

**T.R.**  
**TURKISH NATIONAL POLICE ACADEMY**  
**INSTITUTE OF SECURITY SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

**THE ROLE OF U.S. AND NATO IN AFGHANISTAN:  
SECURITY, POLITICS AND PEACE BETWEEN**

**2014 - 2021**

**Ph. D. DISSERTATION**

**Faridullah TALASH**

**Supervisor**

**Prof. Dr. Coşkun TAŞTAN**

**ANKARA-2021**



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I hereby declare that this Ph.D. Dissertation has been written by myself in accordance with the academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that all materials benefited in this thesis consist of the mentioned resources in the reference list. I verify all these with my honor.

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Signature

Name /Surname

Faridullah TALASH

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**ABSTRACT**  
**Turkish National Police Academy**  
**Institute of Security Sciences**  
**Department of International Security**

**The Role of U.S. and NATO in Afghanistan:  
Security, Politics and Peace between 2014- 2021**

**Faridullah TALASH**  
**Ph.D., Dissertation**  
**Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Coşkun TAŞTAN**

**2021, 289 Pages (Excluding Appendices)**

The Taliban returned to ruling Afghanistan after 20 years by ousting the Afghan government, following the Joe Biden administration's decision to fully pullout of the U.S. troops from Afghanistan. The U.S.-led coalition ousted the Taliban regime by December, 2001, and began military intervention in Afghanistan, which led to the U.S.'s longest and most costly war in its history. In order to maintain its decisive victory, prevent the return of al-Qaeda and Taliban, and preserve its long-term geo-strategic interests in the region, the U.S. engaged in state-building initiative in Afghanistan. The first decade of involvement was fructuous; the state-building process had preceded well, the security and stability were better, but the situation deteriorated post-2014, the violence, insecurity, instability increased due to growing insurgency and inability of coalition troops led by U.S. and Afghan government to contain growing insurgency.

This study aims to find out the reason behind the insecurity and political instability post-2014 and the failure of U.S. and its allies to find a peaceful solution to the Afghan dilemma and prevent the collapse of two decades of achievements at the hands of the Taliban, by addressing the main questions and sub-questions related to the cases of insecurity, political instability, and the failure of peace talks as well as the collapse of Afghan government. Based on the review of literature on state vulnerability to failure and collapse, the answers to the questions in this study were searched in the failed state theoretical framework. The data in this study is collected and analyzed in the context of a qualitative research approach based on a literature review of secondary and, to an extent, primary data. The findings of this research suggest the internal, external and the U.S. related factors contributed to the growing insecurity that led to the U.S. and its allies' failure in its two decades war in Afghanistan.

**Key Words:** U.S. Military Intervention, State-Building, Insurgency, Counterinsurgency, Security, Political Instability, Peace talks, Failed State, Withdrawal, Collaps

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**ABD ve NATO'nun Afganistan'daki Rolü: 2014-2021 Arasında Güvenlik,  
Siyaset ve Barış**

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Joe Biden yönetiminin Afganistan'dan tamamen askerlerini çekme kararı sonrasında, Taliban 20 yıllık aradan sonra Afganistan'da Afgan hükümetini devirip yönetime geldi. Amerika öncülüğündeki koalisyon Aralık 2001'de Afganistan'a askeri müdahaleyle Taliban rejimini devirdi, ki bu ABD tarihindeki en uzun ve en maliyetli savaşa neden olmuştur. ABD bu zaferini kesinleştirmek, Taliban ve El-Kaide'nin dönüşünü engellemek ve uzun dönemde bölgedeki jeostratejik çıkarlarını korumak amacıyla bir devlet inşasına girişmiştir. İlk on yılda ilerleme verimli oldu. Devlet kurma süreci iyi ilerledi, güvenlik ve istikrarda düzelmeler oldu ancak bu durum 2014 sonrasında bozuldu. ABD askerleri ve Afgan Ordusu'nun artan isyanı önlemekte yetersiz kalması nedeniyle şiddet, güvenlik sorunları ve istikrarsızlık arttı.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, 2014 sonrasında ortaya çıkan siyasi istikrarsızlık ve güvenliksizliğin nedenlerini ortaya çıkartmak ve ABD ile müttefiklerinin barışçıl çözüm bulma ya da yirmi yıllık ilerlemenin kazanımlarını Taliban'ın eline bırakmaktan kurtarma ikilemini çözmektir. Bunu yapmak için de güvenliksizlik, politik istikrarsızlık ve başarısız olan barış görüşmelerinin, Afgan hükümetinin çöküşü ile ilişkili olduğu soru ve alt soru başlıklarını ele almak amaçlanmıştır. Devletin tıkanmaya ve çökmeye karşı savunmasızlığı konusunda, literatür taramasına dayalı olarak yapılan çalışma ile 'başarısız devlet teorisi' (failed state theory) çerçevesinde araştırma yapılarak bu sorulara cevap arandı. Bu çalışmadaki verilerin toplanması ve analizinde, nitel araştırma yaklaşımı bağlamında ikincil ve bir miktar birincil data kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın bulguları içsel, dışsal ve ABD ile ilişkili faktörlerin katkısıyla artan güvenlik sorunları sonucunda, ABD ve müttefiklerinin yirmi yıllık Afganistan savaşında başarısız olduğunu savunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** ABD Askeri Müdahalesi, Devlet İnşası, İsyan, Karşı Ayaklanma, Güvenlik, Siyasi İstikrarsızlık, Barış Görüşmeleri, Başarısız Devlet, Çekilme, Çöküş.

**THE ROLE OF U.S. AND NATO IN AFGHANISTAN: SECURITY,  
POLITICS AND PEACE BETWEEN 2014-2021**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AAF</b>	: Afghan Air force
<b>ABNP</b>	: Afghanistan Beginning New Program
<b>AFG</b>	: Afghanistan
<b>Af-Pak</b>	: Afghanistan and Pakistan
<b>AISS</b>	: Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies
<b>ALP</b>	: Afghan Local Police
<b>ANA</b>	: Afghan National Army
<b>ANDS</b>	: Afghanistan National Development Strategy
<b>ANDSF</b>	: Afghan National Defense Security Force
<b>ANP</b>	: Afghan National Police
<b>APRP</b>	: Afghanistan Peace Reintegration Program
<b>ARTF</b>	: Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
<b>BBC</b>	: British Broadcasting Corporation
<b>BSA</b>	: Bilateral Security Agreement
<b>CAST</b>	: Conflict Assessment System Tool
<b>CEO</b>	: Chief Executive Office
<b>CHB</b>	: Clean, Hold, Build
<b>CIA</b>	: Central Intelligence Agency
<b>COIN</b>	: Counterinsurgency
<b>CPEC</b>	: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
<b>DDR</b>	: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
<b>DIAG</b>	: Disbandment Illegal Armed Group
<b>DOD</b>	: Department of Defense
<b>DW</b>	: Deutsche Welles
<b>EIA</b>	: Enemy- Initiated Attacks
<b>ERP</b>	: European Recovery Program
<b>EU</b>	: European Union
<b>FFP</b>	: Fund for Peace
<b>FSI</b>	: Fragile States Index
<b>G8</b>	: Geneva Group Eight

<b>GDP</b>	: Gross Domestic Product
<b>HKIA</b>	: Hamid Karzai International Airport
<b>HPC</b>	: High Peace Council
<b>IDPS</b>	: Internally Displaced People
<b>IED</b>	: Improvised Explosive Devices
<b>IJC</b>	: International Joint Commission
<b>IMF</b>	: International Monetary Fund
<b>IRGC</b>	: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
<b>IS</b>	: Islamic State
<b>ISAF</b>	: International Security Assistance Force
<b>ISI</b>	: Inter-Services Intelligence
<b>ISIL-KP</b>	: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant- Khorasan Province
<b>ISIS</b>	: Islamic State
<b>ISW</b>	: Institute for the Study of War
<b>JANIB</b>	: Join Afghan-NATO Integral Board
<b>JEMB</b>	: Joint Election Management Body
<b>MOIS</b>	: Ministry of Intelligence and Security
<b>MoU</b>	: Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NAF</b>	: Northern Alliance Forces
<b>NATO</b>	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NDS</b>	: National Directorate of Security
<b>NGOs</b>	: None Government Organizations
<b>NRP</b>	: National Reconciliation Program
<b>NUG</b>	: National Unity Government
<b>OECD</b>	: Organization for Economic Co-operation Development
<b>PDPA</b>	: People Democratic Party Afghanistan
<b>PRT</b>	: Provincial Reconstruction Team
<b>PTS</b>	: Program Tahkim-e- Sulh (Peace Strengthen Program)
<b>RAW</b>	: Research Analysis Wing (India Intelligence Agency)
<b>RC-C</b>	: Regional Command Capital
<b>RC-E</b>	: Regional Command-East
<b>RC-N</b>	: Regional Command North

<b>RC-S</b>	: Regional Command South
<b>RC-W</b>	: Regional Command West
<b>RSM</b>	: Resolute Support Mission
<b>S/RES</b>	: Security Council Resolution
<b>SIGAR</b>	: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
<b>SPA</b>	: Security Partnership Agreement
<b>SSR</b>	: Security Sector Reform
<b>TAPI</b>	: Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India
<b>TF</b>	: Task Force
<b>TPC</b>	: Taliban Political Commission
<b>UN</b>	: United Nation
<b>UNAMA</b>	: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
<b>UNCHR</b>	: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNDF</b>	: United Nations Development Fund
<b>UNDP</b>	: United Nation Development Program
<b>UNODC</b>	: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNSC</b>	: UN United Nations Security Council
<b>UNSCR</b>	: UN United Nations Security Council Resolutions
<b>USAID</b>	: United State Agency for International Development
<b>USFOR</b>	: United States Forces Afghanistan
<b>USGS</b>	: United State Geological Survey
<b>USSR</b>	: Soviet Union
<b>VOA</b>	: The Voice of America
<b>WHO</b>	: World Health Organization.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located in the center of South and Central Asia serves as a bridge between Southern and Central Asia and the Middle East. This country has great geo-economics, trade, and energy route potential since yearly time. Its trade routes date back to the early centuries, when the Silk Route acted as a connecting bridge between China and Egyptian civilization, and Afghanistan was at its center, even though its value as a transit hub is still the same. Its geostrategic and geopolitical location have historically been a source of concerns for its inhabitant and governments, they have been paid a high price for it, since the nineteenth century. Afghanistan has always been important to international and regional powers due to its strategic location and natural resources; hence this country has been a battleground for great powers and regional powers for many decades.

Afghanistan's political history is marked by political and social transformations since the country's independence in 1919. During this period of time every political and social change has had a positive and negative impact on Afghan society. The failure of states and collapse of regimes during this period was caused by internal and external factors. The internal factors have stemmed from ideological and political disputes among the political elites, who have repeatedly failed to find peaceful solutions to their political disagreements and to avoid the spread of disparities in society. The spillover of quarrels in this multi-ethnic and religious society has led to the failure of regimes and paved the way for external interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs and triggered endless conflict and violence.

During Mohammad Zahir Shah's reign from 1933 to 1973 Afghanistan experienced stability, economic development and democracy. But this prosperity has turned to a tragedy after the communism penetrated in Dawood Khan's administration and has led to the bloody coup d'état, which paved the way for the Soviet's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The Soviet invasion sparked an East-West ideological conflict in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union has sought to defend a communist regime based in Kabul. On the other hand, the U.S.-and its allies, including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and China supported the Afghan Mujahidin based

in Pakistan with military and financial aid. Following the Soviet Union's defeat and withdrawal from Afghanistan a power vacuum has created, as the U.S. remained largely uninvolved in Afghanistan. The regional actors supported their preferred fractions and groups, and the country descended into a decade-long civil war from 1992 to 1994. The struggle for power between the Mujahidin resulted in the emergence of the Taliban movement in 1994.

Following September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda organized attacks on the United States; the President George W. Bush declared war on terror and ousted the Taliban regime. After the collapse of the Taliban's regime, the international community agreed on the formation of a provisional government and a political settlement in Afghanistan at the Bonn Conference in December 2001.

In the second phase; the "United Nation Security Council" has authorized a military operation in Afghanistan under the "Resolution 1386", which established the first mandate for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), to deploy in Afghanistan to provide security, equip and train Afghan security forces, as well assist the Afghan Interim government in implementing the Bonn Agreement.<sup>1</sup> Since "UNSCR 1386", the "UN Security Council" has passed several resolutions extending the ISAF's mission, including "UNSCR 1510" in October 2003 which expanded the ISAF mandate to cover the entire country it paved the way for ISAF command to expand operations beyond Kabul.

From August 2003 to December 2014, the U.S. and its NATO allies commanded the UN-mandated ISAF, mission in Afghanistan. The primary goal of the U.S./NATO, mission in Afghanistan was to eliminate Al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups and also to assist and support the Afghan government in providing security and stability across the country. The Coalition troop ended its combat mission on ground with the transition of security responsibility to Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) in 2011, which was completed in December 2014.

The U.S. and NATO announced their new strategy named "Resolute Support Mission" (RSM) for Afghanistan after the transition process at the "Chicago Summit" in 2012, and it was extended in the "NATO Summit" in Warsaw in July, 2016, the RSM sustained until the end of 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nation Security Council, "Resolution 1386 (2001)", (December 20, 2001), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/708/55/PDF/N0170855.pdf?OpenElement>.

Concurrent with the inception of RSM and the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan post-2014, the U.S.-led peace talks with Taliban have begun. In contrast to President George Bush's tough stance on the Taliban, the Obama administration has adopted a flexible approach to the Taliban. Along with the counterinsurgency strategy, the door to negotiation has been kept open; in order to facilitate the reconciliation and peace process an office was opened for Taliban in the Doha in 2013.

The U.S.-Taliban peace talks have stepped up after Donald Trump assumed office in 2017, as he promised during his presidential campaign that he would end America's longest war in Afghanistan. The Trump administration has appointed Zalmay Khalilzad as the US' Special Representative for Afghanistan in order to take more practical steps toward a peace deal with the Taliban. The U.S.-Taliban direct talks began in 2018 and finally ended in 2020 with the peace agreement. In accordance with the peace agreement, and with the Taliban's commitment that no terrorist organization including Al-Qaida, will be allowed to attack the U.S. and its allies from Afghanistan, the United States and its allies would withdraw all their troops from Afghanistan until May, 2021, but the troops' complete withdrawal is postponed until September 11, 2021. The decision came after Joe Biden took office and called a policy review and has decided to withdraw all the remaining troops from Afghanistan in September, the reason of postponement of troops has been articulated as the logistic and technical issues. But the early the hasty withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan led to early collapse of Afghan government.

### **1.1. RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The U.S. and NATO ended their longest war in Afghanistan by withdrawing their all troops in August, 2021. The United States' former President George W. Bush has declared war in response to September 11, 2001 attacks on Al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime, the Bush's "War on Terror" strategy resulted in decisive victory in result the Taliban regime collapsed within a few weeks. Following the collapse of Taliban regime, the U.S. and International community sought to form a new government based on the Bonn political agreement. The U.S. and NATO allies deployed its troops in Afghanistan in order to support a new government in Kabul and prevent the

return of Al-Qaeda and Taliban, and to protect liberal democratic values and human rights.

At the Tokyo conference on Afghanistan in 2002, the donor countries pledged \$4.5 billion in aid for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The pledged fund as the humanitarian and development fund spent under the state-building initiative program. The dysfunctional government institutions and bureaucracy as well as security institutions have gradually started functioning. Millions of Afghans voted for their preferred candidate in the 2004 presidential election and the 2005 parliamentary election, putting democracy into practice. Millions of girls and boys made their way to schools and universities. But situation gradually deteriorated after 2007, when the Taliban soon regrouped and declared the war against U.S. and allies as well the Afghan government.

The Taliban rebellion was labeled as an “insurgency” and to suppress the insurgency, counterinsurgency (COIN) measures were implemented as part of the Coalition troops’ war strategy in Afghanistan from 2009-2014. As part of Obama’s COIN strategy, 30,000 additional American troops were deployed in Afghanistan, brought the total number of U.S. and NATO troops to 130,000 by the end of 2012. From 2009 to 2012, Coalition troops and Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) took part in anti-insurgency operation. The COIN strategy on the ground resulted in short-term combat achievements, but the Taliban were still not defeated, and U.S. and its allies felt their quick return. During Chicago summit in 2012 Obama cited, “the risks are still high the Taliban remained a robust enemy and the NATO’s achievements on the ground were fragile”.<sup>2</sup>

Since the U.S. and NATO ended their combat mission in Afghanistan in 2014, the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated. In particular, after the transition of security and operational responsibilities to ANDSF, the conflict has escalated. However, ANDSF launched an offensive operation against Taliban with the support of the Coalition force’s air force. Despite the offensive strategy, the conflict zone has expanded throughout the country day by day. The ANDSF’s casualties were higher than ever before with a total death toll around 30,000 between

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<sup>2</sup> The White House, “Remarks by the President at NATO Press Conference”, (May 21, 2012). <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/21/remarks-president-nato-press-conference>

2014 and 2018, according to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani,<sup>3</sup> and by the 2021 the death toll had raised to 69,000. According to the Long War journal, “the Afghan government had controlled over 143 of Afghanistan’s 407 districts with 15 million populations in 2018. On the other hand, the Taliban had controls over 52 districts with a population of 3 million people; the remaining 201 districts reported as contested between Afghan Government and Taliban.<sup>4</sup> Since the U.S.-Taliban reached a peace agreement in 2020, the conflict between the Taliban and Afghan government escalated dramatically, more than 100 districts previously under the control of government being seized by Taliban.

The political instability social disorder ethnic issues increased post-2014. Some Afghans were optimistic about formation of National Government led by Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, but their unending squabble over the power sharing agreement exacerbated internal divisions, ethnic tensions, and severely undermined the legitimacy of government. On the other hand, the Taliban has not only become more powerful on the battlefield, but they also established political-diplomatic relations with regional powers and gained a political identity. Since the Taliban established a political office in Doha in 2013, they have pledged many of diplomatic manures to regional countries including; Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.<sup>5</sup>

After two decades of the longest and costly war, the U.S. and NATO left Afghanistan to the Taliban, regardless of any intra-Afghan political resolution. The Afghan war cost the U.S. around \$2 trillion and 240,000 lives in total, including 2,442 US troops killed and 20,666 wounded, 3,846 US contractors killed, around 1,144, allies troops killed, between 66,000 to 69,000 Afghan National Security forces killed, and from 2001-2021, 47,245 Afghan civilians were killed and 72,334 civilians

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<sup>3</sup> DW.com, “Afghanistan: Shomari Talafat dar meyan neruhayi emeniyeti beshtar az An Ast ky Tasaver meshod , Afghanistan: the toll of Afghan forces is more than that which was imagined”. (Last retrieved, November 18, 2018), <https://www.dw.com/fa-af>

<sup>4</sup> Bill Roggio & Alexandra Gutowski, “Mapping Taliban Control in Afghanistan”, FDD’s Long War Journal, (last retrieved, 2018), <https://www.longwarjournal.org/mapping-taliban-control-in-afghanistan>

<sup>5</sup> Ben Farmer, “Taliban join Moscow talks to kick start Afghanistan negotiations”, The Telegraph, (last retrieved November 9, 2018), <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/11/09/taliban-join-moscow-talks-kick-start-afghanistan-negotiations/>

were injured including children and women. Between the same period 51,191 opposition fighters mostly Taliban were killed.<sup>6</sup>

The question that arises is what was the purpose of the high cost, bloodshed, and wasted funds that have been spent over the last 20-years? If the answer is that the U.S. and its allies invaded Afghanistan in order to eliminate al-Qaeda and oust the Taliban regime that hosted Osama Bin Laden, as well as to establish a democratic government, and protect human rights, particularly women's rights, to prevent Afghanistan from return back as the safe haven for al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.

Is the Al-Qaeda annihilated? Is the Taliban's returning averted? The most recent UN Security Council report, released on February 21, 2021 warned that the Taliban and al-Qaida ties remains unbroken.<sup>7</sup> In December 2020, the Afghan government claimed the killing of a key al-Qaida figure in Ghazni province, which is controlled by the Taliban.<sup>8</sup> Over the last two decades not only has the Taliban and Haqqani network made a successful comeback, but also ISIL has gained a foothold in Afghanistan too.

The U.S.-Taliban peace agreement signed in June 2020 as the last hope for stability, was supposed to pave the way for intra-Afghan dialogue, a reduction in violence, and a comprehensive ceasefire, but contrary to expectations, the hasty peace deal has strengthened Taliban morale on the battlefield and given them political prestige, and more leverage on negotiating table which obviously undermined the Intra-Afghan peace process. The Taliban has openly violated the peace agreement by launching attacks on the districts and provinces, resulting in unprecedented levels of violence. The Intra-Afghan talks have stalled due to the Taliban's preoccupation military victory following the withdrawal of foreign troops'. And the Taliban regained their strategic momentum. On the other hand, the Afghan

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<sup>6</sup> Brown University, "U.S Costs to date for the war in Afghanistan, in \$ Billions, 2001-2021", Brown University Costs of War project Archived, (April 2021).

<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/figures/2021/human-and-budgetary-costs-date-us-war-afghanistan-2001-2021>

<sup>7</sup> UN Security Council, Twenty-seventh report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL ( Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities", S/2021/68, ( February 3, 2021).

<https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/S/2021/68>

<sup>8</sup> Ariana News, "NDS claims to have killed key al-Qaeda leader in Ghazni Province", <https://ariananews.af/nds-claims-to-have-killed-key-al-qaeda-leader-in-ghazni-province/>, ( October 25, 2020)

government's front was far too fragmented to win the war without foreign support; it was struggling between collapse and survival. After the U.S.-Taliban peace deal, the security situation in Afghanistan has gone from bad to worse; the political instability, immigration, unemployment, and poverty increased. By the July 2021 that U.S. troops were still in Afghanistan the Taliban claimed almost 85 % control over the rural area.<sup>9</sup> And by August 15 Afghanistan fully fell to Taliban

The condition has rigid objections over the unsatisfactory outcome of coalition forces strategies in Afghanistan, a hasty peace deal and an irresponsible withdrawal, despite the U.S. and NATO awareness of the enormous risk that Afghanistan will fall into the hands of Taliban, but still withdraw its troops.

## **1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

After 20 years of military involvement and billions of dollars spent, hundreds of thousands lives lost, the decisive victory gave way to the decisive loss. The U.S. and its allies left Afghanistan after two decades of war, as they already predicted the unpleasant consequences. The U.S. and allies were watching a democracy boat sinking into river of autocracy. There are many critical questions regarding to U.S. and allies' invasion of Afghanistan and its irresponsible withdrawal, but this thesis will only address the following questions.

In order to avoid the intricacy of this thesis and make a meaningful and understandable paper, it's necessary to specify the research questions. In this thesis, our research data collection and analysis will be centered on the three main questions consisting of (A) why has the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated after 2014? (B) Why has political instability increased post-2014 in Afghanistan? (C) Why has the U.S.-Taliban peace deal failed to bring durable peace to Afghanistan? In order to provide more information to answer the main questions, the sub-questions in this research are as follows: (a) why has the Afghanistan turned into a quagmire to U.S. and NATO? Since the U.S.-Taliban peace deal the security situation has gone from bad to worse and the violence dramatically increased. (b) Why did the U.S. and

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<sup>9</sup> Reuters, "Taliban say they control 85% of Afghanistan, humanitarian concerns mount", <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/militia-commanders-rush-aid-afghan-forces-against-taliban-2021-07-09/>, (last retrieved, July 10, 2021),

NATO fail to achieve their favorable and long-term goals in Afghanistan? To address these questions, it requires a comprehensive review of the US-led military intervention, the U.S.'s war strategy and policy toward Afghanistan as well as consideration of U.S. and NATO post-2014 non-combat Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, and the Peace deal between U.S.-Taliban.

### **1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The U.S. and its allies' NATO military intervention of Afghanistan resulted in an explicit victory over the al-Qaida and Taliban regime, but the security situation deteriorated over time, particularly during Obama's term from 2009 to the end of 2016, and it has further worsened between 2016 and 2021 under Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Several changes occurred in U.S. policy toward Afghanistan during this period including a shift from counterterrorism to counter-insurgency strategy, the conversion of combat strategy to non-combat and treating the Taliban as "bad to good". Over the last two decades, of U.S. involvement in the Afghan its "decisive victory" empties its place to a "decisive loss". The purpose of this thesis is to address the readers' concerns regarding insecurity and instability post-2014 in Afghanistan. The overall goal of this thesis is to find the reasons behind the failure of the U.S. and its allies in Afghanistan by examining three dimensions: American foreign policy toward Afghanistan from Obama to Biden, the regional factors behind instability in Afghanistan, and domestic factors and reconciliation efforts.

### **1.4. THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH**

The western coalition led by the U.S. militarily intervened in Afghanistan in response to al-Qaeda's 9/11 attacks on the U.S. and ousted the Taliban regime. The U.S. and its allies were involved in state-building efforts in Afghanistan following the collapse the Taliban regime, and formed a government based on western governance values. Abundant money flowed into Afghanistan, and the country's paralyzed institutions have started to function and the dying wishes of war-weary Afghans vivid for better future. But not so long ago, the situation turned in the opposite direction, the security situation deteriorated, and socio-political instability increased, and Afghanistan's dark chapter reopened. In this paper, the focus is on the

cases and consequences of Afghan government's collapse. Furthermore, the U.S. and its NATO allies' involvement in Afghanistan and the deterioration of security situation have resulted in a tragic end. This paper will address readers' concerns regarding insecurity, political instability, and the failure of political settlement in post-2014 Afghanistan, as well as the incapability of U.S. and its allies and Afghan government to preserve their two decades achievements in Afghanistan.

## **1.5. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The consecutive incidents in Afghanistan in last four decades, including political and social changes, foreign interventions, regime collapse, conflicts, and fragile security have turned this country into an available resource of research for researchers, scholars, and students. Since the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1978, many studies have been conducted, including books, PhD dissertations, and research projects. These academic and non-academic sources have been covering multiple dimensions including social cultural, political, and economic, history, and geography issues and events. By categorizing the events and variables into chronological order before 2001 and post-2001 phases will allow us to concentrate on a specific time period.

Following the United States' invasion of Afghanistan, numerous research studies on the United States' involvement in Afghanistan have been conducted under various titles and from different perspectives. It includes depended and undefended research, such as academic works; books, dissertations, articles, reports, surveys and investigation. And also the non-academic works such as individual research, organizational research, government related investigated or inspecting researches. The incorporation of these variables into qualitative and quantitative research formats provide an enrich literature bank for work on U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. The existed literature on topic cover the broad field including the war on terror, state-building efforts and humanitarian operations in Afghanistan, insurgency and counterinsurgency, U.S. policy toward Afghanistan.

Aaron B. O'Connell a lieutenant Colonel served in U.S. army in Afghanistan in his book dubbed, "Our Latest Longest War: Losing Hearts and Minds in Afghanistan", focused on the many dimensions of U.S. war in Afghanistan between

2001 to 2014 in critical evaluation. He has point out the U. S's role in world by using military power to promote its values overseas including Afghanistan. O'Connell welly explained the functioning role of each U.S. organizations and institutions that have run the U.S.'s war machine in Afghanistan and the approach and beliefs which motivate and guided these institutions. The consensus on his axis suggests, that "culture were the main factors to the war's outcomes and the policy of politician and military leaders has shaped the directions of war".<sup>10</sup> In O'Connell's remarks the cultural differences and incompatibility impacted the relations between U.S. and Afghans which triggered the U.S.'s and its ally's failure to adopt the western norms and values of governance on Afghans to reduces Taliban influence in rural areas.

On the failed states, Ashraf Ghani the ex-president of Afghanistan and Clare Lockhart, their book, "Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured world", proposed several theory and hypothesis which cover many dimensions. The vital is the international response to state-building in failed state. Ghani and Lockhart, point out the problem in international response to state failure in critical manner. The critics are on the inability of international community in entirely diagnosing the reality on ground as well the lack of cooperation on organizational level and internal actors (Afghan elites). The authors suggest a multifunctional framework for state-building in failed state consist of "strategic framework for defining the functions of state, forming the organizational structures, and aligning actors to the goals of state building".<sup>11</sup>

The U.S. futile spending in Afghanistan in the framework of state-building is most discussable and critical issue for American. During 20-years of involvement in Afghanistan only the U.S. spent \$145 billion for rebuilding security intuitions, government and reconstruction of the country. A serious of inspecting and investigated reports by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) indicates the U.S. efforts in reconstruction of Afghanistan. Due to the authenticity of sources it provides a reach literature on U.S.'s state-building effort in Afghanistan. While reviewing this type of academic works, I noticed the following

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<sup>10</sup> Aaron B. O'Connell, (Ed.) Our Latest Longest War: Losing Heart and Mind in Afghanistan, U.S., University of Chicago Press, Pp. 1-2

<sup>11</sup> Ashraf Ghani Clare Lockhart, Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World, New York, Oxford University Press, P.7

gaps: (1) Western perspectives shape most ideas and interpretations of the United States and its allies' military involvement in Afghanistan, while domestic reality on the ground and Afghan resources is given less role. (2) The majority of this works was completed prior to the US-Taliban peace deal and the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. While the security situation deteriorated and the violence increased dramatically post-2014. The worsen security situation is the result of multiple factors including the U.S.'s failure in the Afghan war, the regional factors and the increasing insurgency. In particular, since the U.S.-Taliban deal in 2020, Afghanistan was almost on the verge of collapse into Taliban hands which finally fell by August 2021, simultaneously with the withdrawal of U.S. and its allies from Afghanistan. The most studies have been relying on single or not inclusive factors whereas multiple factors contributed to increasing insecurity, and collapse of Afghan government in hand of Taliban. In this study, I tried to analyze the update contents including, local media sources, books, articles, journals, reports, and survey and official documents and draw the conclusion. As Pashto and Dari are Afghanistan's official languages, therefore the Afghan sources are mostly available in Pashtu/Dari; being fluent in both languages helped me in gathering more accurate and less available data.

## **1.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodology, as a specific procedure for collecting and analyzing data, is an important part of a research. There are various types of research methods that apply to the research process with the aim of producing a reliable result. Since the field of science is extremely wider, with that extent, different scientific methods have been developed by scholars in order to be applied in conducting research and using these methods as the framework for examining the variables and obtaining an validate and reliable outcome. Therefore, prior of planning the method for a research there are two key decisions which are important to be make it.<sup>12</sup> (a) data collection; as the methods depend on the type of data which has to be collected for the research question, so it is necessary to defined the type of data which is need to answer the research questions. For instant, are the data textual-based or in numerical format? Or

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<sup>12</sup> Scriber, "An introduction to research methods" <https://www.scribbr.com/category/methodology/>

is its primary data or secondary? Is it descriptive or experimental type of research?  
(b) The second step to be taken is the way to analyze the data, which depend on the type of data and the method which has to be applied, such as qualitative or quantitative.

Before specifying the research, method which is applied to this paper, it's important to provide information about the type of study and the sort of questions developed in this paper. In general, social research serves many purposes. But the most common and useful purposes are exploration, description, and explanation, although each given study done in the framework of one of these platforms.<sup>13</sup> This can be also describing as the dimension of research too, although a conducted study can have more than one of this purpose. Scholars have developed each of the aforementioned discipline as a research platform. Giving a defining to each research platform will help us to understand the nature our study and will contribute to choose a relevant research approach to our paper.

***Descriptive Research:*** present a picture of specific details of a situation, events, social setting, or relationship.<sup>14</sup> It describes and interprets “what is”, it focuses on conditions or relationship that exists; practices that prevails: beliefs, point of view or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on.<sup>15</sup> In descriptive research a researcher observes and then describes what was observed, the accuracy and precision is important part of descriptive approach.<sup>16</sup> It answers the questions *what, where, how, when*, by exploring or explaining new issues. Its main goal is providing an accurate profile of a group, describing a process and mechanism, or relationship, give a verbal or numerical picture, and find information to stimulate new explanations. According to Lawrence, “In descriptive research the data-gathering method is based mostly on surveys, field research, content analysis, and historical-comparative research.” Descriptive research is a good choice when the research goal is to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends and categories, it is

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<sup>13</sup> Earl Babbie, the practice of Social Research, USA, Wadsworth CENAGE Learning, 2010, (12<sup>th</sup> Ed), P. 92

<sup>14</sup> W. Lawrence Neuman, Social Research Method Qualitative and Quantities approach, USA, Allyn & Bacon, 1997, p.20

<sup>15</sup> Arvind Kumar, Research Methodology in social Science, New Delhi, Sarup & Sons, 2002, Pp.31-32

<sup>16</sup> Babbie, *ibid*, p.93

also useful when not much is explored about the topic, problem.<sup>17</sup> According to McCombes, “a descriptive research is defined as a type of quantitative research, though qualitative research can also be used for descriptive purpose”.

***Exploratory Research:*** In simple words the exploratory research aim is to explore or discover something new that not much know about it before, or if the researchers had written little on it. According to Richard Swedberg, “exploratory studies are a type of exploratory research tends to fall into two categories: those that make a tentative first analysis of a new topic and those that propose new ideas or generate new hypothesis on an old topic”.<sup>18</sup> The exploratory research is also good for more persistent phenomena, it typical conduct for three goals; (a) to stratify the researcher’s inner desire to know more about something, (b) to examine the feasibility of undertaking more extensive study, and to (c) develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study.<sup>19</sup> Exploratory research goal is to: (1) become familiar with the basic facts, people, and concerns involved, (2) develop a well-grounded mental picture of what is occurring, (3) generate many ideas and develop tentative theories and conjectures, (4) determine the possibility of doing additional research, and to develop the pathway for future research on topic.<sup>20</sup> In dealing with collecting data in exploratory research there are many methods available, but researcher frequently use qualitative method for data collecting it includes observations, survey, interview, focus group, and literature review.<sup>21</sup> The mean characteristic of exploratory research is that the availability of early relevant information on the topic is very limit; it has no prior defined structure, it’s flexible and scattered.<sup>22</sup>

***Explanatory Research:*** is an approach focuses on the occurrence of something and aims to demonstrate the root cause for certain situation, and it fills the gap of missing information.<sup>23</sup> In order words, when there is an already existed

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<sup>17</sup> McCombes, Ibid, <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/descriptive-research/>

<sup>18</sup> Colin Elman, John Gerring, James Mahoney (Ed.) The production of Knowledge: Enhancing Progress in Social Science: “*Discovery*”, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2020, P.18

<sup>19</sup> Babbie, Ibid, P.92

<sup>20</sup> Lawrence, ibid, P.20

<sup>21</sup> Lawrence. Ibid, p.19

<sup>22</sup> Formplus Blog, “Exploratory Research: What is its Method & Examples?”, <https://www.formpl.us/blog/exploratory-research>

<sup>23</sup> Indeed Editorial Team, “A Guide To Understanding Explanatory Research”, Indeed’, (June 24, 2021), <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/explanatory-research>

phenomena and description is available on it, and the investigator already know about it, but not has too much details and the “why” question arise in his mind, so the inner curiosity to know “why” and to give an explanation is explanatory research.<sup>24</sup> The descriptive research answer questions of what, where, when, and how, and the explanatory questions is why. It is type of research that focuses on explaining the aspects of study in deep manner. The goals of explanatory research are: (1) to determine the accuracy of a principle or theory, (2) to increase understanding about an underlining trend, (3) to link different issues or topics under a common general statement, (4) to find out which competing explanation is better.<sup>25</sup> The main characteristics of explanatory research is described as follow; it does not provide conclusive results but shed lights on “why” and “how” problem.

**Table 1.1:** The Goals of (Descriptive, Exploratory, and Explanatory Researches)

Descriptive Research	Exploratory Research	Explanatory Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lay out an exact account of group, subject.</li> <li>• Express a trend, mechanism, or relationship.</li> <li>• Give a verbal or numerical illustration (e.g., percentage)</li> <li>• Give primary background information or context.</li> <li>• Create a set of categories or classify types.</li> <li>• Clarify a string, set of stages or steps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become familiar with the basic facts, people, and concerns involved.</li> <li>• Form a solid mental picture of what is occurring.</li> <li>• Comes up with a lot of concept and develop tentative theories and assumptions.</li> <li>• Formulate questions and refines issues for more systematic inquiry.</li> <li>• Create techniques and a research plan for the future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the accuracy of a principle or theory.</li> <li>• Find out which competing explanation is better.</li> <li>• Link different issues or topics under a common general statement.</li> <li>• Build an elaborate a theory so it becomes more complete.</li> <li>• Extend a theory or principle into new areas or issues.</li> <li>• Provide evidence to support or refute an explanation or prediction.</li> </ul>

Source: W. Lawrence Nueman, Social Research Method Qualitative and Quantities approach, USA, Allyn & Bacon, 1997

Since three templates of research are components of social science or basic research therefore it’s not free of similarities in purposes, but still each follow an alternative

<sup>24</sup> Lawrence ibid, p. 20

<sup>25</sup> Lawrence, ibid, p. 21

way and method in discovering a social reality or phenomena. According to Lawrence, “Descriptive and exploratory research have many similarities, they blur together in practice, on the other hand, the explanatory research build on exploratory and descriptive research and goes on to identify the reason something occur”. The below table which described the key characteristics of three research templates will help us to well understand the differences and similarities of each of.

**Table 1.2:** Key Characteristic of Exploratory, Descriptive and Explanatory Research.

Research process template	Exploratory Research	Descriptive Research	Explanatory Research
Nature of Research Questions	General and provisional, (what, where, when, how)	Fairly specific and largely definitive Focus on (who, how) questions	Highly specific and definitive usually a hypothesis, focus on “why” questions
Research Design	Flexibly overlapping and emergent.	Structured sequential and largely predetermined	Highly structured sequentially and predetermined
Data Collection	Usually qualitative	Usually quantitative but may include qualitative	Usually Qualitative
Research theory	Seek to build theory	Seek to develop or elaborate theory	Seek to test develop theory

Source: Julius Sim, Chris Wright, Research in Health Care: Concepts, Designs and Method, UK, Nelson Thornes Ltd, 2002

The purpose of giving a light description on each research template is to find out an appropriate research design in which to present this paper. In above chart the first part as process of research is "nature of question", so it will be helpful that initially identify the research questions of this paper. Alan Bryman categorized the open-ended research questions into six category, which are described as follow; (a) predicting a result (does *y* occur under circumstances of *a* and *b*), (b) explaining causes and consequences of phenomenon (is *y* affected by *x* or is *y* a consequence of *x*?), (c) evaluating a phenomenon; c) describing a phenomenon; (d) developing good practice; e) empowerment.<sup>26</sup> Based on this classification the types of questions in this paper are explaining causes and consequences of phenomenon. The research

<sup>26</sup> Alan Bryman, Social Research Method, UK, Oxford University Press, 2016, P.7

questions are including; (A) Why has the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated after 2014? (B) Why has the political instability increased post-2014 in Afghanistan? (C) Why has the U.S.-Taliban peace deal failed to bring durable peace to Afghanistan? (a) Why has the Afghanistan turned into a quagmire to U.S. and NATO? (b) Why have the U.S. and NATO failed to achieve their favorable and long-term goals in Afghanistan? In accordance to Bryman classification our research questions are explaining the causes and consequence of insecurity, and political instability, and failure of the peace talks.

Based on the type of research questions in this paper the explanatory research well defined this paper. As the exploratory research aims to explore the main aspects of an “under-researched problem”, while explanatory type of research is defined to describe the cause and consequences of a “well-defined problem”.<sup>27</sup> In other words, exploratory research is conducted to find out about a problem whose nature is unclear, and such type of research is usually takes place when the problem is at its initial stage and need exploration.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, explanatory research seeks to answer the “Why” questions and it tries to find out the cases and effects of phenomenon.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand the descriptive research describes the accurate and specific details of an event, situation, social setting, it deals with question “How”. Since the all three types of research is has shared characteristics, the argument herein is not to reject descriptive and exploratory types of research, the purpose is to define the most relevant type of research. Accordingly, the explanatory type of research is appropriate and most relevant to the types of questions chosen in this paper, because the problem is defined, the aim is not to conduct initial research on a newly identified issue, herein the cases and consequences of problem are addressed, in this context, the explanatory research defined well this paper.

***Theoretical Approach:*** Since this paper has the theoretical framework, it’s important to define the suitable research theory. As there are two types of reasoning approaches, including “inductive” and “deductive” reasoning, the main difference between these two is that the inductive approach aims at developing a theory; it

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<sup>27</sup> Shona McCombes, The main types of research compared, Scribbr, ( last revised, August 13, 2021), <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/types-of-research/>

<sup>28</sup> QuestionPro, “Exploratory Research: Definition and Characteristic” [https://www.questionpro.com/blog/exploratory-research/#Exploratory\\_research\\_Definition](https://www.questionpro.com/blog/exploratory-research/#Exploratory_research_Definition)

<sup>29</sup> Valerie Sheppard, Research Methods for the Social Sciences: An Introduction, p.59

moves from specific observations to broad generalizing, this approach applied on topic when there is very limit or no literature existed on the topic.<sup>30</sup> The exploratory research is dealing with developing a theory. While the deductive approach aims at testing an existing theory in order to develop a hypothesis. While fulfilling the deductive research, there should be an existed theoretical framework within which the study must take place. The deductive research approach includes of four steps; (a) begin with an established theory; (b) draw up a hypothesis based on existing theory; (c) collect data to examine the hypothesis; (d) analyze the result.<sup>31</sup> The Theoretical framework of this paper is based on deductive research theory, (failed state theory) which involves the testing of data in an already developed theory.

**Data Collecting Method:** Another part of research which is very important is choosing the method for collecting information to answer your research questions. In general, in social science research the data is collecting and analyzing in the context of qualitative and quantitative methods. Since both qualitative and quantitative are not only a data collection approaches, but a research method themselves, which cover a multiple element of a research. However, the qualitative and quantitative methods of research are distinct in many respects, but in other ways they are the complementary of each other. Many researchers combine both methods while collecting data which called “mixed approach” the purpose of these two approaches here is to choose one as the framework for collecting and analyzing the data. The quantitative research approach is sampled as method which focuses on numbers and statistics, variable, reliability, scales, and the data collection in quantitative method is mostly best in experiments, tests, or survey, while the qualitative research in sample terms deals with words, and their meaning, and also it provides complex textual description about an issue.<sup>32</sup> The common data collection techniques are observation, focus groups interviews, exist data (secondary data). In explanatory research the data collecting techniques are based on qualitative method and which use primary and secondary data to answer the questions. Since the type of data used in this paper is mostly based on the secondary data, including literature review; books, article, and

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<sup>30</sup> Raimo, Streefkerk, “Inductive vs. deductive reasoning”, Scribbr, <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/inductive-deductive-reasoning/> ( Revised on November 11,2019)

<sup>31</sup> Streefkerk, *ibid*, <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/inductive-deductive-reasoning/>

<sup>32</sup> McCombes, *ibid*, <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/types-of-research/>

official documents, internet-based sources and to a limited extent the primary data, which includes authentic data from government official archives. Therefore, the qualitative data collecting method is applied to paper.

