To What Extent Diplomats Influence Foreign Policy? Tony Blair's Foreign Policy since 9/11 with Regards to Afghanistan and Iraq as Case Studies

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Abstract: To what extent diplomats can influence foreign policy of a country? To what extent a diplomat can be influenced by external factors? What are the important factors that are being placed in the agenda of diplomats? To find these answers, this paper examines the Tony Blair's foreign policy after 9/11 towards two Muslim countries-Iraq and Afghanistan. This paper argues that derived from the doctrine of internationalism, Blair took a policy of interventionism which at the end failed to create any effective result. This paper suggests that 'value of life' should be placed at the forefront of foreign policy.

Key words: Foreign Policy · Diplomat · Iraq · Afghanistan · Muslim countries

INTRODUCTION

Pattern of politics in discourse of international relation has changed due to the forces of globalization. Globalization, with its burgeoning power puts challenges on nation-states which in theory and in practice are now transformed into transnational states as domestic and international policy turns out to be intertwined more than ever before. Against this backdrop, Tony Blair in 1999 through his famous Chicago speech stated, 'we are internationalist now' [1]. His view later was elaborated by the former British foreign secretary, Jack Straw, in 2003, who emphasized that, 'the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) will need to work systematically with other Government departments and with people outside Government including Parliamentarians, businesses, Trade Unions, NGOs and the media' in order to readjust foreign policy into the changing discourse of international relation where globalization brings up new issues [2]. This paper studies- how British foreign policy, as stated by Blair and Straw, deals with the changing issues in this globalised period with reference to two Muslim countries-Iraq and Afghanistan- after 9/11. To be specific, I aim to examine foreign policy formulated during the regime of Tony Blair from 2001 to 2007. In that regard I divide my arguments into several sections. Firstly, I aim to understand what is foreign policy and diplomacy. Secondly, I discuss the general trend within the British

foreign policy. Thirdly, I aim to provide a brief description of British foreign policy in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Fourthly, I sketch a brief descriptive picture upon the ramification of British policy in those two countries. Finally, I engage into critical analysis of British foreign policy.

What Is Foreign Policy and Diplomacy?: Classical definition of diplomacy is given by Sir Ernest Satow in 1917, where he states, 'diplomacy is the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of relations between governments' [3]. In reality, foreign policy and diplomacy is co-related. Diplomats are actively engaged in formulation and execution of foreign policy.

Foreign policy is framed from three academic perspectives which are- realism, pluralism and structuralism. Within the framework of realism foreign policy is the prime consideration.

According to the Realists' View: Foreign policy is about the management of interstate relations in an anarchical society in which each major power has ambitions to establish a system of global governance which reflects its values and interests. Since it does not wish to be subject to a system reflecting the values and interests of another great power, it will cooperate with other states in a like position in a framework of a balance of power to ensure that they will not lose, if they cannot win [4].

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However, due to the emergence of globalization, the paradigm of foreign policy formulation has shifted more towards pluralism if not structuralism. The pluralist framework for foreign policy gives much greater credence to a wider range of actors beyond states. These include public opinion and civil society, the role of NGOs more generally and also that of international organizations, multinational corporations, churches, deviant actors such as the mafia [4,5]. Furthermore, pluralist foreign policy also looks up to the global level with analyses of global problems and ways of addressing them as Groom [4] asserts, 'pluralist foreign policy is looking for elements of cooperation and sees a potential general framework in the harmony of interest'.

Finally, according to the structuralist's view, the patterns of transactions create structures, which in due course become autonomous and then put an influence upon the actors. In short, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts because of the autonomous impact of structure upon actor [4]. Structure could be anything in the form of international society and a balance of power, global capitalism, the market and universal political values. Groom [4] asserts that, 'in the structuralism conception outcomes are determined by the interaction between structure and actor but the assertion is that, in the long run, structures dominate outcomes' [4].

General Trend Within British Foreign Policy: Historically, after the Second World War, foreign policy of Britain features three major principles [6-9].

- Act as a bridge between the US and the EU
- Developing special relationship with the US.
- Establishing Britain as a major actor within the EU.

It is fair to argue that, three of these principles are embedded on one philosophy of Britain's ambition to establish itself as an influential player in international relation by developing friendship in transatlantic zone. Historically, Britain placed itself as a bridge between the EU and the US and thus it proves itself important to both the US and its European counterparts. In next section, I aim to look into the British policy in Iraq and Afghanistan in a descriptive manner. It is important to note that, British policy in Iraq and Afghanistan involved helping the US to topple Saddam and Taliban regime with military forces since the US had accused both regimes of actively assisting and providing shelter to the Al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda claimed the responsibility of the terrorist attack on 9/11.

