Chapter-III
US Policy towards the Taliban during Clinton Administration
CHAPTER-III
US POLICY TOWARDS THE TALIBAN DURING CLINTON ADMINISTRATION

*Afghanistan has gone from one of Washington’s greatest foreign policy triumphs to one of its most profound failures.*

As discussed in the preceding chapter, the United States welcomed the Taliban’s victory march in Afghanistan with muted silence for reasons of its national interests. Interestingly it seems to have been guided by Pakistan’s assurance that Taliban, would be able to bring the much needed peace and stability to the war-ravaged region. So it was but natural that the policy makers in Washington hoped for a quick Taliban control over the whole of Afghan territory. The underlying dynamics, which guided the US policy towards the Taliban during Clinton Presidency appear to have had at least two vital objectives, i.e. the Oil politics and Narco-terrorism. However, with the emergence of Osama bin Laden network as a major anti-US terrorist group, denying bin Laden a base of operations in Afghanistan became an increasingly significant US priority. Other concerns include curbing the criminalized economy, ending discriminations against women, eradicating poppy cultivation, retrieval of US Stinger missiles and addressing the refugee migration problem. Each of these factors would be examined in detail to comprehend the intricacies and convolution of US foreign policy in dealing with the Taliban.

[A] Vital Interests:

(1) Oil Politics:

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 leading to the birth of the Central Asian Republics with its huge oil reserves and the subsequent interest exhibited by US oil

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companies\(^2\) in exploiting the vast energy resources there, the debate over a viable route became a priority. The scramble for this gold mineral in this new found ‘middle east’ by the major powers like the US and Russia; the regional powers--Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkey and the most powerful players of post cold war world politics--the oil companies compete in ‘the new great game’\(^3\)

While Washington’s policy has been to tap Central Asia’s energy resource at the same time it is unwilling to give any leverage to Russia in the north and Iran in the south.\(^4\) Due to the land-locked nature of the Central Asian states, out of the many routes passing through Russia, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, the Iran route was considered to be the safest and shortest.\(^5\) However, American hostility with the Islamic Republic ruled out the option. Instead, the choice fell on a more hazardous route that passes through unstable Afghanistan. It is a different matter altogether that the United States interpreted its national interest in terms of an attempt for the economic development of Afghanistan.\(^6\) But in actuality it was United States’ business interests, i.e. oil politics and its global strategy of containing the Soviet Union and Iran, which played a decisive role in its policy choice of engaging the Taliban. Endorsing the view, Andrew Hartman writes, “While an analysis of US policies during the Cold War must account for the geopolitical polarization of the globe, explaining US foreign policy during the cold war era should not be much different from an analysis of US foreign policy during other eras in American history. The broad context of US foreign policy during the Cold War, like other eras,


\(^3\) Ahmed Rashid coined this term in his article, “In the New Great Game-The battle for Central Asia’s Oil”, Far Eastern Economic Review (Hongkong), April 10, 1997.


\(^5\) Most independent energy experts agree that the Iran route is the best choice. For details see Julia Nanay, “The US in the Caspian: The Development of Political and Commercial Interests”, Middle East Policy (London), 1998, vol.6, no.2, pp.150-7.

adhered to the bottom line—protecting a favourable investment climate for private business interests.”

The underlying factor, however, lay in the need for a stable political environment in Afghanistan, which would facilitate such a venture. The fact that the United States acquiesced to Taliban’s series of victories with mute silence needs be interpreted in the light of the American interests in the region.

The story of American oil pursuit in the region is also a story of the bitter contest between two oil companies, UNOCAL of the United States and Bridas, an Argentine Oil company. “In 1994, Bridas, the Argentine Oil Company proposed building a gas pipeline that would cross Afghanistan and deliver gas to Pakistan and India. In February 1996, Bridas had signed a 30-year agreement with the Afghan government headed by Rabbani, for the construction and operation of a gas pipeline. The US company UNOCAL, seeking to build a pipeline across Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (for delivery to energy hungry Asia via the Pakistani Arabian Sea coast), signed an agreement with Turkmenistan for natural gas purchasing rights for transport through a proposed a pipeline in 1995.”

The tussle between these two companies to build this oil pipeline drew the Taliban and other factions along with the regional powers into what Ahmed Rashid calls the “new great game”

In October 1995, UNOCAL signed an agreement with Turkmenistan proposing a gas pipeline from Dauletabad to Multan in Central Pakistan. UNOCAL also signed a second contract envisaging a 1050-mile oil pipeline from Chardzhou in Turkmenistan to an oil

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8 UNOCAL at that time was the 12th largest Oil Company in the USA, which had considerable experience in Asia and had been involved in Pakistan since 1976. Neamatollah Nojumi, The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan: Mass Mobilization, Civil War and the Future of the Region, (New York:;2002), p.34
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terminal on Pakistan's coasts. It is documented that the deals were hailed by the Clinton administration "as an alternative to schemes involving links through America's old nemesis Iran to the Saudi Arabia." While the initial contract with Turkmenistan looked all set to go to Bridas, UNOCAL managed to capture the deal. Together with its Saudi partner, Delta Oil, UNOCAL had already signed a US $2 billion contract to construct a natural gas pipeline, with an oil pipeline envisioned for the future, running between Turkmenistan and Pakistan. On Aug. 13, 1996, Unocal and Delta Oil Co. signed a memorandum of understanding with Russia's Gazprom and Turkmenistan's Turkmenrusgaz to build a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan.

