

Dear All

I am sure all of you have been following the news on Afghanistan. I tried to put together what I know and how I see the situation at this point. Here are my thoughts:

1. Afghanistan is a 39 million population country, has a GDP of \$20 billion, with a per capita income of less than \$500. It is one of the poorest countries in the world. 34 % of the population lives in extreme poverty at less than \$ 1.9 per day. Afghanistan still has infant mortality of 6 %, still high in today's world.
2. Afghanistan got its independence from Great Britain in 1919, August 19 to be precise, so it's a 102 year old independent country. There are many countries who got independence much after Afghanistan and these countries have done well like Indonesia, India etc.
3. Afghanistan has been ruled by Russia for 12 years and by US for the last 20 years. So, Afghanistan has had foreign intervention for 30 of the 102 years of its independence. For whatever reasons, the superpowers have got involved but there has been little development over these 30 years.
4. Afghanistan used to be a popular holiday destination and film shooting location for Indian movies.
5. Afghan food has always been a connoisseur's delight.
6. The US has spent \$ 1 Trillion so far over the last 20 years, i.e. 50 times the GDP of the country. Has this investment yielded anything is a question that is being asked.
7. The US decided to withdraw and they felt that they had trained the Afghanistan armed forces and the Afghan police. When the US pulled out a few weeks ago, the US Intelligence predicted that the Taliban would occupy Afghanistan in 6 months' time. However, it has taken the Taliban just 12 days starting August 6.
8. The Taliban has overrun the country while USA, China, Russia and India were in discussion with the Taliban in Doha.
9. The biggest impact of the Taliban takeover will be on women, girls education and the aspirations of the youth. This will seriously setback these cohorts in the next ten years.
10. Afghanistan has a population of 39 million, even if 10 % of this population turns refugee, then all the neighboring countries will be flooded. This will become a human crisis in a region which is not a rich region.
11. China is interested in the mining possibility in Afghanistan. However, the terrain and the capability and investments haven't been of a similar order.
12. The rapid progress of the Taliban in under 12 days says something about how well the Afghan forces were prepared, their commitment and what happened when they faced the Taliban. This is a challenge every organization has when there is no institutionalizing of the issues. Paratropping someone into a country and hoping to build a nationalistic feeling doesn't seem to work, at least the Afghanistan experiment doesn't show it in that light.
13. Is Afghanistan not important at all in the future as a strategic location? It became a strategic location after 9/11. It is likely that the US or Russia do not see it as a strategic geography anymore.
14. The western countries led by UK and France are concerned about what is happening in Afghanistan. But concern will not help at this point, the people in Afghanistan will need a lot more.

Afghanistan is one of the global challenges in a modern world.

Feedback welcome

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