Afghanistan: Implementation of the British policy in Afghanistan had occurred in two phases. First phase involves 'helping the US army to topple the Taliban regime for self defense' and the second phase involves 'restoration of democracy' in Afghanistan by actively engaging into Bonn process [10,11,7].

The first phase involves two steps: notification of the military action to the UN and the war against Taliban on the ground. In relation to the first step, the Britain and the USA notified the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 'on 7th October 2001 that they had commenced military action in Afghanistan titled *operation enduring freedom* in accordance to the UN charter 51'[1] [12].

The British Legal Statement in the UNSC States: The United Kingdom has military assets engaged in operations against targets we know to be involved in the operation of terror against the United States of America, the United Kingdom and other countries around the world, as part of a wider international effort. These forces have now been employed in exercise of the inherent right of individual and self-defence, recognised in Article 51, following the terrorist outrage of 11 September, to avert the continuing threat of attacks from the same source. this military action … is directed against Usama Bin Laden's Al Qaida terrorist organization and the Taliban regime that is supporting it [12].

From this statement it is noticeable that Britain had notified the UNSC after commencing the military operation on the ground. Furthermore, this statement opens up scope for questioning the justification of the statement of 'self defense' for Britain since the terrorist attacked the USA not the Britain. However, the British government justified its operation through another assertion where it said that, in addition of combating terrorism, one of its major aims was to combat narcotics production in Afghanistan. Tony Blair claimed, 'Ninety per cent of the heroin on British streets originates in Afghanistan' [13]. Interestingly, the Britain also pleaded to rebuild Afghanistan after bringing down the Taliban regime.

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[1]Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported 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 (United Nations website).

Tony Blair in October 2001 told the House of Commons that 'we will not walk away from [the Afghan people], once the conflict ends, as has happened in the past; we will stand by them and help them to a better, more stable future' [14].

As a result of these political and legal statements, on the ground in Afghanistan, 'the operation *enduring freedom*, had driven the Taliban and its al-Qaeda allies from power, although significant elements of both found sanctuary in the eastern and southern border region with Pakistan' [10]. Thus, the Britain had entered into its second phase of policy implementation.

In second phase, the British involved in the restoration process of democracy which was culminated in Bonn where Afghan political leaders met in late 2001. The outcome of that meeting was endorsed by the UNSC. Youngs [10] notes that the meeting reached agreement on step by step restoration of Afghan democracy which includes: transition towards increasingly legitimate power structures culminating in the establishment of a fully representative and freely elected government which is to cooperate with the international community in the fight against terrorism, drugs and organized crime. In addition, through another meeting on International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance for Afghanistan held in Tokyo in 2002, 'over $4.5 billion was pledged by the international community' [10]. However, according to aid experts the money is inadequate 'it should have been perhaps as much as $15bn' [15].

Ramification of British Policy in Afghanistan: In previous section, I draw a brief but concise outline of British policy in Afghanistan. What are the consequences of this policy? The answer is very depressing- poverty, violence, death, destruction with little or no hope for restoration of peace in near future [16].

For example, Afghanistan is, according to a report conducted by the International crisis group, one of the most risky places on the earth due to the increasing number of Taliban insurgent attacks. Recently, another report conducted by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) notes: 'the removal of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan has deprived al Qaeda of a state-based center of operations, however, the weak central government in Afghanistan has been unable to suppress warlordism and Taliban forces seem to be reemerging' [17]. These statements indicate to the failure of coalition forces and strategists on the ground. Furthermore, the fight between the Taliban and the coalition forces where Britain contributed strongly, resulted in hundreds of civilian death. Only in the year of 2006, more than 4,000 Afghans, including civilians had been killed' [18]. At least one hundred of these civilians were killed by coalition forces, not by the Taleban [16]. Furthermore, Tony Blair's promise of rebuilding Afghanistan looks very grim due to the surge in insurgent attacks, aid agencies are finding it hard to operate there. As a result, 'fewer than one in four Afghans now have access to safe drinking water, one in four children die before their fifth birthday and more than three in five adults are still illiterate' [15]. Following figure 1, conducted based on the information received in 2002 after the US-British invasion, brings up the peril situation forefront where it shows inadequacy in the number of doctors and hospital beds backed with the lack of access to safe drinking water puts Afghanis in dire position.