The UNOCAL too projected the US foreign policy in welcoming the Taliban's victory over Afghanistan. "When the Taliban captured Kabul in September 1996, Chris Taggert, a UNOCAL executive, told wire agencies that the pipeline project would be easier to implement now that the Taliban had captured Kabul." In November 1996, UNOCAL further announced that the 'Taliban victory in Kabul was a positive sign and further announced that the company was already supplying 'non cash bonus payments to the Taliban in return for their cooperation, even before the victory in Kabul. State department spokesman, Glyn Davis said the US found 'nothing objectionable' in the steps taken by the Taliban to impose Islamic law. He described the Taliban as anti-modern rather than anti-western. In 1997, the US Congress passed a resolution declaring the Caspian and Caucasus region to be a "zone of vital American interests".

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11 Ahmed Rashid, ibid., p.151.
15 Ralph H Magnus & Eden Naby, ibid., p, 190.
16 Ahmed Rashid, ibid., p.151.
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In 1998, Vice President Dick Cheney, then CEO of the giant oil services company, Halliburton, stated: "I cannot think of a time when we have had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant as the Caspian."\(^{18}\)

The very fact that UNOCAL’s position was closely linked with the US government gave it an advantage over its Argentine counterpart. The Taliban’s acceptance of the offer had carried the possibility of US recognition of the regime. This also would have made possible the opening of the gates for financial assistance from the World Bank for the cash-strapped economy of Afghanistan. However, with these advantages UNOCAL posed some problems for the Taliban. Being closely aligned with the government it had to reiterate the government’s insistence on the Taliban maintaining a positive human rights record. It also demanded the beginning of a dialogue process with the anti-Taliban alliance. Thus, UNOCAL went a step further by declining to negotiate with any body less than a recognized government. In these circumstances, Bridas emerged as favourable alternative for the Taliban. In December 1997 Unocal invited Taliban representatives to their corporate headquarters in Sugarland, to discuss the pipeline project. They were thereafter invited to Washington for meetings with Clinton Administration officials.\(^{19}\)

In January 1998 UNOCAL agreement signed between Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and the Taliban to arrange funding of the gas pipeline project, with UNOCAL also considering a Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-Arabian Sea coast oil pipeline. On February 28, 1998 UNOCAL Vice President, International Relations addressed US House of Representatives, clearly stating that the Taliban government should be removed and replaced by a government acceptable to his company. He argued that creation of a 42 inch oil pipeline across Afghanistan would yield a Western profit increase of 500 per cent by 2015.\(^{20}\) In March 1998 Unocal announced a delay in finalizing the pipeline project due to Afghanistan’s continuing civil war. In the wake of terrorist bombing of the two US

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\(^{18}\) Gabriel Kolko, ibid., pp.56-62


\(^{20}\) Neamatollah Nojumi, ibid., p.89. See A Timeline of Oil and Violence, ibid.
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embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on August 7, 1998, President Clinton ordered a 75-80 cruise missile attacks on Afghanistan and Sudan targets on August 20, 1998. The US bombing of bin Laden's camps in August 1998 forced UNOCAL to pull out its staff from Pakistan and Kandahar. In November 1998, the Trade and Development Agency commissioned Enron to perform a feasibility study on an east-to-west route, crossing the Caspian Mountains and terminating in Turkey along the Mediterranean. (The route was considered impractical as it would cost an estimated $1 billion more than a route through Afghanistan.) In December 1998 UNOCAL issued a statement that it had withdrawn from the pipeline project, noting "business reasons." On July 7, 1999 an executive order was issued by Clinton, freezing US held Taliban assets & prohibiting trade plus other transactions. However, considerable uncertainty remained in the oil and gas pipelines through Afghanistan.

(2) Narco-Terrorism:

"Long the linchpin of the Golden crescent- the opium growing region that stretches through Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan-Afghanistan has now assumed a dominant position in the volatile area". The drug trade in Afghanistan has a long history, of which Washington had conveniently publicly become aware only during the late 1980s with the de-escalation of the Soviet confrontation. Even the mujahideens were reportedly involved in drug trafficking to raise the revenues for their war against the Soviets and Afghan Communists. Authors point out that drug cultivation in the Helmand valley region of Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation days, was somewhat encouraged by the CIA in its objective of demoralizing the Soviets on all fronts. This was launched under a clandestine operation code named 'Mosquito'. The same had happened to the Americans in Vietnam. The use of narcotics appears to have been increased among the

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23 At the height of Afghan resistance, Afghanistan produced a whopping 400-575 metric tons of opium. See Sudhir Sawant, Steps Against Narco-Terrorism in Asia, Aakrosh (New Delhi), vol.2, no.3, April 1999, p.58. Ayman Talal Yousef, ibid., pp.45-56.