**Data Analysis:** After the data collection, the data analysis is a very important part of the research process. As the quantitative data analysis focuses on the examination and interpretation of numerical data to present value and variable. While the data in qualitative research is in the form of text, written, words and phrase, it is analyzed with the context of qualitative data analysis method. “The qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of variables and visual material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it”.<sup>33</sup> Qualitative data analysis can be conducted through three steps; “(1) developing and applying codes, a code can be word or short phrase that presents an idea or theme and explains events, behaviors, activities; (2), identifying themes, patterns and relationships; analytical and critical thinking skills are significant in data analysis in qualitative studies; and (3) summarizing the data in this part, the research findings need to be linked to hypotheses or research aims and objectives.”<sup>34</sup> There are several types of data analysis approaches in qualitative data analyzing methods that serve different purposes, but the most common type of qualitative data analysis approach consist of four, which include of:

**I. Narrative Analysis:** this approach is used to examine content from interviews, field observations, and surveys; it finds the answers for the questions in people’s stories and life experiences. it mostly deals with primary qualitative data. There are different impressions from the narrative approach in social science, but in general, narratively could be in acoustic, visual or textual format. It all carries on the personal experiences of individual and groups of life, relationships, and all social activity.<sup>35</sup>

**II. Discourse analysis;** examines human interactions, it also analyzes the social context in which the researcher and respondent talks.

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<sup>33</sup> Uwe Fick, (edited), The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data analysis, SAGE Publications, December, 2013, P.11

<sup>34</sup> Business Research Methodology, “Qualitative Data Analysis”, <https://research-methodology.net/research-methods/data-analysis/qualitative-data-analysis/>

<sup>35</sup> James A. Holstein, Jaber F. Gubrium, Varieties of Narrative Analysis, SAGE publication, 2012, p.1

**III. Thematic Analysis:** is the study of patterns of meaning or analyzing the themes in your data set to describe the meaning. The thematic analysis approach in qualitative method is used when there is a large body of data and the researcher wants to take the necessary data. This analysis method is also useful when looking for subjective information such as an individual's or group's experiences, views and opinions. The data is mostly derived from surveys, interviews, and audio sources".<sup>36</sup>

**V. Qualitative Content Analysis:** examines recorded human communication, such as text data, in different forms.<sup>37</sup> Qualitative content analysis is one of numerous research methods used to analyze text data; it is the most commonly used methods to analyze qualitative data, such as text, pictures, visual items, verbal contents.<sup>38</sup> The qualitative content analysis focuses on the characteristics of language as communication, with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text. The text data might be in verbal, print, or electronic formats and might have been obtained from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, or print content such as articles, books, or manuals.<sup>39</sup> The content analysis investigates the literature; visual and audioable contents both without directly extracting data from participants or directly getting from participants. In other words, with content analysis, you can simply analyses the data that they have already produced, this data could be in many formats.<sup>40</sup> There are several approaches to content analysis in qualitative data analysis, including conceptual, relational, and direct content analysis. (a) Conceptual content analysis focuses on the number of times a concept occurs in a set of data and it generally focuses on explicit data.<sup>41</sup> (b) Relational content analysis; assesses the relationships between different concepts, as well as how they are concentrated, and the context in which they appear.<sup>42</sup> (c) Directed content analysis approach applied to a research, while there is already a theory or prior research exists on a phenomenon, but it is

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<sup>36</sup> Jenna Crosley "what (Exactly) is Thematic Analysis?", CradCoach, (last retrieved, April, 2021), <https://gradcoach.com/what-is-thematic-analysis/>

<sup>37</sup> Babbies, *ibid*, P. 333

<sup>38</sup> Human of data, "Your Guid to Qualtitative and Quantitative Data Analysis mehtod", ( last retrived, September 5, 2018), <https://humansofdata.atlan.com/2018/09/qualitative-quantitative-data-analysis-methods/>

<sup>39</sup> Hsiu-Fang Hsieh, Sarah E Shannon, "Three Approach to Qualitative Content Analysis", *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9); 1278

<sup>40</sup> Jenna Crosley, Eunice Rautenbach, "What (Exactly) Is Qualitative Content Analysis?", GradCoach, (last retrieved, February, 2021), <https://gradcoach.com/qualitative-content-analysis/>

<sup>41</sup> Jenna Crosley, Eunice Rautenbach, *ibid*, <https://gradcoach.com/qualitative-content-analysis/>

<sup>42</sup> Jennah Crosley Eunice Ruatebach *ibid*, <https://gradcoach.com/qualitative-content-analysis/>

incomplete or needs more description on the subject. In this case, the researcher would use the directed approach to content analysis. This type of approach is called directed content analysis, and its goal is to validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or a theory.<sup>43</sup>

As the data generally is divided into two types; quantitative and qualitative, so the data in this study is based on qualitative (secondary data), which is collected from textual contents. More specifically, the data used in this thesis are based on previously published data version, such as books, thesis and articles, journals, and internet-based data such as survey reports, investigation reports observation reports from national, regional and international organizations and institutions such as UN, Asia foundation, Euoprean Union, NATO, Afghanistan-based institutions, and media, news and data from U.S. government and non-governmental institutions archived such as “The white House, DOD, U.S. National Security Archives, State Department, SIGAR as well from the former Afghan government archives including, ARG, Foreign Ministry, Interior Ministry and non-profit independent entities”. Being fluent in both Pashto and Dari as official languages in Afghanistan made it easy to have access to Afghanistan based data resources. Since there are several types of data analysis approaches in qualitative data analysis, which is explained above, it’s necessary to choose a more appropriate approach which could well define this thesis. Among the existing analysis approaches in qualitative data analysis methods, the content analysis approach fits as an appropriate data analysis approach for this study. Because, according to its conceptual meaning, the content analysis approach deals with textual, audio-visual data, and the data used in this thesis is textual data. As the content analysis has many data-analyzing approaches, the directed approach to content analysis as it applies to the research that analyzes the data in the context of an already existed theory. Since this study has a deductive theoretical framework, therefore the directed content analysis approach well-defined this study.

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<sup>43</sup> Hsiu-Fang Hsieh, Sarah E Shannon, *ibid*, P.1281

## **1.7. RESEARCH OUTLINE**

The structure of this thesis is divided into three sections and consists of 10 chapters in total. The first section covers the background studies, which are consist of four chapters; Chapter one includes the introduction to the thesis, and research question, and research problem, methodology, research outline. Chapter two explains theoretical framework and chapter three discusses Afghanistan's contemporary political history, particularly the political and security situation from Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, to the U.S. invasion in 2001, and its impact on never-ending war in Afghanistan. The geopolitics of Afghanistan and the geopolitical competition of international and regional actors in Afghanistan are the subject of Chapter 4.

The second section provides some answers to the thesis question, it consists of Chapters 5,6,7,8,9, in which Chapter five focus the U.S. military invasion of Afghanistan and Chapter six shed light on post-2001 Taliban's re-emergence. Respectively, Chapter seven cover Barak Obama's war strategy toward Afghanistan from 2009 to 2017, and the transition of security responsibility to Afghan government, and the downsizing of U.S. NATO troops and the security situation after the transition. Chapter eight provides an insider's view of the political transition in Afghanistan; it includes the establishment of the National Unity Government, the security and political instability. Chapter 10 examines Donald Trump's Afghanistan strategy from 2016 to 2020.

The third section of this thesis examines the U.S.-Taliban peace talks, the U.S. and its allies' troop withdrawal and the collapse of Afghan government to Taliban. This section included chapter nine, which dedicates itself to U.S.-led peacebuilding and political settlement efforts in Afghanistan as well as providing an insider's view of the U.S. approach toward the Taliban from the Bush administration to Joe Biden. It also covers the U.S.-Taliban deal and the intra-Afghan dialogue. The last part, which is Chapter ten, focus on Joe Biden's policy toward Afghanistan, and the complete pull out of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, and also Afghan government's collapse, and Afghanistan under the Taliban rule. The conclusion part draws the conclusion and offers findings of research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FAILED STATE

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

After Second World War (1939-1945) from the inception of decolonization until end of Cold War, dozens of independent nation-states emerged across the globe. At the time of the IWW (1914), there were fifty-five recognized national polities, which climbed to fifty-nine nations in 1919, and after the IIWW in 1950, the number reached to sixty-nine. After 10 years, when the United Nations established the Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24) in 1961, it granted independence to colonial countries and people across to Africa, Asia and Oceanic territories. With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the number of nations reached 191, and with the East Timor Independence in 2002, the total number of independent nations reached to 192.<sup>44</sup>

The emergence of new states appeared to be a as positive step toward the establishment of sovereign and independent states with fundamental rights of self-determination, and also as affirmative move toward nations' emancipation from colonial empires' genocides, cultural assimilation, ethic-cleaning, but concerns were raised when these newly emerged states did not meet the defined standard and characteristics of stable and developed state in the term of capacity, capability, and performance, Roberts Rotberg defined the developed and stable as follow:

*“The developed stable states are those states that have control over their territories and deliver a full range and high quality of political goods to their citizens, as well as provide high levels of security from political and criminal violence, guarantee political freedom and civil rights, and foster economic potential growth. The rule of law is supreme, social welfare is justly accessible to everyone, in general the defined states' governments are enviable heavens of peace and order”.*<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, from this definition, Max Weber defined a state as “preserving a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within its borders”. On the other

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<sup>44</sup> Robert I. Rotberg, (Ed), “Failed States, collapsed state, weak States: Causes and Indicator”, Wilson center, (January 2003) P. 2

<sup>45</sup> Rotberg, Ibid. P 4

hand, the states that lack the specified specification, or have not met the standard set by the International Organization's indicators and indexes. Such as in field of security, the economy, social and political environment are being fragile or its inability to fully provide the adequate services to its people, so these types of states were categories as the failed/ fragile/ weak/ states.

The failed/ fragile/ collapse states phenomenon as a threat to developing countries came to attention in the 1990s, but was not regarded seriously as a security threat until the 9/11 attacks. "The assault rapidly established a sense among the U.S. and other western policymakers, experts that a failed state served as both a breeding ground and a conduit for various international threats. Scholars, experts and government agencies have labeled these types of states as: weak state, fragile state, failing state, failed state, collapsed state, precarious state, and vulnerable state". Each of these concepts is defined differently, but in general they all share a number of interrelated characteristics and traits.

Among the other nations or states which have been characterized by scholars, organizations and agencies as fragile/ weak and failing state, Afghanistan is one of them that has been characterized as fragile or weak and failed state, due to its lack of strength, development, violent conflicts, poverty, lack of government legitimacy, extreme political corruption, ethnic division, transitional terrorism, etc. Due to the fact that weak and underdevelopment states share common characteristic, therefore to avoid confusion and choose a theoretical framework for this research, among others, the "failed state" can provide an appropriate context for analyzing and defining the situation in Afghanistan from U.S. military intervention to its exit.

## **2.2. HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The concepts of failed states, weak states and fragile states, as they are often common today and widely used in academic, diplomatic, and international relations arenas, are a new concept. The term "failed states" was first used by S.R. Ranter and G.B. Helman in 1993 in their article "Saving Failed States", which was first published in the winter 1992-1993 edition of Foreign Policy. They described failed States as "those which are entirely incapable of continuing itself as members of international community; the civil unrest, government failure, and economic hardship have

resulted in the emergence of a number of modern debellatio. Given Germany as an example after IWW, due to its internal chaotic nature this state descending into violence, political instability, conflict and abuse of its citizens' rights, by endangering its own citizens and threatening their neighbors through refugee flows".<sup>46</sup> According to Nick Grono, "the failed states have been with us since we have had a state-based international order.

After the September 11, 2001 event, the interests of policymakers in such states have increased.<sup>47</sup> Following the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush administration announced the "National Security Strategy of 2002", stating that "America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones". He pointed out Afghanistan under the Taliban rule, which harbored Osama Bin Laden, the man accused of the 9/11 attacks on US soil. followed by Richard Haass, the State Department's Director of policy planning statement, "The 9/11 assaults reminded us that weak states can pose a threat to our security just as much as the strong state do, by providing breeding grounds for extremism and havens for criminals, drug traffickers, and terrorist, such lawlessness and insecurity oversea can impact our security at home".<sup>48</sup>

The phenomenon of failed states as a threat to developed and stable countries, particularly western-nations has spread rapidly among scholars, policymakers, diplomats and media domestically and internationally. In 2003, The U.S.'s intelligence agency (CIA) recognized around fifty lawless zones around the world that were deemed ungoverned place, in order to minimize the risk of failing state, the United State founded an office named "Reconstruction and Stabilization" which has worked jointly with CIA to recognized the states at risk of collapse and take preventative measures in advance.<sup>49</sup> When the Bush Administration announced its 2006 national security strategy, the weak states, failed states were viewed as serious threat to America. As a preventative measure to counter the possible threats, the Bush administration declared a new policy named, "transformation diplomacy",

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<sup>46</sup> Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner, "Saving Failed States", Foreign Policy <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/06/15/saving-failed-states/> , (last retrieved, June 15, 2010),

<sup>47</sup> Nick Grono, "fragile States and Conflict", Crisis Group, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/fragile-states-and-conflict> , (last retrieved March 27, 2010)

<sup>48</sup> Stewart Patrick, *Weak Links Fragile States, Global Threats and International Security*, London, Oxford University Press, 2011, P. 4

<sup>49</sup> Patrick, *ibid*, P.4

which aimed to build and support the democratic and well-governed states in order to reduce the risk of state's failure and prevent threat to international security. In order to implement this policy, the "United States Agency for International Development" (USAID) adopted its own failed states Strategy, in which the states vulnerable to failure were considered as target.

The European Union also asserted in its 2003, security strategy that "state fragility/weak state and state failure constituted a major threat to European Union".<sup>50</sup> Similarly the regional and international organizations also viewed states fragility and states failure as the threat to the stability and security of their government and international systems. In 2006, UN member states adopted a resolution affirming the establishment of a peacebuilding commission to ensure that those states which emerged from conflict do not relapse once again as the failed state.<sup>51</sup> Not only restricted to governments, simultaneously the international organizations and think tanks, and non-profit organizations also pursued unstable states initiatives, and each of which developed and adopted its own platform for identifying failed states and coping mechanisms for state fragility and failure. The "Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development" (OECD), in corporation with World Bank, Country Policy and Institutional Assessment, Global Peace Index, Fund for Peace, all has been engaged in developing state failure indicators and focusing on states subjected to failure.

### **2.3. DEFINING FAILED STATE**

Due to the complexity and multi-dimensionality of term "state failure" there is no widely accepted definition of what constitute failed state; or in other words, there is no real consensus on the definition of failed state, there are various definitions used by different institutions and scholars. But overall in simple term the failed state/ fragile states/ weak state/ collapse state is described in opposition to the successful or stable State. The terms all used are demonstrating similar conditions of state failure, and the terms are used interchangeable. "The successful state exerts control over a defined territory and population, as well maintains diplomatic relations with other

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<sup>50</sup> Alvaro de Vasconcelos, *The European Security Strategy 2003-2008 Building on Common Interests*, European Union Institute for Security Studies, February, 2009, P. 12

<sup>51</sup> Patrick, *ibid*, P. 5

states, and exercise monopoly over legitimate violence within their territories and provides their citizens with an adequate supply of social goods”. Contrariwise failed states lose control over the tools of violence, and incapable maintaining peace and stability for its’ populations or controlling their territories. They are incapable of ensuring economic growth or an equal distribution of social goods. Failed states are frequently characterized by large economic disparities, warlordsim and violent resource rivalry.<sup>52</sup> Robert described, “Failed States as tense deeply conflicted, dangerous, and contested bitterly by warring factions”.<sup>53</sup> There are some definitions from different account on the term.

- ***International Monetary Fund (IMF)***: “the fragile/ failed states are the states whose government is unable to provide its population with basic services and security due to its institutional failure, weak governance, limited administrative capacity, violence, armed conflict, these characteristics undermining that state’s credibility, legitimacy and stability”.<sup>54</sup>
- ***European Union (EU)***: “fragility refer to situation where the social contract is breached as a result of the state’s inability or unwillingness to carry out its basic functions of implementing the rule of law, protecting human rights, insuring the security and safety of population, delivering public service and managing resources, ensuring the legitimate access to political power fairly, reducing poverty”.<sup>55</sup>
- ***United State Agency for International Development (USAID)***: “fragile states refer to a broad range of failing, failed; recovering states that are unable or unwilling to adequately assure the provision of security and basic services to significant portions of their populations and where legitimacy of the government is in question. Fragile states can be vulnerable to crisis, in crisis,

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<sup>52</sup> Rosa Ehrenreich, “Failed States, or the State as Failure?”, The University of Chicago, Volume 72, Number 4, Fall 2005, P.1160

<sup>53</sup> Robert, Ibid. P.5

<sup>54</sup> International Monetary Fund, “How to Design Tax Policy in Fragile States” August, 2019, P.19

<sup>55</sup> European Commission, “EU aid in fragile and conflict-affected countries”, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/ensuring-aid-effectiveness/eu-aid-fragile-and-conflict-affected-countries\\_en#challenges-for-aid-delivery](https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/ensuring-aid-effectiveness/eu-aid-fragile-and-conflict-affected-countries_en#challenges-for-aid-delivery)

or emerging from crisis. The crisis can take different forms such as violent conflict, food insecurity, political or economic crises”.<sup>56</sup>

- ***The Fund for Peace:*** “a state which (I) loss the physical control of its territory or a monopoly on the legitimate use of force; (II) The erosion of legitimate authority to make collective decisions; (III) an inability to provide reasonable public services; (V) the inability to interact with other states as a full member of the international community”.<sup>57</sup>

The term failed state/weak states employed particularly in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding, security, and has been widely used by various development agencies and organization to refer to the world’s poorest and most unstable countries that is unable to meet the given standard of developed state as well the failure of these countries to perform the required functions to meet citizens basic needs and expectations.<sup>58</sup> In other words, “failed/fragile states are frequently defined as those that are incapable of ensuring primary security and safety, upholding the rule of law and justice, or providing essential service and economic opportunities to their population”. As it mentioned, that there is not any single definition for fragile/ failed states, as the different scholars and entities and agency have their own definitions that are distinct yet gives the same idea in anatomy. Nadia F. Piffaretti analogized the concept state failure as the “looking into the Black Box, fragility/failure is broadly associated with evidence of structural increased risk of events with extreme consequence such as conflict violence, societal upheaval and human tragedy caused by the absence of state’s basic functions”.<sup>59</sup>

Steward F. and Brown G. defined the fragility or state failure as “country which is failing or at high risk of collapsing in three dimensions: (a) authority failure: the state lacks the authority to defend its inhabitants from many form violence; (b) capacity failure: the state inability to provide primary service to its citizens; (c)

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<sup>56</sup> Wade Warren, “USAID’s Approach to Fragile States Programing in Africa”, USAID, (February 22, 2006), [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/022206\\_african\\_fragile\\_states.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/022206_african_fragile_states.pdf), Pp.4-5

<sup>57</sup> The Fund for Peace, “ What Does State Fragility Means?”, <https://fragilestatesindex.org/frequently-asked-questions/what-does-state-fragility-mean/>

<sup>58</sup> Olivier Nay, “Fragile and failed states: Critical perspectives on conceptual hybrids”, *International Political Science Review* 34(3):326-341, June 2013, P. 2

<sup>59</sup> Piffaretti, Nadia F. “Elements for a Conceptual Model of Fragility” *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*, (October 30, 2014). P.1

legitimacy failures: the state lost its legitimacy across the country, only it has support among its beneficiary client not all people".<sup>60</sup> There are many description regarding state failure with different perspective, but the common feature among all literatures are explaining a state's capability, capacity and performance by considering; governance, economy, security, political and social dimensions. As the plasticity nature of concept, it enables to be wide analytical model for unstable governments.

The concept fragile/weak or failed states find its way to social science after Cold War, and attracted the attention of scholars, experts who attempted to use it as an analytical basis in political science, economy, and international relations, notably in development and security studies. The terms have been used as the scientific concepts and theoretical frameworks to describe and characterize the states in which state's institutions are fragile, contested and dysfunctional, as a result of civil conflicts, widespread poverty, terrorism, transnational criminal activities, natural disasters and health and environmental crisis.<sup>61</sup>

The academic and empirical literature on failed/weak, states aims to illuminate the distinct features of those countries which are incapable or reluctant to accomplish service to its citizens. It also addresses a variety of sceneries in which nations fail to handle security and governance issues within their borders. Scholars, institutions, and policymakers, focus on multiple factors and indicators as signs of state failure, including; the state's legitimacy, security, bureaucracy, economy and state's capability to control its territory. Olivier Nay divided the existed literature on fragile/failed states into two groups of approaches: the certain work focuses on institutional contexts and functions as mechanism for societal stabilization. This camp concentrates on the capacity of states to poster development, maintain national security, and contribute to international security. Their research agenda primarily motivated by the donor community's desire for improved assistant effectiveness and security responses within impoverished and insecure contexts. The second camp concentrate on causative variable such as political, economic, social and environmental determinates that contribute to state destabilization, fragmentation, collapse of state institutions as well as state fragility. This group highlights critical

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<sup>60</sup> Stewart, F. Brown G. "Fragile States" Center for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, Oxford, <https://gsdrc.org/document-library/fragile-states-crise-overview-3/>

<sup>61</sup> Nay, *ibid*, P.3

elements that are likely to weaken governmental institutions' capacity, authority, and legitimacy as the internal political structure such as poor bureaucratic performance, autocratic leadership, and corrupt elites, as well as the other serious socioeconomic challenges such as; civil conflicts, poverty, social inequalities, criminal activities, foreign interference.<sup>62</sup>

#### **2.4. THE CORE CASES AND CHARACTERISTIC OF STATE FAILURE**

While it is widely agreed that state failure is multi-cause and multi-dimensional phenomenon, and there is enormous literatures on state failure, state fragility and its collapse, but at broad sense, fragility and failure is the result of a dynamic interaction between internal factors such as (conflict, poverty, economic and structural conditions, weak institutions) and external factors including (international political economy, regional and global insecurity).<sup>63</sup> The fragility and state failure is solely associated to aforementioned factor; there has been increasing concerns in recent years regarding the other factors of states failure including, regional interference in states internal affairs, the foreign military intervention in other sovereign states. In order to narrow down the topic it's necessary to look for the core characteristics of fragile state. The preceding definitions imply that several variables contribute to state fragility and failure.

Robert Rotberg listed the failed state indicators as follow; "(a) civil wars characterized by persistent violence; (b) schism among communities; (c) loss of authority over sections of territory and lack of control over its borders, inability to provide security nations-wide security for all people, rebels threaten the residents of central cities by using different tactics; (d) the growth of criminal violence including gangs, arms, drug trafficking, the security institutions are weaken, for their protection citizens turn to warlords and other influential figures; (e) failed states are incapable of providing political goods to their population, their authority is more in service of warlords and other non-state actors; (f) the institutions in failed state flowed if it's just the executive functions, the legislative branch is ineffective the judiciary branch lacks independence; citizens lost trust on judicial system because its influenced by

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<sup>62</sup> Nay, Ibid, P. 4

<sup>63</sup> Claire Mcloughlin, " Topic Guide on Fragile states", Governance and Social Development Resource Center, March 2012, P.18

executive branch, the bureaucracy paralyzed, the military in failed states are often heavily politicized; (g) the economic opportunity are not same for all citizens, only the authority and those around the rulers are benefiting from economic sources; (h) corruption index in failed states is in its high peak; (i) it loses legitimacy, groups and ethnics seek for autonomous and looking for creating parallel government, citizen divided into clan groups and turning to local warlords and strongman”.<sup>64</sup>

Szpak defined the characteristics of failed States as; “lack of central authority to control entire or at least majority of territory, and the order and security is only maintained in urbans, and multiple groups fighting to have control on population and resources, the increase in internal disorder due to existence of illegal groups such bands, clans, or warlords and strongmen in power, social division and state privatization and criminalization of state policy, lack of control over the borders, corruption, insurgency, and the terrorist organization presence activity”.<sup>65</sup>

Lothar Brock, Hansri Holm, Georg Sorenson, Michel Stohl, summarize the major characteristics of state failure or state fragility in three categories:

- **Government:** Inefficient and corrupt administrative and institutional structure, rule based on selective coercion rather than on the rule of law, no monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, poor state legitimacy.
- **Economy:** lack of coherent national economies, capable of sustaining a basic level of welfare for the population and of providing resources for running an effective state.
- **Nationhood:** Citizen rights not provided: a divided population with predominance of local/ethnic community, neither the community or citizens nor the community of sentiment has developed to become the primary bond among people at the national level.<sup>66</sup>

In Lothar Broack’s description the core cases of state failure associated with government inefficiency, weak economy, and reluctant of government in providing

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<sup>64</sup> Robert, Ibid, Pp. 5-9

<sup>65</sup> Agnieszka Szpak, “what to do with Failed State- a Quest for a Solution from the Inside”, Published by Chinese Journal of International Law 13 (August 7, 2014), P. 2

<sup>66</sup> Lothar Brock, Hans-Henrik Holm, Georg Sorenson, Michael Stohl, *Fragile State; violence and Failure of Intervention*, UK, Polity press, 2012, P.18

citizens basic rights including basic services. On the other hand, Claire Mcloughlin described the cases and factors of state failure and fragility as follow:

- ***Structural and Economic Factors:*** Poverty, low income and economic collapse, violent conflict, presence of armed insurgents, lack of natural resources, geopolitics factors (bad neighbors) demographic stress Including urbanization.
- ***Political and Institutional Factors:*** Crisis of state legitimacy and authority, bad governance, repression of political competition, weak institutions, hybrid political orders, institutional multiplicity, political transitions, succession and reform crises in authoritarian states, state predation, neo-patrimonial politic
- ***Social Factors:*** Horizontal inequalities, severe identity fragmentation, social exclusion, gender inequality, lack of social cohesion, weak civil society.
- ***International Factors:*** Legacy of Colonialism, international political economy, climate change, global economic shocks, security shocks.<sup>67</sup>

According to the aforementioned literature analysis, these variables appear to be the primary causes of state fragility and failure. As the parallel literature developed around the concept, therefore various organizations, and institutions and entities have developed useful state fragility indicators on which the Fragile States index is based; these indicators include a broad spectrum of state failure risk aspects.

## **2.5. THE CONCEPT IN PRACTICE**

The concept of failed state arose in the post-Cold War era as an analytical framework for analyzing the fragility, failure and instability of states resulting from both intrastate and external factors. And then the concept was applied to Colombia, Rwanda, Haiti and other state prone to failures due to violence conflict, weak economy, and defective political structures. The conditions in these states created humanitarian challenges for the international system such as poverty, violence, immigration.

The concept of failed state came more to the attention of international community after 9/11 attacks took placed from Afghanistan under the Taliban rule

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<sup>67</sup> Claire Mcloughlin, *ibid*, P.16

which was characterized as the failed state. over the time the some more countries including Sudan, Yemen, Liberia, Syria, and Chad which have considered as the failed states due to enduring sociopolitical conditions, insecurity, and incapability of its governments to provide basic service for its people. at the academic and empirical atmosphere alongside the qualitative approach the quantitative measurement of state failure accelerated, several national and international organization, donors, and institutions such as “World Bank”, “Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)”, US Agency for International Development, The Fund for Peace developed many indexes and failed stated rankings indicators in order to measure the state fragility and failure by evaluating the multidimensional aspects. The Fragile States index which was developed by the “Fund for Peace” (FFP) and published by “Foreign Policy Magazine” in 2005 in which 178, countries were analyzed and ranked got more attentions.<sup>68</sup>

Since 2005 the fragile and Failed States Index (FSI) has been annually published by non-profit FFP, in which the degree of state fragility and vulnerability to state failure is evaluated through the analysis of four mean indicators, including cohesion, economic, political and social and with its twelve sub-indicators. The available literature on failed state emphasized on various dimensions of state failure, including legitimacy of the state, violence conflict, lack of monopoly on the means of force, ineffectiveness, political division and several other subcategories. Some scholars, experts, policymakers sought more details definition of failing or fragile states, while some other offered more specific definitions. Charles T. Call, refer to the gap framework in which three dimensions of state failure take in consideration including legitimacy gap, capacity gap and security gap.<sup>69</sup>

As the theoretical ground which support this thesis can be found in the failed state debates, so it's necessary to draw the framework which derived from these debates. The paper's findings regarding the U.S. and its allies' failures in Afghanistan are classified into three analytical dimensions; internal factors such as lack of legitimacy, capacity gap, and security gap, and regional factors, such as

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<sup>68</sup> Brad Amburn, “ The Failed States Index 2005”, Foreign Policy, ( last retrieved October 22, 2009), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/22/the-failed-states-index-2005/>

<sup>69</sup> Charles T. Call, “Beyond the ‘failed state’: Toward conceptual alternatives”, European Journal of IR, 17 (2), (2010), Pp. 305-310

transitional terrorism, neighboring countries inference and providing support of insurgency, drug trafficking. Additionally, US/NATO related factors including failure of its strategy, the absence of early political settlement policy, and hasty decision over the withdrawal. In order to ensure that our theoretical framework encompasses the essential classified characteristics, it's essential to analyze the Fund of Peace failed state index data and evaluate Afghanistan status as being a failed state in its framework. So, it's important to shed light on the Fund for Peace's Failed States index's indicators, however there are four main indicators and twelve sub-indicators, but as herein the focus will be only on the indicators which support our research questions.

### **2.5.1. Indicators of State Failure and Fragile Statehood**

The Fragile States Index (FSI) is a yearly ranking of 178 nations based on their vulnerability to various stressors and fragility. The Index is based on an analytical technique developed by the Fund for Peace (FFP) called the Conflict Assessment System Tool (CAST). The FFP used three primary streams of data analyzing methodology including qualitative, quantitative and expert validation to evaluate the collected data and obtain the final scores for FSI.<sup>70</sup>In the context of this methodology the achieved data are analyzed and the countries are scored based on four mains; cohesion political, social and economic indicators and twelve sub-indicators.

#### **A. Cohesion Indicators:**

1. ***Security Apparatus***: This indicator considers the security threats to a state like; terrorism, insurgency, coup, organized crime, etc.
2. ***Factionalized Elites***: Indicator take in account the fragmentation of state institutions along ethnic, class, clan racial or religious lines, it also measures power struggles, political competition, political transitions, and the creditability of electoral processes.

B. ***Group Grievance***: This indicator emphasis on divisions and schism, between distinct groups in society- notably the division based on social or political

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<sup>70</sup> Fund For Peace, "Fragile States Index Methodology and CAST Framework", P.3, <https://fragilestatesindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/FSI-Methodology.pdf>

traits and their significance in access to service and inclusion in the political process.

C. **Political Indicators:** Evaluated the government related factor of state fragility, FFP brought three indicators as main factors including.

1. **State Legitimacy:** Indicator evaluates the representativeness and transparency of government and its relations with its people. It does also consider the transparency or democratic process such election, political transitions. It also considers the government transparency, an accountability and political representation as well evaluate the level of corruption, profiteering, and marginalizing, torturing or excluding opposition.
2. **Public Service:** Indicators refer to presence of basic state functions that serve the people. These essential services include such as; health, education, water, transportation and electricity. Furthermore, it may also include state's ability and responsibility to protect its citizen from terrorism and violence. This indicator also focuses on the distribution of provided service, do the services are provided equally to all citizens or it only serves the ruling elites.
3. **Human Rights Indicators and Rule of Law:** It evaluates the state's behavior against its citizens that whether the citizens subjected to the abuse of legal, political, and social rights, including media harassment, politicization of the judiciary and military, repression of political and civic groups, a bit further, the indicator also looks of political inspired crime and violence against civilian, political prisoners etc.

D. **Economic Indicators**

1. **Economic Decline and Poverty:** This indicator consider the factors related to economic decline with country including; GDP decline, Gross national, unemployment rates, inflations, productivity, debt, poverty, business failures, drops in commodity price, trade revenue, foreign investment, collapse or devaluation of national currency, along with formal economy it also focused on criminal economy, including illicit

trade, drug and human trafficking, capital flight, corruption, money laundering.

2. ***Uneven Economic Development:*** Indicator focus on the inequality within the economy, or unfair of economic development and distribution based on group such as racial, ethnic, religious, etc. or based on education, economic status, or region.
3. ***Human Flight and Brain Drain:*** Indicator considers the economic impact of human displacement for economic, political or social reasons. It is focused on professional labor forced to flee from country to other countries.

#### **E. Social Indicators: and Cross-Cutting Indicator**

1. ***Demographic Pressure:*** Indicator takes on account the pressures on the state due to population high growth rate, life sustaining resource pressure, health, climate and environmental issues etc.
2. ***Refugees and IDPS:*** Indicator measure the pressure upon states by the forced displacement of large communities due to social, political, environment or other causes, it also focuses on the challenges including humanitarian and security due to flow of refugees.
3. ***External Intervention:*** As the cross-cutting indicator focuses on the infiltration and impact of external actors in functioning notably security and economic and politics of a state. This indicator looks at on security aspects of engagement of external actors, both secret and overt in the internal affairs of a state which vulnerable by other governments, armies, intelligence service, identity groups or other entities interference. The external intervention indicator also considers the on economic engagement of foreign player including multilateral organizations, via massive loan, development projects, foreign aid etc. Furthermore the external intervention indicator also consider the humanitarian intervention, such as the deployment of international peacekeeping mission. It also takes on take on account the external support for factions opposed to the government.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> The Fund for Peace, “Fragile States Index Indicators”, <https://fragilestatesindex.org/indicators/x1/>

## 2.5.2. The Fragile States Index: Global Data

The FSI used twelve indicators as the countries rating tools each indicator is rate on a 1 to 10 scale with 1 being the most stable and 10 being the most unstable in danger of collapse. The focus will be only on the unstable states in date table. Among the 12 indicators, however the 6 is more relevant to this thesis questions, but as herein the 10 most unstable countries listed and these countries are rated in context of 12 indicators.

**Table 2.1:** Index of Fragile States, 2021

Country	Rank	Total Score	Cohesion Indicators			Economic Indicators			Political Indicators			Social Indicators		
			A-1	A-2	A-3	B-1	B-2	B-3	C-1	C-2	C-3	-D1	D-2	D-3
Yemen	1	111.7	9.4	10	9.4	9.8	7.7	6.7	9.9	9.8	9.7	9.8	9.8	9.7
Somalia	2	110.9	9.3	10	8.3	9.2	9.5	8.8	9.2	9.8	8.7	10	9.2	8.9
Syria	3	110	9.6	9.9	9.7	9.6	7.1	8.2	10	9.6	9.7	7.6	9.7	10
S. Sudan	4	109.4	9.7	9.2	8.8	9.2	8.9	6.7	9.5	10	8.7	9.5	9.9	9.3
Congo D. R.	5	108.4	8.6	9.5	9.4	8.5	8.5	6.8	9.2	9.8	9.2	9.8	10	9.1
C. Africa	6	107	8	9.7	8.1	8.5	9.6	6.6	9	10	9.3	8.9	9.7	9.6
Chad	7	107	8.9	9.5	8	8.6	8.7	7.9	9.4	9.8	8.2	9.6	9.3	7.9
Sudan	8	105.2	8.1	9.1	9.5	9.1	8.3	7.7	8.8	8.8	8.6	9.1	9.4	8.7
Afghanistan	9	102.1	10	8.6	7.2	9.2	8.1	7	8.7	9.8	7.4	9	8.8	8.3
Zimbabwe	10	99.1	8.6	10	6.1	9.4	7.7	7.1	8.8	9	8	9.3	8.2	6.9

Sources: The Fund for Peace, <https://fragilestatesindex.org/global-data/>

In above table 10 most unstable countries are list from total 178 countries, which are ranked due to its high scores obtained in twelve indicators. The FFP's fragile state 2021 index show that Yemen is the most unstable country and almost on the edge of collapse, followed by Syria, South Sudan, Congo Democratic Republic, Chand, Sudan, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe. The calculation of scoring is done based on different characteristic; those characteristics differ in the case of each state, as the conflict seems to be the important factors of state failure. But herein Chad, Central Africa and Sudan are scored more fragile than Afghanistan while, Afghanistan was one of the unstable country in 2021 due to Taliban offensive and collapse of Afghan government, therefore the calculation based on the average score of 12 indicators. Due to the unsustainable and cross-cutting nature of countries fragility degree, it's important to list the fragility rank of Afghanistan from 2010-2021.

**Table 2.2:** Afghanistan Fragility Index from (2010-2021)

Year	Rank	Total Score	Cohesion Indicators			Economic Indicators			Political Indicators			Social Indicators		
			A-1	A-2	A-3	B-1	B-2	B-3	C-1	C-2	C-3	-D1	D-2	D-3
2010	6	109.3	9.7	9.4	9.7	8.3	8.2	7.2	10	8.9	9.2	9.5	9.2	10
2011	7	107.5	9.8	9.4	9.3	8	8.4	7.2	9.7	8.5	8.8	9.1	9.3	10
2012	6	106.	9.7	9.4	9.4	7.7	8.1	7.4	9.5	8.5	8.5	8.9	9	10
2013	7	106.7	9.9	9.4	9.2	8.2	7.8	7.2	9.4	8.8	8.4	9.3	9.	10
2014	6	106.5	10	9.4	8.7	8.3	7.5	7.8	9.5	9	8.3	8.8	9.3	9.9
2015	8	107.9	10	9.3	8.9	8.6	7.2	8.1	9.7	9.3	8.6	9.3	9.1	9.8
2016	9	107.9	10	8.6	8.6	8.5	7.5	8.4	9.1	9.6	8.7	9.5	9.5	9.9
2017	9	107.3	10	8.6	8.4	8.3	7.5	8.2	9.1	9.9	8.5	9.3	9.8	9.7
2018	9	106.6	10	8.6	8.1	8.3	7.8	8.1	9.1	10	8.2	9.2	9.9	9.4
2019	9	105	10	8.6	7.8	8.6	7.5	7.8	9	9.8	7.9	9.3	9.6	9.1
2020	9	102.9	9.9	8.9	7.5	8.3	7.7	7.5	9	9.5	7.6	9	9.3	8.6
2021	9	102.1	10	8.6	7.2	9.2	8.1	7.0	8.7	9.8	7.4	9	8.8	8.3

Sources: The Fund for Peace, <https://fragilestatesindex.org/global-data/>

Afghanistan fragility index from 2010 to 2021 ranked and scored among the 178 countries. In 2010 by obtaining 109.3 scores it became the 6<sup>th</sup> most unstable country, while from 2016 to 2021, it became 9<sup>th</sup> most unstable countries. The reason behind the decline in rank is due to the growth in the number of more unstable and failing in recent. And the overall scoring method and the calculation which is based on the average of twelve indicators, receiving 102.9, 107.9, 107.3, 106.6, 105, 102.9, 102., scores which make it rank 9 respectively does not indicate that Afghanistan was secure country from 2016 to 2021.

While looking to security indicator score it's the highest 10 from 10, and also factionalized elite's indicator score its most 9.4 from 10 and group grievance 9.5 or 8.5 by average from 10, followed by state legitimacy 9.5 by average from 10 and public service 8.5 and 9.5 from 10 point. As well as the external intervention by average is 9.5 from 10. The analyzed data shows that Afghanistan has been extremely unstable country since 2010, particularly due to deteriorated security situation, political division, lack of state legitimacy, government incapability in providing basic service to people, and its vulnerability to external intervention.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A SHORT HISTORY OF AFGHANISTAN

#### 3.1. AFGHANISTAN'S MODERN POLITICAL HISTORY

The modern state of Afghanistan was founded 274 years ago when Ahmad Shah Durrani (in some literature his last name is Abdali) established a Pashtun dynasty in 1747 in Kandahar, modern-day southern Afghanistan, and by 1757, he ruled whole Afghanistan. The Durrani Empire ruled over modern-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, northeastern Iran until Mashhad and northern India till Delhi.<sup>72</sup> After his death in 1772, his son Timor Shah (1772-1793) succeeded him, and respectively Timor Shah was succeeded by his three sons Zaman Shah (1793-1801), Shah Mahmood (1801-1818) and Shah Shuja (1839-1842). The Durrani dynasty came to an end due to internal division and tribal fragmentation. After the decline of Durrani dynasty in 19<sup>th</sup> century Afghanistan lost its territory and remained within its current borders.

During “The Great Game”, a political and diplomatic rivalry between the Russian and British Empires, between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Afghanistan served as the buffer state between the British and Russian Empires. Britain to protect its India territory from Russia invasion invaded Afghanistan for the first time in 1839-1842. The second Anglo-Afghan war was between 1878 and 1880, where the British won the war and, as result, the Treaty of Gandomak was signed between Amir Yaqub Khan and Louse Cavagnari on May 1879. Amir was pressed to manage the foreign affairs in the best interests of British government.<sup>73</sup> The British retained control of Afghanistan’s foreign affairs until February 1919. When Amanullah Khan, as the successor of his father, Amir Habibullah Khan, seized the throne after his father’s death in 1919, he declared absolute independence from the British Raj, but British Raj ignored his request. The King declared a national uprising against the British Indian Empire, which is recorded as the third Anglo-Afghan war, 1919. After a three-week conflict, the Indian settled British government agreed to a ceasefire and,

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<sup>72</sup> Mir Ghulam Mohammed Ghubar, *Afghanistan der masery Tarikh,; Afghanistan in the course of history*, Inqilab & Jomhurry published, 2th ed, 1999, pp. 360-365

<sup>73</sup> Ludwig w. Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan*, The Scarecrow Press, UK. 4th Ed P. 160.

on August 8, 1919, signed the Rawalpindi Agreement and recognizing Afghanistan as an independence state.<sup>74</sup>

Afghanistan has had right to manage its foreign relations and the behavior of state interests with other nations since achieving its absolute independence. In June 1922, Amanullah Khan dispatched his official envoy to Moscow, Germany, Italy, France, and New York, where he signed diplomatic and friendship treaties with Russia, France and Turkey.<sup>75</sup> In 1927, King Amanullah during his European tour he visited; Egypt, Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany, Britain, Belgium, Poland, the USSR, Turkey and Persia.<sup>76</sup> The King seven-month tour was full of great achievements, he has signed diplomatic, economic, and political agreements with hosted countries. During this visit, King was inspired and impressed by the modernization and economic development of European countries. He was particularly inspired by Mustafa Kamal Atatürk's reforms. Along with establishing relations with the rest of the world, he has attempted to modernize and civilize Afghan society as well as implement social, economic, and political reforms, therefore as the part of his attempts, the 1923 constitution was drafted. The reforms were implemented in the legislative assembly and the court system, the slavery was abolished women were granted the rights to education, work and choice marriage. All the citizens have equal rights regardless their religion, ethnicity, or race.<sup>77</sup>

The young King intended to modernize Afghan society through social and economic reforms, When the King returned from a European tour in 1928, he instituted the third stage of social reforms, but it did not last long. The radical social reforms in traditional religious conservative society, particularly in regards to the women's freedom had misinterpreted by religious clerics and anti-reform elements as provocative tools to raise people against the King. The anti-government rebellion which led by bandit, Habibullah Khan Kalakani known as *Bacha-I-Sqqao* (water carrier son) began in 1929 and seized Kabul and forced Amanullah Khan to leave the

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<sup>74</sup> Hasan Kakar, *Da Bacha Amanullah Wakmani ta yeva nevye Ketana, A new Glance to Amanullah Khan Government*, Afghanistan Cultural development society press, Germany. 2005. Pp. 18-25

<sup>75</sup> Kakar, *ibid*, Pp. 27-28.