Apart from failure in developing humanitarian situation, British campaign against curbing opium production sees a little success. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime reported in its Opium Survey 2004 that 'opium production was increasingly encroaching on previously unaffected areas and had spread from 18 provinces in
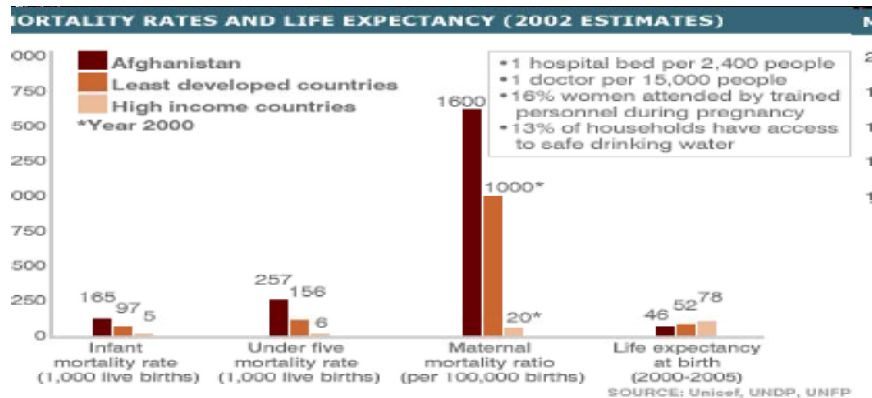

Fig. 1: Mortality rates and life expectancy in Afghanistan[2]

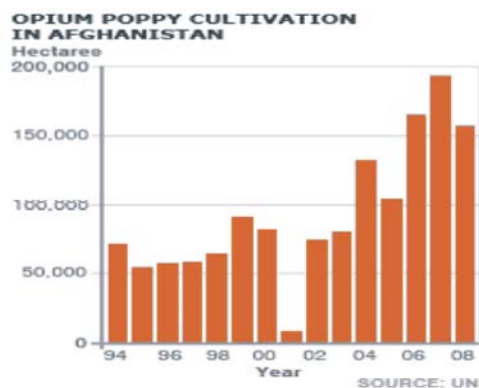[2]Please see BBC's Life in Afghanistan

Fig. 2: Increase in Afghan poppy cultivation

1999 to all 32 provinces during 2004' [10]. In figure2, more recent situation depicted well through graphical illustration which indicates the boost in poppy cultivation over the years in hectares wise.

Nutt argues that this was due to falling price of wheat. He argues that farmers are switching their production choice from wheat to Opium for financial reasons. He asserts, 'farmers have found that in the previous years, the price of wheat has fallen from around 21p to just 4.5p per kilogram (2 pounds) whereas they could raise 20 to 40 times more than this for a kilogram of raw opium' [15]. Therefore, it is plausible to argue that the Britain with the US was not successful to install sustainable livelihoods for Afghans as per the promise made by Blair. It is worth quoting Hanif Atmar, Afghan agricultural minister in 2003, who stresses on urgent requirement on developing alternative sustainable livelihoods. He argued that Afghanistan possess surplus workforce and due to the lack of livelihood many people are joining in the Taliban force. He said to a western aid agency that, 'they (Afghans) will do anything when they are poor and when someone is willing to pay them for their services,' adding, 'since September 11 2001, war in Afghanistan has been globalised; these people will find their way back to global terrorism' [15]. In a dramatic way he cautioned the west, 'to turn your back on Afghanistan now means to write your own suicide note' [15].

Iraq: The general hypothesis asserted by the US for sending troops in Iraq was - a direct link exists between the Al-Qaeda and the Iraq; weapon of mass destruction (WMD) is being developed in Iraq under the leadership of President Saddam Hussein to be used against the west, therefore it is necessary to topple him [19-23]. Tony Blair agreed with this hypothesis and argued in support of his decision of sending troops in Iraq through a dossier, which was made public in September 2002, that:

Iraq continued to produce chemical and biological weapons; continued to develop nuclear weapons; was able to extend the range of its ballistic missile programme, would use these weapons; as vital to its strategic interest and in particular the goal of regional domination, had developed its military planning to allow for some of its WMD to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them [24].

As a result, the Britain sent 40,000 troops in Iraq in 2003 despite the fact that, Britain's Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) had confirmed that Iraq had played no part in the 11 September attacks [19,25]. As an aftermath of military operation, Saddam regime was toppled and a new interim government has installed.