Soviet soldiers substantially. Some of them even indulged in the smuggling operations due to the large nature of profits it brought about.\textsuperscript{25}

After the fall of the Nazibullah government, the US administration suddenly became aware of the dangers of the trade and hoped that the mujahideen would stop depending on trade of narcotics as a source of finance. However, its hopes were belied. It was difficult to suddenly give up an age-old practice, which has always brought in financial windfall.

After the arrival of the Taliban on the political scene, the US administration again hoped that the new rulers with their insistence on the principles of Islam would put a halt on the trade of narcotics. After all the Hudud laws of Islam discourages narcotic use and cultivation. In fact, the Taliban, after it first took power, announced to put an end to drug trafficking and poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. They were particularly vehement in their condemnation of the drug trade, which was not only against Islam but was also a major source of foreign influence and corruption in society through its vast profits.

However, with the initial spurt in anti-narcotics enthusiasm, drug production actually increased. Wendy J. Chamberlain, an expert of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement says, poppy cultivation has actually increased three fold in Afghanistan after the Taliban take over in 1996.\textsuperscript{26} Data on actual production are scarce. The International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCR) noted a 33 per cent increase in drug cultivation in 1996 from previous figures, particularly in areas under control of the Taliban.\textsuperscript{27} In 1997, opium poppy cultivation jumped by 25 per cent, making Afghanistan the world's second largest source of opium with a share of more than forty per cent.\textsuperscript{28}

According to a report by the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board, the


\textsuperscript{27} The United Nations Drug Control Programme has estimated the trade to be worth $ 50 billion annually. Quoted in Tara Kartha, ibid., p.174.

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country may have overtaken Burma as the world’s leading producer of opium, with a 1998 yield of 2,200 tons, up 9 per cent from the previous year. The Taliban controls 97 per cent of the territory that produces illicit opium in Afghanistan. It taxes opium dealers at a rate of $20 million per year, which goes straight to the Taliban war chest.

In October 1997, the United Nations Under Secretary General Pino Arlacchi, executive director of the U.N. International Drug Control Programme, said that the Taliban agreed to enforce a ban on opium production and smuggling and agreed to allow direct monitoring of the ban.

In April 1998, following Ambassador Richardson’s visit to Afghanistan, a US drug control team met the Taliban officials in Afghanistan to continue talks on the issue. However, Arlacchi said in July 1998 that Taliban was failing to comply with the U.N. agreement on drugs and that refineries to produce morphine were being opened and opium production was increasing. In Herat, the Taliban have set up model farms where farmers learn the best methods of heroin cultivation. In March 1998, Afghanistan was listed again by the United States, as it has been every year since 1987, as a state that is uncooperative with US efforts to eliminate drug trafficking or has failed to take sufficient steps on its own to curb trafficking. In February 1999, the White House cited numerous reports of drug traffickers operating in Taliban territory with the consent or involvement


31 In exchange, the U.N. programme agreed to introduce new crops to substitute for the opium poppies, extend irrigation systems, build new factories and pay for police training and enforcement. The estimated cost is $16 million per year, which the Taliban complained was going to be mostly administration costs. For details see Barbara Crossette, Taliban Agree to Cooperate with Ban on Opium Trade, New York Times, October 25, 1997. Also see Kamal Matinuddin, ibid., p.123. Martin Mc Cauley, ibid., pp.59-64.


34 Kenneth Katzman, ibid., p.17.
of some Taliban officials before decertifying Kabul for failing to live up to its obligations under the 1988 U.N. Drug Convention.\footnote{Nishad Hajari, ibid.}

A United States Department of State fact sheet on the ‘The Taliban and the Afghan drug trade’ noted that the

1. The United Nations Security Council Resolution introduced on December 7, 2000, calls on all parties in Afghanistan to observe the existing international conventions to work for the elimination of illicit cultivation of opium poppy. Further, the resolution includes a measure to ban the export to Afghanistan of a precursor chemical, acetic anhydride, which is used to manufacture heroin.

2. The international community agrees that these further measures are necessary because Afghan territory under Taliban control is now the largest producer in the world of illicit opium, which is refined into heroin. Narcotics-related income strengthens the Taliban’s capacity to provide support for international terrorism.

3. The Taliban benefit directly from poppy cultivation by imposing a tax on the opium crop, and they also profit indirectly from its processing and trafficking.

4. The Taliban’s support for, or acquiescence to, poppy cultivation and narcotics manufacture and trade has further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis of the Afghan people. The explosion of poppy cultivation under the Taliban has reduced agricultural land available for food crops at the very time that Afghanistan is suffering the worst drought in a generation.

5. In recent years, the Taliban have announced several bans on poppy cultivation, but there has been little evidence that these bans are credible.\footnote{US Department of State, International Information Programs, http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/global/drugs/00120801.htm (Accessed on May 12, 2006).}

(3) Terrorism:

Terrorism is the use of force (or violence) committed by individuals or groups against governments or civilian populations to create fear in order to bring about political (or
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Terrorism has become a first-order priority for the Clinton administration because the phenomena of state sponsorship have been joined by a new more dangerous religious brand. According to Simon and Benjamin, four developments mark the advent of this new form of terrorism.

