

Review of: "American Mission in Afghanistan: Geopolitical Interests, Strategies and Reasons of Failure"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article is an interesting overview of the US involvement in Afghanistan and can definitely benefit students of International Relations and Geopolitics. However, it needs major revisions.

General comments:

- The author should provide a leading argument, what is the main thesis of the paper?
- It would be worth placing the paper and the argument in the current academic debates in the literature. How does the argument fall into those debates or challenge them? Is it a new argument or is it drawing on others and expanding them?
- Systematic transitions between each section could be added, as well as an introduction to each section.
- The author should explain the structure of the paper in the introduction to better connect each part together.
- The author sometimes advances statements without referring to sources. References should be mentioned thoroughly.
- The author should consider defining the "American mission": does it echo the promotion of democracy in US foreign policy?
- The conclusion is very effective, with clear arguments that should be mentioned earlier in the paper.

Detailed comments:

- p. 3 : "Afghan War" is not a clear expression, the author should consider speaking of "the Soviet war in Afghanistan" or something similar.
- p. 4 : "Starting from late 1990s, the US Congress passed bills that called for diversification of energy supplies from the Central Asia and Caspian region (Yang, 2008)." This sentence should appear at the beginning of the paragraph to introduce the author's argument.
- p. 5 : "Then US administration is reported to have exerted pressure on oil companies to accept the projects." Reference is needed.
- p. 5 : "It was 9/11 that prompted the US to intervene in Afghanistan, but for a long time, the country was ripped apart by civil war and human rights violations by the Taliban regime. The US considered the Taliban a stabilizing force helping to advance its geostrategic interests by assisting with the laying of the alternative Turkmenistan Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) pipeline bypassing Iran and Russia (Rashid, 2010)." The link between these two statements is not very clear. It seems like a transition to the next section but it should be rephrased to be clearer.

- p.6 : "Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, warned during this juncture while keeping Iraq weak, the US would also have to be watchful of Iran." Reference needed.
- p. 6, second paragraph : Yes but this also falls into a deep historical framework of democracy promotion that dates back to Wilson at least. It would be worth touching upon this.
- p. 6 : "The Central Asian states were also cautious not to allow an extra-regional power to play a major role in their security affairs and challenge the Russian role in a major way." Yes, but this changed after 9/11. The author should consider writing a sentence about this, as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan let the US use their territory to install military bases to support Operation Enduring Freedom.
- p. 7 : About A. Al-Zawahiri: Why was this example chosen to support the argument "terrorism emerged as the most dangerous non-conventional threat and geopolitical challenge to the US in the post-Cold War era"? The author should provide more context about either the book or Ayman Al-Zawahiri and his links with the US and/or how the US administration viewed him/his ideology.
- p. 7 : "To fill up the power vacuum after the Soviet Union's disintegration and to pursue its geopolitical interests in various regions" It would be worth giving a few examples of these countries.
- p. 8 : "According to statistics put out by several reports..." Provide reference of those reports.
- p. 9, second and fifth paragraphs : provide references.
- p. 10 : "Some experts ascribed the weakening of Afghan state institutions to the economic agenda of the intervening powers." Provide references.
- p. 11, second and third paragraphs: provide references.
- p. 12 : "Afghan insurgents proved former US diplomat and politician Henry Kissinger's maxim, "The guerrilla wins if he does not lose; the conventional army loses if it does not win"." Provide reference.
- p. 12: "While the primary targets for the Taliban remained the Afghan government institutions and officials aimed at the objective of piling up pressure on the US and Afghan government to agree to their political claims and peace terms and the terror attacks by ISIS not only targeted at the Afghan government officials and foreign diplomatic presence considering them 'apostates', it indiscriminately targeted at civilians who they believed to be 'heretics' primarily religious minority communities in Afghanistan." Consider splitting this sentence into two.
- p. 12, last paragraph : consider mentioning the pashtunwali code of conduct.
- p. 13: "Pakistan is home to more Pashtuns than Afghanistan" Provide figures and references.
- p. 13, fourth paragraph: Does the author have any example of such perception? It would be interesting here to cite Zhou's article "The Muslim Battalions: Soviet Central Asians in the Soviet-Afghan War"
- p. 14: "According to World Bank estimates, Afghan population growth is so high that it needed an expanded and sustainable economy to absorb the youth bulge." Provide figures and references.
- p. 14: The author should elaborate on what the Kerry-Lugar bill is.
- p. 15: "the highest numbers of drones to date were fired in 2010." Provide figures and references.
- p. 16: "For example, after Kabul ambulance bombing death toll reached beyond hundred, the head of Afghanistan's

intelligence service, National Directorate of Security (NDS) Masoom Stanekzai stated that these actions were deadly attempts by the Pakistani backers of the insurgency to show they could not be sidelined." Provide reference.

- p. 17, last sentence: "anarchy" sounds very extreme. Anarchy is described as a situation without any form of government and where the people rule. The Taliban, although non recognized, are in power in Afghanistan. It would be better to talk rather about the uncertainty of Afghanistan's economy, the humanitarian crisis worsening or the problems of women's rights, than using the concept of anarchy.

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