Even though a new Iraqi government was installed in Iraq, on the ground, still a significant number of British troops are in operation in Iraq and the duties they are carrying out features: 'training the Iraqi forces, securing the Iraq/Iran border, securing supply routes, conducting operations against extremist groups and support the Iraq Army when called upon' [25].

Ramification of British Policy in Iraq: Main argument put forward by the US, supported by the UK to invade Iraq was to stop the development of WMD patronized by Saddam Hussein. However, the coalition forces failed to find any WMD after invasion in Iraq [26]. Even though, a new government has been installed in Iraq by the western coalition forces, the situation looks grim now with increasing number of violence, crime, suicide bombing, which makes it difficult to see any constructive outcome of Iraq in near future.

The consequence of British policy in Iraq can be summed up in following ways:

- Saddam Hussein was executed on December 30, 2006 for 'crime against Humanity' even though no relation was found between him, WMD and terrorist attack in 9/11. Interestingly, one of the main charges brought against him featured his involvement in military campaign against Kurds in 1980s, not attacking the US in 9/11 [27,28].
- Scores of people died. For example, according to the Iraqi government statistics, about 150,000 civilians had been killed since 2004 [29]. Most of the deceased were mainly women and children and they were killed by the US, the UK and the coalition troops [30].
- By late 2006, much of the Iraq was engulfed in kidnappings, retaliatory killings and forms of sectarian strife that bore all the hallmarks of a civil war [30].

- Humanitarian situation does not look impressive either. About 25 per cent of children in Iraq are now malnourished and according to the UN World Food Programme, four million Iraqis do not have enough to eat [31,16]. In addition, one in eight children now dies before the age of five [16].
- A comprehensive survey of living conditions in 2004 found deteriorating social conditions. Throughout the country, electricity, water and sewer systems are deeply compromised and unreliable, further endangering health [30].
- In 2005, the unemployment rate passed 60 per cent and grew further in 2006 [16].

It is clear that the ramification of the British policy does not depict very promising scenario. From the aforementioned statistics, it would not be exaggeration if I argue that the British policy in Afghanistan and in Iraq ruptures into blood, hunger, agony, tears and terror rather than contouring constructive result. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the theoretical framework of British Policy in those countries. What went wrong there?

Framework of British Policy: I have provided with a general trend within British policy beforehand. However, British foreign policy in Iraq and in Afghanistan, indicates that it persisted an active philosophy of interventionism grounded on the primacy of Anglo-American relationship [6,7,8,9]. This vision of interventionism is specially asserted by Tony Blair which justifies the claim that in international relation diplomats play an important role. The bridge principal and establishing Britain as a major actor within the EU became less visible during Blair's regime.

Blair's ambition of intervention was outlined in his Chicago speech in 1999 where he coined in the 'doctrine of internationalism' theory.

He Stated: We are witnessing the beginnings of a new doctrine of international community. By this I mean the explicit recognition that today more than ever before we are mutually dependent, that national interest is to a significant extent governed by international collaboration …No longer is our existence as states under threat. Now our actions are guided by a more subtle blend of mutual self interest and moral purpose in defending the values we cherish. In the end values and interests merge. If we can establish and spread the values of liberty, the rule of law, human rights and an open society then that is in our national interests too. The spread of our values makes us safer [1].
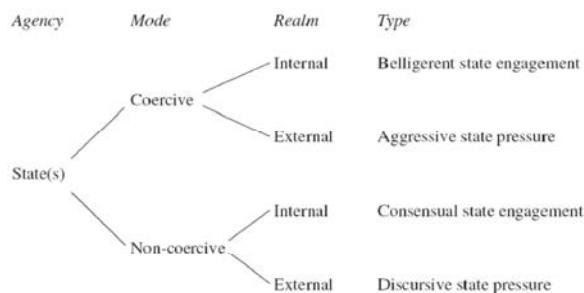

Fig. 3: Typology on intervention [31]

In the aforementioned fraction of this speech, I find Tony Blair's usage of terms and words such as 'mutually dependent', 'national interest governed by international collaboration' sketches a picture where the boundaries of nation states becomes blur due to global interconnectedness as states become more interdependent due to globalization. In addition, by using 'we' and 'open society' it is vivid that Blair indicates to the west. Finally by using the word 'spread' I argue that he indicates to the western intervention whether it is armed or non-armed. To Lunn, Miller and Smith [6] 'his (Blair's) view of non-intervention was not just undesirable – it was no longer an option'. Furthermore, Lord Jay of Ewelme further argues that at the heart of Blair's foreign policy was the concept of interventionism – 'that Western democracies should be prepared to intervene, militarily if necessary, in support of Western values'. In reality this approach is apparent throughout his premiership as 'he presided over large-scale British military action five times within his tenure which are in Iraq, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Iraq again' [13].