- Emergence of religion as a predominant impetus for terrorist attacks.
- The increasing lethality of attacks.
- The increasing technological and operational competence of terrorists; and
- The demonstrated desire of these terrorists to obtain weapons of mass destruction.

The 1993 World Trade Centre bombing in New York and the plot to blow up the Lincoln tunnel and other New York landmarks, the 1995 plot to destroy eleven US aircrafts over the Pacific, the 1996 Oklahoma city bombing and the August 1998 attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salam are the illustrations of the bin Laden brand of terrorism, otherwise called as the ‘New Terrorism’. For the past two years (1998-2000), the primary goal of Washington's Afghanistan policy has been to bring Osama bin Laden to justice, as he symbolizes a symbol of new terrorism, which has emerged during Clinton’s Presidency. Ironically, Osama bin Laden is the personification of ‘blow back’.

At the beginning of the Afghan war, Osma was sent to Peshawar by the Chief of the Saudi prince Turki bin Faizal, where he was actively financing the Afghan war. CIA had given Osma a free hand. In 1984, bin Laden created a front known as MAKTAB-AL-KHIDAMAR- the MAK, which was nurtured by the ISI, the CIA’s primary conduit for conducting the covert war in Afghanistan. Many Arab militants came to fight in

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40 At the CIA, it happens to have a code name: Blow Back. Simply defined, this is the term that describes an agent, an operative or an operation that has turned on its creator. Michael Moran, “CIA and Osma bin Laden”, http://radiobergen.org/terrorism/binladen_5.html.
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Afghanistan, bringing their own view of radical Islam, but also carrying back home their combat experience in the name of jihad. The hub of these informal networks was established in Peshawar through the ‘Office of Services; (Mektab al-khadamat), headed by a Jordanian Muslim Brother of Palestinian origin. Abdullah Azzam, in close conjunction with the Saudi activist and tycoon Osama Bin Laden, who founded the ‘Home of Auxiliaries’ (Bayt al-ansar), a foundation in charge of recruiting and financing the volunteers. After the Soviet withdrawal, Bin Laden returned home to Saudi Arabia, but he soon turned against the governments with which he had cooperated. Bin Laden was among those who opposed the invitation of US troops to Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War. Saudi Arabia deprived him of his citizenship and expelled him in 1994. After a sojourn in the Sudan, which expelled him under US pressure, bin Laden returned permanently to Afghanistan apparently in early 1996.

Since 1996, Afghanistan has become ‘ground zero’ for an international terrorist network headed by Osma. At the heart of the network is Al-Qa’eda, the base, which is emblematic of the new terrorism, characterised by “stateless, defuse networks of individuals united by radical ideology rather than common ethnic or national origin”.

Although by that time the Taliban already controlled southern Afghanistan and Herat, bin Laden instead took up residence in Jalalabad, close to the Pakistani border and an area where his old allies were still strong. According to one report, bin Laden supplied $3 million to the Taliban in the summer of 1996. This deal, brokered by the Pakistani

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44 Among bin Laden’s entourage, apparently, were the leader of the Jihad Group in Egypt, the brother of the assassin of Anwar al-Sadat, at least one son of Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman (imprisoned in New York for the bombing of the World Trade Center), and other exiled leaders of the most violent fringe of world Islamic movements. Montasser Al-Zayyat, ibid., pp.57-59. Barnett R Rubin, ibid.
Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence, funded the Taliban offensive against eastern Afghanistan and Kabul.\(^45\)

After coming under pressure from the US and Saudi Arabia over bin Laden's support for violent Islamic movements, the Taliban moved him to Qandahar in early 1997, promising to keep him under surveillance in their home base in order to prevent him from engaging in political or terrorist activity outside the country.

Bin Laden has been implicated in a long string of attacks on Americans.\(^46\) His first terrorist attack was a December 1992 bombing of a hotel in Yemen used by American soldiers en route to humanitarian operations in Somalia. Bin Laden told CNN in March 1997 that he had trained the ‘Afghan Arabs’ who helped to kill eighteen American soldiers in Somalia in 1993.\(^47\) In addition, he was implicated as a possible unindicted co-conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York City, which killed six and wounded over thousand.\(^48\)

Bin Laden's network remains a prime suspect in two bombings against American targets in Saudi Arabia: a 1995 bombing that killed five American military advisers in Riyadh and June 25, 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers housing complex that killed 19 American military personnel.\(^49\) According to US government sources, bin Laden also hatched two failed plots to assassinate President Bill Clinton.

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\(^{45}\) Barnett R Rubin, ibid.

\(^{46}\) Attacks linked to bin Laden:
1993: Bombing of World Trade Center kills six, injures 1,000.
2000: Suicide bombing of USS Cole in Yemen kills 17, injures 39.


\(^{48}\) While there appears to be no concrete evidence tying bin Laden to the bombing, Ramzi Youssef, the convicted mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing, was trained in one of bin Laden's training camps, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

\(^{49}\) James Philips, ibid., Peter L Bergen, Holy War, Inc: Inside The Secret World of Osama bin Laden, (London: Widenfeld & Nicolson, 2001), p.78. Previous terror attacks have killed...
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Over time, bin Laden's public rhetoric has become increasingly hostile toward Americans. By the spring of 1998, despite the Taliban's promises, bin Laden became more active. In February 1998, bin Laden announced the formation of the "International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders" and signed a *fatwa* (religious edict) calling on all Muslims "to kill the Americans and their allies--civilian and military is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it."\(^{50}\)

Six months later, bin Laden's supporters detonated two truck bombs outside the US embassies in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, killing 224 people, including 12 Americans, and wounding more than 5,000.