<sup>76</sup> Railways of Afghanistan, "King Amanullah's Travels", <http://www.andrewgrantham.co.uk/afghanistan/railways/king-amanullahs-travels/>

<sup>77</sup> Hamid Hadi, *Afghanistan's experiences: The History of the Most Horrifying Event Involving Politics, Religion, and Terrorism*, AuthorHouse published, Bloomington, 2016. P. 15

country and he went to Italy.<sup>78</sup> Kalakani's rule over Kabul did not last more than nine months; Nadir Khand deposed the Saqqawists' self-proclaimed Emirate and the masterminds of rebellion including Kalakani were executed. The rebellion of 1929 paralyzed governmental bureaucracy, and diplomacy channels, it also triggered social disorder, political instability, and insecurity. The internal revenue, custom taxes, and GDP have been downgraded to zero and the treasury of state was looted. Mohammad Nadir Khan, who had the support of Pashtun tribes, set himself up as the new ruler on October 16, 1929 after the quench of rebellion.<sup>79</sup>

Mohamad Nadir Shah was a conservative precautionary ruler, in 1931 he called for Loya Jirga declared constitutional monarchy, He removed most of Amanullah khan's reformist policies, particularly the social reform policies which was not relevant to Sharia law. "The Nadir Shan reign had the specification of a feudal regime which was based on autocracy, royal oligarchy, and mostly relied on religious belief" Write Ghubar. Mohammad Nadir Shah has been depicted as a totalitarian, absolutist leader in recent literature. He has followed the neutral foreign policy of Afghanistan in world affairs. His policies of national gradualism and positive neutrality, as well as maintaining a balance relationship with two powerful neighbors; Russia and British were effective and helped him to maintain control over the domestic affairs.<sup>80</sup> Mohammad Nadir Shah was assassinated in a revenge killing in 1933, and his 19-year old son, Mohammad Zahir Shah succeeded him.

King Mohammad Zahir Shah was guided by his uncles, Sardar Hashim Khan, and Shah Mahmood khan in government affairs. Sardar Hashim Khan was his most trusted adviser and prime minister. During Zahir Shah's reign since 1933 to 1963, the royal family members were influential figures in the government. Since King Zahir Shah ascended to throne, the premiership post was run by the King's uncles Sardar Hashim Khan, Shah Mahmood Khan, and his cousin Sardar Daoud Khan. During four decades of King Zahir Shah's reign almost in three decades the premiership

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<sup>78</sup> Hamid Wahed Alikuzai, *A Concise History of Afghanistan in 25 volumes*, Trafford Publishing, United State, 2013, 1 vol. 1 cilt, p. 470.

<sup>79</sup> Ghubar, *ibid*, P. 21

<sup>80</sup> Amin, Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan A History of Struggle and Survival*, published by I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, New York, 2004. P. 103

which was consist of royal family figures they were influential orchestrators of domestic and foreign affairs.<sup>81</sup>

During the last decades, Shah implemented some reforms in the domestic affairs. The resignation of Sardar Daoud Khan from the premiership position in 1963, which allowed Shah to take control of government affairs, was one of the two factors that led to political reforms in monarchy. As the first effort the royal family had removed from power and they were no longer able to make decisions. After seizing control of monarchy's decision-making bodies, he established the new constitution in 1964 and formed a new government as a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament that included the three branches of government; legislative, executive, and judicial.<sup>82</sup> For the first time, Zahir Shah appointed Dr. Mohammad Yousef a non-royal as prime Minister. During Zahir Shah's reign, as the part of monarchy's internal reforms, Shah established a foundation for free elections and free press, and paved the way for young western educated intellectuals to have partially sociopolitical activities. With that various Afghan political groups from the pro-Soviet and Chinese left-wingers to constitutionalist, Republicans and Islamist gained new avenue for political activities.

The second element was the changes in the region's geostrategic and political environment. The end of IIWW, and the beginning of the cold war rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union, had negative impacted on the sociopolitical environment of Afghan society. Afghanistan's position as a sandwich between two superpowers made it more prone to internal political unrest. Thus, the political changes in the international arena have always had direct impacted political and social lives of Afghans.

Zahir Shah had followed nonalignment policy as well as a policy of balancing between neighboring powers. During his four decades in power, he has adhered to Afghanistan's traditional foreign policy of neutrality in world affairs. Afghanistan expanded its relations during the 1930 with rest of world and it became a member of the League of Nations for the first time in 1934. The United States formally recognized Afghanistan in the same year and signed the first official treaty of

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<sup>81</sup> GlobalSecurity.org " Mohammad Zahir Shah, 1933-73", ( last retrieved, October 08, 2012).  
<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/king%20zahir.htm>

<sup>82</sup> Meredith L. Runion, The History of Afghanistan, Greenwood press, London, 2007. P. 9

friendship with Shah's monarchy, followed by two countries exchanged their ambassadors in 1948.<sup>83</sup>

In 1937, Zahir Shah signed a non-aggression and friendship treaty with Iran and Turkey in Saadabat, Iran as the part of his regional relations. The outbreak of IIWW and the isolation of the British Empire on the India continent paved the way for the U.S. To emerge as an influential power in region. Zahir Shah's neutrality policy and balanced relations led to the flow of economic aid from the USA and Russia for reconstruction and development of Afghanistan.

To conclude, Mohammad Zahir Shah's four decades terms is known as Afghanistan's "golden age" in the terms of stability, prosperity and development. During the period of three royal family premierships, Afghanistan witnessed economic development, security, reconstruction and stable domestic politics. Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan was a most successful prime minister in modern Afghan history, during his ten-year premiership, he began the consolidation of Afghanistan into a nation-state, and as well he quickly brought Afghanistan into a modernization program.<sup>84</sup>

Mohammed Zahir Shah's four-decade kinship came to an ended when his cousin Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan staged a non-violent regime change coup while Shah was abroad. On July 17, Daoud khan's official statement of regime change broadcasted from Radio Afghanistan, he announced the replacement of the monarchy to Democratic Republic system and the Central Committee elected him as president.<sup>85</sup>Daoud Khan made significant inroad into Afghanistan's political, military, and social communities during his ten years duties in Zahir Shah's monarchy, the reason for the coup was portrayed as the constitutional monarchy system's inadequacy for good governance and the absence of a democratic system based on democratic values. The coup plan was already in place in 1971 with coordination of senior government officials and military personals, most notable Daoud khan sympathizer and group of *Parcham* faction of People Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) a leftist movement officer in army who played a critical role

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<sup>83</sup> Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1978, 2th ed. , Pp. 477-478

<sup>84</sup> Dupree, *ibid.* P. 556

<sup>85</sup> Bayaniye Tarihi 26 saratan Rehbiri mili Shahghily Mohamad Daoud Khan ( The historical statement of respectful Mohammad Daoud Khan), The Information and Culture Ministry archive, document 26-1 July 17-1973, P. 6

in coup. After the coup the state of emergency was declared the parliament was disbanded and the constitutions of 1964 was suspended the media was restricted and the opposition movement activities was restricted.<sup>86</sup> The Central Committee including 14 key *Parchami* figures were member of new cabinet. The new domestic policy included social and political changes such as restriction on free speech, limitation of political activity as well as the adopting economic reforms, such as the passage of a new land ownership law. His seven years developments plan was the improvements of the education system, the construction of economic infrastructure and enhancement of trade opportunity.

The neutrality and non-allegation foreign policy was upgraded, and the relationship with Russia was strengthened in areas such as economic, military, and cultural. The diplomatic and economic relations were running normally with USA. In Sardar Daoud Khan foreign policy, the independence of Pashtunistan was indispensable issue which has negatively impact the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>87</sup> The geopolitics of the region, as well as the Cold War confrontation between the U.S. and Soviet Union made Daoud Khan to seek military assistance first from the U.S. when he failed to obtain US military assistance, he turned to the Soviets. It opened the way for the Soviets to infiltrate the Daoud Khan Government. By 1970, USSR had trained some 7,000 officers, most of them were the members of *Parcham* and *Khalq* faction of PDPA and many Soviet officers served as instructor and advisor in Afghanistan which alarmed the west regarding Soviet influence in Afghanistan.<sup>88</sup>

The People Democratic Party of Afghanistan was divided into two faction *Khalq* (people) and *Parcham* (Banner) in 1967 due to the differing policy and revolutionary strategies. The *Parcham* were known as the Daoud Khan support, the *Khalq* by the contrast was opposite of Daoud Khan regime. As a result of the internal dispute among *Parcham's* central committee members of the People Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) the *Khalq* faction took key positions and enhances their active presence in the military as well in government bureaucracy. Following

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<sup>86</sup> Saikal, *ibid* p. 173

<sup>87</sup> Angelo Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: A Modern History, Monarch, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition*, I.B. Tauris published, London, 2007. P. 62

<sup>88</sup> Louis Dupree, *The new Republic of Afghanistan: The first Twenty-one month*, Afghan council of Asia Society, 1976, p. 6

the assassination Khalq faction's member Mir Akbar Khyber in 1978, the key PDPA figures protested against the government. The Daoud Khan government detained the key members of PDPA including its founder Noor Mohammad Taraki, Babrak Karmal. In response the PDPA members launched a coup against Daoud Khan Government, the presidential palace sieged by coup plotters and the communication line was cut. After the 12 hours resistance Daoud Khan with his family member were killed and PDAP announced regime change. Few days after coup the formation of a revolutionary council of the PDPA was publicly announced with Taraki named as chairman and Karmal vice-chairman.<sup>89</sup>

The internal disagreement between Daoud Khan and PDPA's Khalq and Parcham factions as well as the deterioration of relations with Soviet Union has triggered the Saur coup and collapse of Daoud Khan government. At the heights of Cold war between eastern and western blocs Daoud Khan Proximity to the west and some oil-rich Arab states whereas the geopolitics of Afghanistan was already influenced by Soviet Union led to his regimes demise.

### **3.1.1. Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan 1979-1989**

The bloody military coup known as the Saur Revolution of 1978 has opened new chapter in Afghanistan's history. The internal squabbles within the PDAP Central Committee, as well as the ideological differences in conservative religious society made it difficult for PDAP leaders to consolidate power and implement the leftist policies. The escalation of internal disputes, as well as radical social reforms based on Communist and Marxist ideology contrary to Afghan society's religious traditional values of Afghan opened the way for social disorder. The Khalq regime's governance policies, notably economic and social reforms, incensed Afghans, particularly religious leaders, rural inhabitant. It has resulted in anti-regime uprisings and rebellion in various parts of the country. The escalation of schism within the Khalq leadership and the 1979 uprising in Herat province, in which about 25,000 people were killed,<sup>90</sup> As well, the Soviet policies of expansion toward warm water led to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan In December 1979. It was a great

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<sup>89</sup> Rasanayagam, *ibid*, pp. 67-70

<sup>90</sup> M. Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response*, 179-1982, Los Angeles, University of California Press, P. 150

movement for Soviets that they had been waiting, impatiently for so long to find their way to Afghanistan. The condition after coup was reported by US. Embassy in Kabul to USA government in an official telegram as follow:

*“The new government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) is overwhelmingly depended on the Soviet Union. It can’t stay in power without Soviet help. It relies on hundred percent on the Soviet Union for military supplies and equipment, and increasingly on the Soviet Union for economic assistance, both technical and financial. The leaders of the DRA have been ideologically inspired by the Soviet Union. Their adherence to Marxist-Leninism is readied in their rhetoric”.*<sup>91</sup>

As the Soviet arrived to Kabul they staged a coup and killed Noor Mohammad Taraki and installed a socialist Babrak Karmal.<sup>92</sup> By the time that Soviets arrived to Kabul, they embroiled in a conflict with Mujahidin in support of the Kabul regime. In 1980, the United Nations General Assembly convened an emergency special session on Afghanistan after a resolution in Security Council was not passed due to USSR’s veto. In resolution (ES-6/2) the UN called for Soviet Union withdrawal from Afghanistan and invited Nations to contribute humanitarian assistance.<sup>93</sup> The Soviet Union did not take the UN demand serious and continued conflict in support of PDPA regime that had brought about an abrupt international reaction. In response, the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan formed an alliance and had supported Mujahidin and provided them with a substantial amount of financial and military aid as well as extensive training provided by CIA and Pakistani Inter-Service (ISI).<sup>94</sup> Despite all efforts, including changes in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan leadership, replacing Dr. Najibullah with Babrak Karmal in 1986, Soviets was unable to win the war. The Soviet Union incurred economic and political costs as a result of the conflict’s prolongation. The high cost of war has triggered economic crisis in Russia. Finally, on 14 April 1988

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<sup>91</sup> National security Archiev, “ Six Weeks after Afghanistan’s Revolution”, Docement 1, June 13, 1978. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB396/docs/1978-06-13%20Six%20Weeks%20After%20Afghanistan's%20Revolution.pdf>

<sup>92</sup> Douglas MacEachin, “Predicting the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: The Intelligence Community's Record”, <https://fas.org/irp/cia/product/afghanistan/index.html>.

<sup>93</sup> United Nation, “ Afghanistan& the united Nations”, <http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/un-afghan-history.shtml>

<sup>94</sup> David C. Isby, *The War In Afghanistan 1979-1989*, CONCORD Publications, Hong Kong, 1990, P.4

Soviet signed Geneva accord which stipulated the withdrawal of USSR's from Afghanistan by February 1989.<sup>95</sup>

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was extremely costly and devastating for both sides. It has obliterated the Afghanistan foundation, infrastructure including political, social, economic, educational, and governmental. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan planted the seed of misery and civil war in Afghanistan, as a result of the war, more than five million of Afghan fled their homeland and sought asylum abroad. Around 150 thousand civilians and 90 thousand members of the Mujahidin groups killed while three million Afghans, mostly civilians have been wounded.<sup>96</sup> Nearly around 15,000 Russian soldiers have been killed, 55,000 have been wounded. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan opened the way for regional actors to engage in proxy wars against each other interest in Afghanistan.

### **3.1.2. The Civil War (1989-1993)**

The U.S. and its ally's withdrawal from Afghanistan in September 2021 have repeated the history of Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989. After the Soviet Union withdrew completely from Afghanistan in 1989, they have left behind Dr. Najibullah's government alone against Pakistan based seven Mujahidin factions plus Pakistan military establishment and Gulf states' jihadist groups, all of which were directly involved in fight against Dr. Najibullah's government as well as the Iran-based Shia faction backed by Iranian government. With the difference that the U.S. and NATO withdrawals have had no effect on their support for the Afghan government in war against Taliban, but the kremlin has cut its support for the Dr. Najibullah government followed the post-soviet withdrawal. Two factors have contributed to Najibullah's loss of counter-capabilities against the Mujahidin and the Pakistan military establishment which had been backing mujahidin; a) the US and USSR agreed to cut off all military aid from January 1992, to conflict involved party while U.S. and Pakistan with Saudi Araba continued their support for the mujahidin

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<sup>95</sup> David B. Ottaway, "Agreement on Afghanistan signed in Geneva", The Washinton Post, (last retrived, April, 15, 1988). [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/04/15/agreement-on-afghanistan-signed-in-geneva/c7288c64-6764-4e73-9bc5-7eeb48f7827d/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.5d5f3a5c4568](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/04/15/agreement-on-afghanistan-signed-in-geneva/c7288c64-6764-4e73-9bc5-7eeb48f7827d/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.5d5f3a5c4568)

<sup>96</sup> Anatonio, Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-1992*, Hurst& Company press, London 2000, p. 115

on the other hand Najibullah government was left without foreign assistance; b) General Dostum revolted against the government in northern provinces, and as he joined a faction of Mujahidin led by Ahmad Shah Masoud and captured Mazar Sharif, a critical geostrategic location.<sup>97</sup> However he kept the door opened with National Reconciliation, but mujahidin were in a position similar to that of the Taliban today. Following the failure of his reconciliation efforts, he resigned in April 1992 leaving Kabul surrounded by mujahidin. According to the 1992 Peshawar Accord in 1992 and United Nations mediation, the mujahidin council agreed on Sebghatullah Mujadidi's as interim administration head.<sup>98</sup>

It was believed that it would be the end of the war, and people were optimistic for stability, security and development, but not long after, the prediction proved improbable, as the war flared up with renewed vigor between the mujahedeens, who turn up their gun on one another. The struggle for power among mujahidin and the International community's apathy, notably the United States, which was largely in charge of the Afghan-Soviet war, set the ground for regional powers rivalry in Afghanistan. The continuation of ongoing conflict turned country into the most violent civil war. In May 1992 the Mujahidin militants from seven factions deployed troops in Kabul, effectively destroyed Afghanistan's political and territorial integrity, the country divided into zones as result of mujahidin division. The civil war in Kabul has caused the big adversity and humanitarian crisis, some 50,000-civilian died and more than hundred thousand wounded nearly 2 million displaced most of the victims were civilians.<sup>99</sup>

The devastation caused by the civil war from 1992-1994 were irrecoverable; it turned Afghanistan into ruins; the military institution and the defense capability have been completely destroyed. Additionally, it has sparked ethnic tensions throughout the country. The civil war created condition for Taliban's emergence.

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<sup>97</sup> Shaista Wahab & Barry Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, infobase publishing, New York. 2010, second edition, Pp. 198-199.

<sup>98</sup> United Nation, "Peshawar Accord", (April, 1992).

[https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/AF\\_920424\\_PESHAWAR%20ACCORD.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/AF_920424_PESHAWAR%20ACCORD.pdf)

<sup>99</sup> Wahab & Youngerman *ibid*, Pp. 201-210

### 3.1.3. Taliban Emergence (1993-2001)

The fall of the Dr. Najibullah regime created a political vacuum, which resulted in civil war and a security dilemma. The political fragmentation, ethnic tension, insecurity and divided Afghanistan into Power Islands among jihadist factions and the continuation of this situation paved the way for the transformation of a religious school (madrassa) student into a military movement. Taliban emerged for the first time in 1994, in Southeast of Afghanistan in Kandahar province the movement led by Mullah Mohammad Omer a preacher who has fought against Soviet in Afghanistan.<sup>100</sup> At the height of conflict and instability in each part of country, the Taliban emerged with slogan of enforcing Sharia law and defending the territorial integrity and Islamic values, the removing of illegal roadblocks and checkpoints constructed by local commanders affiliated with jihadist factions for the purpose of collecting illegal taxis from commercial caravans and passengers, and disarming and persecuting criminal illegal warlords who have been charged with many crimes and restoring peace and adopting disarming program which were highly welcomed by war-weary Afghans.<sup>101</sup>

Since their abrupt appearance at the end of 1994, they have accomplished numerous successes, including disarming, punishing the local commanders, reopening transit routes by removing local militant checkpoints, restoring peace and security to Kandahar province. They advanced to the central and northern provinces after capturing the Southern important cities of Kandahar, Helmand, and Herat. Over the three months, Taliban captured twelve Southern provinces and thousands of volunteers have joined them. The Capital Kabul fell to Taliban in 1995, and the movement controlled 95 % of the territory until 2001.<sup>102</sup> Following the fell of Kabul to them, an extreme interpretation of the Sharia or Islamic law has imposed, in the context of new law all girls' schools closed, women prohibited from appearing in public without a Mahram ( related person) and hijab for women became compulsory, all the entertainment, including music, television, video and even football games

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<sup>100</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, Yale University Press, London, 2001, Pp. 17

<sup>101</sup> General Azimi, *Taliban Chugona Amad*, " *How Taliban Emerged*", Koser Published, 1377 Hijri calendar, 1988, Kabul. P. 21

<sup>102</sup> Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan A military History from Alexander the Great to the fall of Taliban*, Da CAPO Press, United State of America, 2002, Pp. 270-281

were banned.<sup>103</sup>The Taliban's rapid rise herein examined on three fronts: domestically, regionally and internationally.

### ***3.1.3.1. Domestic Factors***

After the withdrawal of Soviet from Afghanistan, the mujahidin inability to agree on the formation of a government acceptable for all resulted to an increase in political instability, social disorder and insecurity. The internal strife among jihadist leaders during Burhanuddin Rabbani's presidency undermined his government's legitimacy. When Taliban captured Kandahar, they were largely welcomed by Burhanuddin Rabbani, he saw them as a necessary evil for resolving Afghanistan's ongoing chaos and instability, and most importantly, he used the Taliban against Gulbudin Hikmityar as his political opponents.<sup>104</sup> Taliban initial victories in Southern provinces were not considered as a serious threat by Kabul-based Rabbani government, and by the time mujahidin leaders acknowledged that they posed a threat, it was too late to prevent their territorial gain.

Other domestic factors that accelerated the Taliban's growth as military power were ideological factors; approximately three million Afghans immigrated to Pakistan following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Pakistan settled refugees have dragged into a Cold War game by Cold War players used them as the proxy warrior against the Soviet Union. In order to run this conflict indirectly via third party a strategy of an ideological preparation was launched; the majorities of Pakistan's almost 45,000 religious Madrassa were founded during Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and were financially supported by foreign donations. These Madrassa also served as orphanages for the war's numerous parentless victims.<sup>105</sup>

Thousands of Afghan refugees enrolled in these Madrassas, most of the Taliban warrior had graduated from Pakistani Madrassa administrated by Jamiat ulama-e- Islam, a religious political party in Pakistan under the leadership of

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<sup>103</sup> Rashid, *ibid*, P. 2

<sup>104</sup> Wahid Mujda, *Afghanistan ve panj sal saletay Taliban*, "Afghanistan and Taliban five year regime, ( 1382 Hijri, 2003), Neshreney Press, Iran. P. 26

<sup>105</sup> Peter W. Singer, "Pakistan's Madressahs: Ensuring a System of Education not Jihad", Brookings, ( November, 2001), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/pakistans-madrassahs-ensuring-a-system-of-education-not-jihad/>

Maulana Fazilurrahman, most of Afghan refugees particularly Orphans and poor family studied in these school and then they have sent to Afghanistan to fight against Soviet.<sup>106</sup> Pakistani religious schools have played important role in radicalization of region since the Soviet invasion until today. Pakistan military establishment plus religious leaders has contributed to Afghanistan's instability and endless wars.

### ***3.1.3.2. Regional Factors Behind Taliban Emergence***

Afghanistan has been a vulnerable state in terms of regional power meddling; this country has constantly been targeted by regional powers for their own interests, both directly and indirectly. Pakistan has been more involved in Afghanistan's internal affairs than any other regional power. When Taliban emerged in 1994, Pakistan along with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates was the first country that formally recognized Taliban government officially.<sup>107</sup> Pakistan played a crucial role in Taliban's rise as military forces; they have provided Taliban with abandon military, financial and political support. In 1997/98 Pakistan provided the Taliban with an estimated US\$30 million in aid.<sup>108</sup> Insofar the religious communities and religious leaders wield considerable influence in Pakistan, they have played critical role in coordinating recruitment efforts with Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) in recruiting soldiers for Taliban frontline. Pakistan's initial policy following the Soviet withdrawal was to install a government that would facilitate the opening of direct land routes for trade with the Central Asian Republics, but the civil war made this policy difficult to implement. While Taliban removed the chains and opened the transit route into Pakistan, the first Pakistani trade convey of 50 trucks cross the border safely crossed the border in exchange Pakistan payed Taliban US\$ 5000 in tolls.<sup>109</sup> The Taliban's swift advancement surprised Pakistan Prime Minister Benazer Bhutto that led to her government full support from Taliban.

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<sup>106</sup> William Milly, *Afghanistan ve Siyaset Jahani, Afghanistan and World politics* (edited), (Translated by Abdulghafar Muhaqiq) 1377 Hijri, 1988. P. 27

<sup>107</sup> Zachary Luab, "The Taliban Afghanistan", Council on Foreign Relations, (last retrieved, 4 July 2014). <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan>

<sup>108</sup> Rashid, *ibid*, P. 183

<sup>109</sup> Rashid, *ibid*, P. 29

Saudi Arabia and Iran's ideological, political rivalry was another reason behind the flow of financial aid to Taliban from Gulf States. Particularly when Taliban captured Mazar Sharif province in 1989, they killed nine Iranian diplomats,<sup>110</sup> they became more desirable for Saudi Arabia. When Saudi Intelligence Chief Prince Turki visited Kandahar in 1996, he provided funds, vehicles and fuel for the successful Taliban attack on Kabul".<sup>111</sup> The Saudi Taliban ideological proximity and as well as Taliban anti-Iran stance were two critical factors that contributed to some Gulf states' support for the Taliban.

### ***3.1.3.3. The International Factors***

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan elicited an outpouring condemnation from international community, particularly from United States, Muslim countries and some of NATO member countries. The anti-Soviet alliance bloc headed by United State, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and China was created in response to USSR's expansion policy toward warm waters.<sup>112</sup> The Anti-Soviet alliance supported mujahidin by provided them substantial financial and military aid, as well as training by CIA and ISI. Following the USSR's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the U.S.'s interests in the country waned, with that Afghanistan's significance in US foreign policy has underscored, and a broken Afghanistan was left behind, however the United Nations attempted to reconcile the Dr. Najibullah government and mujahidin factions, but due to regional powers, notably Pakistan influence over the mujahidin, it strongly tried to sabotage the reconciliation program. On the other hand, the United States' lackluster commitment to Afghanistan resulted in a power vacuum and struggle for power, which created the condition for the Taliban's emergence.

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<sup>110</sup> CNN, "Taliban Threatens Retaliation if Iran Striks", (last retrieved, September, 1998), <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/meast/9809/15/iran.afghan.tensions.02/index.html>

<sup>111</sup> Rashid, *ibid*, P. 201

<sup>112</sup> Hall Gardner, *Surviving the Millennium: American Global Strategy, the collapse of the Soviet Empire, and the Question of Peace*. PREGER, London, 1994. 99

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **GEOPOLITICS OF AFGHANISTAN**

#### **4.1. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The term geopolitics dates all the way back to 1899, when Kjellen combined the words Geo and Politics together as Geopolitics for the first time. This concept was later predominantly popularized by Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1917), Halford Mackinder (1861-1947) and Karl Haushofer (1869-1949) and was dominated theory in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe and the United States.<sup>113</sup> The early geopolitics model is known as “Classic Geopolitics”, it refers to a state’s power in relations to its geographic location and territorial control. However, there are numerous approaches to the conceptualization of geopolitics, in common as it is defined in Merriam dictionary as “a study of the influence of such factors as geography, economic, and demography on the politics and especially the foreign policy of state”. The definition has undergone numerous conceptual shifts. After the Second World War, the concept of geopolitics suffered a decline as a result of Nazi Germany’s expansionist policy, based on geopolitical theory. But in the twenty-first century, geographer, politicians, military policymakers, and IR scientists have reintroduced this concept. The geopolitics concept has been promoted since 20<sup>th</sup> century within numerous theories that deliberately played the role of geo-space in power and strategy of world.

#### **4.2. THE GEOSTRATEGIC LOCATION OF AFGHANISTAN**

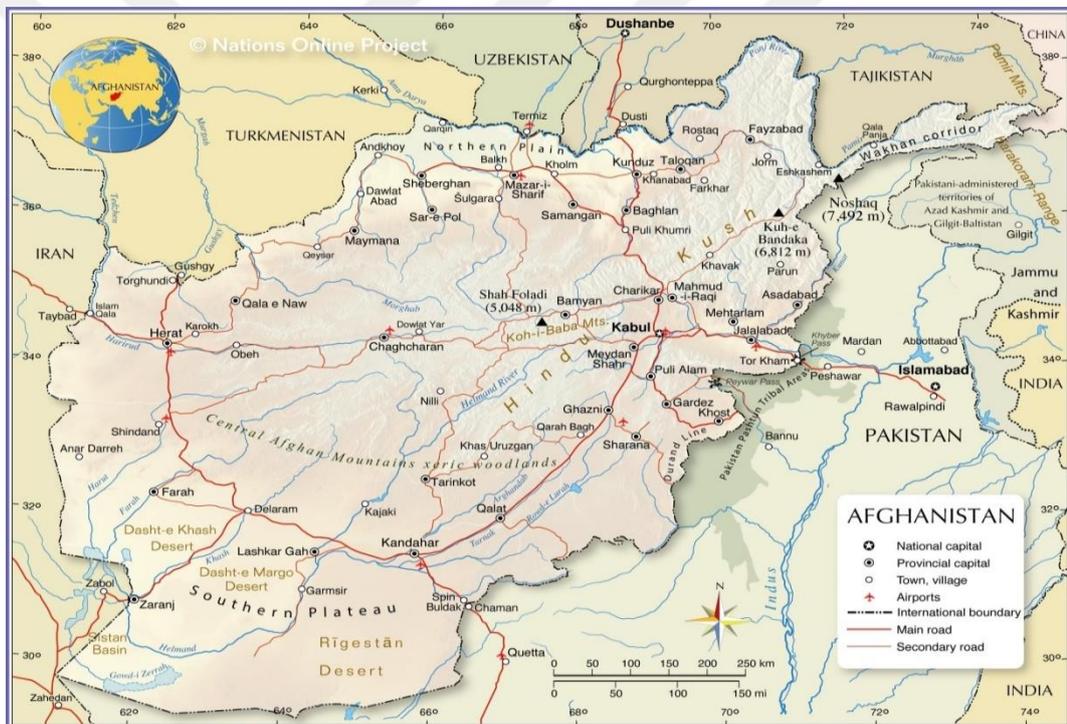
Afghanistan is a landlocked country located at crossroads of South Asia and Central Asia. The country’s total area is about 652,864 square km. it has a total of 5,987 km of share land boundaries. In the northeast it shares 91 km border with China and in the west 921 km with Iran, in the south and east 2,670 km with Pakistan, and in the north, it shares 1,357 km with Tajikistan, 804 km with Turkmenistan, and 144 km

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<sup>113</sup> Universitat Bielefeld, “Geopolitics”, [https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/cias/wiki/g\\_Geopolitics.html](https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/cias/wiki/g_Geopolitics.html)

with Uzbekistan.<sup>114</sup> Afghanistan's location on the geopolitical map shows that Afghanistan is located on the Heartland-Rimland border. Its main geopolitical allies are: Russia, China, Iran, and the USA and its opponents are Pakistan.<sup>115</sup> The Northern and Southern portions of Afghanistan is divided by the massive Hindu Kush mountain ranges. In the east, the passes in the Suleiman mountain range, like the famous Khyber Pass, have provided access to the Indian sub-continent. To the northeast, the Pamir Mountains form the border between Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and China. Due to Afghanistan's landlocked location, it lacks direct access to the ocean, the most direct route to the Arab Sea and the Indian Ocean is via Iran and Pakistan.

**Figure 4.1:** Afghanistan Geographical Map

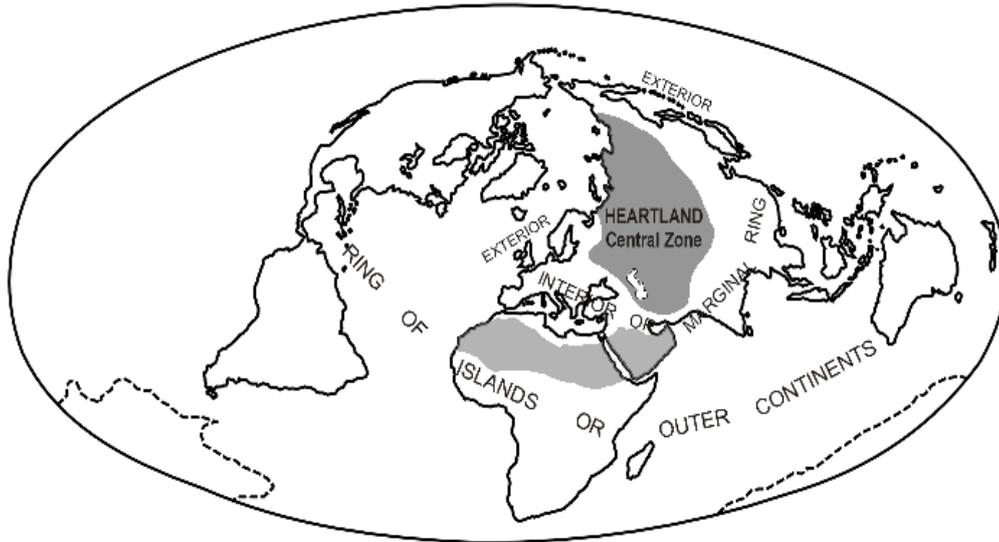


Source: [https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/afghanistan\\_map.htm](https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/afghanistan_map.htm)

<sup>114</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, <https://www.mfa.gov.af/about-afghanistan/country-profile.html>

<sup>115</sup> Геополитика. Ru/ Carthago delenda est, "Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: Geopolitical profile", 2018. <https://www.geopolitica.ru/en/article/islamic-republic-afghanistan-geopolitical-profile>

**Figure 4.2:** Afghanistan Position on Heartland- Rimland Border



Source: <https://www.geopolitica.ru/en/article/islamic-republic-afghanistan-geopolitical-profile>

#### **4.2.1. The Geopolitical Importance of Afghanistan**

Geographical location has a significant impact on a country's interaction on international area particularly in dealing with other countries. Thus, having control over a strategic location is vital for the political, military, and economic capabilities of a state. The landlocked and surrounded position made it difficult for Afghanistan to have direct access to the waters. Therefore its maritime dependency on neighboring countries, Iran and Pakistan had a negative impact on the trade, economy, and political condition of the country. However, its proximity to important countries such as Russia, China, India, and Iran as well the discovery of oil and gas in Central Asia and Persian Gulf regions, have made it an important strategic location and center with easy access to region. Historically, it was a cross-Silk Route that connected various civilizations and played a vital role in trade. This route was a unique in fostering not only prosperity and trade relationships, but also promoted the exchange of cultures, ideas, and knowledge among the different societies.<sup>116</sup> Due to its strategic and geographic importance, this region has been invaded by foreigners throughout history. For the first time, in 330 B.C., Alexander the Great invaded this

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<sup>116</sup> Angela Schottenhammer, "War and Peace along the Historical Silk Roads", Universitat Salzburg, Austria, 2016, P. 22

region which is today Afghanistan, and spent two years fighting and facing repeated rebellions.<sup>117</sup> Islam was introduced to this region by Arab in (642–870); this region was ruled by Mongols in 13<sup>th</sup> century, respectably by Persians, Turks, as well as local tribal chiefs.<sup>118</sup>

The Durrani dynasty, which was founded by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1747, is widely regarded as the beginning of modern Afghanistan. In its modern history, it has been invaded by three great powers; the British, the Soviet Union, and United States. Afghanistan's strategic importance during certain periods has depended on the international and regional circumstances of the time period. In the nineteenth century, during the great game between Tsar Russia and the British India Empire, Afghanistan became a buffer state. The British was concerned about Russia's expansion policy in Central Asia, and the occupation of Afghanistan, and thus access to warm water, in order to safeguard its controlled territory the British invaded Afghanistan in 1839.<sup>119</sup> During outbreak of Cold War, this region once again became an important geostrategic location for the east and west blocs, and even international terrorism did not miss out its footprint in Afghanistan.

As natural resources are vital for a country's economic development and prosperity, we are witnessing to the fact that natural resources also have been the primary sources of conflict since the industrial revolution began, numerous violent conflicts have occurred, particularly in the twenty-first century, over natural resources. Despite significant efforts in developing new energy technologies, oil remains the most dominated of natural resources. Afghanistan is a country brimming with untapped natural resources such as oil, gas, coal, copper, lithium, iron, and precious stone. According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the cost of natural resources is estimated to be around USD \$2 trillion.<sup>120</sup> Dominance over the Afghan territory enables easy access to these untapped natural resources, and it's one of the reasons for great powers' geopolitical influence in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has been invaded by foreign powers more than other countries in the region, but their

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<sup>117</sup> Frank L. Holt, *Into the Land of Bones: Alexander the Great in Afghanistan*, University of California Press, Long Angels, 2012, P. 12

<sup>118</sup> Ghubar, *ibid*, P. 185

<sup>119</sup> Captain Gervais, Lyons, *ibid*, Pp. 22-23

<sup>120</sup> Karine M. Renaud, , '2013 Minerals Yearbook (Afghanistan Advance Release) ', The United State Geological Survey office, May 2015, Pp. 1-2

inability to induce stability due to domestic resistance has made it difficult for them to have access to these untapped natural resources. Michel Chossudovsky writes “The war in Afghanistan is a profit driven resource war”. According to him, the U.S. is more optimistic about the worth of these untapped natural sources.<sup>121</sup> However since US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 there no clear evidence comes out to support the claim.

#### **4.2.2. The Competing Geopolitical Interests of International and Regional**

##### **Powers**

What drew the great powers’ attentions to this region? Despite the great powers’ repeated failures in this country, it has not lost its geostrategic important to these powers. While most scholars, analysts, and policymakers has point out the energy resources in Central Asia, and the Middle East as the primary factor for players to compete in this region. But on the other hand, each of these power had their own considerations, therefore, for the better understanding the condition it’s necessary to shed light on each player’s interests in regions.

##### **4.2.2.1. Russia**

Russian geostrategic, geopolitics and economic interests in Afghanistan date back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the Great Game era, when it pursued a successful territory expansion policy in Central Asia. Russian influence on British India’s territory continued to expand day by day. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russia had already the border of Afghanistan.<sup>122</sup> Afghanistan was viewed by Russia as a strategic territory that could serve both as its geopolitical interests as well as a route to the Indian Ocean. But when British invaded Afghanistan in 1832 to counter Russia’s expansion into its occupied territory it prevented Soviet infiltration into Afghan territory, an as a result, Afghanistan became a “Buffer

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<sup>121</sup> Prof. Michel Chossudovsky, “The War is Worth Waging: Afghanistan’s Vast Reserves of Minerals and Natural Gas The War on Afghanistan is a Profit driven "Resource War". Global Research, (September 28, 2018). <https://www.globalresearch.ca/the-war-is-worth-waging-afghanistan-s-vast-reserves-of-minerals-and-natural-gas/19769>

<sup>122</sup> Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990, P.5

State” between British and Russian, and with that the Russian’s geopolitical interests in Afghanistan were interrupted.

During the first Cold War ideological and militarization rivalry between east and west blocs, however, Afghanistan was not a key geopolitical priority for the Soviet Union during this era; nonetheless, Moscow was still seeking to establish ideological dominance over Afghan elites. The Soviet intrusion in Afghanistan grew during the reign of King Mohammad Zahir Shah in the 1950s and 1960s. From the beginning of the “Great Game” until the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the Soviet approach toward Afghanistan was based on its expansionism, traditional policy, and some ideological factors.

Russia’s involvement in Afghanistan ended with the collapse of the Dr. Najibullah government. Throughout the civil war and until the rise of Taliban in 1994, Russia was absent from the Afghan political scenes. But following the Taliban’s territorial gain in the Northern provinces in 1997, Russia’s security concern has increased over its central Asian ally’s border security. Moscow has expressed concern about the spread of fundamentalism into Central Asia, which could threaten Russia’s geopolitical interests in the region. As a counter measure, Moscow has begun to play a major supporting role on the side of Northern Alliance led by Ahmad Shah Masoud. During this period of time, Moscow has provided economic, military, and logistic support to the Northern Alliance.<sup>123</sup>

In the Aftermath of September 1, 2001 attacks, Vladimir Putin supported President Bush’s “war on terror,” strategy in which Russia and the U.S. had finally made common causes.<sup>124</sup> When the main supply route through Pakistan became unreliable for the U.S./NATO in the war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in late 2007, Russia provided an alternative supply route to NATO.<sup>125</sup> On the one hand, Russia was not optimistic about the USA and NATO’s long-term

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<sup>123</sup> James Risen, “ Russian Are Back in Afghanistan, Aiding Rebels”, The New York Times, ( Last retrieved , July 27, 1998), [https://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/27/world/russians-are-back-in-afghanistan-aiding-rebels.html?module=ArrowsNav&contentCollection=World&action=keypress&region=FixedLeft&pg\\_type=article](https://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/27/world/russians-are-back-in-afghanistan-aiding-rebels.html?module=ArrowsNav&contentCollection=World&action=keypress&region=FixedLeft&pg_type=article)

<sup>124</sup> Fiona, Hill, “Putin and Bush in Common Cause? Russia’s View of the Terrorist Threat After September 11”, Brookings, (last retrived, June 1, 2002). <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/putin-and-bush-in-common-cause-russias-view-of-the-terrorist-threat-after-september-11/>

<sup>125</sup> Kamran Bokhari, “Russia’s View of Afghanistan and the Taliban”, Geopolitical Futures, (last retrieved, January 18, 2018). <https://geopoliticalfutures.com/russias-view-of-afghanistan-and-the-taliban/>

involvement strategy in its sphere of influence. On the other hand, the US/NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan increased Moscow's security concern regarding its ally's national security.

The Taliban's territorial gains in Northern provinces, notably capturing Shir Khan Custom in June 2021, which is a transit route between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, raised Moscow's concerns regarding transitional terrorism and narcotic trafficking to Central Asian countries. Therefore, Moscow deployed its troops on Tajikistan border and conducted joint military exercises with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan security forces.<sup>126</sup> Since 2010, Russian policy toward Afghanistan has shifted from reactive to a more flexible and diversified approach toward the main veto players in Afghanistan and in the region, as well as being more proactive on the diplomatic front and launching its own track of regional peace consultations on Afghanistan.<sup>127</sup> To engage in Afghanistan's matter as regional player, Russia has formed its own Afghan solution platform through the formation of a regional consensus comprised of regional powers including; China, India, Iran, and Pakistan, who are involved in Afghanistan's affairs. Moscow initiated a series of consultation on Afghanistan; the first round Moscow hosted Afghan peace talks was held in 2016 with the participation of Russia, China, and Pakistan, followed by the second and third rounds talks were held in 2017, where China, India, Pakistan, and Russia came around the table to discuss security, and peace talks in Afghanistan.<sup>128</sup> However the US and Afghan government rejected Russia-led talk invitation on Afghanistan.<sup>129</sup> But in its little next conference, which was hosted by Moscow, the USA and Afghanistan took part.