Blair's foreign policy beliefs are deeply influenced by Robert Cooper, a former special envoy to the Afghanistan sent by Blair [22,13]. Cooper believes that the essence of globalization erodes the distinction between domestic and foreign events creating a need to intervene as international order is created by force, preserved by force and backed by the threat of force [13,22]. It is apparent that Cooper's thought of force intervention influenced Blair. Therefore, it is relevant here to understand the theory of intervention in order to observe how it fits within the framework of British foreign policy in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Holliday [31] through the following typology of intervention argues that the nature of state intervention can be of several kinds.

I find Tony Balir's foreign policy juxtaposes all four types of intervention identified by Holliday. Holliday [31] argues that *Belligerent state engagement* taken the form of war. Presence of British troops in Iraq and Afghanistan fits within this frame work. In addition, Blair actively

comprises his foreign policy framework in the line of *aggressive state pressure* where Britain acted on behalf of imposing sanctions against Iraq before 2001. Furthermore, Blair's policy after immediate intervention in Iraq and in Afghanistan fits within the category of *consensual state engagement* as according to Holliday [31], 'states can directly provide many forms of humanitarian assistance to societies in distresses'. Right after the intervention, Britain through various non-government organizations and through UN provided humanitarian assistance in war zones even though the volume was inadequate. Finally, Blair's policy also fits within the framework of *discursive state pressure.* Holliday [31] argues that, 'this interventionist type requires an element of pressure in routine diplomacy'. Forming the new government in Iraq and in Afghanistan, putting pressure on respective governments to establish 'democracy' is a gesture of Blair's intervention which I argue fits within the framework of discursive state pressure.

A critical point to note is that Blair's vision of interventionism is based on the theme of the west driven globalization. He consistently advocated this idea. For example, in 2002, he insisted to the Trade Union Congress that, 'the key characteristic of today's world is interdependence where your problem becomes my problem' and 'used this logic to assist the USA' which indicates to the special nature of the Anglo-American friendship [14,32,13]. This friendship is nothing new. Milne [7] argues that' it is been there for more than 60 years'. In fact, British found it increasingly necessary to attach themselves closely to the Americans. This way, Azubuike [33] argues, 'the British hoped to be able to influence the direction of US foreign policy and thus use American power to promote British interests and influence'. This [friendship] has been a device used by a declining power for trying to harness a rising power to service its own ends. In that regard, a good example is Britain's reliance on the US military resource. Azubuike [33] asserts that, 'without Britain's privileged access to the American technology (no other country receives this), British nuclear deterrence would become almost useless for the effectiveness of British submarines depends on American ballistic rockets, cruise missiles, guiding systems and intelligence.' Therefore in Azubuike's opinion it was difficult for Blair not to join President Bush's war on terror. Bluth [26] argues that the strategic choice for Britain was whether to join the American effort or to let the Bush administrations go it alone and Blair did not take the risk of jeopardizing the friendship. However, Dyson [34] argues that there would have been no harm done if Blair decided not to join US in Iraq and Afghanistan. He compared the situation between Blair and Wilson, who was the prime Minister of Britain during1970s and concludes that, 'US applied much more direct pressure upon Wilson for a UK troop contribution than Bush's quite gentle advances toward Blair and yet Wilson stood firm in refusing' [34]. Critics argue that this justifies the claim that Blair was a poodle of President Bush which will be explored in detail in next section.

Criticism: Critics criticize Blair's foreign policy on four major grounds. Firstly, realists argue that Blair jeopardized Britain's own interest by joining wars which were not his war and thus served more American purpose than British purpose [6].

Lunn, Miller and Smith argue that, 'Blair had strayed too far during his premiership from the central objective of British foreign policy, which was a clear-sighted pursuit of the country's national interest'. As a result, 'Blair had failed to do enough to generate the political, economic and military will and capability' [6].