In the wake of the bombings, as the evidence of bin Laden's involvement mounted, concern over the terrorism issue clearly took precedence over all others. Anti-Taliban activists worried that Washington would recognize the Taliban in return for concessions on bin Laden, but on a visit to Nairobi the day before the US strikes, Secretary of State Albright stated that while controlling (not handing over) bin Laden was a condition for recognition, other conditions still applied as well, including establishment of a broad-based government and respect for human rights. The Taliban Amir, Mulla Muhammad Umar, according to Afghan Islamic Press stated "We will never hand Ossama over to anyone and [will] protect him with our blood at all cost".\(^{51}\) He and other Taliban spokesmen, however, reiterated their previously violated promises to prevent him from engaging in international activity and offered to try him under Islamic law if they were presented with evidence he had committed a crime.

Suspects arrested trying to transit Pakistan with fake passports on their way from Kenya to Afghanistan reportedly implicated bin Laden, as did, the US charged, communications intercepts from bin Laden's cellular telephone. The US also claimed that it had


\(^{51}\) Barnett R Rubin, ibid.
information indicating that the bases were about to be used for imminent attacks on yet more American targets and citizens. And bin Laden's own words accused him: in a May 28 interview with ABC News reporter John Miller, he described a "fatwa" he had issued (though he has no formal Islamic qualifications) calling for the killing of Americans and said, "We do not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians; they are all targets in this fatwa." 52

These events came just as the Taliban reached a key turning point. On August 8, one day after the embassy bombings, Taliban troops marched almost unopposed into Mazar-i-Sharif, seizing the last major city out of their control, fortifying their claim to be the government of Afghanistan. As they fanned out in the coming weeks, they reduced the opposition to pockets in Badakhshan and Panjsher (Rabbani and Massoud, with Rabbani's forces subject to defections) and the Hazarajat, under Hizb-i Wahdat. Russia and Iran charged that they did so with massive Pakistani military support. Thus the Taliban set the stage to campaign for diplomatic recognition and Afghanistan's UN seat.

The United States responded on August 20, 1998, by launching seventy-five remotely guided tomahawk cruise missiles from US navy ships in the Arabian Sea against three of bin Laden's training camps near Khost, Afghanistan, and against Al-Chifa, a pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, Sudan 53 , suspected of making chemical weapons for bin Laden in operation codenamed 'Infinite Reach'. 54

Washington is particularly interested in preemiting a chemical weapon strike because bin Laden has shown an interest in acquiring weapons of mass destruction since at least 1993. In November 1998, CIA officials confirmed that bin Laden sought to acquire

53 The connection between bin Laden and the Sudanese target remained less evident. The US at first claimed that the factory in question was at least partly owned by bin Laden (later they modified this to state that he had invested in the ministry that owned the factory) and that it was producing precursors of VX nerve gas, the same chemical weapon substance found on Iraqi missile parts. Press leaks later claimed that Iraq was also involved in the factory. Sudanese sources denied all these charges and noted that the factory produced 50 percent of all medicines in Sudan. See Steven E. Schier, The Post Modern Presidency: Bill Clinton's Legacy in US Politics, (Pittsburg, 2000), p.89. Barnett R Rubin, ibid.
chemical weapons for attacks on US troops in the Persian Gulf region.\(^5^5\) CIA Director George Tenet testified before Congress in March 2000 that bin Laden was the ‘foremost’ terrorist threat to the United States and that ‘his operatives have trained to conduct attacks with toxic chemicals or biological toxins.’\(^5^6\) Tenet reaffirmed that due to US manhunt to nab bin Laden, he is “placing increased emphasis on developing surrogates to carry out attacks in an effort to avoid detection,”\(^5^7\)

President Clinton has declared Osama bin Laden as “America’s public enemy number one”.\(^5^8\) Hence the United States has ratcheted up the pressure on bin Laden.\(^5^9\) Assistant Secretary of State, Karl Inderfurth declared Osama as a “threat to our interests and the international community worldwide”.\(^6^0\) The United States has pressed the Taliban repeatedly to seize or expel him. The Taliban regime, however, maintains that bin Laden is an honored guest who is not guilty of terrorism and cannot be handed over to \textit{kafirs}.\(^6^1\)