In recent years, the Russia-Taliban relation developed rather than before, according to Afghan government official the Russia provided the Taliban with sophisticated weaponry, these weapons include 82 mm mortars, night-vision

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<sup>126</sup> The Moscow Times, "Russia to Boost Tajikistan Army Amid Afghanistan 'Deterioration'", (retrieved, July 28, 2021). <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/07/28/russia-to-boost-tajikistan-army-amid-afghanistan-deterioration-a74636>

<sup>127</sup> Ekaterina STEPANOVA, "Russian's Afghan Policy in The Regional and Russia-West Contexts", *Ifri*, (May, 2018) France, Pp. 10-11

<sup>128</sup> Daniel Schearf, "Moscow Expected to Host Afghanistan Talks", VOA (February 14, 2017). <https://www.voanews.com/a/moscow-expected-to-host-afghanistan-talks/3723667.html>

<sup>129</sup> Matthew Pennington & Lolita C. Baldor, "US declines invitation to Russia-led talks on Afghanistan", (August 23, 2018). <https://www.apnews.com/b271ff1d4e2e4143a0645baac593068a>

devices, and missiles.<sup>130</sup> However Moscow denied the claim, but Russian authorities accept their relationship with the Taliban, according to them, their relation aim is to persuade the Taliban for peace talk with Afghan government. Russian back-channel diplomacy eventually succeeded in hosting the second round of regional consensus on peace talks in Moscow on November 9, 2018. Along with delegations from eleven other countries, including India, Iran, Pakistan, China, the United States, and Afghanistan's High Council of Peace delegations, and five delegations from the Taliban's political office in Doha attended the Moscow meeting. It was the first time that five delegations from the Taliban's political office in Doha attended such a high-level gathering on peace talks in Moscow. At the conference inauguration ceremony, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said, "Russia stands for preserving a one and undivided Afghanistan, in which all of the ethnic groups that inhabit this country would live side by side peacefully and happily."<sup>131</sup> However, the Afghan Government rejected officially taking part in Moscow peace talk platform claimed, "Based on the principles and decision of Tashkent Summit and the Kabul process, the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban should be directly in dialogue".<sup>132</sup>

When the IS-Khorasan Province (IS-K) announced their presence in Afghanistan in 2014, the Taliban's opposition to ISIS provided them with an opportunity to approach Russia and receive Russian support. In early 2016 Russia's Special envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov said, "Taliban Interests objectively coincide with our", in struggling against IS-K militant in Afghanistan.<sup>133</sup> The IS-K presence in Afghanistan increased Moscow's security

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<sup>130</sup> Radio Azadi, "Makamat farah; Taliban dar jang az durbin haye shabbin estifada mekona ( Farah Official: Taliban using night vision glasses during clash)", ( November 2017). <https://da.azadiradio.com/a/28853053.html>

<sup>131</sup> Amie Ferris-Rotman, "Moscow shows its back in the great game by hosting Taliban-Afghan peace talks", The Washington Post, (November 9, 2018). [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/in-a-first-moscow-prepares-to-host-afghan-talks-between-taliban-and-kabul-envoys/2018/11/08/1adffc42-e2a4-11e8-b759-3d88a5ce9e19\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.9371ba8613d6](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/in-a-first-moscow-prepares-to-host-afghan-talks-between-taliban-and-kabul-envoys/2018/11/08/1adffc42-e2a4-11e8-b759-3d88a5ce9e19_story.html?utm_term=.9371ba8613d6)

<sup>132</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "The ministry of Foreign Affairs Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's statement regarding Moscow Summit", (November 9, 2018), <https://www.mfa.gov.af/fa/press-releases/ministry-of-foreign-affairs-press-release-regarding-moscow-meeting.html>

<sup>133</sup> Javid Ahmad, " Russia and the Taliban Make Amends", Foreign Affairs, ( last retrieved, January 31, 2016), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2016-01-31/russia-and-taliban-make-amends>

concern over the transitional terrorism to its ally's territory, as there are Russian and central Asian nations' citizen was fighting in the ISIS frontlines. Russia has a concern of these extremist and fundamentalist returns to Central Asia.

To summarize, Russia's geopolitical interests in Afghanistan after 2001 are mostly based on (a), security concerns, avoiding extremism and fundamentalism influence in the region, particularly among Russian and Central Asian countries' citizens who are affiliated to ISI and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. (b) Confronting US/NATO influence towards Central Asian nations, whereas Moscow geopolitical and geo-economic interests are laid. (c) Undermining the US/NATO position in the region by keeping close ties with regional powers over the Afghanistan crisis. The New York Times's a very recent report unveiled a secret from Russia offered Taliban bounties to kill U.S. Troops. According to the reports, U.S. intelligence officials find out that Russian military intelligence unit was paying Taliban-linked militants for killing force in Afghanistan.<sup>134</sup>(d) Securing its allies' borders security and its future interests by establishing friendly relation with Taliban. (e) Preventing drug trafficking and transitional crime from Afghanistan.

#### **4.2.2.2. China**

Sino-Afghan relationship was established for the first time in 1957, when Premier Chou En Lai and Primer Minister Dawood Khan met, during this visit, the two countries signed their first bilateral trade agreement, followed by signing ten-year treaty of friendship and mutual non- aggression in Kabul on 1960. In 1963, both countries signed a treaty formalizing the demarcation of the two countries' 76-km long shared border in the Pamir.<sup>135</sup> China-Afghanistan diplomatic relation was running normal until 1979, when the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan. Beijing-Kabul relations have deteriorated after Noor Mohammed Taraki signed a bilateral friendship agreement with the Soviets in December 1978. China not only

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<sup>134</sup> Charlie Savage, Eric Schmitt and Michael Schwartz, "Russia Secretly Offered Afghan Militants Bounties to Kill U.S. Troops, Intelligence Says", New York Times, (last retrieved, June 27, 2020). <https://nytimes.com/2020/06/26/us>

<sup>135</sup> Byron N. Tzou, *China and International Law the Boundary Disputes*, Praeger Publisher New York 1990, Pp. 70-71

reacted immediately by pausing economic aid to Afghanistan, but it also shifted it's also shifted its support to anti- communist Afghan mujahidin.<sup>136</sup>

During Taliban early regime from 1994 to 2001, China maintained no official relations with the Taliban, but they had contact with the Taliban through Pakistan's mediation regarding security concerns over the Uyghur militants presence in Afghanistan. According to report by Foreign policy, "Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Lu Shulin met Taliban's ex-leader Mullah Mohammad Omer in December 2000 in Kandahar discussed the concerns over Uyghur Militant in Afghanistan".<sup>137</sup>

China was the first country to support the U.S.-led "War on Terror" campaign following the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, and it immediately established official relations with the provisional government headed by Hamid Karzai, and reopened its Embassy in Kabul in February 2002. Following the establishment of diplomatic relations, multiple bilateral agreements were signed between the two countries in order to advance overall relations and facilitate closer and deeper economic and technical cooperation.<sup>138</sup> Since 2001, Kabul and Beijing have signed multidimensional agreements including economic, diplomatic, social and to a small extent, security and military cooperation agreements.<sup>139</sup> Following establishment of the National Unity Government (NUG) in 2014, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani scheduled his first official visit to China in October 2014, and attended the 4<sup>th</sup> Foreign Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan. The two sides signed a number of documents, including an agreement on economic and technical cooperation and a joint declaration on deepening Sino-Afghan strategic cooperative partnership, which was warmly welcomed by Xi Jinping.<sup>140</sup> In last two decades, both countries'

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<sup>136</sup> Frederick Starr (editor) *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, M.E Sharpe Armonk New York. 2004 Pp. 157-58

<sup>137</sup> Abdreu Small, " Why Is China Talking to the Taliban?", Foreign Policy , (last retired, June 2013) <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/06/21/why-is-china-talking-to-the-taliban/>

<sup>138</sup> Tiffany P. Ng "China's Role In Shaping The Future of Afghanistan" CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, sept 2010, p. 2

<sup>139</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, " Joint declaration AFG-China ", (June 2012)

<sup>140</sup> Embassy of PRC in Afghanistan, " Xi Jinping Holds Talks with President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan, Stressing China Values Developing China-Afghanistan Strategic Cooperative Partnership and Hopes Afghanistan Achieve Enduring Peace and Stable Development" (October 2014). <http://af.china-embassy.org/eng/zagx/sbgx/t1206560.htm>.

relations were friendly, China's involvement in Afghanistan since 2001 has been primarily based on economic factors, in regards to Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan China maintained a balance policy toward Afghanistan.

While evaluating China's economic interests, it is suggested to look beyond Afghanistan. Beijing's geo-economic and geopolitical interests in Central Asia encompass a variety of factors, including rare earth minerals, energy corridors, and alliances with regional powers. China is a huge consumer of raw materials, such as oil, gas, and coal, while Central Asia is a significant producer of energy resources. Since 2001, China has made massive investments in energy and transportation infrastructure in region, including Pakistan, Central Asian countries, and Iran. Afghanistan is endowed with vast untapped resources of copper, iron, cobalt, and lithium, it has long been that, these untapped natural resources have been under China's microscope and are big assets for Chinese metal processing companies. Beijing became the largest investor in Afghanistan's mining sector. In 2008, two Chinese state-owned companies, the China Metallurgical Group Corporation (MCC) and the Jiangxi Copper Company limited were award a \$3.5 billion investment on Aynak copper mine contract.<sup>141</sup> The project has not started due to security concerns, but since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, China is willing to resume its project. China's territorial proximity to Afghanistan has sizable impact on regional and Afghanistan issues, for securing its interests China is seeking to have good relations with the Taliban government and its goal is to established alliance with regional powers like Pakistan, Iran and Russia.

There are four factors which shape China's geopolitical interests in Afghanistan; (a) economic interests, where China has already made investments in Afghanistan in Aynak Logar copper mine and Amu River oil and gas basin; (b) Beijing is concerned with three Afghanistan-related security issues: terrorism, drug trafficking, and cross-border crimes in Xinjian province, which is touched to Afghanistan; (c) China widely investment in central Asia, Pakistan, and Iran, thus the instability in region will negatively impact its interests; (d) The Beijing's security interests were laid in the US/NATO presence in Afghanistan, but on the

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<sup>141</sup> House of Commons Treasury Committee, "Globalization: prospects and policy responses" 14th report of session 2006-2007, printed September 2007, p. 7

other hand it was not optimistic about US/NATO long-term involvement in Afghanistan.

During two decades of U.S. and NATO presence in Afghanistan, Beijing has kept a low-profile regarding Afghanistan's matters, but since the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan with high probability Beijing is preparing to fill the vacuum left by the departure of U.S. and NATO troops from this country through its "Belt and Road Initiative". China wants to include Afghanistan on its \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project as part of its "Belt and Road Initiative", which includes the construction of highways, railways, and energy pipelines between Pakistan and China to Afghanistan".

China hosted the Taliban's Doha office senior leaders, including Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Beradar, in the Northern Chinese city of Tianjin on July 28, 2021. The Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi described the meeting as a chance to persuade the Taliban to seek a peaceful solution in Afghanistan and to rebuild the country.<sup>142</sup> But in light of recent events, Beijing has two concerns in post-U.S. Afghanistan: (a) The security concern of its massive investments in the region including Pakistan and Iran as well Central Asia, the escalation of conflict and insecurity in Afghanistan is severely threatening the Beijing economic interests in region. On July 16, 2021, a terrorist attack on Chinese citizens working as the engineers on the China-funded Dasu hydropower project in the Pakistan's northwestern Kohistan region raised Chinese authorities' concerns about the safety and security of their citizens and investment in Pakistan.<sup>143</sup> (b) Simultaneously with the Taliban takeover, Chinese authorities have expressed their deep concern about the possible transition of Uyghur militant groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and having historical connection with the Taliban to Xinjiang. However, during the Taliban's recent visit to China, they assured the Beijing that they will not let any groups in region under their control to pose threat from Afghanistan soil to any country, but Beijing still has doubts. On the other, hand

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<sup>142</sup> Eric Cheung, Ben Westcott, "Chinese officials and Taliban meet in Tianjin as US exits Afghanistan", CNN, (last retrieved, July 29, 2021). <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/07/29/china/china-taliban-tianjin-afghanistan-intl-hnk/index.html>

<sup>143</sup> Ayaz Gul, "China presses Pakistan to Hold Killers of Chinese Nationals Accountable" VOA, (Last retrieved, July 16, 2021). <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/china-presses-pakistan-hold-killers-chinese-nationals-accountable>

China is lobbying for the Taliban government in International arena to be recognized by the international community.

#### **4.2.2.3. Iran**

After the Islamic revolution in 1978-1979 Iran emerged as a regional power playing an influential role in Afghanistan's political environment. Iran's increased involvement in Afghanistan dates back to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Along with cultural, historical, language, and religious similarities, the two countries share a roughly 900-km border. The immigration of around 2 million Afghan refugees to Iran, as a result of the war in Afghanistan has provided Iran with an opportunity to benefits from the condition as sphere of influence in Afghanistan. However, Iran seemingly practiced neutral policy regarding Soviet occupation, but in the backend, provided partial support for a Shia militant group which was led by Abdul Ali Mazari, who fought alongside Mujahidin.<sup>144</sup> Iran's strategy in Afghanistan following 1982 was centered highly on strengthening the leader of a relatively small organization, Szaman-e Nasr (organization of victory), led by Abdul Ali Maazari to head an alliance of Shia resistance groups based in Iran. The conflict units of the Afghan Shia party were often directly linked to religious leaders in Iran and were supervised by Iranian Intelligence officers.<sup>145</sup>

From the beginning of the civil war in 1992 until the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001, Afghanistan hosted rivalries between Shia-Sunni, Pakistan and the Arab Gulf States, and Iran. Both sides have aided their affiliated groups in accomplishing their strategic goals. On the one hand, Saudi Arabia and its allies backed Pakistan based Sunni Mujahidin groups; while on the other hand, Iran provided support for Shia militant groups. By 1988, Iran had consolidated eight Iran-based Shia Hazara groups into single Hizb-e- Wahdat party and demanded 25 percent stake in the newly formed Mujahidin government.<sup>146</sup> Tehran pursued a dual policy during the Afghan civil war. On one hand, it supported Afghan Shia in order to expand its ideological sphere of influence in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Iran has used its Persian language as tool of political and cultural influence

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<sup>144</sup> Rasheed, *ibid*, P. 198

<sup>145</sup> Saikal, *Ibid*, p. 211

<sup>146</sup> Rasheed, *ibid*, pp. 199

over the Persian speaking Sunni Afghans. Tehran was primarily interested in establishing a non- Pashtun dominated regime in Afghanistan during the civil war.

The rise of the Taliban as a Sunni fundamentalist group, which was influenced by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, was not in favor of Iran. Tehran viewed the Taliban as a threat to their interests in Afghanistan as well. The relations between the Taliban and Iran in post-2001 Afghanistan deteriorated after the Taliban captured Mazar Sharif in 1998 and killed 9 Iranian diplomats charged with carrying out secret missions and supporting the Northern Alliance.<sup>147</sup> Iran Initially, declared war on the Taliban, but later reversed its decision due to mediation by UN, in response; Tehran provided full support to Northern Alliance led by Ahmad Shah Masoud, including financial, military logistic, and intelligence.

Following the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Iran's relations with the U.S. played a role in Iran's policy shift toward Afghanistan; Tehran has sought a more active role in Afghanistan's state-building process following the collapse of Taliban regime. At the Bonn Conference 2001, Iranian representative declared their readiness to cooperate with the international community in the state-building process in Afghanistan.<sup>148</sup> In post-Taliban Afghanistan, Tehran sought influence among the political leaders, mostly Shia leadership and demanded Hazara Shia participation in the decision-making process within the newly established government. On the other side, Iranian officials viewed their cooperation with the U.S.-led coalition in combating the Taliban and al-Qaeda as a foundation for a broader strategic dialogue between the two countries.

Between 2002 and 2014, during Hamid Karzai's presidency, Iran-Afghan relations went through several stages, all of which were determined by Iran's multidimensional interests. During this period, the two countries signed a number of bilateral agreements on a range of topics, from counterterrorism to economic cooperation and refugee's issues. Iran has been a proactive participant in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan by pledging \$500 million in humanitarian

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<sup>147</sup> Jason Burke, "Iranian Army confronts the Taliban", Independent, (retrieved, September 16, 1998). <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/iranian-army-confronts-the-taliban-1198465.html>

<sup>148</sup> Michael Kugelman, "The Iran Factor in Afghanistan", Foreign Policy, (retrieved, July 10, 2014), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/07/10/the-iran-factor-in-afghanistan/>

and development assistance, serving as major trading partners.<sup>149</sup> Two factors changed the course of Iran's policy toward Afghanistan; (a) US-Iran relations; whenever President George Bush referred to Iran as the "Axis of Evil" state and disregarded Iranian efforts in Afghanistan; it negatively affected Iran's engagement in Afghanistan.<sup>150</sup>(b) The Afghan-US partnership agreement in 2012 has cooled relations between Kabul-Tehran. The prolonged presence of US/NATO troops in Afghanistan heightened Iranian tension about their national security and regional interests. Regardless of Tehran and Washington's hostile relations, Iranian officials were inevitably looking to maintain their influence in Afghanistan, in order to exercise influence beyond western Afghanistan and areas populated by Tajik and Hazara population. According to Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta, who has remained as foreign minister and national security advisor during the Karzai administration has uncovered the secret of Iran's interfering in Afghan internal affairs. According to him, Iran has financially supported and politically persuaded the new movement, the National Front (Jabha-ye Melli), which was mostly a non- Pashtun alliance inside the Karzai administration.<sup>151</sup> The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Strategic Cooperation between Tehran and Kabul, as the important partnership agreement between the two countries was signed in 2013, during President Karzai's visit to Tehran, where he attended the inauguration of new president, Hassan Rouhani. <sup>152</sup>

Afghan- Iran relations during the National Unity Government (NUG) have experienced ups and downs. NUG headed by Mohamad Ashraf Ghani has declared its new foreign policy maintaining good and friendly relations with neighbors which is based on mutual interests.<sup>153</sup> President Ghani first official visit to Tehran was NUG in 2015 followed by his second visit in august, 2017.

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<sup>149</sup> Alireza Nader, Ali G. Scotten, Ahmad Idrees Rahmani, Robert Steward and Laila Mahnad, "Iran and Afghanistan: A Complicated Relationship", Rand & JSTOR, 2014, p. 5

<sup>150</sup> New York Times, "The Axis of Evil' Speech", (Last retrieved, November 5, 2015).

<https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/politics/10000004021075/the-axis-of-evil-speech.html>

<sup>151</sup> Rangin Dadfar Spanta, *Siyaset Afghanistan; Rovayeti az Daron*, Afghanistan politics: the Narrative from within, Aazem Publishing house, Kabul (second edition) 2017, P. 747

<sup>152</sup> Sudhanshu Verma, "Can Kabul Carry Two Melons in One Hand? Afghanistan and Iran sign strategic cooperation document", Afghanistan Analysts Network, (Last retrieved August 6, 2013), <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/can-kabul-carry-two-melons-in-one-hand-afghanistan-and-iran-sign-strategic-cooperation-document/>

<sup>153</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "Afghanistan foreign Policy", <http://mfa.gov.af/en/page/3883>

Regional issues including Middle East crisis, the wars in Syria, Iraq and Yemen as well the escalation of tension between Washington and Tehran over the Tehran's support for the Bashar-Al-Asad regime and President Donald Trump's insistence on withdrawing from the (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) Iran nuclear deal were basic issues which has triggered ebbed and flowed in relations between Tehran-Kabul.

Iran's interests were undermined by President Ghani's rigorous stance on its foreign policy. In Particular, the Afghan government's water management plan was including construction of multiple dams and hydropower projects in western Afghanistan, including the Kajaki Dam hydropower project on the Helmand River and the Kamal Khan dam in southwestern Nimroz province, as well as the Salma Dam in Herat. Previously, nearly 70 % of the water from Afghanistan's Helmand and Hariroad rivers flowed into Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan provinces; however, with the dam reconstruction the water flow to Iran's Haamon-e-Saaberi decreased. Iran has criticized the Afghan government's water management plan and even Rouhani during his speech at an international forum on dust storms in July 2017 said, "We cannot remain indifferent to the issue [water dams] which is apparently damaging our environment".<sup>154</sup> Recently, the Iranian-backed militants have attacked the reconstructed dams in the western part of Afghanistan, but they have been unable to demolish the dams due to tight security measures by the Afghan government. Not limited to water issues the other multiple issues including signing a long-term Security and Defense Cooperation Agreement with the US and Ghani's sequential official and unofficial visits to Riyadh, sensitized Tehran, which has cooled the political relations between two countries.

The United States and Afghan officials have repeatedly criticized Iran for its support to the Taliban in Afghanistan. Tehran-Taliban close ties have been revealed while Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour was killed in U.S. drone strike in May, 2016 when he was crossing over into Pakistan from Iran.<sup>155</sup> Rahmatullah Nabil, former head of the National Directorate of Security (NDS),

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<sup>154</sup> Noor Zahid, "Iran Criticism of Afghan Dam Projects Draws Rebuke from Kabul Officials", VOA, ( July,5 2017). <https://www.voanews.com/a/iran-afghan-dam-projects/3930411.html>

<sup>155</sup> Jon Boone & Saeed Kamil Dehghan, "Death of Mullah Mansoor highlights Taliban's links with Iran", The Guardian, (May 23, 2016). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/23/death-of-mullah-mansoor-highlights-talibans-links-with-iran>

claimed that Iran has been providing financial and military support to the Taliban, which includes providing arms, recruiting and training Taliban fighters.<sup>156</sup> Before Afghanistan collapse to the Taliban Farah province, which shares a border with Iran, fell to Taliban on May 2018, after almost 300 Taliban militants stormed on it.<sup>157</sup> Afghan officials asserted Iran's direct involvement in Farah's fall to the Taliban. Though previously Iranian officials denied their connection with Taliban, but in recent Iran accepted their ties with Taliban according to Iranian officials the purpose of their contacts with the Taliban is to fight their shared enemy: the Islamic State (ISIS) Khorasan Branch and to persuade them for peace talk with Afghan government, however U.S. and Afghan government is suspicious with what Tehran claim.

Since the Taliban established its political office in Qatar the Iran-Taliban relations get more closed; the western provinces, including Herat, Farah, and Nimroz are buffer zones for Iranian activities. According to Amrullah Salih, ex-Afghan Intelligence head (NDS), and ex-first vice president, that three Iranian agencies, including; a) The Qom seminary, refers to the tradition of theological institution of the Shia faith, it's a major center of Shi'ism in Qom city in the southern part of Iran; b) The Ministry of Intelligence and Security; c) The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC): these three agencies have full influence in Afghanistan through multiple channels, interfering in Afghanistan.<sup>158</sup>

Iran's involvement in Afghanistan has been motivated by geopolitics, geostrategic, and geo-economics, considerations. The geopolitical factors include supporting an Iranian-friendly central government in Kabul favoring Iranian interests, and that is dominated by Tajik and Afghan Shia. President Trump's more aggressive policy toward Iran, including withdrawal from the Tehran nuclear deal and imposing immense economic sanctions on Iran, unprecedentedly deteriorated the relations between the two countries. Iran's containment policy

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<sup>156</sup> Ashti sohbi, "Nabil: Iran az Taliban Hiymayat Mali ve teslihati mekoned, ( Nabil: Iran Supports the Taliban financially and military", Ashti Sohbi, ( November 18, 2016)

<sup>157</sup> Aziz Amin Ahmadzai, "Iran's Support for the Taliban Brings It to a Crossroads with Afghanistan", The Diplomat, (May 21, 2018). <https://thediplomat.com/2018/05/irans-support-for-the-taliban-brings-it-to-a-crossroads-with-afghanistan/>

<sup>158</sup> Amrullah Salih, "Afghanistan National security challenges and Iran", BBC Archive (January 24, 2013), [https://www.bbc.com/pashto/interactivity/2013/01/130124\\_afghanistan\\_challenges\\_and\\_iran\\_by\\_salih.shtml](https://www.bbc.com/pashto/interactivity/2013/01/130124_afghanistan_challenges_and_iran_by_salih.shtml)

was to undermine US/NATO's long-term presence in Afghanistan by implementing two pronged policies; on one hand, it has provided support to their proxies to fight against US/NATO and their allied Afghan government. On the other hand, Tehran provoked Afghan political elites and civil society political parties that have influence on them to keep anti-western stand and sabotage U.S. efforts. As far as we see, there is close rivalry between Shi'ism and Wahhabism in region, Tehran has been attempting to limit and prevent Saudi and Pakistan's influence over Afghan social and political society. Afghanistan's abundant untapped natural resources are both an opportunity and a challenge. The water has been not only the source of dispute among Kabul-Tehran. According to Afghan officials Iran has spent all its efforts to prevent and sabotage TAPI gas pipeline project because Tehran wanted the project flow through its territory. The construction of TAPI has started from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and will flow to Pakistan and India.

In Post-US withdraw from Afghanistan, Iran is closely monitoring the Afghanistan situation, its diplomatic and military relations with the Taliban have been strengthened since the establishment of Taliban political office in Doha; Iran has hosted Taliban senior member's couple of time. In Afghanistan under the Taliban rule Iran adopted watch and wait policy, as Taliban establish its interim administration which is not an inclusive one, Iran has repeatedly criticized the Taliban's new administration structure.

#### ***4.2.2.4. Pakistan***

The U.S. and NATO troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban takeover was widely celebrated across Pakistan by Pakistani officials, religious leaders, and public. Pakistan- Afghanistan government's unfriendly relations go back to the early time and more worsen after Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1978. After the British withdrawal from India in 1947, due to religious violence between Muslims and Hindus, the area was partitioned into Hindu (India) and Muslim (Pakistan) states, two states. After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Afghanistan objected to its admission to the United Nations due to its territorial

dispute over the Durand imposed line.<sup>159</sup>It marked the beginning of two government unfriendly atmosphere, and hostile relation. The territorial dispute over the Durand imposed line between the two governments led to a long unresolvable dispute.

After the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan joined the anti-communism bloc and hosted and supported Afghan Mujahidin against the Soviet Union and Dr. Najibullah's Government. After the withdrawal of Soviets from Afghanistan in 1989, the Pakistan government supported the Peshawar-based seven mujahidin factions in a war against Dr. Najibullah's government, and the Najibullah government collapsed in 1992. During the civil war from 1992 to 1994, Pakistan supported "Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin Hikmatyar's" faction against the Tajik-dominated "Jamiat-e-Islami" faction which was led by Burhanuddin Rabbani. When the Taliban emerged in 1994, in Qandahar, the Pakistani government backed them with military, logistical, financial support. After Kabul fell in 1996 to Taliban and subsequent territorial gain and advancement, Pakistan officially recognized the Taliban regime and extended diplomatic relations and supported them in war against the Northern Alliance.

After the 9/11 attacks and the U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan, General Pervez Musharraf, who assumed power in a military coup in 1999, inevitably turned back to the Taliban and assist the U.S. in its "War on Terror" campaign. Islamabad allied with the U.S. and provided bases, and supply route to the U.S.-led coalition war in Afghanistan. After the collapse of the Taliban regime in Pakistan, the country provided a safe haven for the Taliban and helped the group to re-emerge. In the post-2001 Taliban reemergence Pakistan military establishment provided support including; military, training, logistic, recruitment. During the 20-years of the U.S.'s Afghan conflict, Islamabad played a double game, on one hand, it allied with the U.S. in counterterrorism operations across the Durand line, and other hand, and it supported Taliban and Haqqani Network. The primary interests of Pakistan in Afghanistan will help us to understand the purpose of Islamabad's interfering policy against Afghan central governments.

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<sup>159</sup> Institute for the Study of War, "Pakistan and Afghanistan", <http://www.understandingwar.org/pakistan-and-afghanistan>

- Since 1990, Pakistan has pursued a policy of “strategic depth” in Afghanistan.
- Pakistan’s persistent policy of supporting Afghan militants, particularly the Taliban, post-2001 aims to ensure that Kabul is controlled by a pro- Pakistan regime which would not be opposite of Islamabad interests.
- To gain access to the Central Asian market through Afghan territory.
- Restrict India’s role in Afghanistan, the Delhi-Kabul relations has been strengthened until collapse of Afghan government, India provided \$ 2 billion in aid, it has assisted former Afghan government in its reconstruction of infrastructure projects, security institution capacity building, education, health, and governance. Pakistan has seen Indian influence in Afghanistan as a security threat to its national security.
- Pakistan has consistently pressured Kabul to recognize the Durand line as the international border, but Kabul always refused to recognize the Durand line as the international border.
- Pakistan is willing to access the untapped natural resources in Afghanistan.

Post-US withdrawal Islamabad has obviously supported Taliban on the battleground as well as diplomatically, Pakistani authorities in the role of Taliban spokesmen lobbying for the Taliban victory. Recently Taliban’s advancement was celebrated in Pakistan cities publicly. In a very recent interview with Pakistani Interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad he revealed that “families of Afghan Taliban live in Pakistan, as well their militants receiving medical treatment in local hospital”.<sup>160</sup> However, the Pakistani government has previously constantly denied its support for the Taliban, but since the U.S.’ withdrawal from Afghanistan, Islamabad has obviously backed the Taliban in their war against Afghan government and after the collapse of the Afghan government, Pakistan’s high-level authorities have stepped up their efforts by engaging in regional diplomacy and lobbying for Taliban government recognition by the international community.

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<sup>160</sup> Ayaz Gul, “Families of Afghan Taliban live in Pakistan, Interior Minister says”, VOA, ( last retrieved, June 27, 2021). <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/families-afghan-taliban-live-pakistan-interior-minister-says>

## CHAPTER FIVE

### U.S. AND NATO INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

#### 5.1. UNITED STATE MILITARY INTERVENTION OF AFGHANISTAN

The U.S.-led military intervention in Afghanistan started after four weeks following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on multiple targets in the U.S. On October 7, 2001, Congress passed a resolution authorizing the use of military force against those responsible for the attack.<sup>161</sup> The United Nation Security Council has passed its resolution granting the U.S. the right of self-defense, followed by a NATO statement condemning the attacked and pledging its support under article 5.<sup>162</sup> Not so far, Al-Qaeda leader Bin Laden hand behind the event has revealed and he was on that time in Afghanistan.

The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan began on October 7, 2001 when the diplomatic efforts between the U.S. and the Taliban failed to handover Bin Laden to the United States. Therefore, the counter al-Qaeda and Taliban campaign was conducted with immense American airpower, and the support of tens of thousands of Northern Alliance ground forces, allied with some three hundred U.S. Special Forces soldiers working with 110 CIA officers.<sup>163</sup> The airstrike campaign has targeted Taliban's strategic location in northern, central, and southern regions. The Taliban resistance collapsed almost immediately; the initial campaign lasted less than two months, some of the Taliban's leaders were detained by U.S. forces and some crossed the border into Pakistan.

The first phase of U.S. counter-terrorism strategy which swiftly eradicated Taliban regime and destructed al-Qaeda training camps was successful, thousands of Taliban militant surrounded to Northern Alliance Forces in Northern provinces. And also all the military heavy equipment were destroyed and captured by (NAF). The Taliban physically defeated but were not ideological defeated yet. After collapse of

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<sup>161</sup> Congressional Record, vol. 147, 2001, <https://www.congress.gov/107/plaws/publ40/PLAW-107publ40.pdf> .

<sup>162</sup> NATO, "Statement by the North Atlantic Council" 11 September, 2001. PR/CP(2001)122. <https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2001/p01-122e.htm> .

<sup>163</sup> Peter L. Bergen, *The Longest War The Ending Conflict between America and al-Qaeda*, Simon & Schuster inc. New York, 2011, p. 57

Taliban regime Pakistan returned as safe haven for Taliban from leadership council to ordinary members have run to Pakistan and registered in Pakistani religious Madrassas.

### **5.1.1. The Legal Basis for the Use of Force**

Although it has been two decades since the USA and its allies' military intervention in Afghanistan, which resulted in the ouster of the Taliban regime, but the legitimacy of intervention under international law remains a discussed and controversial issue among international law scholars, diplomats and human rights advocates. However some scholars, human rights advocates, and lawyers believed that the US-led use of force in Afghanistan violated the United Nations Charter's article 2/4. Myra Williamson, in his book "Terrorism, War and International Law", writes:

*"All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations". (Chapter I/ Article 2, Paragraph 4).<sup>164</sup>*

According to Williamson, the US and UK use of force in Afghanistan was unlawful and violated article 2/4. As he believed the 9/11 was not an armed attack; it was a terrorist attack, and the Security Council ought to have taken more responsibility for bringing a comprehensive consensus to react to the event. Second, it was assumed to be an armed attack because the length of the attack was so short and it had ended by the evening of 9/11/2001, and the force in Afghanistan was deployed 26 days later. Third, the responsibility of the attack was not adequately attributed to the state of Afghanistan. Therefore the attack on the Taliban for regime change was unlawful. Fourth, the use of force in Afghanistan was hastily decided rather than to set and negotiated with the Taliban to hand over all involved suspects. In Williamson's conclusion, "if the force was not a legitimate exercise of self-defense, than it was an unlawful use of force, it was a kind of revenge and retaliation in the desire by the US to use force against Afghanistan."<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> United Nations, Chapter 1/Article 2, Paragraph 4

<sup>165</sup> Myra Williamson, *Terrorism, War and International Law: The legality of the use of force against Afghanistan in 2001*, England Published by Ashgate, 2009, pp. 227-230.

On the other hand, significant numbers of western scholars, theorists, and U.S. conservative politician have considered the use of force as a legal act in accordance with article 51 of UN Charter.

*“Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense 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-defense 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”.*<sup>166</sup>

According to The Northern Atlantic Organization (NATO) article 5 as collective defense in support of ally subjected to victim, states if an armed attack occurs against any NATO members it will be considered as an armed attack against all.<sup>167</sup> Following the 11 September, attacks the U.S. has used force in Afghanistan to prosecute Osama Bin Laden and Taliban regime which was accused for having link with al-Qaeda organization. When the investigation groups find out that the attack was done by non-state actor it was referred as act of terror. The Authorization for the use of force resolution was adopted by the U.S. congress on 14 September 2001.

*“Use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001 or harbored such organization or person in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the united states by such nations, organizations or persons”.*<sup>168</sup>

The international community responded sympathetically to the events, and most of the nation’s leaders condemned the attack and labeled the attack as a crime against humanity. The UK’s response, delivered by Toney Blair in House of

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<sup>166</sup> UN, “Chapter VII, Article 51”, <http://legal.un.org/repertory/art51.shtml>

<sup>167</sup> NATO, “Statement by the North Atlantic Council” (11 September, 2001). PR/CP(2001)122. <https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2001/p01-122e.htm>

<sup>168</sup> United State Congress “Joint Resolution”, Congress Archived record, Sponsor Sen Daschle, Thomas A ( S.J. Res 23, Public Law 107-40-September 18, 2001), <https://www.congress.gov/107/plaws/publ40/PLAW-107publ40.pdf>

Commons, was condolences and emphasized its support to the US.<sup>169</sup> The European Commission reacted quickly to the attack and demand for justice, pledging its contribution and support to the government of US and its people.<sup>170</sup>

The United Nation explicitly condemned the attacks and expressed its deepest condolences to the victims and their families, and calling on the international community to redouble their efforts to prevent and suppress terrorist acts, as well as expressing its readiness to take all necessary steps to respond the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and combat all forms of terrorism. The UN Security Council adopted resolution 1368 on September 12, 2001, and marked the attacks as terrorist acts and explicitly recognized the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense in accordance with article 51 of the UN Charter.<sup>171</sup>

In accordance with article 51 of the UN Charter, the Security Council members decided to show their political support for an imminent U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan. The Security Council justified the U.S. use of force as self-defense, and to set a legal ground for the U.S. attacks on Afghanistan obtained Northern Alliance's authorization of as political and military authority in Afghanistan after the collapse of the Taliban regime, in the framework of intervention by invitation, and immediately passed the Resolution (1378 of 2001) for establishing an interim administration, followed by authorizing the deployment International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in framework of Humanitarian Intervention with (Resolution 1386 of 2001) and the ISAF mission mandated by adopting (Resolution 1413 of 2002).<sup>172</sup> The legality of the U.S. use of force in Afghanistan is continues to be a source of contention among the opponents and advocates, and each of them has their own reason for being right. However, the consequences suggest that appropriate solutions might be one, if the UN nation had taken more responsibility by pursuing diplomatic solutions rather than use of force in Afghanistan.

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<sup>169</sup> Williamson, Ibid, P. 230

<sup>170</sup> European Commission, EU response to the 11 September: European Commission action, MEMO /02/122, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-02-122\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-02-122_en.htm).

<sup>171</sup> Security Council Resolution 1368, 12 September, 2001,

<sup>172</sup> For more details refer to aforementioned United Nations' adopted Resolutions.

## 5.2. POST-2001 STATE BUILDING EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN

The term “state- building” frequently used in international relations literature is originates in Europe. It has become wide analytical and experimental platform for the analysis of recent global events in the case of post-conflict states. The term state-building has numerous synonyms, including post-conflict construction, stabilization and reconstruction, but conceptually it all refers to the security, political, economic and social recovery of a post-conflict state.<sup>173</sup> It demonstrates the wide range of the international community’s and donors’ engagement in the reconstruction of war-torn nations’ multidimensional fields. After the IWW, sixteen postwar states emerged in Europe, particularly Western Europe including Germany and also in Asia Japan which were heavily destroyed during IWW. It’s economic, social and political infrastructures were disrupted by the war. Post-IWW between 1945 and 1952 the United States reconstruction aid officially known as the “European Recovery Program” (ERP) flowed to the nations which were devastated by the war under the Marshal Plan to ensure financial recovery, reconstruction of governmental institutions, and economic infrastructure. The US has pledged nearly \$ 13 billion in aid, consisting of shipments of food, staples, fuel and machinery and investment in industrial sector as result, by 1952, European economies grew at an unprecedented rate.<sup>174</sup>

The term “state-building” became more widely used in academic and bureaucratic fields after 1990, when Soviet Union collapsed and new states were founded in Eastern Europe, the Balkan and Central Asia, and it has been practically utilized for various purposes, such as post-conflict reconstruction, humanitarian intervention, expanding democracy, responsibility to protect, and even as a tools for the removal of unfriendly regimes. Recently, the concept has been applied to the problem of weak states, which have been viewed as a threat to international security.

The RAND Corporation published a book, “America’s Role in Nation Building from Germany to Iraq”, in which the authors examined seven case studies – Germany, Japan, Somalia, Haiti Bosnia Kosovo and Afghanistan and Iraq, to

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<sup>173</sup> Verena Fritz and Alina Rocha Menocal, “ Understanding State-Building from a Political Economy Perspective”, An Analytical and Conceptual Paper on Processes, Embedded Tensions and Lessons for International Engagement, published Overseas Development Institute, September 2007. P. 13

<sup>174</sup> The George C. Marshall Foundation , “ History of The Marshall Plan”, <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/marshall/the-marshall-plan/history-marshall-plan/>

determine the effectiveness and failure of state-building approaches in transforming conflict-affected societies into democracy, prosperity, development, and peace. The author expressed the condition changed at the end of the Cold War, which created new problems for the US and its allies, and one of the problem identified as state failures, and the phenomenon of terrorism in post-2001, which has shifted the U.S.'s policy from a containment, deterrence and maintenance of the status quo approach to direct interventionist policy.<sup>175</sup> The state-building has been combined with military intervention or regime changes, particularly since the 9/11 attacks. The U.S. and its allies have used the state-building approach to accomplish humanitarian and development objectives, and also it has been used as an approach to counterterrorism and counterinsurgency instrument in Afghanistan. The 9/11 attacks laid the groundwork for an international consensus on how to address the post-conflict or weak states problems. International state-building has developed into a critical framework and a proactive response to a broad range of economic, social and political problems, which has been threatening the international security.<sup>176</sup>

### **5.2.1. The Bonn Agreement in 2001**

In the immediate aftermath of the Taliban's regime collapse, the international community has called for a conference with the support of the United Nation for the future of Afghanistan in Bonn. The conference was held on December 27, 2001. It was attended by Afghan elites, international community representatives, and regional countries envoys. After a few days of negotiations and dialogues on December 5, the participants agreed on the formation of interim government and among the listed candidates for chairmanship position, Hamid Karzai was elected as eligible chairmen of interim administration by committee members.<sup>177</sup>

Since the fall of Dr. Najibullah's government in 1992, the Bonn agreement has been regarded as the first step toward a state-building initiative in Afghanistan. It marked the first peaceful transfer of power officially in civil war-torn country from

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<sup>175</sup> James Dobins, John G. McGinn, *America's Role in Nation-Building from Germany to Iraq*, Rand Corporation, California, 2003. P. 14

<sup>176</sup> David Chandler, *International State building The Rise of Post-Liberal Governance*", Routledge, New York, 2010, P. 3

<sup>177</sup> United Nation, "Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of permanent Government Institution", <https://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/afghan-agree.htm>

conflicting faction to an interim administration. The Interim authority consisted of an interim administration led by a chairman and five Vice-chairmen, a Special Independent Commission charged with convening an emergency Loya Jirga (Grand assembly) a traditional Afghan decision-making body and Supreme Court of Afghanistan.<sup>178</sup> The Loya Jirga was held, on June 10, 2002, and 1600 delegates participated from 34 provinces in order to elect a transitional administration. During two days inside referendum the delegations elected Hamid Karzai as president and extended the transitional government for two more years.<sup>179</sup>

The Bonn 2001, agreement was a foundation stone of state-building and political settlement in Afghanistan, which was supported by the international community and determined by Afghans, excluding the Taliban, as a roadmap for their future. Following the attempts, a constitutional assembly was held to adopt a new constitution as legal framework for interim administration. The 2004, constitution set up a three-branch structure of government, including an executive branch with presidential system and an elected president, and legislative branch comprised of the parliament and Senate assembly.<sup>180</sup> As well the judicial system in accordance to Islamic principles, international standards and Afghan legal traditions was established.<sup>181</sup>

The new constitution paved the way for the 2004 presidential election, which was Afghanistan's first democratic presidential election. Which has been lauded as significant step forward in the country's fractured political life.<sup>182</sup> Millions of eligible voters cast their ballots for their preferred candidate. The Afghanistan Election Commission confirmed Hamid Karzai's victory as president of Afghanistan with 55.4 % of votes.<sup>183</sup>

After the constitution approval by Constitutional Loya Jirga, it became the official law of country and effected before presidential election. The constitution set

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid, <https://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/afghan-agree.htm>

<sup>179</sup> The Institute for War and Peace Reporting, "Public Record of Afghanistan's Loya Jirga", 2002, [https://iwpr.net/sites/default/files/download/publication/lj\\_transcripts.pdf](https://iwpr.net/sites/default/files/download/publication/lj_transcripts.pdf)

<sup>180</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Politics, Election and Government Performance", Congress Research Service, June 12, 2015. P.5

<sup>181</sup> Bonn Agreement 2001, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3f48f4754.html>

<sup>182</sup> Global Security.org, "Afghanistan- Government", <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/government.htm>

<sup>183</sup> Joint Electoral Management Body, "Decision of the Joint Electoral Management", Afghanistan Presidential Election, 2004, [http://www.iec.org.af/public\\_html/Election%20Results%20Website/english/english.htm](http://www.iec.org.af/public_html/Election%20Results%20Website/english/english.htm)

has up a framework for the executive, legislative and judicial system. All the bureaucratic, politic, foreign affairs and civil society activity take place in accordance to new constitution. The process of state-building in Afghanistan after collapse of Taliban regime has occurred on different steps.