Second criticism is Blair acted as a 'poodle' of President Bush and as a consequence of that, 'Blair acted against the wishes of the UN, Britain's key European partners and a majority of British and European people' [33]. A good example of Blair's 'poodle' action is how he followed President Bush's political campaign in favor of their military intervention in Afghanistan and in Iraq as a mean of protection to the western 'ways of life'. Johnson [21] argues that Bush and Blair used same pattern of rhetorical theme to promote military intervention. He analyzed 13 speeches given by Blair and 21 speeches given by Bush from September to December in 2001. I quote following speeches given by Bush and Blair from Johnson's work in order to show the resemblance in both leaders' speech.

Bush on 23 October said, 'the object of terrorism is to try to force us to change our *way of life*, is to force us to retreat, is to force us to be what we're not' [21]. In addition, Bush on 20 September said, 'The only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our *way of life* is to stop it, eliminate it and destroy it where it grows (Applause) [21].

By Contrast, Blair on 27 September said, 'we must not let these events shake our confidence in ourselves,in our country and in our *way of life*'. In addition, Blair on October 2 said, 'Our *way of life* is a great deal stronger and will last a great deal longer than the actions of fanatics, small in number and now facing a unified world against them' [21].

Not only through identical political campaign, Blair acted as a poodle of Bush but also he used dodgy evidence to justify the argument in favor of sending

troops in Iraq through a dossier about which I mentioned earlier sections. For example, 'one of the claims contained in the dossier that Iraq had sought to obtain significant quantities of uranium from Niger had based on intelligence so obviously flawed that it could, have been spotted by someone using Google' [35]. Furthermore, former British foreign secretary Robin Cook asserts that the claim Saddam could deploy WMD has proved to be false after the immediate intervention 'as not only were chemical or biological weapons never fired by Saddam's forces, but none could be found anywhere'.

Thirdly, critics argue that, by acting as a poodle of President Bush Blair jeopardized the security of British people. In other words, by joining war with the US, Blair brought war home. Hill [36] points out to the terrorist attacks taken place in London on 7/7 and argues, ' Blair's foreign policy has had a dramatic effect on domestic society, if not vice versa. The UK has suffered a serious terrorist attack, almost certainly connected to the way it behaves internationally'.

Finally, Critics accuses Blair of war crime and violation of international law. Curtis [22] argues that the British and the US were involved in war crime by referring to the civilian killing in Iraq and Afghanistan. He asserts:

The Blair government had indulged in six specific violations of international law: in conducting without UN authorization the wars in Yugoslavia (1999) and Afghanistan (2001); in committing violations of international humanitarian law in the bombing of Yugoslavia; in the illegal bombing of Iraq in December 1998; in maintaining the illegal 'no-fly zones' over Iraq, a permanent 'secret' war; and in maintaining sanctions against Iraq, which over the previous decade contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people [22].

CONCLUSION

Blair's foreign policy of intervention based on friendship with the US indicates that it can be placed under the pluralist framework of foreign policy as Bush and Blair advocated for military intervention as a solution of a global problem like terrorism. I have not mentioned the causality of British troops and Taliban or Iraqi forces in the war zone here. Rather I put my focus on humanitarian calamity while describing the ramification of British policy. The humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq and in Afghanistan showcases the appalling outcome of foreign policy. It is hard to see an immediate constructive outcome from Blair's policy which apparently was heavily influenced by the Bush administration as the war and Iraq

and Afghanistan is still on. Furthermore, Blair's policy had a de-stabilizing impact on the region of Middle East, South Asia and to some extent Europe since terrorists and insurgents are carrying out terror attack. As a result Blair had to resign before completing his second tenure. Furthermore, Anglo-American policy put a challenge on the international governing body like United Nations as it is clear that they notified the related UN body after the intervention rather than seeking approval beforehand. This brings a new debate forefront regarding the limited power of governance by international organization in international relation. They are heavily controlled by superpowers like the USA and the UK. In addition, these case studies shows that role of diplomacy is very important in contemporary geo-politics. Blair as a diplomat pursued his idea of interventionsim based on his doctrine of internationalism theory. His decision of sending troops in Iraq on the basis of a dossier where information was flawed and not presented honestly is clearly an indication of ill-practice of diplomacy. Besides, Blair's promise of rebuilding Afghanistan looks bleak as new US president under the leadership of President Obama decided to increase US and foreign troops in Afghanistan. How justified were the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is now a subject to another debate. However, the lives lost during those wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and in London underground bombing are gone forever. Families are devastated and many hopes and dreams are shattered. Therefore, 'value of life' should be appreciated with high importance within the framework of foreign policy of a country because after all we all are living in the same world.

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