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55 Bin Laden reportedly also tried but failed to buy a nuclear warhead on the Russian black market. See Stefan Leader, \textit{Osama bin Laden and the Terrorist Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction}, Jane's Intelligence Review, June 1, 1999.  
56 John F. Murphy Jr., \textit{Sword of Islam: Muslim Extremism from the Arab Conquests to the attack on America}, (New York: 2002), pp.146-47.  
57 Such surrogates include Egypt's Al Jihad organization, which was responsible for the 1981 assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, and Algeria's Armed Islamic Group. Bin Laden has funded both of these organizations for years. For details see James Philips, ibid., Steven E. Schier, ibid., p.89.  
59 He is now on the Federal Bureau of Investigation'(FBI)'s Ten Most Wanted Fugitive list, and there is a $5 million reward for his capture. Peter L. Bergen, ibid., p.96.  
61 It was highly unlikely that the Taliban will surrender bin Laden. The wealthy Saudi has supported the Taliban financially and is known to be close to Mullah Omar. Bin Laden reportedly built a house for Mullah Omar, who is rumored to have married one of bin Laden's five daughters. Also see Richard Mackenzie, ibid. pp.100-1. Nasim Zehra, "Taliban Afghanistan: Image and Governance", \textit{Himal} (Kathmandu), vol.13, no.4, p.31. John F. Murphy Jr., ibid., pp.174-76.  
62 Bergen, Peter L., ibid., p.100. Also See \textit{A Timeline of Oil and Violence}, ibid.
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demanded compliance with Resolution 1267, and imposed further sanctions on the Taliban (24b).

Despite growing diplomatic and economic pressures, the Taliban regime has refused to cooperate. The reasons for this defiance, which ultimately could threaten the Taliban's hold on power—lie in the nature of the Taliban and the Afghan political scene.

After repeated refusals by the Taliban to take action, President Clinton on July 6, 1999, declared a national emergency with respect to the Taliban. Because of the Taliban's hosting of bin Laden, Clinton imposed sanctions, including a ban on trade with Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan and a freezing of Taliban assets in the United States. On August 10, 1999, the Administration banned US citizens from flying on Ariana Afghan Airlines. Washington prompted the United Nations Security Council to follow suit on November 14, 1999, freezing Taliban assets and embargoring its airline.63

These sanctions are designed to induce the Taliban to abandon bin Laden, but among many Afghans, the renegade Saudi is popular because of his efforts during the jihad against the Soviets. Others support him as a symbol of defiance against the West, making American public denunciations of bin Laden somewhat self-defeating. Such denunciations rally support for bin Laden among anti-Western Afghans, contribute to his mystique throughout the Muslim world, and inspire donations from wealthy Gulf Arabs who want to share in bin Laden's self-created image as a champion of Islam. In the words of one Saudi dissident, "What Clinton is saying is there are two superpowers again: the United States and Osama bin Laden."64

The United States, therefore, must hold the Taliban responsible for the terrorism of its protected guest. Washington has stressed this point repeatedly to the Taliban. After bin Laden's plots in Jordan and Canada were uncovered in December 1999, Michael Sheehan, the State Department's Coordinator for Counter terrorism, called the Taliban's foreign minister to warn him that the US military could retaliate against the Taliban for

any future bin Laden terrorism. Sheehan told him that bin Laden "is like a criminal who
lives in your basement. It is no longer possible for you to act as if he's not your
responsibility. He is your responsibility."65

In his testimony on Drugs, Crime and Terrorism, Michael Sheehan told a House judiciary
sub-committee on December 13, 2000 that "The Taliban's control over most of
Afghanistan has resulted in a haven of lawlessness, in which terrorists, drug traffickers
and other criminals live with impunity. The Taliban naturally benefits from the resources
brought in by these sources, and thus has little incentive to change their own or their
"guests' behavior".66 Consequently, in its 'Patterns of Global Terrorism Report' for
2000, the United States noted that:

Islamic extremists from around the world—including North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Central, South, and Southeast Asia—continued to use Afghanistan as a training ground and base of operations for their worldwide terrorist activities in 2000. The Taliban, which controlled most Afghan territory, permitted the operation of training and indoctrination facilities for non-Afghans and provided logistics support to members of various terrorist organizations and mujahidin, including those waging jihads (holy wars) in Central Asia, Chechnya, and Kashmir. Throughout 2000 the Taliban continued to host Usama Bin Ladin despite UN sanctions and international pressure to hand him over to stand trial in the United States or a third country. In a serious and ongoing dialogue with the Taliban, the United States repeatedly made clear to the Taliban that it would be held responsible for any terrorist attacks undertaken by Bin Laden while he is in its territory.67

The attack on US Navy ship, USS Cole at Aden port killing seventeen American
soldiers, once again raised the hackles of Clinton administration. However, the policy
with regard to Osama's extradition to US has met with a dead end. Besides the secret
negotiations held between Washington and Kabul and the importance of the oil industry,

65 James Philips, ibid.,
66 US Department of State, International Information Programs, ibid.
67 Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2000, US Department of State, Released by the Office of the
Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, April 2001.
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Brisard and Dasquie contend the US government's claim that it had been prosecuting bin Laden since 1998.

COUNTER-TERRORISM MEASURES:

Terrorism emerged as main threat to the UD national interests. Executive Order 12947 of January 23, 1995, Prohibiting Transactions With Terrorists Who Threaten to Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process, issued by President Bill Clinton - blocks the assets and business transactions of a specific list of “terrorist organizations” whose actions are believed to threaten the ongoing peace negotiations in the Middle East.