### **5.2.2. Post- 2001 Political Settlement in Afghanistan**

Political settlement is a critical step toward state-building in a post-conflict society. The term “political settlement” refers to direct and indirect agreement among the elites principally on the rules of the game, power distribution, and the political process by which states and society are connected.<sup>184</sup> In other words, it refers to the distribution of power among the political leaders, different ethnic and civil societies. Political settlements are composed of agreements that formally and informally lay the ground for the political participation of all members of society. The fundamental elements of political settlements are governance, stability, development and legitimacy. The struggle among the elites is largely an informal process of conflict, negotiations and compromise in which the involved parties seek to secure access and control over sources of wealth and power or advance a particularly ideological or national vision.<sup>185</sup> The political processes in post-conflict societies particularly in third world countries seem little bit difficult in comparison to developed societies, because due to fragility in social and political structure cause by conflict and violence.

Since the collapse of the monarchy in 1973, the Afghan political structure has been unstable; the dilemma of the elite’s fragmentation and political instability has persisted for a long. The Afghan politicians’ failure to unite triggered the structural instability and institutional crisis, particularly, since the “Saur Coup” of 1978 until the collapse of Afghan government in 2021. This country has been constantly witness of leadership chaos, due to internal and external factors. According to Dennis Abrams, described, “Chaotic is a good word to describe Afghanistan’s recent political history since 1973, alone it has seen its national leader deposed (1973)

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<sup>184</sup> OECD, “DAC Guidelines and Reference Series Supporting State building in situation of Conflict and Fragility”, OECD Publication, 2011, P. 30

<sup>185</sup> The Asia Foundation, “Political Settlements: Implications for International Development Policy and Practice”, 2010. P.5

executed (1978) executed (1979) removed (1987) overthrown (1992) overthrown in (1996) and oust in (2001)".<sup>186</sup> And finally collapse in 2021, the constant regime changes posed a threat to state legitimacy and sparked a crisis within the leadership circle.

After the 1970s, Afghanistan's political environment became increasingly dominated by religious groups that lacked a commitment to civic politics. They sought to accomplish their objectives through regime collapse rather than democratic ways.<sup>187</sup> The collapse of the regimes has continued in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. However, there have been few failed political settlement attempts made such as "Peshawar Accord" on April 24, 1992, which was signed by the mujahidin leaders backed by Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, and the United Nations on the establishment of an Afghan interim government with two executive organs interim Islamic Council and leadership Council headed by Sebghatullah Mojadidi, and Burhanudin Rabani and the Gullbidin Hakmatyar as Prime Minister, but the internal disagreements over power sharing contributed to the fall of the Peshawar Accord. The second failed political settlement agreement is known as Islamabad or Macca accord, which was signed among warring mujahidin groups in March 1993, in Islamabad, but the accord did not resulted with stability.<sup>188</sup>

The advent of the Taliban in early 1994 brought an end to internal disagreement between Jihadist factions, but not to war violence in Afghanistan; a new chapter of misery has opened in the country's history. The Taliban's approach to political settlement was coercive through the use of hard power against their opponents; they occupied the territory and disarmed the opposition. The Taliban sought to establish an authoritarian and totalitarian regime based on Islamic Sharia law and an Islamic Emirate headed by a self-proclaimed Amirul Momenin as headed with full decision-taking power. The Taliban sought absolute monarchy and practiced marginalization politics instead of the elite's convergence approach to establish a government that represented a democratic government inclusive of all ethnic groups. By 2001, the Taliban regime had gained control of 95 percent of the

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<sup>186</sup> Dennis Abrams, *Modern World Leaders Hamid Karzai*, Infobase Publishing, united state, 2007, Pp. 14

<sup>187</sup> William Maley, *Rescuing Afghanistan*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2006, P. 20

<sup>188</sup> William Maley, "The Dynamics of Regime Transition in Afghanistan", *Central Asian Survey* 16 (2) P. 174.

territory and was on the verge of victory, but the unexpected 9/11 events altered their course and brought the regime to an end.

Post-2001, the political settlement in Afghanistan as part of state-building occurred in different stages. The first step toward political settlement in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime was the “Bonn Agreement,” which has set up a framework for political participation of Afghan political leaders after four decades of war. Excluding Taliban’s almost all Afghan factions, political and religious leaders came together to architecture the future of the country. The international community, including international organizations and foreign donors have also taken an active role in the process of state building and announced their commitment to the economic, politic and security recovery of Afghanistan.

Following the Bonn Agreement, the 2004 constitution was adopted it has paved the way for a democratic presidential election in 2004 for the first time in the history of Afghanistan. Millions of Afghans had cast their vote in order to choose their future leader. Hamid Karzai was proclaimed by election commission as winner of election.<sup>189</sup> The newly adopted constitution established a legal framework for all political parties and civic societies to work. In political sphere, the involved parties’ commitment was to form an autonomous government structure that reflects the will of Afghan people, protecting its territorial integrity paving way for national reconciliation and rebuilding the economic infrastructure most importantly protecting the rights of minorities and giving social political and economic rights for women.<sup>190</sup>

The parliamentary and provincial election held on 2005, it was another important step toward democratic political settlement in Afghanistan about 5,800 nominees including 582 women candidates competed for 252 Parliament seats and also provincial council seats.<sup>191</sup> The Parliament ensured the relationship between people and government through its delegation, the parliament was authorized to act as an observer of government activities.

The second round of presidential election was held in 2009 under the 2004 constitution. President Karzai won the election by 49.67 % votes, followed by 2014

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<sup>189</sup> JEMB, Ibid. 4

<sup>190</sup> The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Chapter two, January, 2004, <http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf> , Pp. 9

<sup>191</sup> Joint Electoral Management Body, “Gozahrish Rozi Antikhabat; Antikhabat Wolsey Jirga ve Shurah Wilayeti sal 1384, 2005 Parliamentary and provincial elections reports”, JEMB, P.3

election between Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah which was the most problematic election due to widespread allegations of elections fraud between two candidates, as result, an agreement was reached on the formation of a National Unity government with Ashraf Ghani as president and Dr. Abdullah as chief executive.<sup>192</sup>

As the political settlements in conflict-affected countries are an inherently complex and time-consuming process, therefore, Afghanistan as country that has suffered a long period of insecurity and political instability was not immune to those difficulties and impediments during the political process. Due to the fact that political settlements in conflict-affected and fragile societies are exclusively and frequently unstable and vulnerable to the risk of violence between elites and faction, and the states are unable to have an absolute monopoly on violence.<sup>193</sup> Afghanistan's history has been defined by a weak central government and a strong rural society, ethnic diversity, tribalism and conservative religious society have all had an impact on political process in Afghanistan. Another factor undermining the Afghan political process was the presence of armed warlords in province, which undermined the legitimacy of the central government and weakened the rule of law. Additionally the external intervention including, regional and international players interference in internal affairs of Afghanistan undermined the legitimacy of government and has triggered more unstable political environment.

### **5.2.3. Security Sector Reforms**

The security institutions in post-conflict society are most vulnerable to destruction, Along with economic, political, and social institutions, security institutions are rapidly destroyed in the aftermath of external and internal conflicts. Rebuilding the security sector is a critical component of state building following the political process and peace reconciliation. Despite a security establishment, the other dimensions of process, such as economic, political, and social development are hard

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<sup>192</sup> Afghanistan Analysts Network, "Agreement between the Two Campaign Teams Regarding the Structure of the National Unity Government", 2014, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/miscellaneous/aan-resources/the-government-of-national-unity-deal-full-text/>

<sup>193</sup> Thomas Parks, William Cole, "Political Settlements: Implications for International Development Policy and Practice", The Asia Foundation, occasional paper , No.2, July 2010). Pp. 10-11

to achieve.<sup>194</sup> The formation of professional and standardized security institutions with well-trained professional security forces contributes to the effective implementation of law and the government's legitimacy. Instability, unstandardized security institution and incompetent security forces undermine the role of law and weaken the legitimacy of a government.

As the security dilemma is associated to violent terrorism and extremism which can jeopardize national and international security, it also endangers the state-building process, peace, democracy, human security, and human rights. The existence of external and internal security forces and the process of reforming the security sector are vital components of the post-conflict peacebuilding agenda. In this context, security sector reform (SSR) has become a significant concept in conflict affected states. As part of the state-building initiative and the formation of political institutions, the security and economic structures are essential part of process.<sup>195</sup>

However, there is not a comprehensive conceptual definition of security reforms or any worldwide accepted agenda for security establishment, because each country's situation different due to geopolitical, economic, historical and culture factors. But still some overarching principles are established by international organizations and security establishment agencies. According to United Nations definition from security sector reforms, "the purpose of establishing a security institution is to prevent and respond to violence, to provide security to citizens, and ultimately to foster popular trust in state service and sustainable development".<sup>196</sup>

The SSR as vital part of state-building emerged at the end of the Cold War whereas the war-affected states were seen as threats to the western capitalist core and international security therefore; the state-building has been seen as treatment to this issue.<sup>197</sup> The SSR has become an approach toward international involvement in the post-conflict recovery of states and centered on a development agenda. The security establishment as a stage of the state-building process in conflict-affected countries has a couple stages, including political settlement, deploying peacekeeping forces for

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<sup>194</sup> Albrecht Schnable and Hans- Georg Ehrhart, ( Ed ) *Security Sector reform and Post-conflict Peacebuilding*, United Nations University Press, Tokay, 2005, P.1

<sup>195</sup> Schnable & Ehrhar, *ibid* , P. 3

<sup>196</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping, " Security Sector Reform", <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/security-sector-reform>

<sup>197</sup> Mark Sedra, *Security Sector Reform in Conflict- Affected Countries the evolution of model*, Routledge, New York, 2017. P. 54

providing security, and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process, security institution building, security personal recruitment and training, the donor engagement in providing financial, military supports and also security sector reforms.

In post-2001 international war on terrorism the SSR became a core to the state-building and peace-building process and it has been used as tool to combat terrorism and extremism. Following the US-led military intervention of Afghanistan SSR was top agenda of state-building efforts. The international community notable U.S. and NATO came up with a strong commitment to establish a capable security forces and security institutions as part of state-building initiative to handle the security challenges to provide security to citizens and to defend territorial integrity and most importantly to protect the democratic values of newly formed government. Although it was a challengeable task because the successive wars in country has destroyed all security foundations, and Afghanistan was divided into six autonomous regions which were ruled by local warlords belong to different factions, the existence military equipment were serving the local warlords. The Security Institutions establishment and SSR process have been taken place in various occasions after 2001 in Afghanistan including.

#### ***5.2.3.1. The Deployment of International Security Assistant Forces***

Following the Taliban regime collapse, the first step toward providing security in Afghanistan was the deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which authorized under UN Security Council resolution 1386 with a chapter VII enforcement mandate, to assist in consolidating peace and provide security for newly formed transitional administration. Additionally, to contribute to the process of developing unified Afghan National Forces (UNSC, S/RES/1386, 2001).<sup>198</sup> On August 11, 2003, NATO assumed command of the combined ISAF mission, initially the mission's mandate was limited to provide security around Kabul, but on October, 2003 the UN extended the ISAF mission's mandate to other parts of Afghanistan,

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<sup>198</sup> United Nation Security Council, “ Resolution 1386 (2001) on Afghanistan”, December, 2001, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/708/55/PDF/N0170855.pdf?OpenElement>

paving the way for the mission's expansion across the country.<sup>199</sup> The NATO mission extended for decades and during this time the coalition troops have contributed to the security, training and equipping Afghan National Security Forces.

#### ***5.2.3.2. International Community Contribution to SSR in Afghanistan***

In 2001, the international community pledged its commitment to providing financial support for Afghanistan's reconstruction through the Bonn Accord. Along with political, economic and infrastructure development, the donor nations have committed to the establishment of security institutions and Afghan National Security Defense Forces (ANDSF). The first donor nations' financial commitment conference was held in January 2002, in Tokyo, in which a five years reconstruction plan was drafted for Afghanistan. The estimated cost of reconstruction across multiple dimensions was overall estimated \$15 billion. Approximately \$270 million of this total amount was allocated to the security sector reforms, which covered recruitment, training, equipment, mine action, and drug control.<sup>200</sup> The international community mandated their support for SSR in Afghanistan in the Geneva Group Eight (G8), conference which was held in April 2002, developed a comprehensive scheme for the SSR, and pledged financial support for establishment of ANDSF. The SSR agenda rests on five pillars; each of individual donor took the responsibility for each sector reforms; Military Reform (U.S.); Police Reform (Germany); Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Ex-combatants (Japan); Counter-Narcotics (UK); and Judicial Training (Italian).<sup>201</sup>

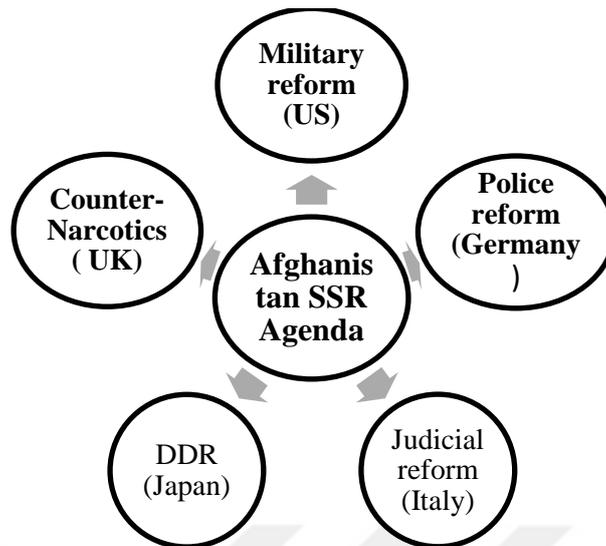
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<sup>199</sup> NATO "Resolute Support Afghanistan ISAF History, <https://rs.nato.int/about-us/history/isaf-history.aspx>.

<sup>200</sup> United Nations, "Donors Meet in Tokyo to Commit to Major Recovery Plan for Conflict-Ravaged Afghanistan", January 2002, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2002/afg181.doc.htm>

<sup>201</sup> Sedra, *ibid*, P. 166

**Figure 5.1:** Afghanistan Security Sector Reform Process



The SSR was launched in order to create a professional, well-trained, and equipped security forces capable of replacing international coalition troops and to handling the security challenges of Afghanistan. The international commitment to SSR in Afghanistan was reiterated at the Berlin summit in April 2004, which the donor nations place a premium on recruiting, training, equipping and capacity building of the ANDSF.<sup>202</sup> From 2002, until the collapse of the Afghan government in August 2021 the United States and NATO have been actively involved in supporting, developing ANFS. Since the U.S. has assumed responsibility this mission from 2002 to 2008, Washington has contributed over 16 billion in financial assistance to train, educated, and equip ANDSF.<sup>203</sup> The London Conference on Afghanistan dubbed the “Afghanistan Compact,” held in 2006, followed by Paris Conference on Afghanistan in 2008, Hague Conference in 2009, as well as the second round of London Conference in 2010, followed by second round of Bonn Conference in 2011. At each of these conferences, the international community pledged financial support to ANDSF. Pursuant to these commitments, NATO members decided to prolong their financial support for ANDSF until 2024 during the NATO Summit in Brussels in

<sup>202</sup> U.S. Department of State, “ The Berlin Donors’ Conference: Helping Afghanistan move Forward”, Fact Sheet Bureau of Public Affairs Washington, May 3, 2004. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/sca/rls/fs/32094.htm>

<sup>203</sup> Lawrence B. Peabody, ( Editor), *Afghanistan Security*, NOVA Science Publishers Inc. 2009, New York, P.2

July 2018 by providing \$4 to \$5 billion annually.<sup>204</sup> This financial support has continued until the collapse of Afghan government on August 15, 2021. Since 2001 the U.S. provide a total of \$84 billion in financial aid to ANDSF.

### ***5.2.3.3. Security Sector Reform Post-2001 in Afghanistan***

Post-2001, the SSR process consisted of establishing Afghan security institutions, security force personal recruitment, training and equipping. The international community, particularly the five donors have assumed responsibility for ANDSF's training and providing technical, logistical, and financial support. In 2003, at first internal SSR conference which was held in Kabul, Hamid Karzai the head of Afghan transitional administration announced the reintegration of Afghan Militia Forces which were predominantly anti-Taliban and loyal to Northern Alliance into ethnically balanced national army. The stakeholders have agreed on creation 70000 army and about 6000 police forces.<sup>205</sup>

However, when the security threat intensified due to the Taliban reemergence, the stakeholders decided to increase the number of ANDSF, hence, in these new efforts, the U.S. was in charge of training and equipping the ANA, while the European Union, particularly Germany took the responsibility for training Afghan Nation Police (ANP). A professional capable Afghan army was viewed as a viable alternative for replacing Coalition troops and combating insurgency and protecting territorial integrity and implementing role of law. The first phase of SSR has included the recruitment, training of ANSF which initially numbered 130,000 in total including ANA and Police forces.

Due to growing security concerns and an escalating insurgency from 2007 to 2009 the U.S. and NATO agreed to increase the number of ANDSF to 171,600 by the end of October 2011.<sup>206</sup>The deterioration of security situation in Afghanistan post-2009, and the announcement of U.S. and NATO gradual withdrawal of troops

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<sup>204</sup> SIGAR, "2019 High- RISK LIST", [https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/spotlight/2019\\_High-Risk\\_List.pdf](https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/spotlight/2019_High-Risk_List.pdf), 2019. P.8

<sup>205</sup> VOA, "Conference On Establishment of National Army", (last retrieved, 04/21/2003), <https://www.darivoa.com/a/a-48-a-2003-04-21-2-1-94061849/1421117.html>

<sup>206</sup> Rod, Nordland, "U.S. Approves Training to Expand Afghan Army, (retrieved, Jan, 2010), <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/15/world/asia/15afghan.html>

from Afghanistan by 2014, as well as the transition of security responsibility to ANDSF, has led that U.S. and NATO increased their commitment to ANDSF, in which they had increased the number of ANDSF and pledged financial support, and provided training, equipping facilities. With that the total size of ASDFS reached to 352,000 including 195,000 Afghan National Army (ANA) 175,000 Afghan National Police (ANP) and 12000 Afghan Local Police (ALP) before their collapse.<sup>207</sup>

The ANSDF was composed of Afghan National Army, The Afghan Air force, Afghan National police and National Directorate of Security (NDS) within these mean unites the specific unites including; ANA Ground unite, ANA Special forces, National police, border police, public protection forces, Security Police, criminal investigation Police, Narcotic Police, Local police, Intelligence agency. Since the transfer of security responsibility from Coalition troops to Afghan security forces, the ANDSF was in charge of security, defending territorial integrity, combating terrorism, insurgency, organized crime, and narcotics, as well as implementing the rule of law and protecting citizen rights.<sup>208 209</sup>

The ANSDF's training process began with the recruitment process; thirty six recruitment centers were established in 34 provinces to process nominee recruitment for ANA and ANP. The ANSF training program was launched in 2003 under the name of Task Force Phoenix by ISAF. The TF Phoenix mission consisted of broad-based training, mentoring, and assistance program (Coalition Joint Task Force Phoenix).<sup>210</sup> The TF Phoenix program was followed by the NATO's Training Mission program in Afghanistan. The training was conducted by foreign and Afghan trainers, alongside two military academies; (I) the Afghan National Military Academy and (II), National Police Academy. There were also six military training centers in the capital and provinces. The training consists of 12 weeks of basic warrior training, literacy programs, and higher education and professional training

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<sup>207</sup> Ali A. Jalali, "Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces; Mission, Challenges, and Sustainability, United States Institute of Peace, Paperwork, (115), May, 2016. P. 10

<sup>208</sup> Zainab Muhammadi, "Nerohayee Amnity Afghanistan; shumar of Tajhizat, (Afghan Security Forces; size and equipment)". BBC, ( last retrieved, June 28, 2013), [http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2013/06/130618\\_k04\\_afghan\\_security\\_force\\_info](http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2013/06/130618_k04_afghan_security_force_info)

<sup>209</sup> Afghanistan National Defense Ministry, " Wazyet Feli Ardu mili ( The Current Status of National Army), <https://mod.gov.af/dr/%D9%88%D8%B6%D8%B9%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D9%81%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%88%DB%8C-%D9%85%D9%84%DB%8C>

<sup>210</sup> Global Security.org, " Coalition Joint Task Forces Phoenix", <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/dod/cjtf-phoenix.htm>

for ANSF.<sup>211</sup> Additionally, the Afghan National Forces were sending abroad to Turkey, India, USA, China, Russia, and Europe for education and professional training.

To summarize, SSR was one the most important processes of the state-building initiative in Afghanistan. The SSR process consist of four stages; the first phase, which lasted from 2001 to 2003, focused on laying the foundation of ANDSF, after the US and coalition partners have agreed on the formation, development and training of ANSF. The formation process began with small infantry unit training and progressed to the formation of large military unites and construction of security and defense institutions.

The second phase was between 2004 -2008 the ANDSF expanded in response to the growing insurgency in Afghanistan. To address these concerns and protect the newly formed government, the U.S. and other coalition nations agreed to increase the number of ANDSF from 60,000 to 82,000 ANP and from 75,000 to 134,000 ANA, as well as provide professional training and sophisticated equipment.<sup>212</sup> The third stage between 2009 and 2014 was very crucial both for the U.S. and allies, and also for Afghan forces, because on the one hand, due to conflict and security threat exacerbation, and on the other hand, the gradual withdrawal of foreign troops and transition of security responsibility to Afghan forces made it difficult for ANDSF. The transition of security responsibility from NATO to Afghan forces began by 2010 and completed by end of 2014 with that the NATO mission in Afghanistan shifted from conflict to training missions.<sup>213</sup> However, this period was a difficult time for ANDSF, but significant improvements have been made, including creation of ANA Special forces unite by the end of 2012 over 12,525 commandos and 955 Special Forces had received professional training. <sup>214</sup> The Afghan Air force power and capability was among the ANDSF development program the U.S. efforts was already started by 2009 to develop the AAF capabilities.

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<sup>211</sup> Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Media & Information Center, “Urdo Milli: Peshraft ha ve Karkardha ( National Army: Progresses and activity)”, <http://www.gmic.gov.af/dari/analysis/56-urdo-i-millie>

<sup>212</sup> SIGAR, “Reconstruction the Afghan National Defense and Security Force: Lesson From the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan”, September, 2017, <https://www.sigar.mil/interactive-reports/reconstructing-the-andsf/index.html>

<sup>213</sup> NATO, “ISAF’s Mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014) (archived)”, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_69366.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm)

<sup>214</sup> SIGAR *ibid*, 86

The last phase of ANDSF development and operational responsibility began after the security transition from NATO to Afghan Forces from 2015 to 2019. With the introduction of the Result Support Mission, a non-combat mission tasked with training, advising, and assisting the ANDSF, since the start of RSM in 2015, until its collapse in August 2021, the ANSDF was in charge of providing security and fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan. Since its formation in 2001 until its collapse in August 2021, \$84 billion dollars spent on ANDSF's training, equipping, and capacity building, but what the donor nations expected did not achieve. In spite of its improvement there have been still criticisms over their inability, insufficiency and easy collapse.

According to SIGAR's annual 2017 report, "The weak leadership, corruption, attrition, lack of equipment, and lack of coordination among military institutions, illiteracy and growing insurgency, as well as insecurity, the reintegration of corrupted, criminal militias into security institutions as internal factors affected the development of ANDSF and undermined efficiency and reform in security and defense institutions." For instance, some of the external factors which are related to donor nations the lack of coordination and a standardized SSR framework among coalition nations before 2014, was another factor which slows down the process. The shortage of military equipment including offensive and heavy weapons, logistic equipment, and air force capabilities paved the way for the increasing insecurity and Taliban influence over the rural areas. The above issues caused the inability of the ANDSF to provide security in Afghanistan and also triggered high casualties. According to former President Ghani, "45,000 Afghan forces have been killed in conflict with the Taliban in Afghanistan since 2014," an unprecedented number.

#### ***5.2.4. Economic and Infrastructure Development***

The devastating civil war in Afghanistan has destroyed all infrastructures, including economic institutions, the manufacturing sector, roads, building, customs, trade, and financial system. During this period, poverty, drought, immigration, illiteracy reached an all-time high, and even people lacked access to basic services. Following the fall of Taliban regime, in context of the liberal state-building approach which is seen as a good prescription for peace and stability in failed and collapse states, the international community concluded, that promoting economic development would

have played a significant role in the lives of people and progress of Afghan society. Therefore, the international community including various regional and international organizations, non-governmental organizations, donor countries has pledged their strong commitment to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Along with the recovery of the political, social and security sector, the rebuilding of economic institution and infrastructure rebuilding was prioritized.

Due to the critical nature of economic recovery in Afghanistan, following the Bonn accord in 2001, the Tokyo international conference for the reconstruction of Afghanistan was held in 2002. The donor nations pledged \$4.5 billion as part of an emergency response for humanitarian assistance, health, food, security and irrigation, education and reconstruction.<sup>215</sup> Due to massive war destruction, the aide amount was insufficient to cover the all damages, therefore during London conference which was held in 2006, the international community committed to the economic and infrastructure development of Afghanistan by pledging \$10 billion in development aids. The conference was also about the evaluation of 5 year development program.<sup>216</sup>

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) was developed for the first time in 2008 and presented at the Paris Conference on Afghanistan, and it served as a roadmap for the next fifteen years, the security, governance, economics, and development were the primary components of the ANDS. The estimated cost of implementing ANDS was \$50 billion, but the donor nations have committed to fund \$15 billion.<sup>217</sup> The main purpose of launching ANDS was to reduce poverty, improve the welfare service to citizen and establish the foundations for a secure and stable Afghanistan. Afghanistan economy during former president Karzai's was constantly depended on foreign aids, but during Ashraf Ghani government the economy steadily improved. The GDP per capital in 2020 was \$2000 according to World Bank

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<sup>215</sup> UN, "Donors Meet in Tokyo to Commit to Major Recovery for Conflict-Ravaged Afghanistan", archived ( AFG/181-DEV/2363-PI/1395), 18 January 2002.

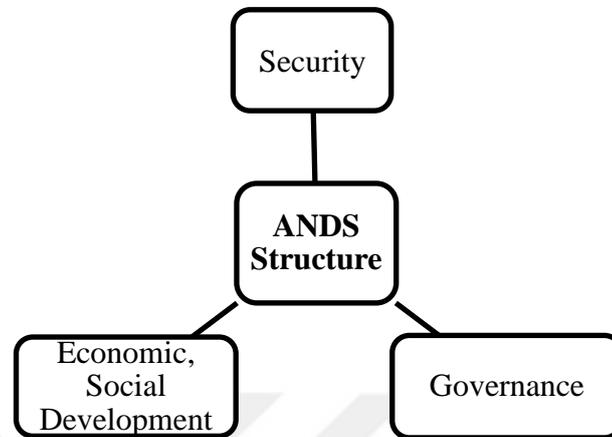
<https://www.un.org/press/en/2002/afg181.doc.htm>

<sup>216</sup> Office of the Deputy Minister for Policy, Ministry of Finance Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "London Conference January 2006, The London Conference on Afghanistan", February 2006, <http://policymof.gov.af/home/london-conference-2006/>

<sup>217</sup> The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, " Afghanistan National Development Strategy", 2008 p. 5

whereas it was \$848 in 2002; Afghanistan exported \$783 million of goods in 2020 and billion imported \$6.48.<sup>218</sup>

**Figure 5.2:** Afghanistan National Development Strategy Structure.



#### ***5.2.4.1. International Community Contribution to Afghanistan Development (2001-2014)***

The international community’s contribution to the development of Afghanistan 2001-2014 was unprecedented. In last fourteen year more than 10 international and regional conferences have been held regarding Afghanistan’s security, economic development, and governance. Since the Bonn the first Conference on Afghanistan in 2001, followed by the Tokyo Conference in 2002, Berlin Conference in 2004, the London Conference in 2006 and 2010, the Rome Conference in 2007, the Paris Conference in 2008, the Moscow Conference in 2009, Bonn second term conference in 2011, the Istanbul Conference in 2011, the London Conference in 2014 and the Geneva conference in 2020, during 14-year more than 10 international and regional conferences have been held regarding Afghanistan security, economic development and governance.<sup>219</sup>

During this period, billions of dollars have flowed into Afghanistan as the international community’s humanitarian aids, economic development, and reconstruction funds. From 2001 to 2010, the United States was the leading

<sup>218</sup> Aaron O'Neill, "Import of goods to Afghanistan 2020", Statista, ( last retrieved, August 4, 2021), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262175/import-of-goods-to-afghanistan/>

<sup>219</sup> DW, "Dah Sal Dah Conference" ( ten years ten conference), ( last retrieved, 04.12.2011), <https://p.dw.com/p/13MRX>

contributor, providing \$51 billion in reconstruction funds, with \$14.74 billion of the total amount allocated for governance and development, including infrastructure reconstruction and economic development.<sup>220</sup>

From 2011 to 2014, the total contributed amount of fund was \$43 billion, which 23% counted for economic development.<sup>221</sup> Along with the fund provider individual countries, international organizations, regional organizations, and international institutions such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations (UNDF, UNCHR, WHO), the European Union, and Shanghai Corporation have involved in Afghanistan's reconstruction since 2001. The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) was established in 2002 by the World Bank to provide all relating financing, budget spending, and evaluating mechanism for the Government of Afghanistan. The ARTF is supported by 4 donors.<sup>222</sup> Since 2002, the European has provided 3.66 billion euros in development and humanitarian aid which makes it the fourth largest fund provider to Afghanistan.<sup>223</sup> During this period, the fund has been spent through a variety of channels including; USIAD, IRD, UN agencies, and Afghan government and NGOs.

Since the Taliban regime's demise, progress has been made in a variety of sectors, including government, the economy, and the security sector. Since 2001, Afghanistan's 12200 kilometer-long roads have been reconstructed and the country has also been connected to regional and international markets via North, West East corridors. Macroeconomic stability has been maintained around the sixteen commercial banks that have been licensed. Numerous mega development projects have been reconstructed, including water irrigation systems, hydroelectric project, commercial infrastructure, transportation infrastructure. But the worsen security situation seriously challenged the ANDS process.

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<sup>220</sup> SIGAR, "Quarterly Report to the United States Congress", July, 2010, Pp. 41

<sup>221</sup> USAID Data Service "U.S. Foreign Aid by Country" (Last update, 06/13/2019), <https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/AFG>

<sup>222</sup> The Afghanistan Reconstruction Fund, <http://www.artf.af/>

<sup>223</sup> European Commission, "International Cooperation and Development; Afghanistan", 2015, [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/countries/afghanistan\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/countries/afghanistan_en)

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **POST-2001 TALIBAN'S REEMERGENCE**

#### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

Following the U.S. and its ally's military intervention of Afghanistan, the Taliban regime has ousted so swiftly. Even it was hard to believe that their strong foothold, whereas they have control over 95 percent of territory would be wiped in only few weeks quickly. But shortly, the Taliban reemerged and today they are rule Afghanistan after two decades of their military combat. It takes two decades from their defeat to their return, during this time period, the US has spent \$ 800 billion and the international community has spent 298 billion dollars in Afghanistan, primarily in reconstruction, economic development, and security. While significant progress has been made during this time period, but there has been widespread national and international criticism over Coalition troops and Afghan government inability to defeat the Taliban and bring peace and stability to the people of Afghanistan. Between 2001 and 2020, 150,000 foreign troops from 50 coalition nations in framework of ISAF and NATO were deployed to Afghanistan alongside 300,000 ANDSF to combat insurgency. Dispute all this military capability and international commitment in combating insurgency, the Taliban has not defeated. Unlike they get stronger and rise from a military power to politic and diplomatic power and eventually return back to power.

The focus of this section is on the Taliban's reemergence post- 2001, and their military, political and diplomatic success and achievements. By the end of 2005, the Taliban had declared their presence and opposition to Afghan government and coalition troops led by U.S.; they regrouped and returned to southern and eastern province within the first 5 years. The conflict has been intensified since 2009, particularly with the transition of security responsibility to ANSDF in 2014 the insecurity and conflict entered into a new chapter. Alongside rural area, districts they seized Kunduz province twice first time in 2016 and second time in 2017, followed by Farah Province attacks in May 2018 and Ghazni Province collapse in August 2018. Particularly Taliban's territorial gain enhance after the Biden's and its allies'

declaration of complete withdrawal from Afghanistan. In first 6 months of 2021 Taliban claimed for capturing 100 districts from Afghan government and very recently Nimrouz and Jawzijan province fall to Taliban on August 7, 2021 and by August 15, 2021 Kabul fall to Taliban and they establish their Islamic Emirate.

## **6.2. TALIBAN: A DRAMATIC FALL AND RAPID RISE**

In the wake of 9/11, the negotiation has failed over hand over of Osama Bin laden to U.S. between Washington and Taliban Emirate. President Bush has declared “global war on terror” he has called on world leaders to join the U.S. “Either you are with us or you are with the terrorist”.<sup>224</sup> Following that, Britain pledged allegiance to the United States and intervened militarily in Afghanistan. The Taliban were in battle frontline with Northern Alliance and they did not achieve their entire victory in Afghanistan. While the U.S. Special Forces added to Northern alliance frontlines and supported by the U.S. and British Air Force bombing campaigns. Their key strategic footholds including defensive and offensive fronts, military infrastructure in Takhar, Kunduz, and Mazar Sharif Northern provinces were heavily targeted by airstrikes.<sup>225</sup> Aftermath their northern fronts crack downed Taliban has lost its conflict moral their regime collapse by end of October, 2001.

Following the collapse of the Taliban regime, the majority of their leadership council’s members, including their leader Mullah Muhammad Omar, ministers, governors, and military commanders fled to Pakistan, while some of them were detained by U.S. prisoned in Bagram and Guantanamo prisons, the remained members including foot soldier have reintegrated in society. But shortly, the Taliban resurged in 2006 after Mulla Dadullah, a senior Taliban military commander regroup his followers and launched attacks against the US and Afghan government Helmand province. According to Wahid muzhda, “at first Mullah Dadullah was not accompanied by other senior Taliban members; he was unable to secure the support of other Taliban members”. As Mujhda, write to BCC, “Most of the Taliban’s high-ranking officials were engaged in private business for a brief period of time.” For

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<sup>224</sup> CNN, “ Transcript of President Bush’s address”, (September, 2001), <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/>

<sup>225</sup> Paul Watson, Paul Richter, George Wilson “ U.S. Escalates its Air War on Taliban North of Kabul”, Los Angeles Times, ( retrieved, Nov.1, 2001), <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-nov-01-mn-64162-story.html>

instant, The Taliban regime's foreign minister, Mullah Mohammad Hassan was busy with farming activities in Kandahar's remote district. But the coalition troops' "Capture and killed" strategy led to re-insurgency of Taliban.<sup>226</sup>

In order to understand the associated factor regarding to the reemergence of Taliban from an ordinary group to a military and political power, therefore it is necessary to thoroughly explain the internal and external factors which contributed to the Taliban's reemergence and acquisition of political and diplomatic identity post-2001.

### **6.2.1. The Internal Factors: Social Roots of Taliban Reemergence**

The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan resulted with a quick victory over ousting Taliban regime. The movement has decisively defeated from geostrategic perspective, but ideologically they have not defeated. The U.S. grossly underestimates the ideology of Jihad, which Washington itself with cooperation of its close allies, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia promoted and used as a combat strategy against communist during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979-1989. Despite of the inconstant nature of the political and social ideologies, Jihadism as religious ideology has deep religious roots and has been used as a conflict motivator in war with communism and western liberalism and democracy in Afghanistan since the Cold War. Islam as a religion with 99% followers in Afghanistan has been an influential source of unification of various ethnics groups and sects against foreigner; first during British invasion of Afghanistan and then during Soviet invasions, Jihad ideology was used to motivate the uprising. The constant foreign invasion deeply radicalized Afghan society, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan three million Afghans migrated to Pakistan and Iran. Thousands of religious madrassa have been founded in Pakistan territory. Alongside religious education these madrasas became training centers for Jihadist militants. The Afghan Jihad ideology as well Taliban leadership was emerged from these madrasas.<sup>227</sup> According to Farrel, "The Taliban movement was founded on a network of Deobandi madrassas in Pakistan within which group's leadership and cadre were educated". In the reemergence of Taliban after 2001 dispute other

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<sup>226</sup> Wahid Muzhda, "Taliban deroz ve Taliban Emroz" (Today Taliban and Yesterday Taliban), July 27, 2010. [http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2010/07/100718\\_k01\\_taliban\\_2](http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2010/07/100718_k01_taliban_2)

<sup>227</sup> Robert W. Hefner, Muhammad Qasim, *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education*, Princeton University Press, USA, 2007, Pp. 1

motivation and recruitment factors which are including grievance, poverty, injustice and nationalism religious motivation has been dominating factor in recruitment campaigns of Taliban.

Post-2001, social reforms have occurred including promotion of democracy, freedom of speech, education, women rights, and promotion of media which plays a critical role in Afghan society's moderation. Millions of girls find their way to schools and university, whereas they were previously oppressed members of Afghan society, with no rights to education, employment, or public appearance. but the all the development were still insufficient to compete radicalism and extremism, because the reforms and measures did not cover whole Afghanistan according to World Bank data % 74 percent of Afghanistan's population are living in Rural areas.<sup>228</sup> As the most of the Afghan population lives in rural areas, throughout history these rural area based populations have played important rule in uprising, and revolution in Afghanistan. The social reforms in rural areas were not fulfilled sufficiently due to traditional factors, insecurity and religious elements' dominance. Therefore these areas have become a hotbed of Taliban recruitment, almost 70 % of Taliban members are from rural including the movement's influential figures.

### **6.2.2. Taliban's Exclusion from Bonn Political Settlement**

Following the fall of Taliban regime, during the Bonn Accord, despite Taliban members all other political, religious leaders of political parties including Northern Alliance, Peshawar group, Cyprus group and Rome group headed by former King Zahir Shah were participant of this conference.<sup>229</sup> Taliban were excluded from the Bonn political settlement, the first person who has criticize exclusion of Taliban from Bonn Accord was Lakhdar Ibrahimi who was the chief organizer of Bonn summit and a UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan. According to him exclusion of Taliban from Bonn agreement was a mistake.<sup>230</sup> Following the Taliban's regime collapse 2001, they were no longer willing to fight;

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<sup>228</sup> World Bank, "Rural population (% of total population)", <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=AF>

<sup>229</sup> United Nation, "Agreement On Provisional Arrangement in Afghanistan Pending the re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions", 2001. <https://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/afghan-agree.htm>

<sup>230</sup> Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies, "Barasi Goftogo haye Solha dar Afghanistan dar chahar diha gozashta, (overview of Peace Talk in Afghanistan in last four decades)", (2017), p. 52

they were living a normal life but the harsh condition led them to resurge.<sup>231</sup> The movement's swift defeat established condition that the U.S. and Afghan authorities saw no reason to include Taliban in the newly formed government. Unlike as the George Bush's repressive approach their senior members were detained. Among the thousands Taliban detainees around 200 were in Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba.<sup>232</sup> Whereas five top Taliban members including; Mohammad Fazel, Mohammed Nabi, Khairullah Khairkhaw, Abdul Haq Wasiq and Noorullah Noori which was held for 12 years in the US detention center were released in 2012 as part of a prisoner exchange agreement in return for U.S. soldier Berg Bergdahl.<sup>233</sup>

In 2004 Hamid Karzai established the commission for consolidation of peace and reconciliation headed by Hazrat Sabghatullah Mujadid a jihadist leader and former president of provisional government of Mujahidin. The commission was later renamed with "The Commission of Conflict and Public Relations with the Government" its responsibility was eliminating the gap and building trust between government and public and to persuade armed opposition for peace and reconciliation. For the further efforts to create a more inclusive mechanism for peace Hamid Karzai's government called for "Peace Jirga" in June 2010, which has long history in Afghanistan it has role of mediation for the conflict resolution. During the Jirga important issues including; forming clear mechanisms and frameworks for peace negotiations and the establishment of "High Commission of Peace Council", releasing Taliban prisoners and the development of a comprehensive national and permanent strategy for peace and reconciliation was suggested.<sup>234</sup>

The reconciliation process only reintegrated the foot soldier and the high-rank member were not reintegrated, the late call for reconciliation was fruitless and it did not have any impact on reduction of insurgency and violence. Multiple factors undermined the process including; (a) severity of conflict and the Taliban's strategic and military victories on the battlefield between 2006- 2010; (b) The absence of a

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<sup>231</sup> AISS, *ibid*, p.55

<sup>232</sup> Simon Rogers, "Guantanamo Bay detainees- the full list", *The Guardian*, (last retrieved, Jan 11, 2011), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/datablog/2011/apr/25/guantanamo-bay-detainees-full-list>

<sup>233</sup> Jibran Ahmad, "Taliban assign ex-Guantanamo inmates as future peace brokers", *Reuters*, (last retrieved, October 31, 2018), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban/taliban-assign-ex-guantanamo-inmates-as-future-peace-brokers-idUSKCN1N51L5>

<sup>234</sup> AISS, *ibid*, p. 56

constant intention of U.S. and Afghan government to engage in early peace talks with Taliban; (c) the deficiency in the structure of “Peace Council” although the Jirga was not sufficiently inclusive, it failed to draw a more comprehensive consensus plane for peace. The Taliban and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezb-I- Islami did not participate in peace council.<sup>235</sup> The early inclusive political settlement in Afghanistan whereas everyone would have seen their-self in, it might be ground for durable peace.

### **6.2.3. Public Discontent from Government Performance**

The war-weary Afghans were optimistic and hopeful for the establishment of new government post-2001, but the consequences were contrary to the expectations. The constant conflict and instability had negative impact on people’s life. However, the international community’s involvements in Afghanistan’s reconstruction and the flow of development assistance have maintained Afghans hopes for bright and sophisticated future of their country. But unfortunately the poor performance of government, lack of transparency and accountability, a huge corruption in bureaucracy and implementation of development projects, failure to law enforcement, insecurity, and injustice made a gap between public and government. Corruption might be one cause of insecurity, social disorder, injustice and discontent of people from government in Afghanistan. According “Transparency International Corruption Perception Index”, from 2002 to 2015 Afghanistan respectively ranked between 2 and 5 the most corrupted country and also between 2016 to 2019 Afghanistan ranked between 8 and 18.<sup>236</sup>

Corruption and bribery within government bureaucracy, especially in judicial and executive branches heightened public distrust and dissatisfaction from the government. These discontents have resulted that in rural areas people refer to Taliban courts for their legal and social issues instead of governmental judicial system. The presence of corrupted warlords in civil and security sectors ranging from the ministry to provinces and districts as minister, local governors, police

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<sup>235</sup> Caroline Wadhams, “ Afghanistan’s Fluffy peace Jirga”, Foreign Policy, ( last retrieved, June 4, 2010). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/06/04/afghanistans-fluffy-peace-jirga/>

<sup>236</sup> Transparency International, “ Corruption Perceptions Index”, [https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/cpi\\_2009/0](https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/cpi_2009/0)

chiefs resulted in a rise in crime and power abuse. As a result, the Taliban have developed social roots among the people.<sup>237</sup> Additionally the political grievances and the economic factors abuse of power and have driven insurgency, injustice, and Taliban return. Many have joined due to their anger with the Afghan government, which they perceive as corrupt, illegitimate, and predatory.

