charter of United Nations to refrain from use of force in its international relations and against the sovereign, territorial integrity or political independence of any state or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

VI. CONCLUSION

Afghanistan has experienced major military and security problems since after the 11th September terrorist attacks on the United States. The terrorist attacks of US by al Qaeda network led NATO and US invoking various United Nations Articles for waging war on al Qaeda networks and Taliban in Afghanistan. United States started by toppling the government led by Taliban after Taliban refused to release Osama Bin Laden who was believed to be taking refuge in Afghanistan. International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was formed by the United Nations to help in fighting terrorism in Afghanistan. ISAF was charged to train the Afghanistan Military and Police personnel for handing over the security of the country to them. However, the Taliban troops mounted resistance and pressure on the ISAF despite sophisticated weapons possessed by the ISAF troops. The use of military attacks on the sovereign state of Afghanistan was illegal as none of the Articles of the United Nations authorized NATO and United States to use force on the government of Afghanistan and its citizens. It was clear that United States and NATO acted out of provocation and in line with the spirit of fighting terrorism but they would have used other peaceful means of handling such situations instead of using force on Afghanistan. However, they claimed to invoke Article 5 of the United Nation which stipulated that any attack on any member state of UN is an attack on all the members of UN but the attack was not legally justified as no nation is allowed to interfere or attack another sovereign state under the International Law. More so, the killing of the Afghanistan citizens was equally against the rights to protection of life and properties.

³¹ The exact mechanism for applying the crime of aggression in a given circumstance is not yet known, though ICC jurisdiction might be triggered based on decision making at the ICC itself (without affirmative action at the Security Council) in circumstances where the alleged aggression is undertaken from or against a party to the Rome Statute. At present, Afghanistan is a party to the Rome Statute, while the United States and Pakistan are not. See International Criminal Court, Assembly of States Parties, available at <http://www.icc-cpi.int/asp/statesparties.html>.

³² Article 2(3) of the UN Charter: Member states shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice were not endangered.

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