The Domestic Preparedness Program, resulting from 1996 congressional hearings that focused on efforts to better coordinate interagency counterterrorism operations, legislation designated the Department of Defense (DoD) as the lead agency in preparing the nation for terrorist attacks using weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

The Senate intelligence committee and its staff examined whether the Khobar Towers attack’s success was due to an intelligence failure. It examined a number of issues, including collection, analysis, the production of vulnerability assessments, and dissemination. Its primary conclusion was that “The Khobar Towers tragedy was not the result of an intelligence failure.”

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68 Jean-Charles Brisard and Guillaume Dasquie, in their book, "Bin Laden, la verite interdite" ("Bin Laden, the forbidden truth" (internet edition), Brisard and Dasquie have long experience in intelligence analysis. Brisard was until the late 1990s director of economic analysis and strategy for Vivendi, a French company. He also worked for French secret services, and wrote for them in 1997 a report on the now famous Al Qaeda network, headed by bin Laden. Julio Godoy, US Policy Towards Taliban Influenced by Oil, http://www.truthout.org/docs_01/11.17A.OilTaliban.htm (Accessed on June 17, 2006)


After the August 7 bombings of US embassies in Africa, the FBI "quickly focused investigative attention on terrorist financier Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network Al Qaeda." "Significant events" include indictments, trials, convictions as well as the creation of plans to establish a National Domestic Preparedness Office.\(^7\)

In the aftermath of the August 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the United States launched retaliatory strikes against training bases and infrastructure in Afghanistan used by groups affiliated with Osama bin Laden as well as plant in Sudan that the US charged was involved in producing a critical nerve gas component. Raphael E. Perl in Congressional Research Service report asserts that the attacks represented the first time that the "US had unreservedly acknowledged a preemptive military strike against a terrorist organization or network." The report went on to examine whether the strikes represented a new policy direction and the issues such a policy shift would raise, including U.S preparedness for domestic and overseas attacks, possible cost in human lives, and potential restrictions on civil liberties.\(^3\)

Executive Order 13099 of August 20, 1998, ‘Prohibiting Transactions with Terrorists Who Threaten to Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process’, was issued in 1998 following the terrorist attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and on the same day that President Clinton directed retaliatory missile strikes against suspected terrorist-related facilities in Afghanistan and Sudan. The second order amends E.O. 12947 to include Osama bin Laden – the chief suspect in the embassy bombings – the Al Qaeda organization, and two other individuals on the list of terrorists whose assets and transactions are to be blocked. The order also drops the word “organizations” from the heading of the list, apparently because specific individuals are now targeted.\(^4\)


Executive Order 13129 of July 4, 1999, Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions With the Taliban blocks assets and transactions connected to the Taliban, the radical Islamic political and military movement exercising de facto control over most of Afghanistan. The order notes that the Taliban provides safe haven in Afghanistan for Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda organization "who have committed and threaten to continue acts of violence against the United States." The Taliban thus "constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."

On June 5, 2000, the National Commission on Terrorism (NTC), a congressionally mandated group, issued its report, Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism. The report argued for a more aggressive US strategy in combating terrorism—specifically, a proactive intelligence and law enforcement authority to collect intelligence about terrorist plans and methods, employing sanctions against all states that support terrorists, disrupting non-governmental sources of terrorist support, planning to respond to WMD (weapons of mass destruction) terrorist attacks, and improved integration of individual agency counterterrorism programs into a comprehensive national counterterrorism plan. The report also recommended designating Afghanistan as a state sponsor of terrorism and imposing sanctions on the regime.76

[B] Secondary Concerns:

(a) Women Rights:

When the Taliban first appeared in the Afghan political scene, it ‘acted against a mujahideen commander in Kandahar who had abducted, raped and killed three women in


76 However, this report notes and examines the concerns expressed by some over the possible consequences of implementing the report's recommendations with regard to civil liberties, the relationship with US allies, and US trade relations. Raphael F. Perl, National Commission on Terrorism Report: Background and Issues for Congress (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, February 2001). http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/(Accessed on June 17, 2006)
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mid-1994. However, the incident hardly provided any indication of the things to unfold. What followed afterwards was a series of diktats aiming at restricting women to the four corners of the houses.

The Taliban however, maintained consistently that all its decisions are intended to protect its women folks from the evil influences. The step to shut the doors of educational institutions on girls is one such instance. With equal consistency, the Taliban, on all levels, have insisted that the movement considers it an Islamic duty to provide education for all, including women. However, given the fact that separate facilities are non-existent, a temporary ban is in order. Taliban, however, finds it difficult to explain the other measures, which are nothing short of a discriminatory practice against women. Seeking to enforce its brand of puritan Islam, Taliban has subjected women to limitations on social participation, working and education. "They must wear a head-to-toe veil in public, and they may not ride in vehicles unless accompanied by a male relative. Until November 1997, women were only allowed to be treated at one hospital in Kabul, which is under U.N. sponsored reconstruction and lacks sufficient staff and equipment."

Taliban policies towards the women have received widespread condemnation. It has forced many United Nations and other aid organizations, including the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, Save the Children, and Oxfam, to cut back or cease operations, either in protest or for lack of available (female) staff.