#### **6.2.4. Oppression and Grievance**

Chapter two of Afghanistan's national constitutions assures citizens' fundamental rights and obligations, with article 29 avoiding any form of unlawful persecution, torture and punishment of citizen.<sup>238</sup> So it was supposed that all citizens' rights are protected in accordance with the international human rights declaration and Afghan national constitution, and the elected government is responsible for the protecting citizens from all kind of illegal oppression, discrimination, torture and any other activity that would jeopardize their rights. Unlikely in some part of country the injustice and oppression increased particularly in rural areas, where the law enforcement was in hand of criminal warlords illegal armed groups. Notably when the US-led coalition forces launched the Afghan Local Police (ALP) recruitment program in 2010, a paramilitary unites to protect their villages from insurgent, the influence of criminal warlords and their militia in structure of ALP caused to conducted more crime, human right abuses such as rape, arbitrary detentions.<sup>239</sup> In some northern provinces including; Kunduz, Baghlan people joined Taliban for defending their honor, lands and villages from these militias. What attracts people to refer to Taliban is their justice system which in comparison to the Afghan government justice system has been very less corrupted.

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<sup>237</sup> Farrel ibid, Pp. 63

<sup>238</sup> Ministry of Justice Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "The Constitution of Afghanistan", <http://moj.gov.af/en/page/legal-frameworks/168329941684>

<sup>239</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Just Don't Call it a Militia Impunity, Militia, and the " Afghan Local Police", 2011, Pp. 6-8.

<https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/afghanistan0911webwcover.pdf>

### 6.2.5. Cultural and Ideological Factors

The consecutive failure of foreign power to established long-term military and political dominance over Afghanistan named this region as “Graveyard of Empire” it started with British invasion (1839-1919), and was followed by the Soviet Invasion in 1979 and ended with the US-led military intervention in 2001. Each attempt to project long-term physical and political influence over the Afghan territory has not been only unsuccessful and has come at a high cost to occupiers. The key factor regarding anti-foreigner resistant movement in Afghanistan is not only concluded to unconventional warfare, geographical location with wide range of dessert surrounded by high peak mountain that provide ideal terrain for guerrilla and asymmetric warfare, but also the cultural, traditional and religious beliefs and also the haterism and aversion against invaders as resistance motivating factor.

Prof. Scott Atran, an anthropologist who holds academic positions in the US, UK and France and directly involved in the research project in Afghanistan and Iraq. He has spent decades trying to figure out what cause or what motivates “ordinary people interests in fight” to fight to the death. He concludes, that it is “sacred values” the values whether religious or secular, such as God and country, the values which that would be always non-negotiable, in the sense, that they can’t be abandoned or exchanged for material gain. Atran believes that “sacred values” are the motivating factors behind the revolutionaries and insurgent have repeatedly won over the state security forces, regardless their strength since the IIWW.<sup>240</sup>

Therefore combination “sacred values” and patriotism have played a vital role in combating foreign invasion in Afghanistan. As the Afghan society is a conservative religious society therefore the source of anti-foreigner forces have been motivated by religious belief and patriotism. The jihadism ideology was promoted during cold war and it was used as tools in anti-communism war, in Afghanistan, following by US-led coalition’s military intervention of Afghanistan, with no changes this time the Taliban reemergence with same ideology to fight US-led coalition and Afghan government under the justification of holy jihad

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<sup>240</sup> Scott ATRAN, “ The will to fight”, Science, ( last retrieved, September 3, 2021), <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abl9949>

against, occupiers and their puppet regime. Taliban declared Jihad against foreign troops and Afghan government thousands of sensitive fundamentalist joined their frontlines. The jihadist ideology has been successfully spread in Afghanistan particularly in remote rural areas and villages whereas religion, mosque and Imam are still essential in people social, political and economic life.<sup>241</sup>

Religious beliefs have been used a central strategy of Taliban in running their war machine. The movement's organizational structure is that every members of movement is obligated to obey the role and regulation which is based on Sharia law and the Layhia "the code of conduct" which was established by Taliban's leadership council in 2010. In Layhia preface the importance of Jihad in accordance to Quranic verses is cited. In section seven of Layhia the member of groups are invited to the obedience from their leadership circle,

*"The mujahedin must obey their group leader; group leaders must obey their district leaders; district leaders must obey the senior provincial officials; senior provincial officials must obey their head of the zone; heads of the zones must obey the Imam and his Nayeb, this is a religious duty".<sup>242</sup>*

The recruitment system demonstrates the process in circulation manner beginning with religious motivation and continuing with an explanation of the policies to obey their leader and maintain their loyalty to the organization's leadership circle. They are promised life after death during the brainwashing process, and they come with strong faith, knowing that even if they die, they will be praised as martyrs. Taliban are accused for child soldier recruitment and training for various military operation including suicide bomber".<sup>243</sup>The training process is begin from Madrasa, and villages with studying religious subjects than following by military training than they are sending to frontline to take part in military operations. The winning strategy of Taliban is their loyalty for religious values, obedience.

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<sup>241</sup> Marisa L. Porges, "Radicalization Processes in Afghanistan", Combating Terrorism Center, vol. 5 Issue 1, January 2012. <https://ctc.usma.edu/radicalization-processes-in-afghanistan/>

<sup>242</sup> Kate Clark, "The Layha Calling the Taleban to Account", (Translated) Afghanistan Analysts Network, Pp. 8

<sup>243</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Afghanistan: Taliban Child Soldier Recruitment Surges", February 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/17/afghanistan-taliban-child-soldier-recruitment-surges>

The religious madrasas in Pakistan as well in areas under the controlled of the Taliban in Afghanistan serve as a source of militant recruitment for this group. During two decades the Talibanism ideology promoted and spread from villages to cities and from madrasas to universities. The Jihadist ideology which is based on fundamentalism and extremism principles has been infiltrating into academic environment and higher education institutions. The Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies conducted a research about radicalization in three major Afghan Universities including Kabul University, Herat University and Nangarhar University. According to survey results 22, 5 % students were in the favor of political system change from republic to Islamic khilafat and Islamic Emirate based on rigid Sharia law. 88 % of students were supporting the implementation of (al-amr bi 'l-ma'ruf wa 'n-nahy 'ani 'l-munkar) Enjoining good and forbidding wrong, or promotion of virtue and prevention of vice which are the foundation for Islamic values. Among the interviewer 35.7 % were willing to the return of Islamic khilafat as governing system. 75, 3 % of asked audiences were in the favor of Islam as complete religion that everyone should follow it.<sup>244</sup>

Hafiz Mansoor, an Afghan parliament member expressed concern regarding the rise of fundamentalism and extremism in higher educational institutions, stating that unless if the government does not take serious measures, the rise of fundamentalism in education institution will pose a serious threat in future.<sup>245</sup> In July 2019, the National Directorate of Security (NDS) of Afghan government arrested four suspects including three lectures and a student of Kabul University. They have charged with allegation to Islamic State (IS). During NDS investigation one of the arrested student, confessed that one of the lecture was in charge of converting students to Salafism fundamentalism and encouraging them to join Islamic State of Khorasan Province. <sup>246</sup> The infiltration of fundamentalism and

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<sup>244</sup> Ramin Kamangar, “ Resha yabi Radikalizm deni dar nizam Amozish Aly Barasi darsgoftar nizam siyasi Islam ve Taser Aan bar Danishjoyan. ( Religious Radicalism in the Higher Education of Afghanistan Analysis of the political system of Islam and its impact on students)”, Afghanistan strategic studies Institute, Kabul Afghanistan, 2019, Pp. 51-52

<sup>245</sup> Ayob Aryan, “ Afirat garaye ve bazi Qadrat dar Afghanistan” ( Fundamentalism and power game in Afghanistan), BBC, ( last retrieved, December, 2 2016), <http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan-38142355>

<sup>246</sup> Ezzatullah Mehrdad, “ How Islamic State Infiltrated Kabul University”, The Diplomat, ( last retrieved, August 12, 2019). <https://thediplomat.com/2019/08/how-islamic-state-infiltrated-kabul-university/>

extremism into educated class seem as successful strategy for Taliban. Their influence over this class paves the way for propaganda and recruitment opportunity among the educated Afghans which can deploy as social media campaigner. Most of the anti-communist resistance members and leaders rise up from Kabul University.

To sum up, the use of religion for political purposes are not new phenomenon which used by Taliban for their political power, however the use of religion as tools for political powers has deep root in region particularly during Iran Islamic revolution in 1978 and the influence of religion in Pakistan political system as well the use of religion as anti- communist ideology in Afghanistan during Soviet Invasion in 1979.

#### **6.2.6. The Rule of Media in Psychological Warfare**

With the development of internet technology the criminal groups, gangs and lately the terrorist organizations have infiltrated into internet world and they start using internet as instrument for the multiple purpose including distribution of information, as propaganda tools for recruitment purpose etc. however the diffusion of terrorism and crime into cyberspace recoded in 1998 where as nearly thirty terrorist groups established their presence on the internet but after 11 September 2001 attacks use of internet as psychological warfare increased the presence of terrorist groups in internet between 2003-2005 increased to more than 4300 web sites serving terrorists and their supporters.<sup>247</sup> After the founding multiple social media platforms like; Facebook, YouTube, twitter, Instagram, and many other application the terrorist and insurgence groups widely used these internet forms as spread their message, to recruitment members and to keep going on their psychological war through cyberspace. Using internet and social media by international terrorist organization goes back to 9/11/2001 when al-Qaeda attacked multiple targets in United State. The al-Qaeda members used Yahoo! Groups for many purposes including communication via email, broadcasting all activities related to organization, recruitment of members.<sup>248</sup> Following the ISIS emerged in 2014 which they broadly used the internet and social media to spread

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<sup>247</sup> Gabriel Weimann, *Terror on the Internet: The New Area the New Challenges*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, 2006. p. 15

<sup>248</sup> Gbriel Weimam, *ibid*, p. 29

their message to recruit members globally and to diffuse many videos, news and pictures to persuade their spymasters and to wage a psychological warfare against their foes.

The reemergence of Taliban and the inception of internet service both simultaneously find their way to Afghan society. Since 2001, Afghans have been using the mainstream media, internet and social. Currently, 63 internet service provider companies in Afghanistan provide internet service to their customers.<sup>249</sup> According to Internet World Stats Statistic in 2001 the internet users in Afghanistan were only thousand whereas in 2019 around the 7, 3 million Afghans have access to internet.<sup>250</sup> The young generation is using social media as entertainment and they are being hunted by Taliban's propaganda website and social media accounts.

There are also numerous fake account on twitter and Facebook and other social media platforms which have actively broadcast all related issues to the group including political, military, and also are using as psychological warfare and as well as recruitment tools. The contents that they have been sharing are mostly provoking videos, picture and epic song known as the (Tarani) without music. The ancient tradition of epic poetry has long history in Afghanistan literature, the heroic resistance of Afghan's against foreign occupiers has been celebrated via epic poetry lyric. The war poetry has been using as useful instrument in recruitment combatant by Taliban. The epic poetry (Tarani) has been a significant factor in persuading youths emotionally and mentally to fight for religious, traditional values and it keeps the sense of strong nationalism in them. According to Alex Strick Van Linchotein "the Poetry of Taliban provided a fascinating insight of Taliban's long-standing poetic tradition". Since 2013 Taliban has developed its active media diplomacy and digital propaganda all the activities related to the group are broadcasting on daily bases particularly since the peace talks between US-Taliban begins.

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<sup>249</sup> Ministry of Communication and Information Techonolgy, "Internet Service Provider", <https://mcit.gov.af/node/6941>

<sup>250</sup> Internet World Stats Usage and population statistic, "Afghanistan", <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm>

### 6.2.7. The External Factors

There have been enormous claims regarding the regional support behind the Taliban in post-2001. This support has taken a variety of forms, from the financial and military to diplomatic and political. There are ample evidences that the Taliban had a safe haven in some of neighboring countries during two decades of conflict in Afghanistan, and these countries have provided them with training equipping and even treatment. After the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001 their leadership circle has taken refuge in Pakistan, they have regroup and supported by Pakistan military establishment. The Pakistan's military establishment support behind the Taliban is undeniable and undiscussable anymore, because today the Pakistani authorities clearly accepting that they Taliban have been living in Pakistan and used Pakistan territory as "strategic-depth" even they claim Taliban as the guardian of their interests in Afghanistan. As the Pakistan Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad admitted, that "Afghan Taliban's families reside in Pakistan, and added their dead bodies arrive and they treated in Pakistan's hospital".<sup>251</sup>The Pakistan support for Taliban is illustrated with more details in chapter two.

Iran as an old enemy became too close to Taliban in post-2001, hostility against U.S. and fights with ISIS-K or Daesh-Khorasan in Afghanistan as Tehran-Taliban mutual interests drew two former adversaries together, dispute their religious beliefs (Sunni- Shia) differences. Since the establishment of Taliban's political office in Doha, Tehran has received several times the top members of the Taliban, including the movement co-founder and Doha office head Mullah Abdul Ghani Beradar. Not only Iran and Pakistan have invited Taliban political representatives, but also Russian and China have rolled out the red carpet and have gave the political members a great welcome in Moscow and Beijing. Most recently, before the collapse of Afghan government Chinese senior authorities hosted Taliban Doha office high-ranking members in July, 2021.<sup>252</sup> China explained their ties with Taliban as diplomatic which include two

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<sup>251</sup> Roshan Noorzai, "Taliban Active in Pakistan as dead and wounded Militants arrives from Afghanistan", VOA, (last retrieved, July 13, 2021). <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/taliban-active-pakistan-dead-and-wounded-militants-arrive-afghanistan>

<sup>252</sup> Rebecca Tan, "China hosts Taliban leaders as U.S. withdraws troops from Afghanistan", Washington Post, (last retrieved, July 28, 2021).

reasons; the security concerns over the transitional insurgency to Xinjiang region and persuading Taliban to political solution in Afghanistan.

Moscow-Taliban proximity has been a source of concern for U.S. and Afghan government and both allies have constantly criticized Moscow support for Taliban. Moscow relations with Taliban have publicly revealed when President Vladimir Putin's Special Representative for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov, expressed in 2015, that his country was in contact with the Taliban to fight with ISIS-K in Afghanistan.<sup>253</sup> Moscow-Taliban official diplomatic relations has increased since peace talks led by U.S. in 2018 in Afghanistan, Kremlin have hosted Taliban high-rank members in many occasions in Moscow.<sup>254</sup>

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[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/taliban-china-afghanistan/2021/07/28/dfbe024-ef88-11eb-81b2-9b7061a582d8\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/taliban-china-afghanistan/2021/07/28/dfbe024-ef88-11eb-81b2-9b7061a582d8_story.html)

<sup>253</sup> Anadolu Agency, "Exclusive Interviews with Russian diplomat Zamir Kabulov", ( Last retrieved, December 31, 2016). <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/exclusive-interview-with-russian-diplomat-zamir-kabulov/717573>

<sup>254</sup> The Guardian, "Russia hosts Taliban delegation following collapse of US talks", (last retrieved, September 19, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/15/russia-hosts-taliban-delegation-following-collapse-of-us-talks>

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### BARACK OBAMA'S AFGHAN WAR STRATEGY (2009 -2017)

#### 7.1. INTRODUCTION

The U.S. and NATO involvement in Afghanistan during Barack Obama administration was a crucial and destiny making period in the term of its military strategy on the ground as well as its policy toward Afghan government. After assuming the office president Obama announced his strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, which included deploying 30,000 additional troops in Afghanistan in the framework of its counterinsurgency strategy. During this period the U.S. and its NATO allies widely engaged in Afghanistan by signing enduring strategic and security partnership agreement with Afghan government, and fighting Taliban on ground.

Afghanistan's security, stability, governance beyond 2014, has been subjected to perplexing debate and most discussable headline topic in national and international media and roundtable discussions. It was not only a challengeable year for Afghan government, which assumed security responsibility from the Coalition troops. But it was also a critical period for all stakeholders in Afghanistan particularly for coalition troops. The complete transition of security responsibility from coalition troops to ANSF which was discussed and agreed upon early in 2010 at Kabul and Lisbon Conferences, took place in December between NATO allies and the Afghan government.<sup>255</sup> The transition process has put an end to US/NATO direct combat mission in Afghanistan. The 2014 also coincided with the end of gradual withdrawal of coalition troops from Afghanistan while the country was in middle of serious security challenges. The intensity of ongoing conflict between Taliban and Afghan government, the political instability due to the presidential election in 2014, and the government's poor performance in providing security and other services to the population put the US to the test.

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<sup>255</sup> NATO, "Lisbon Summit Declaration 2010", (last retrieved July 31, 2012).  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_68828.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm)

This chapter sheds light on Barack Obama's Afghan war strategy and the transition of security responsibility to ANDSF and Obama administration's withdrawal plan during in his second term presidency as well as its impact on security, politics and governance in Afghanistan. The U.S./NATO commitment to Afghanistan after 2014 until its complete pullout in 2021, was limited to "Resolute and Support Mission" a non-combat mission that provides training, advice and assistance to the ANDFS.

## **7.2. COUNTERINSURGENCY STRATEGY (2009-2011)**

President Barak Obama declared his administration's new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan (Af-Pak) shortly after he assumed office in 2009. The new policy comprised three main elements: a counterterrorism campaign on both sides of the Durand lines, counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan, and support for the Afghan government by funding, training, and equipping, ANDSF. The major objectives of the new strategy were to degrade al-Qaeda and the Taliban while simultaneously assisting the Afghan government and ANDSF. For the accomplishment of this strategy, Obama deployed an additional 30,000 more U.S. troops to Afghanistan. The counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy was at the heart of his administration's efforts in Afghanistan during his first term. This chapter discusses the COIN strategy's implementation, as well as its achievement and challenges. In practice, the COIN strategy was primarily centered on strategic and operational planning, which included intelligence gathering and analysis, training, technical equipping, organizational support, and guidance as well as recovery initiatives as part of state-building in insurgency-affected areas.<sup>256</sup> All of the efforts were made as part of a quick-term plan in framework of a tactical unit that included offensive, defensive, and stabilization operations.

The U.S. military strategy for Afghanistan under the George W. Bush administration was conceptualized in the framework of "war on terror" strategy. In this context of counter-terrorism strategy, Al-Qaeda was viewed as a substantial threat to U.S. national and international security in the context of counter-terrorism strategy. In post-2005 Taliban's reemergence the manner of conflict in Afghanistan

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<sup>256</sup> FMI 3-07.22, "Counterinsurgency Operation", DOD, p. 6

shifted from terrorism to insurgency, the multiple factors including geographic, cultural, and , unconventional warfare tactics such as suicide bombings, roadside bombings, guerrilla attacks, and hit-and-run attacks used by Taliban has challenged the counter-terrorism strategy which raised the concerns among U.S. and its allies about Afghanistan's continued instability and insecurity, as well as the return of al-Qaeda to the country. Therefore a more comprehensive and effective strategy was required to address the persistent threat of insurgency in rural areas.

When President Barack Obama assumed office on January 20, 2009, Afghanistan and Iraq were not merely unfinished tasks for his administration; the situation in both countries was deteriorating day by day. The increasing violence in Afghanistan has made this country the main foreign policy effort of Obama administration. In 2009, prior to Obama's assuming office, Taliban had increased their attacks on areas controlled by local governments in southern and eastern provinces. They had established their influence in south and east part of Afghanistan, designated as their stronghold. The counter-terrorism strategy on the ground fell short of responding to ongoing violence and reversing Taliban momentum, and countering ongoing insurgency. To halt the worsened violence and deteriorating security situation a more comprehensive strategy was needed.

To this end, Obama tasked Stanley A. McChrystal a newly appointed four-stars General as commander of the NATO, to evaluate and provide an assessment of the situation in Afghanistan in summer 2009. With a 66-page report, McChrystal described the situation on the ground as fragile and concerning, and in order to contain and reduce violence and prevent the Taliban from gaining additional territory, he requested additional troops be sent to Afghanistan as well as the adoption of a population-centric approach that would be implemented through a joint civilian-military counterinsurgency campaign.<sup>257</sup> In the framework of a "comprehensive strategy" President Obama has supported McChrystal's recommendation with authorizing 33,000 additional troops deployed in Afghanistan. He has declared the policy goals as: "to disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al-Qaeda in

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<sup>257</sup> Chris McGreal, Richard Norton-Taylor, "General Urges Barack Obama to send more troops to Afghanistan", *The Guardian*, (Last retrieved, September 21, 2009).  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/21/barack-obama-afghanistan-mcchrystal-report>

Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to avoid making this region as their safe heaven, and to stop Taliban overthrowing Afghan government”.<sup>258</sup>

The “Comprehensive Civil-Military Counterinsurgency” (COIN) campaign went into practiced early in 2010. The COIN strategy was compound of direct (hard power) and indirect (soft power) approaches. It was consist of military, population centric; social, economic and development efforts. The COIN (FM 3-24) doctrine was deliberated by General David Petraeus during Barak Obama presidency for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The COIN strategy in Afghanistan was consist of deploying 33,000 additional troop, supporting Afghan central and local government, training and equipping ANDSF and engaging in civil and military operation in provinces by establishing “Provincial Reconstruction Team” ( PRT) for rebuilding service after clearing operation in rural areas. In details the COIN doctrine was explained in manual FM 3-24 COIN booklet as long-term plan combines of “offensive, defensive and stability operation and an indirect approach with subsequent seven counterinsurgency lines of effort including; establish civil security, establish civil control, support host nation security forces, support to governance, restore essential services, support economic and infrastructures development, and conduct information engagement.”<sup>259</sup> Tackling insurgency threats in Afghanistan needed a comprehensive strategy, because only the military options have seemed insufficient to response the increasing insurgency threats. Therefore some new aspects of state-building initiative were added to the new strategy.

### **7.2.1. Counterinsurgency Strategy Implementation Phase**

The term “Clear- Hold- Build” was used in General David Petraeus COIN vision for Afghanistan and Iraq, the strategy basically is a full spectrum of operation consists of offensive, (finding, eliminating insurgents) defense (protecting local population) stability (all the development efforts including rebuilding the infrastructure, economic development, supporting local government legitimacy and role of law.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Jesse Lee, “A New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan”, The White House President Barack Obama, March 27 2009. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2009/03/27/a-new-strategy-afghanistan-and-pakistan>

<sup>259</sup> FM 3-24, “ Tactics in Counterinsurgency” Headquarters department of the Army, April, 2009. p. 8 [www.us.army.mil](http://www.us.army.mil)

<sup>260</sup> FM 3-24, *ibid*, p. 83

The objectives of the “CHB” were cited as; (a) eradicating insurgency in rural areas; (b) establishing a safe-zone for insurgency-affected residents and providing them with continuous security; (c) reinforcing political primacy and enforce the rule of law; (c) launching nation-building initiatives, rebuilding local host nation institutions and obtaining the populace’s support.<sup>261</sup> The US-led coalition’s counterinsurgency efforts on the ground in Afghanistan between (2006- 2011) were as follows (a), suppressing Taliban and other groups through COIN operations in rural areas (b), training and equipping ANSF (c), supporting newly established Afghan government (d), winning the hearts and minds of Afghans through the economic and infrastructure development. The operation phases were including three trenches.

- **Clear Phase:** The Clear phase explained as tactical mission that entails conducting an offensive or clearing operation in rural areas in order to eliminate insurgent groups. U.S. and NATO troops jointly conducted a joint offensive operation against the Taliban and other affiliated groups in southern Afghanistan, particularly in Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Farah. The offensive operation against Taliban was intended to purge the districts of Marja, Musa Qala, Girshk, Nawzad and Kajaki from Taliban. In December 2007, the Coalition troops and Afghan forces launched a massive operation to retake Musa Qala district, the Taliban reemergence stronghold. Musa Qala battle took place in 2007 and lasted for 4 days, after four days the city came under government control.<sup>262</sup> The area cleanup operation began with the deployment of military –civic teams to clean the area of explosive weapons and approached the first aids to civilian who has been displaced and injured in battle. Followed by defensive and stability operation, which included searching for Taliban members hiding among civilian and also establishing public service to people.
- **Hold Phase:** the Hold phase concentrate on the areas affected by insurgency and emancipation of population from Taliban influence, and building security forces in order to take control of clean up areas. During this phase after

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<sup>261</sup> FM 3-24, *ibid*, p. 19

<sup>262</sup> Bill Roggio, “ The Battle of Musa Qala”, FDD’s Long War Journal, ( Last retrieved, December 9, 2007), [https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/12/the\\_battle\\_of\\_musa\\_q.php](https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/12/the_battle_of_musa_q.php)

clearing operation the Coalition forces and ANDSF was providing support for military and civil institutions in districts which were vulnerable to re-insurgency threats. The supports included developing local governance, by promoting civilian service, training and equipping the local police, reestablishing governmental intuitions, and restoring essential services ( health, educations, governance) and planning economic and agriculture development projects,

- **Build phase:** the focus in this phase was on normalization of situation after ensuring a more secure environment. In order to emancipate population from insurgency the Coalition troops (PRT teams) and the Afghan government developed a platform of joint efforts consist of reconstruction, rehabilitation plans in the context of that national and international organizations carried out their reconstruction plans, particularly social warfare projects, humanitarian assistance, and health projects.

### **7.2.2. Counterinsurgency Strategy Operation Lines**

Generally the COIN strategy in Afghanistan was divided into two main operation lines including military action or an “enemy-centric approach” and “population-centric lines”. The enemy-centric approach has focused on defeating the enemy (Taliban) by implementing a variety of approaches including soft vs. hard, direct vs. indirect, violent vs non-violent and decapitation and marginalization strategies.<sup>263</sup> The military operations lines have consist of offensive and defensive measures and also developing and supporting ANSF. During this phase the Coalition troops were conducting nights rides operations, airstrikes, and joint ground offensive against Taliban and while in defense stage ANDSF were deployed in districts and villages.

The population-centric operation line was included of an inclusive economic development, infrastructure reconstruction and supporting Afghan government central and local governmental institutions. For implementing this approach the U.S. and NATO formed civilian-military teams and deployed in several provinces. The team under the name of “Provincial Reconstruction Team” (PRT) combines of military, civilian and diplomatic and development components of different

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<sup>263</sup> United States Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, January 2009. Pp. 14, [www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/pmppt](http://www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/pmppt)

stakeholders including various agencies involved in the stabilization and rebuilding efforts.<sup>264</sup>

Following the transfer of ISAF operations to NATO in 2004, the PRT mission has expanded from center to provinces and districts. In the COIN strategy framework, the PRT mission has primarily focused on three main areas; security, government, and development. It's effort included strengthening local governance through engagement with local leaders and rural populations vulnerable to re-insurgency threats, the providing security through supporting local government's security forces, taking part into COIN operations, and to facilitate province and districts level reconstruction efforts by providing essential health, education and construction services . Since establishment of PRT in 2003 till end of PRT mission there was 26 PRTs working in 26 provinces in Afghanistan.<sup>265</sup> According to Directorate General Budget of Afghanistan Finance ministry, "overall PRT contribution to reconstruction and development in all provinces of Afghanistan over past 9 years was approximately US \$900 million".<sup>266</sup>

The PRT's strategy for Afghanistan in the framework of Coalition troops emphasized on following policies;<sup>267</sup>

- Prioritizing the improvement of rural security and stability by assisting local government institutions.
- Strengthening the capacity of Afghan governmental and civil society organizations to uphold the rule of law, to promote accountability and transparency.
- Contextualizing people to government relation by funding of essential services as well other rural development projects.
- Pursuing to coordinate different local agency, organization, institution to step together toward development process.

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<sup>264</sup> Center for Army lessons Learned, "Afghanistan Provincial Reconstruction Team" No 11-16 ( February, 2011), P. 2 <https://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/11-16.pdf>

<sup>265</sup> Institute for the Study of War, "PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS (PRTS)", <http://www.understandingwar.org/provincial-reconstruction-teams-prts>

<sup>266</sup> Ministry of Finance Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, " Team Bazsazi villayeti PRT chest, ( transtlation What is PRT reconstruction team)", <http://www.budgetmof.gov.af/index.php/fa/faq/214-9-f-what-is-a-provincial-reconstruction-team-prt>

<sup>267</sup> Handbook " Provincial Reconstruction tehttp://www.budgetmof.gov.af/index.php/fa/faq/214-9-f-what-is-a-provincial-reconstruction-team-prtam observations, insights, and lessons", vol no. 11-16, Feb, 2011. <https://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/11-16.pdf>

- Providing a platform and secure address for international donors including UN, and other international organization to have provincial visit where they has missions.

However, the PRTs have been one of fundamental part COIN strategy in Afghanistan which was addressing stability operations and “winning mind and heart” strategy but it has been widely criticized for many reasons including; more focusing on military objectives rather than civil engagement, lack of coordination among the actors, institution, and organization.<sup>268</sup> Former president Karzai criticized the poor quality of reconstruction projects with very high prices. Spending nine hundred million dollar couldn’t help to avoid the rise of insurgency and the influence of Taliban among the rural populace. The Afghan government also criticized the PRT role is parallel government to Afghan local administration by undermining the legitimacy of central government.

### **7.2.3. The Inefficiency of Counterinsurgency in Curbing Insecurity**

The COIN strategy was a critical component of the Obama Administration’s comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan in his first term. The purpose of this strategy was to clean up the insurgency affected territory and secure Afghans people and establish and support a model of a legitimate government that composed of five main functional components; political function, economic function, security function, information function. The COIN’s doctrine architects viewed a joined military operational campaign and a strong functional Afghan government as key to defeat the insurgency and stabilizing Afghanistan, as well as the gradual reduction of Afghan government dependency on U.S. and International assistance. The large-scale of joint military campaign conducted on the ground by coalition troops and ANSF suppressed Taliban in rural areas, and has resulted in a quick victory on ground, but it was not a successful approach for ensuring long-terms achievements.

Numerous arguments of the COIN approach in Afghanistan have been made by critical scholars and experts. Paul D. Miller argued, “The lack of sufficient resources to conduct the COIN campaign, and also matter of time, as President

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<sup>268</sup> Robert J. Bebbler, “ The Role of Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRTs) in Counterinsurgency Operation: Khost Province, Afghanistan”, 2007, Small Wars Journal. Pp.3

Obama intended to draw a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan by end of 2011, while the Taliban remained strategically undefeated and it was clearly visible that they would pose a threat to hard gained achievements and undermine the long-term efficiency of this approach. Miller also criticized Obama administration for failing to take proactive steps to restore political order in Afghanistan, which was viewed as the Afghan government's greatest strategic weakness by its allies".<sup>269</sup>

From the theoretical perspective the COIN strategies contents are enriched and it was a good version, but on the implementation phase due to the multiple obstacle it has faced including lack of corporation and coordination among the ally countries as well as the problem on the leadership level undermined the its efficiency. The complex cultural and geographical elements made it challengeable to carry out COIN effectively in rural areas. Additionally, the lack of logistic, military equipment, and professionalism of ANSDF as the COIN's achievements protecting force made it difficult for them to maintain their presence on region which was wipe up from Insurgency during cleanup operations. On the wining heart and mind phase the Taliban political-religious motivation seemed more effective and successful than the coalition troops and Afghan government political-economic motivation.

To summarize, from the theoretical standpoint the COIN strategy was delivered as sufficient version for combating Taliban and reducing their influence in Afghanistan. The strategy included the following components; situation assessment, policy formulation, strategy development, integrated planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.<sup>270</sup> COIN strategy covered most of aspects including economic, security, and development, political based on situation in Afghanistan. But when the theory was put into practice, some of the internal and external elements had challenged the strategy and it has largely failed to achieve its complete aims. The lack of effective and truly coordination and cooperation among all partners as each of them had specific province as the operational area of responsibility. For instant the security threats in northern and central provinces were

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<sup>269</sup> Paul D. Miller, "Obama's Failed Legacy in Afghanistan", *The American Interest*, volum 11, No.5 ( February 15, 2016).

<sup>270</sup> Bureau of the Political Affairs, "U.S. Government COIN Guide", ( January, 2009), Pp. 36

lesser than in south and east between 2005, 2009. The NATO/ISAF operational zones were divided into five regional commands; the capital was led by France and Turkey, norther by Germany, West by Italy, South by Netherland, Britannia, Canada, and the east regional Command was leaded by United State. Some of leading NATO member countries in the area of their responsibility were intensively in conflict with Taliban while some of they were enjoying their time.

One of the primary aims of COIN was the people's emancipation from Taliban control and to provide them with economic and social welfare, as well as good government services. Not only the mention services have not provided, the civilians have been subjected to suppression, torture and detonations in case of insurgency. The government bias, corruption, role of law, the existence of parallel government by warlords, the civil-military relation, the economic viability and trans-national dynamic were among the internal factors of COIN strategy ineffectiveness.

In 2009, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange released around 75000 documents from total 90,000 U.S. military files related to Afghan war (2004-2009). The released documents named "Afghan War Dairy", the documents uncover up the suppression, torture and extrajudicial killing of Afghan civilian by foreign troops between 2003- 2010. The leaked documents related to Afghan war were published by New York Times, Guardian and Der Spiegel news agencies.<sup>271{272}</sup> The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan civilian casualty's annual report between (2007-2011) indicated that, between 2007-2011 from overall 11,921 civilian death 2903 civilians were accidentally or purposely killed by pro-government forces includes International military forces, Afghan Security Forces.<sup>273</sup>

According to WikiLeaks reports most of the bloody operations carried by international forces particularly by Task Forces 373 a secret U.S. Special Forces assassination unite triggered civilian casualties including women, children, and

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<sup>271</sup> The New York Times, "THE WAR LOGS, An archive of classified military documents offer view of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan",

<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/world/war-logs.html?hp>

<sup>272</sup> LEVES NOT WAR, " WikiLeaks's Afghan War Dairy: A Pentagon Papers for our time",. ( 08/02/2010). <https://www.levesnotwar.org/wikileaks-afghan-war-logs-a-%E2%80%9Cpentagon-papers%E2%80%9D-for-our-time/>

<sup>273</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, " Reports on The Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict". <https://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports>

elders.<sup>274</sup> In the separate events many civilian has been purposely shot by Coalition troops. According to the Guardian's reports in 21 separate occasions, British troops shot and killed 26 civilians including women, children.<sup>275</sup> In 2008, a French Soldier shot three civilians including a pregnant women and a child.<sup>276</sup> In another bloody tragedy incident known as the Kandahar Massacre in March 2012, a U.S. army Staff Sergeant Robert Bales opened fires on civilians and killed 16 members of a family including children, women and elders.<sup>277</sup> In one another early events in 2007 Polish soldiers shot six unarmed civilians including women, children.<sup>278</sup> There have been many other unreported events which indicate Coalition troop's involvement in civilian's casualty, torture and extrajudicial killing.

Particularly when Coalition troops responded the Taliban's increasing attacks on districts and villages in the South and East by conducting airstrikes against Taliban targets. The civilian casualties and their property's destruction due to airstrikes were, in fact, one of the primary reasons for local protests against Coalition troops in Afghanistan. It sparked public outrage and damaged the Coalition troops' humanitarian service images in country. It has given Taliban an opportunity to provoke the public particularly rural population against foreign troops and portray them as the foreign invaders. It has helped the Taliban to influence among the society and recruit combatants.

In Post-2001 Afghanistan the political settlement and the power-sharing arrangement were not based on national partnership, the power was not distributed equally; Taliban was marginalized from participation in new established administration. Additionally, the government bias has been one of the reasons behind the increased insurgency, the appointment of corrupted warlords, criminals and disqualified individual in central government as well in provincial

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<sup>274</sup> Elizabeth Vos, "The Revelations of WikiLeaks: No. 2- The Leak That Exposed the True Afghan War", Consortium News, ( May 9, 2019). <https://consortiumnews.com/2019/05/09/the-revelations-of-wikileaks-no-2-the-leak-that-exposed-the-true-afghan-war/>

<sup>275</sup> David Leigh and Rob Evans, "Afghanistan war logs: Civilians caught in firing line of British troops", ( July 20, 2010). <http://archive.is/DvF6H>

<sup>276</sup> BBC, "French Troops killed Afghan Civilians at checkpoint", ( July 28, 2011). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-14321202>

<sup>277</sup> Moni Basu, "A soldier's deadly march to massacre in Kandahar", CNN ( March, 13, 2012). <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/13/world/asia/afghanistan-shooting-scene/index.html>

<sup>278</sup> Reuters, "Poland clears four soldiers in war crimes over Afghanistan killing", ( March 19, 2015). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-military-afghanistan/poland-clears-four-soldiers-of-war-crimes-over-afghanistan-killings-idUSKBNOMF1TL20150319>

administration regardless their qualification undermine the legitimacy of government. The practice of nepotism in former administration was a big problem and obstacle for good governance and rule of law. It paved the way for corruption, crimes, and drugs trafficking. In most cases these people to defeat their political rivals they had mislead the Coalition troops to target their rivals. The misused of power and mistreatment of population led most of population particularly in rural areas joins Taliban.

The corruption in government institutions, particularly in security institutions paved the way increasingly to Taliban to influence over the population. Most importantly the US's alliances with infamous powerbrokers and warlords in order to use them as proxies in war with defeat al-Qaeda and Taliban jeopardize the COIN strategy. As many of these powerbrokers and warlords were brought into government where they continued their abuses, maintained private militias and had link to narcotic and smuggling and criminal networks that had committed war crimes and grave human rights abuses against Afghans.<sup>279</sup>

### **7.3. NATO-AFGHAN ENDURING PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

The NATO-Kabul enduring partnership agreement was signed in 2010 in the Lisbon city; it extended the NATO involvement in Afghanistan and reaffirmed its long-term commitment and partnership to Afghan government. During this summit mutual commitment has made by parties to enhance long-term partnership, efforts in addressing multiple issues including: supporting Afghan Security Forces development security institutions and preparing the ground for the security transition process. The purpose and principle of declaration was as following:

- The NATO has reaffirmed its long-term commitment and sustained piratical support to Afghan Security Institutions. In order to sustain and enhance the ANSF's capacity and capability to counter security threats and challenges in Afghanistan.
- Supporting Afghan peace talks and reconciliation process in achieving long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan and region.

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<sup>279</sup> SIGAR, "Lessons Learned from the U.S. Experience with Corruption in Afghanistan", 2016, <https://www.sigar.mil/interactive-reports/corruption-in-conflict/lessons.html>

- The Afghan government has reaffirmed its commitment to actively accomplish its security, governance and development responsibility and to fight terrorism strengthen its economy, address the corruption, regional security and respect the human rights.<sup>280</sup>

NATO's involvement in Afghanistan began in 2003, by assuming responsibility for the ISAF mission, The NATO has collaborated side by side with US in combating terrorism, insurgency and assisting Afghan government particularly the development of security institution through supporting, training, equipping the ANSF beyond the 2014. NATO's command of ISAF mission from 2003 to 2014 was the Alliance's largest and longest running conflict in its 70-year history.<sup>281</sup> That NATO 's Resolute and Support mission in Afghanistan ended when the Biden administration decided to withdraw its all troops from Afghanistan by mid-2021, Turkey and US as the last members left Afghanistan by August 25, 2021 after the Taliban takeover all Afghanistan.

#### **7.4. U.S.–AFGHANISTAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

The establishment of Strategic Partnership Agreement between United State and former Afghan government is the continuation of the evolutionary course of relation between two countries which can be classified into six different periods as follows: The USA recognized Afghanistan as independence states in 1921, followed by the establishment of full diplomatic relations between two countries in 1934. After the IIWW, the U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower paid an official visit to Afghanistan in December 1959, followed by King Mohammad Zahir Shah, the first Afghan head of state to visit the US.<sup>282</sup> During first Cold War (1950-1970) two nations had normal and minimal relations. Post- Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, the U.S. established close relations with Mujahedeen factions and Jimmy

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<sup>280</sup> NATO, “Declaration by the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on an enduring partnership signed at the NATO summit in Lisbon, Portugal”, ( last update November 20, 2010),

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_68724.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68724.htm)

<sup>281</sup> Johnston, Seth. “NATO's Lessons from Afghanistan,” *Parameters* 49, no. 3 (Autumn 2019): 11-26.

<sup>282</sup> The Embassy of Afghanistan Washington. DC “Diplomatic History”,

<https://www.afghanembassy.us/afghan-us-relations/afghan-us-relations/>

Carter and Ronald Reagan administrations financially and logistically support Afghan resistance groups to fight against Soviet and Dr. Najibullah government.

After the Soviet withdrawal and beginning of civil war until Taliban regime collapse there was no diplomatic relation at all between two countries. Post-2001 under the George W. Bush and Hamid Karzai administrations the diplomatic, political, economic, security and strategic relationship resumed between two countries. The Obama and Karzai's administrations signed the Strategic Partnership Agreement in May 2012, officially titled "Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement". Prior to the establishment of strategic partnership, the parties signed a joint declaration of strategic relations in 2005, during which they discussed the legal terms of the agreement, which renewed in 2009.<sup>283</sup> Basically this agreement defined the relationship between two countries in four broad areas; a) "Military and security cooperation; b) Economic assistance and development of economic infrastructure; c) strengthening regional cooperation; d) expanding cultural and social and education ties." The US/NATO was legally authorized to stay in Afghanistan and expand their military presence beyond the 2014, as well as to utilize Afghan facilities in the fight against al-Qaeda and its affiliate groups. This agreement was signed on May, 2012 as a long-term international strategic agreement between the top diplomatic figures of both countries in the presence of Barak Obama and Hamid Karzai. The agreement was comprised of eight section with thirty six subsections was signed on May 2012.<sup>284</sup>

Prior to sign this agreement Hamid Karzai convened a "Loya Jirga" (Grand Assembly) in 2011, a traditional gathering of all tribal elders; religious figures political leaders, civil society and women delegation, which is customary in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan's constitution it's the highest unofficial decision-making institution held while a big decision is taking about country futures. The decision on whether or not to sign the SPA has sent it to the Loya Jirga for approval. The decision has received approval votes from Loya Jirga and had declared their decision as:

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<sup>283</sup> U.S. Department of State Archive, " Joint Declaration of the United State-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership", ( May 23, 2005) , <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/sca/rls/pr/2005/46628.htm>

<sup>284</sup> The Embassy of Afghanistan Washington. DC "Strategic Partnership Agreement", <https://www.afghanembassy.us/document/spa/>

*“Commitment for the protection of ten years achievements, respect the Afghan constitution, women’s rights, freedom of speech and taking into consideration the prevailing situation in the region, the strategic cooperation with the United States of America, which is a strategic ally of the people and government of Afghanistan is considered important. In order to ensure political, economic and security situation of the country, signing a strategic cooperation documents with the United State conforms the national interests of Afghanistan and is of significant importance...When signing this document Afghanistan and the United States must be considered as two sovereign and equal countries” in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations”.*<sup>285</sup>

**The content of SPA where both parties had agreed on is in below:**

- ***Protecting and Promoting Shared Democratic Values:*** Afghan government reaffirmed its strong commitment for protecting and promoting democratic values including, free elections, human rights, women rights.<sup>286</sup>
- ***Advancing Long-Term Security:*** as the critical part of this agreement both side emphasized on close cooperation in ensuring Afghanistan’s security and stability. The U.S. Military and civilian personnel presence in Afghanistan and their activity post-2014 was authorized under this agreement the U.S. designated Afghanistan a “Major Non-NATO Ally”. In Post-2014 the U.S. reaffirmed its support and funding, training, equipping, advising and sustaining ANSF.<sup>287</sup> In the context of this agreement Kabul agreed to provide U.S. forces with access to and use of Afghan facilities and territory beyond 2014. Additionally, the U.S. affirmed in the case if any external aggression against Afghanistan taking place it will stand with Afghanistan and will hold consultations on an urgent basis to develop and implement an appropriate response including; political, diplomatic, economic or military measures in accordance with their respective constitutional processors.<sup>288</sup>
- ***Reinforcing Regional Security and Cooperation:*** In this part of agreement, both parties agreed on the importance of Afghanistan relations with its neighbors. As the regional cooperation for consolidation of security in the

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<sup>285</sup> Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement Between the United State of America and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, (May 2, 2012), Kabul, p. 1

<sup>286</sup> Ibid, p.2

<sup>287</sup> Ibid, p.3

<sup>288</sup> Ibid p.4

region is important therefore both side shall contribute with regional and international organization to recognized and combat with threats including: terrorist networks, organized crimes, narcotics trafficking and money laundering. Building regional initiatives including transit and trade agreement, strengthening border coordination and management with neighbors, expanding regional transportation, energy transit, mobilizing regional investment were part of agreement.<sup>289</sup>

- ***Social and Economic Development:*** the U.S. reaffirmed its commitment to Afghanistan's economic development on the other hand; the Afghan government reaffirmed its' strong commitment to self-reliance and fight against corruption and development its human capacity.<sup>290</sup>

To summarize, the SPA was the important part of Washington-Kabul relations in post-2014, but the question is how much and to what extent the how the agreement's legal and political contents has been implemented and practiced? The contents of this important security and strategic agreement was not implemented properly, both parties have violated the content of agreement. The US has violated the agreement by directly involving in peace talks with Taliban without including the Afghan government as important sides. As parties affirmed that any peace and reconciliation efforts occurring will be Afghan-led and owned whereas in U.S.-Taliban talks Afghan government was marginalized from process. The U.S.-Taliban peace deal only served Washington interest, when the Biden Administration announced its withdrawal decision in May, 2021 the Taliban escalated their offensive in Afghanistan and before the withdrawal date which was September 11, 2021 Taliban takeover whole Afghanistan. As the part of agreement the U.S. reaffirmed that Washington will stand with Afghan people against internal and external security threats, but as we are witness the districts and province are falling to Taliban one by one, and the Biden administration is putting all reasonability on Afghan government and make free its shoulders from responsibility. On the other hand Afghan government also violated the agreement by not taking serious step against the corruption, accountability and transparency in spending donors pledged aids.

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid, p. 5

<sup>290</sup> Ibid, Pp. 5-7

## **7.5. AFGHANISTAN BETWEEN WITHDRAWAL AND TRANSITION (2012-2017)**

After the transition of security responsibility to ANSDF the security situation deteriorated gradually, Taliban launched massive offensive and increased their attacks on Afghan government civil and military institutions some of districts and province fall down including Kunduz province fall to the Taliban for first time since 2001. The transition and withdrawal took place while, neither the Taliban weakened nor the ANSDF was ready to take security responsibility. Some of the experts believe that Obama hasty decision over the withdrawal of troops and transition gave leverage and moral to Taliban to battleground. Paul D. Miller links the US war strategies failure in Afghanistan with early withdrawal of US/NATO troops whereas the mission was incomplete.

### **7.5.1. Troops Reduction Plan**

Barak Obama's deployment of 30,000 additional U.S. troops was followed by troop's withdrawal plan after 18 months in July 2011. while delivering remarks on the troops drawdown from Afghanistan Obama added, "we are starting this drawdown from a position of strength, we dismissed Al-Qaeda's leadership by killing Osama bin Laden, in Afghanistan we have inflicted serious losses on the Taliban, the ANSF is in good growing condition reaching by over 100,000 troops, we have already begun to transition responsibility to Afghan government in the context of these success we are meeting our goals as the result we will remove 10,000 of our troops from Afghanistan by end of 2011".<sup>291</sup> Obama's plans for a rapid withdrawal elicited a range of response from US politicians, the public and allies. Some Democrats have welcomed the decision; in a statement, Senator Carl M. Levin (D-Mich.), the chairman of the Armed Services Committee called the plan a positive development and emphasized on larger drawdown of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, While, Sen. John McCain expressed his concern over the quick withdrawal plan as an unnecessary risk to the hard-won gains in Afghanistan. Some European leaders had also welcomed the Obama's plan as French President Nicolas Sarkozy had prepared to pull its 4000 troops out of Afghanistan, followed by Germany decision to

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<sup>291</sup> ABC News, " Full Speech: Obama on Afghanistan Troops Withdrawal (Transcript)", (last retrieved, June 22, 2011), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/transcript-obama-afghanistan-troop-withdrawal-full-speech/story?id=13906420>

reduce of 4900 troops by end of 2011. The President Karzai also cheered Obama's announcement.<sup>292</sup>

By August 2010, the total number of foreign troops in Afghanistan reached to 150,000 that 100,000 of these troops were U.S. forces.<sup>293</sup> The first phase of foreign troop's withdrawal in 2011 took place, where the security situation was deteriorated, the Taliban were no longer fighting undercover; they gained control of the rural population and were busy with recruiting new militant. Additionally, due to conflict violence the civilian causality increased. According to (UNAMA) reports civilian deaths in 2011 was 3,021 an increase of eight percent over the 2010 with (2,790 civilian and % 25 increased from 2009 (2,412 civilian death).<sup>294</sup> According to Gallup poll in June 2011, 87% of Democrats approved Obama's U.S. force drawdown plan from Afghanistan, along with 74% independents and 50% Republicans.<sup>295</sup>

The growing anti- Obama Afghan's war strategy sentiment among the political party inside the U.S. and also in NATO allies has induced Obama to reaffirm his strong commitment to decline its troops present in Afghanistan and to replace U.S. direct combat strategy with non-combat strategy. However A counterinsurgency campaign needed more patience and time to succeed. The surge troops took about six months to deploy, and they began withdrawing in July 2011 about one year after their full deployment. Political pressure and financial constraints in donor countries eroded support for an extended counterinsurgency effort, leading to a drawdown of U.S. forces at the end of 2014.<sup>296</sup>

### **7.5.2. Chicago Summit: U.S./NATO Roadmap for Drawdown**

The Chicago summit of NATO members took place in May 2012 in Chicago; among other important issues discussed at the summit were the alliance's collective defense capabilities, alliance troop's withdrawal timeline from Afghanistan by the

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<sup>292</sup> Scott Wilson, "Obama hugs the center in pulling troops from Afghanistan", (last retrieved, June 23, 2011), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-to-order-home-10000-troops-from-afghanistan-officials-say/2011/06/22/AGUuRCgH\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-to-order-home-10000-troops-from-afghanistan-officials-say/2011/06/22/AGUuRCgH_story.html)

<sup>293</sup> Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2011: Afghanistan Even of 2010", <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2011/country-chapters/afghanistan>

<sup>294</sup> UNAMA, "Afghanistan Annual Report 2011 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict", (February, 2012) p. 1

<sup>295</sup> Dinesh Sharma, Uwe P. Gielen, (edited), *The Global Obama: Crossroads of Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Routledge, New York, 2014. p.237

<sup>296</sup> Ali A. Jalali, *ibid* p. 10

end of 2014 and the transition process of security responsibility from ISAF to ANSF. The stakeholders had reaffirmed their commitment to close partnership with Afghanistan beyond 2014. In the sideline of Chicago gathering alongside the downsizing the troops level the NATO members declared their enduring commitment to Afghan security forces post-2014 in framework of Resolute and Support Mission a new strategy to continue its support by training, advising and assistance mission. The NATO members also confirmed their part in the financial sustainment of the ANSF and with its increased forces size of 228,500 with an estimate of \$ 4.1 billion.<sup>297</sup> Although the parties released that conflict is not the solution to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan, in this context, the International community, US/NATO and the Afghan government had emphasized on reconciliation and reintegration process.

By September 2012, the US troop level had downed to 65,936 from 86,692 whereas it was a total 130,000 troops from 50 NATO and partner nations with specifically only 100,000 US troops. In following phase the U.S. troops downsized to 46,000 troops, in December of 2013. In March 2015 troops decline to 9800 as the security situation beyond 2014 deteriorated Obama has decided to keep the current force through the end of his term.<sup>298</sup> Simultaneously with the withdrawal of the ANDSF gradually assumed the security responsibility.

## **7.6. THE TRANSITION OF SECURITY RESPONSIBILITY TO ANDSF**

The transition is the process by which security responsibilities are transferred from U.S. led coalition troops to Afghan security forces. The decision of transferring security responsibility from ISAF to Afghan security forces was made following in January 2010 at London conference.<sup>299</sup> In the Kabul conference in July, 2010 the international community expressed its support for President Hamid Karzai suggestion over the handing over the security responsibility to ANSDF by the end of

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<sup>297</sup> NATO, “Chicago Summit Declaration on Afghanistan”, ( last retrieved May 21, 2012), [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_87595.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87595.htm)

<sup>298</sup> Military Times, “ A timeline of U.S. troops level in Afghanistan since 2001”, (last retrieved, July 6, 2016), <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2016/07/06/a-timeline-of-u-s-troop-levels-in-afghanistan-since-2001/>

<sup>299</sup> UNMA, “Communique of London Conference on Afghanistan”, ( January 28, 2010), <https://unama.unmissions.org/communiqu%C3%A9-afghanistan-london-conference%E2%80%9D>

2014.<sup>300</sup> Eventually, at NATO annual strategic concept summit in Lisbon in November, 2010 NATO/ISAF members' nations reaffirmed their commitment to transition process which started at 2011 and ended by the end of 2014.<sup>301</sup> Thus, the transition process simultaneously began with foreign troop's withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Prior to the inception of transition process, A Joint Afghan-NATO Integral Board (JANIB) which co-chaired by the Afghan National Security Council, NATO/ISAF was formed, and attended by key stakeholders from Afghan government and the United Nation. The joint board's transition strategy was largely determined by the situation on the ground in the terms of security, governance and development.<sup>302</sup> Prior to the implementation of the transition plan, four conditions were considered to ensure a secure and successful handover process. The four conditions were including. (1) The security of hand over area should be at level that allows the population to pursue routine daily activities. (2) The ANSDF operational capability should be much enough to handle the security task and missions with limited combat and operational support of coalition troops. (3) The legitimacy and capability of the local governance should on level that delivery good service for the population so that security will not be undermined as ISAF assistant reduced. (4) Finally, ISAF should decrease its role as ANSDF capabilities increased and threat levels stabilize or diminish.<sup>303</sup> The transition process has been completed in five tranches with beginning of first phase on March 2011 and the final trench on June, 2013. The district and provinces with lesser security challenges and with accountability and transparency governance system was enlisted as first to be transferred to Afghan security forces.

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<sup>300</sup> UNODC, "Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan", (July 20, 2010), Pp.6, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Kabul\\_Conference/FINAL\\_Kabul\\_Conference\\_Communique.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Kabul_Conference/FINAL_Kabul_Conference_Communique.pdf)

<sup>301</sup> United Nation, Yearbook of The United Nations 2011, Department of Public information, New York, year 2011, vol. 65, p.332

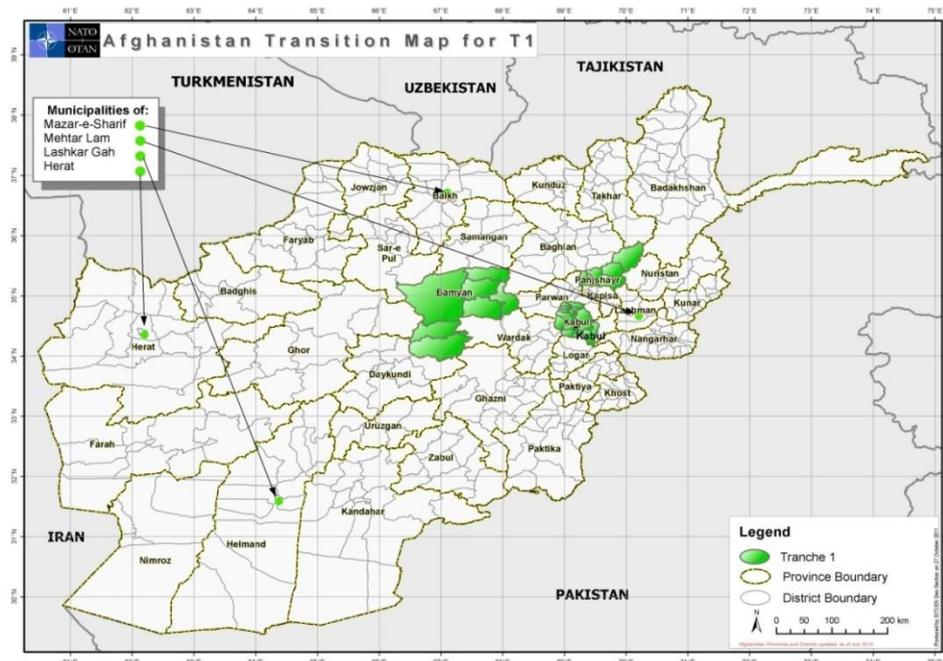
<sup>302</sup> Great Britain Parliament House of Commons: Defense Committee, Operation in Afghanistan; Fourth report of session 2010-12, published by the House of Commons, London, (July 2011), vol. 1 fourth report. p. 162

<sup>303</sup> Department of Defense of United State of America, "Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan", (DOD Archive, October, 2011) P. 55, [https://archive.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/October\\_2011\\_Section\\_1230\\_Report.pdf](https://archive.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/October_2011_Section_1230_Report.pdf)

### 7.6.1. The Transition Implementation Plan (2011-2014)

*The First phase:* the first hand over phase was announced by President Karzai on 22 March 2011 which including four municipalities; Mazar Sharif, Mehtar Lam, Lashkar Gah and Herat.

**Figure 7.1:** Transition Process First Phase Map

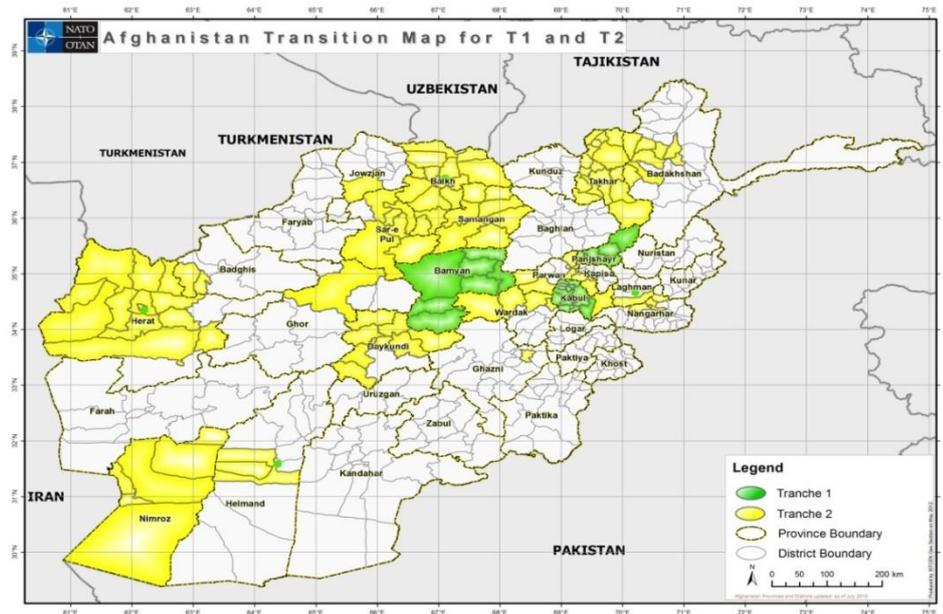


Sources; [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_87183.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_87183.htm)

*The Second Phase:* after the successful transition of first tranche and evaluation of security situation the second phase was announced on 27 November 2011 with extensive geographical coverage. According to JAINB Commission suggestion six provinces with all its districts including; Mazar Sharif, Daikundi, Takhar, Samangan, Kabul, and Nimrouz were included in second phase of transition process. Similarly seven municipalities including; Jalalabad, Chaghcharan, Sheberghan, Faizabad, Ghazni, Maidan Shahr, Qala-e-Naw were also under the second tranche coverage. After the second phase almost fifty percent Afghanistan's population was living in areas under the control and responsibility of ANSF security forces.<sup>304</sup>

<sup>304</sup> Rawand Inteqal Masulet ha, “ Marhalayi duhum Inteqal Gam ba soyeed khod bawari ( The second phase of transition and a step toward self-esteem)”, ( last retrieved, November 29, 2011), <http://www.gmic.gov.af/dari/transition-analysis/827-2011-11-29-05-24-49>

**Figure 7.2: Transition Process Second Phase Map**

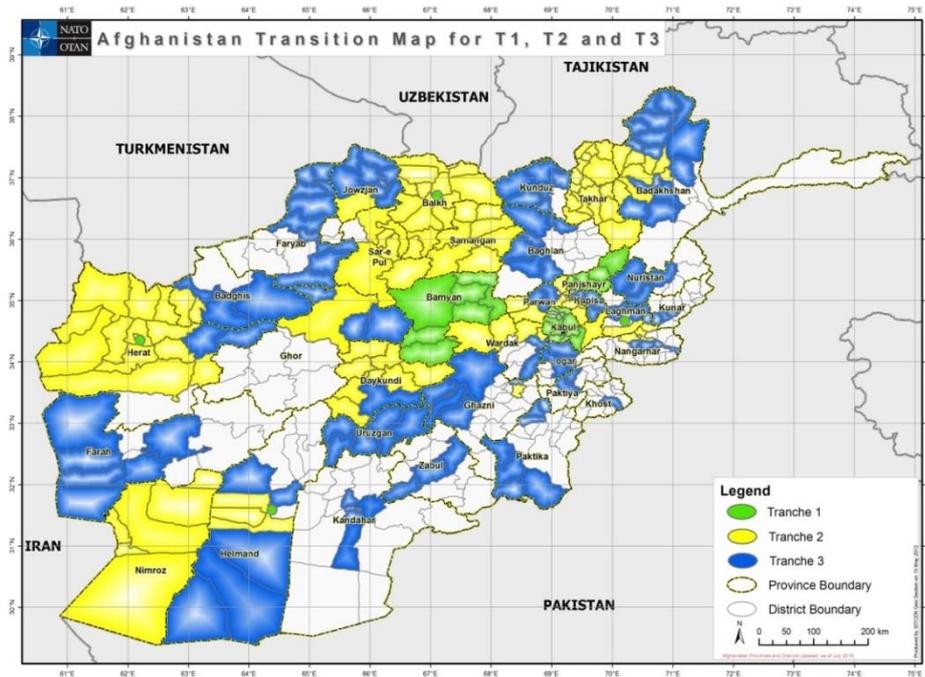


Source: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_87183.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_87183.htm)

**The Third Phase:** after the successful transition of second phase the third phase of transition was announced on May 13, 2012 by JAINB and NATO/ISAF. The third step included the handover of security responsibility of eleven full provinces with its all districts transition of security and the whole 34 province’s municipalities to ANSF. The third phase had covered 75 % of Afghan population living in area under the control of Afghan government.<sup>305</sup> On the one hand, the poor equipment, weak preparation of ANSF for taking a huge responsibility, the logistic challenges and on the other hand, the wider territory and 75% population and Taliban influence in these areas, as well Taliban negative reaction over the signing of Afghan-U.S. Strategic Partnership agreement made the third phase more challengeable and difficult rather than two pervious.

<sup>305</sup> NATO, “Integral: Transition to Afghan Lead”, ( last retrieved, Jan 7, 2015), [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_87183.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_87183.htm)

**Figure 7.3: Transitions Process Third Phase Map**

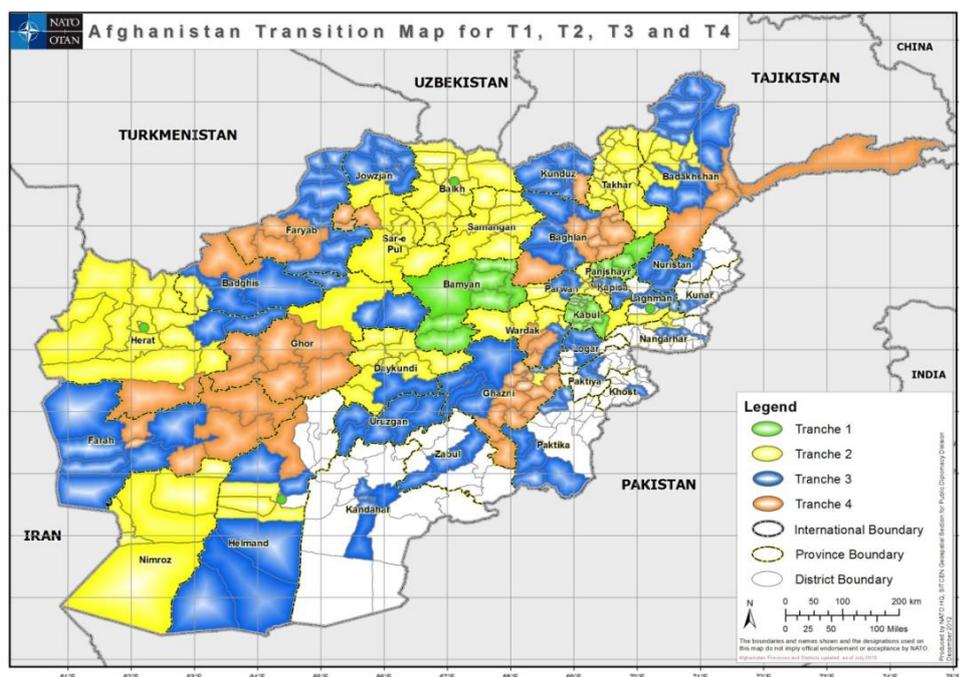


Sources: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pictures/stock\\_2012/120517-ISAF\\_Transition\\_T3-highres.jpg](https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pictures/stock_2012/120517-ISAF_Transition_T3-highres.jpg).

**The Fourth Phase:** The JANIB announced the fourth transition phase on December 12, 2012 which were included of 23 out of 34 provinces almost 87% of population lived in hand over areas.<sup>306</sup> In this stage the security responsibility of remaining districts of; Badakhshan, Badghis, Baghlan, Farah, Faryab, Ghazni, Ghor, Helmand, Herat, Jawzjan, Kunduz, Sarpol, Maidan Wardak provinces were handed over to Afghan forces. The handed over area in fourth phase from the security aspect were “red zone” most insecure and with high graph Taliban activity.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_87183.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_87183.htm)

**Figure 7.4:** Transitions Process Fourth Phase Map

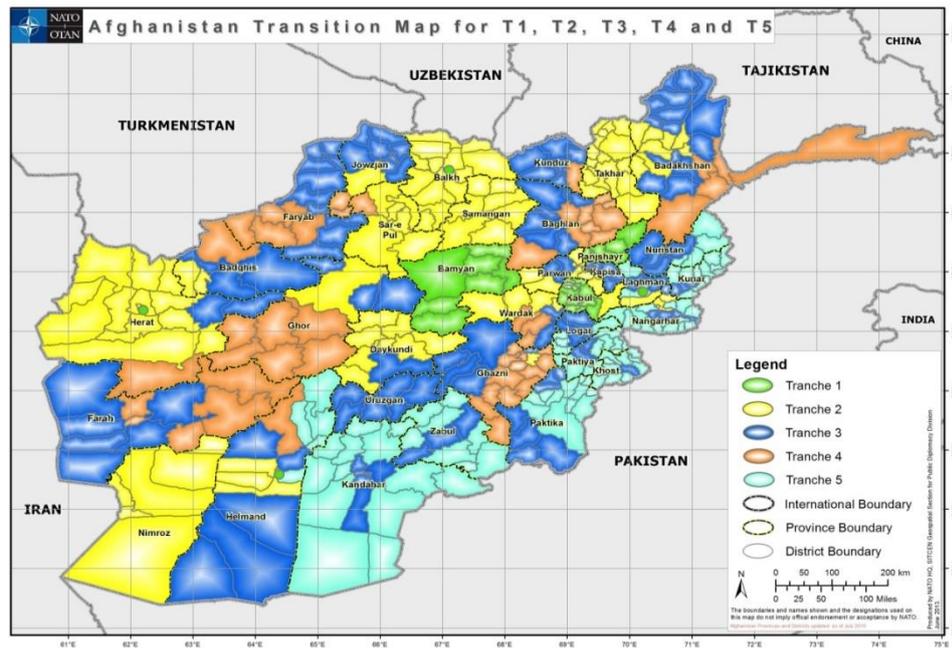


Sources: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pictures/stock\\_2012/20130103\\_121219-ISAF\\_Transition\\_T4.jpg](https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pictures/stock_2012/20130103_121219-ISAF_Transition_T4.jpg)

In this stage of transition 52 administrative units were added to the total 312 administration units from coalition troops to Afghan security forces. The transition of security responsibility to Afghan forces in its fourth tranche was a difficult exam toward the future of Afghanistan.

**The Fifth Phase:** the announcement of the final phase of handing over on June 18, 2013 by President Karzai marked the final phase transition to ANSF. With the declaration of fifth phase the eleven remaining provinces were entirely entered into transition stage and the security and operation responsibility of whole 34 provinces were now in hand of ANSF. The latest phase of transition has occurred while the violence, insecurity and instability was still on its top, on one hand the lack of sufficient equipment and professional training of ANSF on the other side taking the responsibility of wider area and Taliban influence over the rural area population was a concern for Afghans whether the ANSF would be able to provide security of civilian.

**Figure 7.5:** Fifth Phase of Transition



Source: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pictures/stock\\_2013/20130618\\_130618-afghan-transition-tranche5-bg.jpg](https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pictures/stock_2013/20130618_130618-afghan-transition-tranche5-bg.jpg)

To conclude, with the completion of the final transition trench in June 2013, the process of transferring security responsibility from NATO/ISAF to ANSF was completed. The ANSF took the responsibility of military operations in all over provinces and districts with mentorship and air support of coalition troops. By the end of transfer process, all the military infrastructure and non-transferable U.S./NATO facilities throughout Afghanistan had been handed over to Afghan forces, rather than five zones including Kabul, North, South, East and West.

Coalition troops contribution to ANDSF at tactical and combat supportive level since the beginning of transfer till end were in four stages; (a), as the ANDSF assumed command of the operation, the NATO/ISAF troops took the role of mentors, (b) the ANSF has conducting its operation under the tactical oversight of NATO advisors, (c) NATO/ISAF oversight has been reduced to a limit role in operation, (d) the ISAF has continued its contribution and advising role only on the strategic level.<sup>307</sup> The transition occurred concurrently with the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, the 2014 presidential election and the

<sup>307</sup> Joachim Krause, Charles King Mallory, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Strategic Changes: Adjusting Western region policy,

intensification of high- profile attacks by the Taliban continue as well on the meantime the peace talks. Factors such as logistical, operational and strategic planning, corruption, and ineffective leadership have complicated the mission for ANSF, resulting in causality between 2011 and 2014. However the Afghan government and its foreign allies were optimist about the ANSF performance taking the responsibility and handling situation with insufficient facilities. The US/NATO commitment and support had continued beyond 2014 in framework of training, financial assistant to ANSF. Beyond the 2014 the US/NATO's decision on its mission in Afghanistan was mostly based on the condition on the ground approach.

### **7.7. SECURITY SITUATION BETWEEN WITHDRAWAL AND TRANSITION (2011-2017)**

The security concerns have been a major challenge for the Afghan government and its foreign allies for many years; since the U.S. military intervention of Afghanistan until its complete withdrawal, the U.S./NATO and Afghan government have not only failed to secure and stabilize this country, but also failed to protect its hard-won costly achievements. The concerns about security situation in Afghanistan have increased after the U.S. / NATO withdrawal and transition in 2011-2015. The anxiety rose among afghan regarding repeating history of Soviets' withdrawal and the beginning of civil war 1989. However the long-term strategic agreement between the U.S.-Afghanistan ensured the international community's assistant to Afghanistan. The agreement stipulated that the US/NATO would continue provide military and financial support to the Afghan government beyond 2014. A range of complex interrelated issues such as; Obama's hasty decision to end the combat mission and withdraw troops, the transition of security responsibility to the ANSF, the Taliban increasing insurgency and warfare tactics, the political transition of 2014 and its impact on security, and the regional dynamics all had an a negative impact on political security situation between 2011-2015. Pulling foreign troop from Afghanistan cased increasing insurgency and it has weakened the moral of ANDSF in battleground due to lack of air and logistic support.

### **7.7.1. ANDSF Achievements and Challenges**

The establishment of ANDSF was one of the most significant achievements of the U.S. and its NATO allies in last two decades in Afghanistan. The foundation of ANDSF was set up in 2002 after the security donor's conference in Geneva under the name of security sector reforms. Since its establishment in 2002, the US has invested \$84 billion in the ANDSF's training, equipping, and sustainment.<sup>308</sup> The ANDSF has evolved significantly over the last two decades, from a militia-integrated army to a collection of security institutions with professional security forces. The development and expansion of the ANDSF into a force with a total size of 352,000 by the end of 2012 was a part of the US and allies withdrawal and transition strategy, began in 2009. The development and strength of ANDSF remained a top priority for the U.S./NATO until 2021, as the U.S. perceived that only way to achieve long-term strategic success in Afghan war is to develop Afghan Security Forces, and also the withdrawal of coalition troop's gap needed to fill with ANDSF to provide security for Afghan and to avoid Al-Qaeda and Taliban return to Afghanistan.

The U.S. and NATO have continued its support from Afghan security forces in the framework of RSM under the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan in post 2014. The ANDSF training, equipping, process limited to only financial support concurrently with the U.S.-Taliban peace deal and Biden's complete withdrawal decision in 2021. The strategy of developing and replacing US/NATO forces with ANDSF has come after the re-insurgency of Taliban and their influence over the rural population. the ANDSF was seem to be appropriate option for combating the Taliban and Al-Qaeda at a lower financial cost rather than a U.S. troops, as a U.S. soldier's annual expenditure on duty in Afghanistan range to \$ 250,000, while the ANDSF soldier's annual salary ranged to \$3600. By the end of 2014, the Afghan forces had assumed security and defense responsibility for the entire country. Since the first transition phase in 2011, they have conducted all of their operations independently, with limited support from NATO/ISAF. According to SIGAR's 2011 report, Afghan Security Forces have maintained the highest

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<sup>308</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "October 30, 2011" Quarterly Report to Congress, Pp. 29,

performance rating since the start of the first phase of transition.<sup>309</sup> SIGAR 2012, report shows a progress in ANDSF performance they have been capable in their planning, executing, sustaining of full spectrum of mission without assistance from coalition forces.<sup>310</sup>

Despite the growth and accomplishments between 2011 and 2014; ANDSF has continued to face challenges on both combat operational and professionalism level. The challenges included weak leadership, human resources, management, and logistics and corruption on top level. The politicization of the security institutions and the interference of Afghan elites in the ANDSF, hiring higher process was a major problem for central government, which has undermined the legitimacy and efficiency of security forces performance.

#### **7.7.2. Security Situation Assessment in 2011**

The domestic and regional dynamics including withdrawal of foreign troops and transition process overall had its impact on security situation in Afghanistan beyond the 2011. Taliban declared their spring operation name as “Badar” offensive in 2011, the Badar operations included, “launch of attacks on military centers, foreign troops and Afghan government bases across the country”.<sup>311</sup> The violence increased due to Taliban attacks and Coalition troops and Afghan government counter response. The UN record showed that despite the progress in security, governance sectors the security situation in the country went toward fragility and gradually it has deteriorated by the end of 2014.

Overall, the United Nation civilian causality records shows the ANSF and civilian casualties had increased. According reports, the security incidents by the end of November 2011 the monthly average was 1,995 up %21 compared to first 11 months of 2010. The report state the armed clashes and improvised explosive devices constituted majority of such incident accounting for nearly 65 percent

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<sup>309</sup> SIGAR, *ibid*, p. 30

<sup>310</sup> SIGAR, “Quarterly Report to the United States Congress” (October 30, 2012), p. 78, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2012-10-30qr.pdf>

<sup>311</sup> Jonathon Burch, Rob Taylor, “Afghan Taliban declare start to spring offensive”, Reuters, (last retrieved, April 30, 2011). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban-idUSTRE73T0JU20110430>

while 38 suicide attacks have occurred in last three month of 2011.<sup>312</sup> The civilian casualties in 2011 ranged to a total number of 7842 including 3133 killed and 4709 injured.<sup>313</sup> On the other hand the US/NATO records indicated that the security situation improved in 2011.

The Coalition troops' operational area of responsibility was divided into six commands, including regional commands (East, South, Southeast, West, North, and Capital). Prior to 2014, the Taliban's operations were primarily seasonal; their insurgency activity increased in summer and decreased in during winter. The Taliban's attacks in Regional Command-East (RC-E) increased June and July of 2011 and then declined in winter. Therefore, violence in RC-E remained 16 percent higher than during summer season compared to 2010.<sup>314</sup>

The violence in RC-S declined due to ANSF-ISAF operations within Kandahar, Uruzgan, Zabul provinces. Thus the security situation in RC-Southwest Helmand Province had improved, as it was the most insecure province in 2009 and 2010. Followed the violence in s RC- West has decreased by 20 percent compared to the same period 2010. And also security situation in RC- North improved and the Taliban attacks declined 31 percent in compare to last year.<sup>315</sup> According to NATO and UN records, the Taliban concentrated attacks on urban centers in 2011 and increased their suicide complex attacks on Afghan government military and civilian institutions, as well as Coalition troops. Such as attacks on InterContinental Hotel in Kabul on 28 June, attacks on British Council in Kabul on 19 August, on February 19, 2011 suicide attack targeted Kabul Bank in Jalalabad city killed dozens of ANSF personal. Additionally Target-killing and assassinations of government official, local political and religious leaders continued. By the end of 2011 almost 126 assassination incident has taken place and which 182 individuals were killed.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Unite Nation General Assembly Scurity Council, "The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implication for International Peace and Security", ( December 13, 2011) ( A/66/606\*-S/2011/772\*), p. 3, [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/111219%20SG%20Report%20Afghanistan\\_0.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/111219%20SG%20Report%20Afghanistan_0.pdf)

<sup>313</sup> UN News, "Afghanistan: Civilian casualties exceed 10,000 for sixth straight year" ( last retrieved, February 22, 2020), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1057921>

<sup>314</sup> DoD, Archie *ibid*, p.62

<sup>315</sup> DoD, Archie, *ibid*, p. 64-65

<sup>316</sup> Unite Nation, Year book of United Nations 2011, New York, published 2011, vol. 65. p. 319

To sum up, in the spite of that the ANSDF had some achievements in 2011 including equipment, training and taking the security responsibility of some provinces by their own, it was still a challengeable year for Afghan security forces, as the conflict is seasonably in Afghanistan thus due to intensity of conflict the violence increase in summer and decline in winter. The domestic and regional dynamics has always its impact on security situation in Afghanistan.

### **7.7.3. Security Situation Assessment in 2012**

The security situation in 2012 in compare to pervious year looked satisfied, but not much improved. In the assessment of security situation in 2012, various variables have been evaluated, including the growth and performance of the Afghan forces, transition and withdrawal process as well as the Taliban offensive strength. As a part of Obama's drawdown strategy the second phase of force reduction took place in September 2012, almost 33,000 U.S. forces departed Afghanistan, while approximately 68,000 were still remained in Afghanistan.

The International community's commitment to Afghanistan was reaffirmed in NATO Summit in Chicago in May 2012. The NATO/ISAF partner nations made a strong pledge of long-term support and commitment for security in Afghanistan beyond 2014 by pledging annually 4.1 billion per years for training, equipping and supporting ANSDF. As a part of ANSDF growth and development strategy, the ANSDF met its goal of recruiting a force of approximately 352,000 soldiers by October 2012, including 195,000 ANA and 157,000 ANP and 8000 airman.<sup>317</sup>

The transition's first and second phases were completed in 2011, followed by announcement of transition tranches three, four in 2012. The third and fourth phases of security responsibility transition to ANSDF were consisting of 23 out of 34 provinces and 261 districts out 405. After the implementation of tranche 3 and 4 approximately %87 Afghan population was living in areas, where the ANSDF were in the lead for security.<sup>318</sup> At this point, ANDSF took the security and operational responsibility across the already transited areas with the ISAF supporting role.

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<sup>317</sup> Department of Defense, " Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan", ( DoD archive, December, 2012), p.45 [https://archive.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/1230\\_Report\\_final.pdf](https://archive.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/1230_Report_final.pdf)

<sup>318</sup> DoD ( Achieve 2012) *ibid*, p. 29

The last two tranches in RC-N, RC-E and RC-W zones included wider territory which was consist of districts and villages which were vulnerable to violence and security threats. It was supposed that maintaining security in mentioned area would be more challengeable. But unlike the ANDSF performance in the early months of the year was adorable, as they independently expanded security to transfer regions, but still the security situation remained fragile. The number of security-related incidents declined to 1,286 in January 2012 a decrease from the previous two months, the number of events was also lower than in January 2011 (1,636).<sup>319</sup>The dropped in security incident was due to the season trend and ANDSF and ISAF securitization efforts.

In May 2012, The Taliban launched their first major spring offensive, dubbed Al- Farooq across the RC-C and RC-E zones by attacking the National Assembly, ANDSF and governmental institutions, International organization, and foreign embassies. During this period 1412, security incidents have recorded a %28 decrease compare to April 2011 but increase compare to January 2012. According to UNAMA report between first, six months of 2012, almost 49 civilians were killed 110 wounded and 11 Afghan service personnel were killed 42 injured while 36 insurgent died.<sup>320</sup> The security events over the % 70 happened in Northern, South-eastern and Eastern province. the UNAMA security incident report of September 2012 shows that from May 1 to July 31 overall 5,190 incident 30 percent lower compared to the same period in 2011, ( 7,470) incident took placed.<sup>321</sup> While the security incidents December 2012, report records show that August 2012, was more violent and a deadliest month for civilian. From August 1 to October 21, almost (4801) security incidents were recorded a 14 % decreased compare to same period in 2011, (5,582) incident. Almost 70 % of this incident

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<sup>319</sup> UN General Assembly Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security : report of the Secretary-General, A/66/728-S/2012/133 ( 5 March 2012), available from [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/SG%20Report%20to%20the%20Security%20Council-March%202012\\_0.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/SG%20Report%20to%20the%20Security%20Council-March%202012_0.pdf)

<sup>320</sup> UN General Assembly Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security : report of the Secretary-General, A/66/855-S/2012/462 ( 20 June, 2012), available from [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg\\_report\\_to\\_sc\\_-\\_june\\_2012.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_to_sc_-_june_2012.pdf)

<sup>321</sup> Ibid, Report of the Secretary- General, A/67/354-S/2012/703 ( 13 September 2012), available , <https://unama.unmissions.org/>

between August and October occurred in south and east.<sup>322</sup> Overall in first eight months of 2012 the security incident was 30 % decreased compared to same period in 2011. Also in final quarter, there was 10 percent reduction compared to 2011. The SIGAR October 2012 report's shows the improvement in security situation in compare to 2011 and reduction in Anti-Afghan government element attacks according to report enemy- initiated attacks EIAs dropped 63 percent in Kandahar, 22 percent in Kabul, 33 percent in Jalalabad, 60 percent in Helmand, 88 percent in Mazar Sharif, and 13 percent in Herat.<sup>323</sup> A survey records which conducted by Asia Foundation in 2012 demonstrated that the respondents to a survey question "Is Afghanistan moving in right direction?" Was 52 % positive and optimist and the most commonly cited reasons for the optimism were good security 41 %.<sup>324</sup> Notwithstanding, The cost of human in 2012, was still high due party's conflict civilian toll decreased in compare to 2011, but still it was worrying. According to UNAMA report's 2769 civilian killed and 4821 injured in 2012.<sup>325</sup>

#### **7.7.4. Green-On- Blue Attacks**

One of the other concern in 2012 was the increase in insider attacks, also known as "Green on Blue attacks," an organized attacks which were carried out by Taliban infiltrators dressed in ANDSF uniforms on the duty with Coalition troops. The motivations behind the attacks were possibly linked to; Taliban's infiltration, impersonation, co-option, post-traumatic stress, inter-personal dispute and extremist views.<sup>326</sup> Although NATO initially expressed that an estimated 90 % of the attacks were motivated by cultural differences and personal enmity, but Taliban claims their infiltration in ANDSF. In 2012, the total 44 greens- on- blue attacks accounted for 15% of NATO/ISAF troops deaths. In 2011, a total 16 green-on-blue attacks accounted for 6%; in 2010 a total 5 attacks , 2%; in 2009 a total 5 attacks accounted , 2%; and in 2008, less than 1%. The green-on-blue death and wounded

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid Report of Secretary-General, A/67/619 S/2012/907 ( 6 December, 2012) available, [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg\\_report-as-issued\\_13dec12.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report-as-issued_13dec12.pdf)

<sup>323</sup> SIGAR, Ibid, Pp. 79, available from : <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2012-10-30qr.pdf>

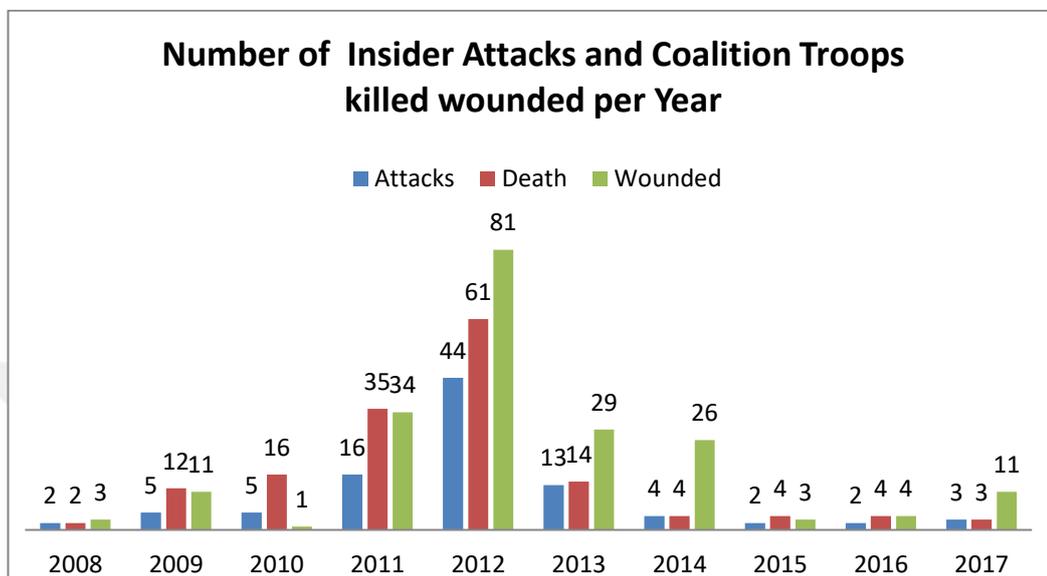
<sup>324</sup> Nancy Hopkins (editor), Afghanistan in 2012 A survey of the Afghan People, Asia Foundation, Kabul, 2012, Pp. 5, available from <https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Surveybook2012web1.pdf>

<sup>325</sup> Ibid, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1057921>

<sup>326</sup> DOD, ibid, p. 33

total from 2008 to 2017 were 152 death and 200 wounded.<sup>327</sup> With this the total death tolls of Coalition troops in 2012 were 402 and 2971 US soldiers wounded.<sup>328</sup>

**Figure 7.6:** Green on Blue Attacks



Sources: <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2012-10-30qr.pdf>

The Insider attacks undermined NATO/ISAF’s efforts of transition of security responsibility and also it has strained the relationship between Afghan Security Forces and their foreign counterpart, the increasingly occurrence of such attacks have created mistrust atmosphere among NATO and ANSF. With the gradual withdrawal of coalition over the time the insider attacks reduced.