There has been significant US and U.N. pressure on the Taliban regime to moderate its treatment of women. Several U.N. Security Council resolutions urge Taliban to end the discrimination against women. During her visit to Pakistan in November 1997, the US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright attacked Taliban policies as despicable and intolerable. US representative to the U.N. Bill Richardson discussed the treatment of women during his April 1998 visit to Afghanistan and reported some progress on the

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77 Nancy Hatch Dupree, _Afghan Women Under the Taliban_, in William Maley, ibid. p.145.
78 For details of the strict laws and decrees see Kamal Matinuddin, ibid. pp.19-20 and pp. 34-5.
81 Clinton reproaches Afghanistan rulers for ill-treatment of women, Indian Express (New Delhi), October 28, 1999.
issue. In the month of October 1999, President Clinton was reported to have said, "Perhaps the most difficult place for women in the world today is still Afghanistan."82

Ever since Madeline Albright became the Secretary of State, US condemnation of Taliban policies on gender had been forthright. While the Secretary's own commitment might have influenced this direction, so has the organization of an influential lobbying network comprising of feminist, human rights, and humanitarian groups, supported by some Afghan women exiles in the United States, who made the Taliban gender policies a political issue.83 In addition, the women lobby in the United States rallied consistently to put pressure on the government to act in this regard. Women rights groups like Feminist Majority and the National Organization for Women (NOW) mobilized to stop the Clinton administration from recognizing the Taliban unless it alters its treatment of women.84 Not to forget the important role played by the Hollywood celebrities who since 1997 have espoused such causes. These networks having included key constituencies of former President Clinton and his Democratic party acted a significant manner to toughen the US attitude towards the Taliban.

In a significant development on March 17, 1999, the United States Senate passed the following resolution, which signified the American response to the anti-women policies of the Taliban. Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the treatment of women and girls by the Taliban in Afghanistan it resolved that:

1. The President should instruct the United States Representative to the United Nations to use all appropriate means to prevent any Taliban-led government in Afghanistan from obtaining the seat in the United Nations General Assembly reserved for Afghanistan so long as gross violations of internationally recognized human rights against women and girls persist; and

2. The United States should refuse to recognize any government in Afghanistan which is not taking actions to achieve the following goals in

82 Indian Express, October 28, 1999.
83 Barnet R Rubin, "Testimony on the Situation in Afghanistan, October 8, 1998", United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.
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Afghanistan: (A) The effective participation of women in all civil, economic, and social life. (B) The right of women to work. (C) The right of women and girls to an education without discrimination and the reopening of schools to women and girls at all levels of education. (D) The freedom of movement of women and girls. (E) Equal access of women and girls to health facilities. (F) Equal access of women and girls to humanitarian aid.\(^{85}\)

The Taliban maintained a defiant attitude. In January 1998, the Chief Taliban representative in the US, Abdul Hakim Mujahid, proclaimed, “ninety-nine percent of Afghan women are supporting the Taliban policy toward women”. He further said that resistance to Taliban’s treatment of women is present only among “one percent of Afghan women tied to a Communist style of liberation.”\(^{86}\)

(b) Retrieval of US Stinger Missiles:

Another US policy objective in the region is to recover the Stinger missiles provided to the mujahideen fighters during the Soviet occupation days. It needs to be noted that these missiles were used with lethal accuracy accounting for a great number of losses of aircrafts of the Soviets. According to a ‘US Defence Intelligence Agency’ testimony, an unspecified number of Stinger missiles remain in Afghanistan.\(^{87}\) The United States was apprehensive of the possibility of these missiles falling into the hands of terrorist groups. Policy makers feared that Iran could acquire additional Stingers and provide them to groups Iran supports, such as the Hizbollah, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. With considerable amount of money and influence in Afghanistan at his disposal, bin Laden was also suspected to have acquired some Stingers.

In 1992, the United States reportedly spent about $10 million to buy back the Stingers from individual mujahideen commanders. The New York Times reported that the first effort failed because the US was competing with other buyers such as Iran and North Korea. The report further suggested that CIA would spend about $55 million in 1994 in a


\(^{87}\) Kenneth Katzman, ibid. p.16.
renewed effort to buy back the Stingers.\textsuperscript{88} On March 7, 1994, the Washington Post reported that the CIA had recovered only a fraction of the at-large Stingers and does not know who control the remaining ones. Thus, the concern remained and there was very little the administration could do without the assistance of the Taliban.

In addition other concerns such as the large scale migration problem of the refugees and Afghanistan turning into a hub for criminalized economy. The devastated condition of Afghanistan produced the world’s largest-ever single refugee case-load, at times as high as 6.2 million persons.\textsuperscript{89} Smuggling of consumer goods, fuel and food stuffs through Afghanistan played havoc and crippling the local industry. The Taliban tax on the smuggling trade was the second largest source of income after drugs.\textsuperscript{90} These needs, however, remained relatively unfocussed in view of the in fashion threats such terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism.

\begin{itemize}
\item[b.] The entire economic interaction between Pakistan and Taliban is legalised by the Afghan Trade and Transit Agreement, 1965. See Sreedhar, \textit{Is the Taliban being Coverted into a Jihadi Army?}, Aakrosh, vol.3, no.7, April 2000, p.16.
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