### 7.7.5. Security Situation in 2013

Security has remained a primary concern and source of anxiety for Afghans over the last four decades, particularly in the last two decades. The security situation has gradually deteriorated post-2012, however in 2012 the graph of insecurity and human cost of war in Afghanistan was in some degree down in compare to 2011 but the graph start increased in 2013. As the Coalition troop’s withdrawal from

<sup>327</sup> Bill ROGGIO and LISA LUNDQUIST, “Green-on-Blue Attacks in Afghanistan; the data”, FDD’s Long War Journal, ( August, 23, 2012) , [https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/08/green-on-blue\\_attack.php#data](https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/08/green-on-blue_attack.php#data)

<sup>328</sup> Icasualties . org Iraq Coalition causality count, “ Fatalities by Year and Country”, <http://icasualties.org/>

Afghanistan has continued by the September 2013, the total number of Coalition troops dropped to 65,222.<sup>329</sup> As part of transition trend Coalition troops Joint Command (IJC) had closed or transferred 728 of 812 almost 89 % its bases and non-transferable military facilities on September 15, 2013 to Afghan government. According to DOD's report as the September the IJC had transferred 455 military Bases to ANDSF.<sup>330</sup> The NATO contribution to ANDSF in five pillars continued in this stage including leadership, command and control, sustainment, and logistics combined arms integration and training.<sup>331</sup>

The violence remained high with an overall increase in incidents associated with insurgency, drug-trafficking, criminal activities and extortion in 2013. As the Taliban momentums offensive was usually started in spring and weakened by end of fall, so in 2013 their spring operation was launched named "Khalid-Bin-Walid".<sup>332</sup> The offensive was include of attacks against Afghan government and Coalition troops by conducting asymmetric warfare tactics such as IEDs, high-profile attacks in urban centers, infiltration, assassinations and target killing, guerrilla attacks. In addition, alongside the combat campaign Taliban's leadership circle enhanced focus on non-kinetic activities by dominating rural population. In response to the Taliban security provocation the Pro-government forces increased their anti-government element clearance operation in province and districts and villages.

The civilian and ANDSF fatalities remained alarmingly high in 2013, due to the conflict escalation, the alongside civilian casualties ANDSF casualties graph reached its highest point since 2009, while the Coalition troops casualties graph likely downed. The civilian casualties had triggered by conflict involved parties including; Taliban, pro-government forces and Coalition troop. According to UNAMA reports from 16 February to 15 May 2013, 4,267 security-related incidents were recorded which show a 10 % increase compared with same period

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<sup>329</sup> Department of Defense, " Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan", ( DoD archive, October, 2013), p.13 available from: [https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/October\\_1230\\_Report\\_Master\\_Nov7.pdf](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf)

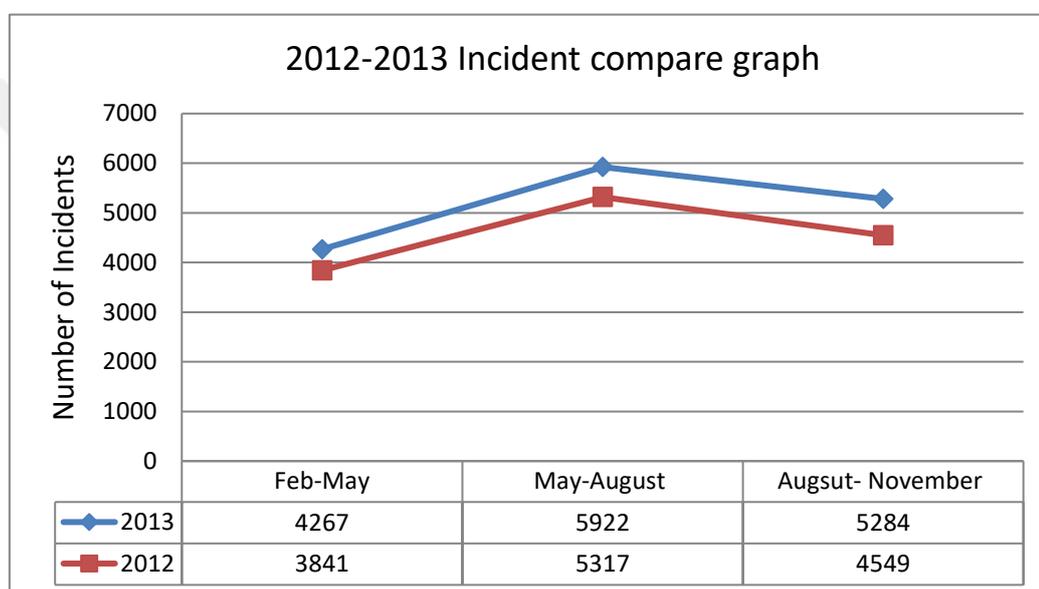
<sup>330</sup> DoD Ibid, p. 11

<sup>331</sup> Ibid, p. 4

<sup>332</sup> Tolo News, " Taliban Announces to Launch Offensive", ( last retrieved, April 27, 2013), <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/taliban-announces-launch-offensive>

in 2012.<sup>333</sup> And also from May 16 to 15 August 2013, 5,922 security incidents including suicide bombing, IEDs, ground conflict, airstrike, night ride attack were recorded, an 11% increase compared with same period in 2012 which were 5,317.<sup>334</sup> Respectively, from 16 August to 15 November, 5284 incidents happened. With a 13, 9 % increase over the same time in 2012.<sup>335</sup> During ten months of 2013 all reported incidents were on the whole 20,790, where High-profile attacks, armed clashes and improvised explosive devices constituted the majority of events.

**Figure 7.7: 2012- 2013 Security Incident Compare Graph**



Source:[https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/SC\\_report\\_6\\_Dec\\_13.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/SC_report_6_Dec_13.pdf)

The civilian causality in 2013 were higher in compare to 2012, the total death tolls accounted 2969 and 5669 wounded whereas the death tolls in 2012 were 2769 and 4821 wounded.<sup>336</sup> As ANDSF took almost 90 % security responsibilities and they have continued conducting most of the offense and defense operation

<sup>333</sup> UN General Assembly Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security : report of the Secretary-General, A/67/889 S/2013/350, (13 June, 2013), Pp. 5 available from: <https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/n1335556.pdf>

<sup>334</sup> Ibid, Report of the Secretary- General, A/67/981–S/2013/535 (6 September, 2013) p. 6 available from: [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sept\\_2013.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sept_2013.pdf)

<sup>335</sup> Ibid, Report of the Secretary- General, A/68/645 S/2013/721, ( December 2013), available from: [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/SC\\_report\\_6\\_Dec\\_13.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/SC_report_6_Dec_13.pdf)

<sup>336</sup> Ibid, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1057921>

therefore the ANDSF causality remained high in 2013, during the second quarter of 2013, over the 3,500 ANDSF personal were wounded or killed.<sup>337</sup>

To conclude, the decision over the transition of security responsibility to ANDSF was too early because in compare to coalition troops capabilities, professionalism, equipment, training, the ANDSF remained far away. However in number they were more enough but their capability of taking over all responsibility of conducting complex mission were still questionable. Additionally, the poor leadership, the lack of coordination between security, defense and intelligence institutions and the operational tactical shortages consist of logistic, air power, and intelligence was issue of mater, which heavily undermined their operational capability and effectiveness in 2013, and also transition of the large area of responsibility with lesser facility made hard for ANDSF to maintained security and stability. Additionally, Pakistan's sanctuary for Taliban and providing training, logistic, recruitment facility has been an important contributing factor for war in Afghanistan. Generally during 2011- 2014 however to some extent progress was made in different field of governance, but still security situation remained a big challenge in Afghanistan unlikely that security situation did not improve but deteriorated and war continues until today.

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid, p. 5

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **THE POLITICAL TRANSITION IN AFGHANISTAN IN 2014**

#### **8.1. INTRODUCTION**

Beyond 2014, is known as the transition to transformation decades (2014-2024). It is the beginning of a new chapter in Afghanistan's history. The first peaceful transfer of the power from a president to another president occurred in Afghanistan, in the result of a democratic election. Afghanistan has experienced two destiny making transitions including security responsibility transition and political transition between 2011 and 2015. In this stage, the process of security responsibility transition from coalition troop to ANDSF was still underway and was not on track to meet its deadline by the end of 2014, while in early months of 2014, the Afghan government has announced the date of holding presidential election. Therefore peaceful transition of power from a statesman to another was one of the important events in country's political history. However the 2014, presidential election was one of the controversial and problematic elections which have ended into two rounds in the result of U.S., United Nation and Afghan political elite's mediation.

The wide-ranging dispute over the outcome of the Afghan presidential election between two rivals has drawn U.S. Secretary of state John Kerry and other international allies to Afghanistan, as a result of John Kerry's mediation a National Unity Government with fifty, fifty power sharing agreement was signed between Dr. Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah on September 2014. It was followed by signing a BSA with Washington which has formed a legal base for the U.S. forces present and utilizing Afghan soul until 2024. The Coalition troops officially ends its 13 years combat mission in Afghanistan in December 2014 by transferring the Bagram base detainee center to Afghan government.

## 8.2. HISTORY OF ELECTION IN AFGHANISTAN

Election was first introduced in 1923, in Afghanistan during the reign of King Amanullah Khan. The Constitution of Amanullah Khan's reign which is adopted in 1922 decreed that the members of government council and local councils be elected by people votes.<sup>338</sup> But the election was not held due to Habibullah Kalakani which is known as "Bacha-ye Saqao") rebellion against Shah in 1929. When Nadir Khan came to power by mid of 1923, he repealed Shah Amanullah Khan's entire legal system and enacted a new one. Nadir Khan's new constitution also mandated an establishment of national council in capital Kabul and advisory councils in the provinces. In 1930, however a draft of national assembly and provincial advisory council election was adopted, but the election was not held in its democratic way.<sup>339</sup>

The first democratic parliamentary election in Afghanistan was held in 1949, during Mohammad Zahir Shah constitutional monarchy and under the Prime Minister Sardar Shah Mahmud Khan leadership. But in 1953, when Dawood Khan became a Prime Minister in order to avoid the establishment of power block against government and to prevent internal provocation against monarchy, the parliamentary election was not allowed. By the end of Dawood Khan's Premiership in 1964, a new constitution was written and once again the new constitution paved the way for a holding a democratic Parliamentary election. The twelfth National Assembly democratic election was held in 1965, during Premiership of Dr. Mohammad Yusuf Khan. Although the political party's law was still pending and not signed by King, but the representative of political parties had saved seats in Parliament. The decade of democracy has ended with a bloodless coup by Dawood Khan in 1973, and he overthrown the Zahir Shah's monarchy and established a Republic and proclaim himself as President and did not allowed the Parliament.

From Dawood Khan Republic 1973 to the Dr. Najibullah Democratic Republic in 1986 for 14 years, no elections were held. When Dr. Najibullah selected as president of Afghanistan in 1988, the new law introduced which allowed other political parties to take part in a power shared coalition government.

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<sup>338</sup> Ministry of Justice Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, " Constitutions of Afghanistan", The Ministry of Justice Press, 2007, Kabul , p. 20, available from; <http://old.moj.gov.af/Content/files/ConstitutionsAfg.pdf>

<sup>339</sup> Mohammad Ibrahim Ataye, Nigah Mukhtaser Ba Tarikh Muaser Afghanistan ( A brief Glance on The Contemporary History of Afghanistan), Maiwand Publisher, Kabul, 2010. p. 301

In the context of new constitution the new bicameral National Assembly with Wolesi Girga (House of Representative) Meshrano Jirga (the Senate) resumed its activity and after the long hiatus the first Parliamentary election was held in 1988. After the fall of Dr. Najibullah government in 1992 until collapse of Taliban regime in 2001, and followed by first four years of International community presence in Afghanistan for 13 years no election was held in Afghanistan.<sup>340</sup> Regime change and a lack of political continuity and sustainability are two problems Afghanistan's political history of Afghanistan. Throughout the decades in Afghanistan, political parties, and governments have fought for power via violence and they used political violence against each other.

Post-Taliban regime collapse in 2001 and intervention of international community the new political order was formed. In 2001, the Bonn accord drawn a platform for establishment of a government based on democracy and people's vote. In new established constitution of 2004, the people have given the rights of vote and viewed as source of power. On the October 9, 2004 for the first time in political history of Afghanistan the first presidential election with participation of a large number of people was held in Afghanistan and the Independent Election Commission announced Hamid Karzai as elected president of Afghanistan. It was followed by parliamentary and provincial council elections which were held in 2005. Thousand of Afghans including womens nominated theirselves parliament and provincial council sets. The second Presidential and provincial council elections were held on August 2009. Respectively the third and fourth terms Presidential election was held in 2014 and 2019 which was very problematic election with wide range of fraud claims and electoral crisis which has undermined the democratic process and creditability of democracy and election in Afghanistan.

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<sup>340</sup> National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "Pishenay Parliman dar Afghanistan" (the Parliament history of Afghanistan), available from: <http://wolesi.website/pvd/showdoc.aspx?Id=64>

### **8.3. 2014, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND FORMATION OF NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT**

The international law of democratic process recognizes as acceptable election's principle that citizens must choose their next government through a free, fair, and transparent election process.<sup>341</sup> The best kind of electoral system is one that adheres to domestic and international electoral rules and norms such as: electoral transparency, participation of voters, validity of election facilities and security. However electoral fraud during electoral process is a common occurrence in many countries nowadays. Even in advanced democracies and developing countries such as in former Soviet Union countries, Asia, Latin America and Asia and particularly in African and Middle East countries. In an election fraud context, there are many ways to rig or undermine an electoral process and an election result which range from manipulating the process, hacking the voting system by using technology, adding and removing votes, buy votes using violence.<sup>342</sup>

In comparison to the stable states the elections in failed/fragile states are problematic and it's very vulnerable to fraud, non-transparency and after election crisis. Based on this, rather than first term presidential election which was held in 2004 in Afghanistan, as it was partially acceptable on bases of people participation transparency, the other three terms presidential which were held 2009, 2014 and 2019 and two terms parliament election in 2010 and 2018 were claimed non-transparent and fraudulent.

However, the democratic process during two decades in Afghanistan was vulnerable to non-transparency, due to conflict, ethnic issues; external meddling in process, but the 2014, presidential elections was more controversial. Elections went to second round due to fraudulence and non-transparency claims, when the election went to second round between two front-runner candidates Dr. Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah the Independent Elections Commission of Afghanistan announced Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani as the winner of election.<sup>343</sup> But the due to widespread accusation of systematic fraud, political infiltration in election process and ballot

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<sup>341</sup> Krishna Kumar, *Postconflict Elections, Democratization & International Assistance*, Lynne Rienner Publisher Inc. USA, 1998. p. 6

<sup>342</sup> R. Michael Alvarez, Thad E. Hall, and Susan D. Hyde, ( Editor), *Election Fraud: Detecting and Detering Electoral Manipulation*, Brookings Institute Press, Washington D.C. 2008, p. 6

<sup>343</sup> IEC, "2014 election final result", <https://www.iec.org.af/en/elections/2014-elections>

stuffing the election went to crisis. The disputation over the result has undermined the democratic process of election in Afghanistan. The inability of the Afghanistan Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaint Commission to convince politician and public on the election result undermined the credibility and legitimacy of these two organizations. On the other hand, the ongoing violence, including Taliban attacks on election sites to disrupt the process, the direct interference of powerbrokers warlords in 2014, election where each of whom worked for their preferred candidates, paved the way for more electoral crisis. Dr. Abdullah rejected the election results and threatened the government on the establishment of parallel government and social provoking then the election result was delayed.

The electoral crisis deeply deteriorated the political, social, economic and security situation in Afghanistan. The escalation of tensions has frightened both the international community as well the public (Afghans) over the unpleasant outcomes of ongoing uncertainty and worsened insecurity situation. Thus, the Obama administration acted rapidly intervened by assigning former Secretary of State John Kerry to visit Kabul, in order to put an end to the electoral wrangling. Kerry has convinced both rivals to form a National Unity Government” (NUG) rather than focusing on who won the election. As a result, a power sharing agreement dubbed the “National Unity Government” was signed between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah. Under the deal Ashraf Ghani became the president and Abdullah has received the CEO set and 50 % of power sharing.<sup>344</sup>

### **8.3.1. The Concept of National Unity Government**

In modern history the idea that people should govern themselves by electing a leader to lead a government of system was came out in end of eighteenth century as result of revolutions in United States and in France. The solution to the ongoing problem was suggested by the Jean-Jacques Rousseau in 1762, which was self-government of the people, which was deemed to be the best system for advancing liberty. As all the people cannot govern at same time or the government system doesn't had the capacity to incorporate everyone in the government, therefore it needed to be ruled by someone who is acceptable figure for majority that would be

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<sup>344</sup> BBC, “ Afghan Presidential Contenders sign unity deals”, ( last retrieved, September 14, 2014), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-29299088>

choose by electing through elections.<sup>345</sup> The idea of representative government based on modern election was appeared in late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Idea of election and representative democracy was developed after WWII and an increasing number of countries have put the concept into practice to form representative governments. And it has supported by International community United Nations and other organizations as a contributing factor in promoting national, regional and international peace and stability, as well as and promoting representative democracy and people rights and liberty.

Despite that the electoral system being a democratic system but still the risk of turning this democratic process to undemocratic system was high. The electoral fraud, unfair election, foreign electoral intervention undermined the process particularly in countries fragile states, failing states. The electoral process collapses was experienced in most countries including Madagascar (2001) Ukraine ( 2004) Kenya ( 2007), Zimbabwe( 2008), Cote d'Ivoire (2010), Haiti (2010 and 2015), Cambodia (2013) and Afghanistan (2009,2014 and 2019).<sup>346</sup> As usual when the post- electoral process is in crisis and the result is rejected due to claims of systematic manipulation, fraud or irregularities in the tallying of results. In order to prevent escalation of tension and risk to national stability in most cases both parties individually or by the intervention of third party including United Nation, other countries, and organizations in the rule of mediator suggest the formation Coalition government or National Unity Government.

The National Unity Government (NUG) is defined as a broad coalition government that is to resolve past electoral crisis during political instability or after war. Once the parties agree on the formation of NUG, than a power-sharing agreement will be signed among them and they could together run government affairs. There have been many NUG established in different countries including in early time in England in 1922, 1931 between Ramsay MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin in most recent in Sri Lanka when the United National Party won the 2015 election it formed a NUG with the electoral rival party Sari Lanka Freedom Party. Followed the formation of NUG in Nepal in 2015, after the Nepal earthquake

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<sup>345</sup> Adam Przeworski, *Why Bother with Elections?*, Polity Press, UK, 2018, p.2

<sup>346</sup> Sean Kane, Nicholas Naysom, "Electoral Crisis Mediation Responding to a rare but recurring challanes, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Sweden, 2016, p.2

crisis, in 2014, the Palestinian Unity Government was created. And also in Afghanistan for the first time after four decades the National Unity government was created in 2014.

### **8.3.2. The 2014 National Unity Government Agreement**

The power-sharing agreement named “National Unity Government” was signed in on September 21, 2014 between Dr. Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah by the mediation of USA Secretary of State and Obama special envoy to Afghanistan John Kerry. Under the agreement, the Ghani who received the most votes became president and the post of Chief Executive was given to Dr. Abdullah. This political agreement has seven key sections including:<sup>347</sup>

- ***The Creation of a Post of the Chief Executive Officer:*** The second part of the agreement dedicated to the creation of the CEO’s post. According to agreement the CEO (Dr. Abdullah) had the rights to have two deputies and they would attend government decision- making meetings and responsible for the managing administration and governmental affairs. The president will mandate a specific executive power to the CEO in specific ceremony in accordance to the articles 60, 64, 71 and 77 of the Constitution. The key features of the power will include as following;
- ***Going for Referendum:*** the parties agreed on holding Loya Jirga (grand Assembly) to modify the constitution and considered the proposal to forming the Prime Minister position. On the basis of article 140 of the constitution the NUG is committed to hold district council elections to pave the way for Loya Jirga
- ***Appointment of Senior Officials:*** On the basis of the principles of national participation, fair representation, merit, honesty, and commitment to the reform programs of the NUG, the parties are committed to the following (a) equality and balance in nominating and appointing of cadres between the President and the CEO at the level of head of key security and economic institutions, and independent directorates.

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<sup>347</sup> Afghanistan Analysts Network, “The ‘National Unity Government’ (NUG) deal (full text)”, ( last retrieved, April 3, 2020), <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/resources/afghan-government-documents/the-government-of-national-unity-deal-full-text/>

- **Electoral Reforms:** The agreement affirmed the necessity of electoral agreement, In order to ensure that the upcoming election in Afghanistan is fully credible; the electoral system including (laws and institutions) requires fundamental changes.
- **Implementation:** Both sides are committed to the implementation of agreement in case of any disagreement over the interpretation or application of this agreement shall be resolved through consultation between the parties.
- **Enforcement:** The agreement will enter into force upon signing the agreement by two parties in presence of Afghan and International witness.

The NUG agreement was signed by both stakeholders of NUG, President Ashraf Ghani and CEO Dr. Abdullah and also by Mr. Jan Kubis, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nation and Mr. James B. Cunningham, Ambassador of the USA in role of witness. On September 20, 2014 in an official decree by President Ghani in accordance to annex article (50) of constitution and in line of power sharing agreement the position of CEO was formally inaugurated and CEO and his two deputies were official introduced to cabinet.<sup>348</sup>

### 8.3.3. The Cabinet of National Unity Government

The cabinet of NUG was announced after three month of delay, with half and half nominees for. Ashraf Ghani introduced thirteen minister nominees, while CEO Abdullah nominated twelve others to the parliament.<sup>349</sup> The delay in introducing the cabinet was criticized by parliament and Senate. The reason for the delay was dispute over the selecting nominees for some of ministers particularly two key security institutions including Interior Ministry and Defense Ministry. As the part of agreement the Defense Ministry belong to President and Interior Ministry was given to CEO. But due to wide range of corruption claims and a need for fundamental reforms on the leadership level of security institutions. Ashraf Ghani

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<sup>348</sup> Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, “ Parman Ries Jumhor Ghani dar mored takaror reis ve mavenin reiyaset ajraya hikomet”, President Ghani decree on behavior of appointing CEO and deputies), September 29, 2014. <https://president.gov.af/da/?p=2617>

<sup>349</sup>Tolo news, “ Finally NUG Announces Cabinet Nominees” , ( last retrieved, January 13, 2015), <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/finally-nug-announces-cabinet-nominees>

was eager to make significant changes and reforms in these two institutions and he wanted the employment formation should be on merit-based mechanism while appointing senior authorities not based on religious and tribal status .While Dr. Abdullah had insisted to have dominance on Interior Ministry as agreement's share to appoint senior officials on terms of parity. Therefore the divergence over the selection of nominees for the ministries has remained as one of the controversial issues and unresolvable dilemma among the two sides until end of the NUG. The disagreement over government structure has undermined the legitimacy of government it has become as a barrier to enforcement of law and reforms. Even though, it has triggered government disobedience and political social and ethnic fragmentation.

#### **8.3.4. 2014 Crisis and National Unity Government**

The National Unity Government of Afghanistan has itself emerged from a period of crisis; it was established in very difficult time while the country was on the edge of collapsing along the lines of political fragmentation, insecurity, economic problems such as capital flight and unemployment due to foreign troop's withdrawal. President Ghani inherited a government that was budget deficit and losing ground to raising momentum insurgency, the drawdown of Coalition troops and the end of their combat mission by the end of 2014 created a big significant concern. The majority of Afghans, including government officials, were skeptical of ANDSF's ability to address ongoing security challenges. Whereas early almost 100,000 Coalition troops fought alongside the ANDSF and provided air and logistical support on the battlefield. Simultaneously with the foreign troops withdrawal the ANDSF has had the last transition tranche almost 80 percent of security responsibility overall all Afghanistan .However on one hand, the lack of sophisticated military equipment and logistic support on the other hand intensification of Taliban offensive made the situation more difficult.

The unemployment was another source of concern for Ghani's administration. The lack of factories, manufacturing companies and a regular jobs market in Afghanistan was filled with foreigner engagement in Afghanistan since International community engagement in Afghanistan many foreign companies have

start working in different sector, it has helped that the unemployment rate in country down. But simultaneously with beginning of Coalition troops' withdrawal a large number of Afghan working forces whose daily life expenditure relied on working with these companies had started losing their jobs. The capital flight from Afghanistan caused employment rate went somehow 2 percent high in 2013 which was % 11.53 2012 descended to %11.51 in 2012.<sup>350</sup> The unemployment helped Taliban's frontline amplification with new recruitment of a large number of jobless young forces particularly from rural areas.

#### **8.3.4.1. Corruption**

Furthermore, one of the serious challenges on the way of NUG was corruption in government that has threatened the legitimacy of government and has created an atmosphere of mistrust between the Afghan government and International community. Even it has led the international community constantly threaten the Afghan government with cutting off its fund, if the Afghan government does not take serious action against corruption. For instant the financially collapse of Kabul Bank where nearly \$1bn has disappeared was one of the worst banking scandal in history of Afghanistan.<sup>351</sup> Dragging the authorities involved in corruptions to court was not an easy because most of these power-brokers and warlords backed authorizes had strong influence on government.

#### **8.3.4.2. External Inferring**

Throughout history Afghanistan has been a competing ground for international and regional powers particularly neighboring Pakistan and Iran have always interfered in Afghanistan's internal affairs. Thus the drawdown of coalition troops from Afghanistan has created a power vacuum which has paved the way for regional actors to be more involved in Afghanistan and fight for their interests. in the contrast to president Karzai's softer and moderate foreign policies towards neighbors president Ghani has chosen more stricter policies which has threatened

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<sup>350</sup> H.Plecher, "Afghanistan; Unemployment rate from 2009 to 2019", Statista, (Jun 9, 2020), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/808214/unemployment-rate-in-afghanistan/>

<sup>351</sup> Jon Boone, "The financial Scandal that broke Afghanistan's Kabul Bank", The Guardian, (last retrieved, Jun 16, 2011). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jun/16/kabul-bank-afghanistan-financial-scandal>

Iran and Pakistan's interests which has put NUG in more serious confrontation with Islamabad and Tehran.

#### **8.3.4.3. Security**

Prior to NUG formation the security situation was critical and deteriorated. Afghanistan was a battleground for several actors including Taliban, ISIS, and al-Qaeda. The main reason for the spread of insecurity was the withdrawal of coalition troops and the inability of government to secure the remote areas once its security responsibility was with U.S./NATO forces. Demoralization of Afghan forces and the lack of necessary growth in capacity and capabilities of them and also the presence of corruption in security institution were also the primary reason of insecurity. The security challenges has caused an increase in civilian causality and led to the growth of drug production over the years according to UNODC's report in 2013 the poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has reached a new peak of 209000 hector an increase of % 26 from 2012, whereas it was 154000 in 2012.<sup>352</sup>

#### **8.3.4.4. Foreign Relations**

Following the end of Karzai's presidency term a gap and distrust atmosphere was existed between Afghanistan and its international partners particularly USA as Afghan government close ally. The tension has risen when Karzai had refused to sign a Bilateral Security Agreement with U.S. and a similar accord with NATO that would allowed coalition troops to remain in Afghanistan from 2014 to 2024.

### **8.3.5. Crisis inside National Unity Government**

#### **8.3.5.1 Political Fragmentation**

A peaceful Political settlement in post-conflict or fragile states such as Afghanistan is more challengeable that requires more time and resources. Because the capacity of society to transform itself from a traditional state defined by persistent violence and patrimonialism to a modern state defined by stable,

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<sup>352</sup> Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Counter Narcotic, "2013 Afghanistan Drug Report", publisher UNODC, December 2014, p. 24, available from: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Afghanistan\\_Drug\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Afghanistan_Drug_Report_2013.pdf)

effective, and legitimate government is limited.<sup>353</sup> Afghanistan's political system has been instable since 1973, as a result of long-standing political divisions and conflict. After the collapse of Zahir Shah Monarchy, the political history of Afghanistan has characterized by foreign intervention, regional countries rivalry, domestic power struggle, and instability. Since Daoud Khan until present almost all the government with various ideological spectrums including; Dawood Khan's Republic from 1973-1978, the pro-communist state from 1978 to 1989, theocracy or (Mujahidin government) from 1992 to 1994, the fundamentalist regime of Taliban from 1994 to 2001, and the constitution from 2004 to present with presidential system as officially known as Islamic Republic and from 2021 to the remerge of Taliban Islamic government, during these last four decades the country has been endured unpleasant political instability experiences.

The National Unity Government was not exempt of these experiences. While looking back on the formation of NUG, in fact the NUG itself emerged from the inside of a chaos and political crisis. From the electoral tussle to the power-sharing discrepancy to governmental disobedience and declaration of parallel government as the internal factors, all have almost dragged the government on the edge of political decay. The internal divisions and incoherence in one hand and the acceleration of insurgency on the other hand has weakened the foundation of Dr. Ghani's government and undermine its legitimacy. The discord point between presidency and executive branch was due to implementation of power-sharing agreement. Each side had different perceptions and interpretations of their power and authority. Dr. Abdullah believed that he has fifty percent share in government according to agreement; whereas Dr. Ghani had emphasized that constitution give him ultimate power. The high-ranking civilian and military appointment in government mostly based on camp and ethnicity. Ghani as reformist was mostly looking for appointee who best implements its government policies whereas Dr. Abdullah had to appoint his parity. This situation has led to the widening of ethnic and regional divisions, particularly when the first vice-president Abdul Rashid Dostum accused by Ahmad Ischi a political rival for illegally detaining, raping

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<sup>353</sup> Naazneen H. Barma, *The Peacebuilding Puzzle, Political Order in Post-conflict State*, Cambridge University Press, November 2016, p. 43

and beating him.<sup>354</sup> The allegation against vice-president of Ghani caused political crisis and the pressure from Human rights defenders, western diplomats led to that the Afghan government exile its first vice-president to Turkey.<sup>355</sup>

The another political dilemma was between Mazar Sharif province's former-governor and the Jamiat-e Islami party's Chief Executive and Mazar Sharif's an influential figure with central government over his resignation. Mohammad Atta Noor, has been a leading figure in Jamiat-e Islami, a party that represents Afghanistan's Tajik ethnic group, he had worked as Mazar Sharif's governor for almost eighteen years, after Ghani took office in 2014, he wanted to remove him and introduce another governor for Mazar province which was denied by Noor it has triggered a long political and ethnic tension in Afghanistan which the ongoing dispute was resolved in 2018, in result of an agreement which was signed between Atta Noor and Ashraf Ghani.<sup>356</sup> The political disputes between the president and the chief executive over various issues had led to the resignation of several government officials including; National Defense Service (NDS) chief Rahmatullah Nabil, Noorul-haq Alumi the interior minister, Daoud Shah Saba mines and natural sources minister. The indifference of local officials to the central government was a sign of deep political instability in country.

The existence of an opposition against NUG rose from inside of NUG or in other words, political stances of well-known officials of NUG against government, in order to achieve more political and economic privileges from President Ghani had created unpredictable political challenges in the government.

Alongside that NUG was plunged into internal issues the external factors such as oppositions by ex-president Karzai, whom regularly criticized NUG over the weak leadership, foreign policy and security situation. Karzai government senior officials gathered into an opposition groups under the name of Afghanistan Protection and Stability Council led by Unity party leader Abdul Rasul Sayaf

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<sup>354</sup> Anisa Shaheed, "I was Sexually Assaulted by Dostum and His Men: Eshchi", Tolo New, ( Last retrieved, December 14, 2016), <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/i-was-sexually-assaulted-dostum-and-his-men-eshchi>

<sup>355</sup> Sune Engel Rasmussen, "Vice-president leaves Afghanistan amid torture and rape claims", The Guardian, ( Last retrieved, May 19, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/19/vice-president-leaves-afghanistan-amid-torture-and-claims>

<sup>356</sup> REF/RL, " Powerful Afghan Governor Resigns, Ending Standoff with Ghani", ( Last retrieved, March 22, 2018) RadioFreeEuropeRadioLiberty", <https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-powerful-governor-resigns-noor-ghani/29115699.html>

and Northern Alliance leader Yunus Qnauni and many others. The (APSC) has challenged NUG and rejected its legitimacy. Another opposition group was created under the name of “The High Council of Jihadi and National Parties”.<sup>357</sup> The role of this opposition was more destructive rather than corrective and constructive, because most of Karzai’s cabinet senior officials have sought to challenge NUG and form an interim government.<sup>358</sup>

The foreign interference in NUG was also another factor which undermined government legacy. In addition to USA had its political influence on NUG the neighbor’s including Pakistan and Iran obviously interfere in NUG’s affairs via its influential figures. Particularly the intelligence networks of the neighboring countries have always directly and indirectly interfered in Afghan affairs by creating ethnic division among Afghan. Despite these all discords NUG survive and complete its 5 years. It did not lost its foreign allies supports particularly USA’s political, financial and military support. With risen concern and opposition of Afghan elites over the dismissing NUG’ and forming a short government John Kerry the architecture of NUG in Afghanistan had visit to Kabul and defended Ashraf Ghani government and his remarks Kerry Said, “ the compromise government formed to end the bitter elections dispute in 2014 should last for a full five-years term”,<sup>359</sup> Kerry remarks had maximized Afghan politician anger and accused U.S. for interfering in Afghan government affair.

#### **8.3.5.2 . The Security Situation Post-2014**

The security situation in Afghanistan remained as unsolvable puzzle, I am the third generation and the fourth generation also grows up in conflict. I opened my eyes to the world inside conflict, I grow up in war. The conflict has been suffix to this land. There are multiple factors that peace and stability remains elusive from this land. The ongoing conflict and instability in Afghanistan has interlocking dimensions including; internal, regional, transitional and international factors.

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<sup>357</sup> Crisis Group, “Afghanistan: The Future of the National Unity Government”, Asia Report N285, ( April, 2017) p. 12

<sup>358</sup> Crisis groups, Ibid, p. 11

<sup>359</sup> Ali M. LATIFI, “ Kerry’s Comments in Afghanistan on Unity Government spur anger, charges of U.S. interference ( last retrieved, April 11, 2016), <https://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-afghanistan-kerry-20160411-story.html>

These interrelated factors contributed to Afghanistan's long-standing conflict, insecurity and instability. The insecurity had remained a big challenge for the NUG, the presence of insurgency activities of terrorist networks including ISIS-K, al-Qaeda and Tehrik Taliban Pakistan, along with Taliban activities on one hand and the withdrawal of Coalition troops from Afghanistan and inability of ANDSF on the other hand triggered increasing insecurity during NUG. Taliban's offensive capabilities have increased significantly in much part of countries. The group has launched massive operations including Khyber operation in 2014, Azim operation in 2015, Omari operation in 2016 which they seized Kunduz a strategic northern province for the first time since their regime collapse in 2001, and also the Mansori operations. Due to escalation of violence and conflict in country the ANDSF and civilian causality has unprecedentedly increased during the NUG era. However the Ghani administration developed a strategy from 2014 to 2019 to counter the Taliban attacks and decrease the security incident. The strategy was include (a) to enhance the capability of ANDSF in counter Taliban operations; (b) to conduct large-scale offensive operation in area under the Taliban control; (c) and to expand the government presence and control in rural areas which was zones clearing operations.<sup>360</sup> Despite the restrictive measure the security situation did not positively changed, unlike it has gone from bad to worsen by the end of NUG era. The corruption in security institution, regional countries inference changed the situation in favor of the Taliban on ground

#### **8.4. THE REGIONAL DYNAMIC OF INSECURITY**

The five decades of war and instability in Afghanistan have deep extrinsic roots. In this context several regional factors such as economic, geographic geopolitics, and demographic, and also power rivalry for controlling natural sources in Afghanistan has fueled the conflict for decades. Afghanistan was not an important actor either on regional and global stage until 1950s. But Since the beginning of Cold War a geopolitical tension between USA and Soviet Union from 1947 until dissolution of Soviet Union in 199, Afghanistan became as important geostrategic location for both great rivals. The geopolitical map of region has changed after the withdrawal of

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<sup>360</sup> Department of Defense, "Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan" ( June, 2017), Page. 2

United Kingdom from India in 1947, and its colonize territory was partitioned into two sovereign states of India and Pakistan. Not so far the Chinese civil war has also resulted in territory division, it has led to establishment of the People's Republic of China led by Mao Zedong in 1949, and Taiwan led by Kuomintang. After the fall of USSR five sovereign states including: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan were founded in neighborhood of Afghanistan.

The growing interests of west bloc in region during Cold War era to confront USSR and the geopolitical transition in region challenged the regional order, which has led to intensification of geopolitical rivalry among regional and international powers which brought more instability to region.<sup>361</sup>In early years of Cold war due to Afghanistan's nonaligned politics it was not strategically important to United State. As David Zierler a Historian stated that "Afghanistan was not a major focal point of Jimmy Carter administration until the communist coup that overthrew President Daoud Khan in 1978, and the Washington's interests in Afghanistan increased when Afghanistan fall into Soviet orbit and followed by Soviet military invasion of Afghanistan in 1979".<sup>362</sup>

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has brought this country as pivot of relations, alliance, and confrontation of international and regional actors. The anti – Soviet coalition consist of United State, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, China supported Afghan Mujahidin. The jihad mounted from Pakistan during the 1980's thousands of soldiers had recruited trained and equipped inside Pakistan from refugee camps and also from Gulf States to wage war to restrain Soviet expansion toward warm waters.

A decades of war in Afghanistan paved the way for regional power's interfering in Afghan affairs, particularly the two close neighbors Pakistan and Iran which never had such open hand access to Afghanistan before as they have in recent. Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan until present day a huge part of political instability and insecurity, conflict attributed to external powers seeking to realize

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<sup>361</sup> R. Gopalakrishnan, *The Geography and Politics of Afghanistan*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1982, p. 1

<sup>362</sup> Department of State, "FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1977-1980 VOLUME XII, AFGHANISTAN", <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v12/preface>

their own strategic, political, ideological, and economic interests in the country.<sup>363</sup> The two close neighbors Pakistan and Iran is widely accused for arming and supporting their clients in Afghanistan to gain their interests. The geopolitics internets of regional powers are described in details in Chapter four.

As the geostrategic location and the geopolitical situation in Central Asia, South Asia, and Middle East has always been focal point of international and regional powers, and Afghanistan has been known as a land bridge connects these three strategic regions, therefore this country has been unable to take advantage of its location, unlike it has been paying high price for its position for many years.

However the US/NATO military intervention of Afghanistan in 2001 has put a temporary end to Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, India, Russia ongoing contest in Afghanistan. It has changed the surface of their contest engagement in Afghanistan to a cooperative involvement. China and Russia as U.S. rivals also supported U.S. military action in Afghanistan in United Nation under the justification of self-defense, followed by Russia has provided supply route to NATO in 2009. Pakistan also allocated airbases and provided supply route to Coalition troops in Afghanistan and helped U.S. in capturing Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders. Iran also took active part in reconstruction of Afghanistan. But it takes not long this collaboration turned into an unwholesome competition among the actors, and the continuation of rivalries dragged Afghanistan into collapse.

To sum up, President Ghani assumed his 50 % power in most difficult circumstances the responsibility of country in the midst of security, economic and political crises. The most threaten challenge to the NUG was the security situation, simultaneously with withdrawal of coalition troops from Afghanistan and transition of security responsibility to unprepared ANDSF, has triggered that Taliban and their other allies had launched unprecedented and bloody attacks against government. The economic downturn followed with the withdrawal of international forces had far-reaching human consequences in country. Despite all imperfection and negative side the NUG has made some progress such as partial economic growth, infrastructure development including water irrigation huge project, hydropower dams and government reform, notably it has reopen a new chapter in Kabul-world relation

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<sup>363</sup> Marvin G. Weinbaum, “ Afghanistan and its Neighbors An Even Dangerous Neighborhood” United Sates Institute of Peace, Washington DC, Report 162, ( June, 2006), p.5

particularly establishing close ties with U.S. by signing BSA provided NUG with more opportunity. But regardless of this progress, overall evaluation from conditions during life of NUG shows that the situation did not move toward a positive direction unlikely, the situation deteriorated due to multiple factors.

## **8.5. U.S. - AFGHANISTAN BILATERAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT**

The Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) between Afghanistan and United State was one of the most controversial agreements. The excessive insistence of U.S. for signing the agreement and the denial and rejection from former president Karza's administration led to a diplomatic tension between Kabul-Washington. The BSA was under discussion since November 2012 and it was lately signed in 2014 during first days of forming National Unity Government led by President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. Despite of the internal and external pressure on president Karzai he denied to sign BSA with USA even after the Loya Jirga (Afghan traditional general assembly) which was held in 21 November, 2013 backed the BSA.

Abdulkarim Khoram president Hamid Karzai's Chief of Staff written in his book "Chel Sal dar Tupan, Forty Years in Storm", In addition the external pressure from U.S. and its allies including UK. Germany, the Afghan political leaders, the parliament, and president Karzai's cabinet including Defense ministry Bismillah Khan and Interior minister Mohammad Omer Dawoodzai did not miss any opportunity to encourage former president Karzai to sign the BSA.<sup>364</sup>

The tensions and disagreements over the signing of BSA with the United State had divided involved parties into two camps; critics and supporters. Each side interpreted this agreement differently in accordance with its own interests. Due to uncertain political situation in Afghanistan, the upcoming presidential election in 2014 and its ambiguous result as well regional issues made U.S. and allies to ensure their troops long presence in Afghanistan beyond the end of 2014 until 2024 and the immunity for its servicemen from prosecution by the Afghan legal system. The U.S. did not wanted Iraq experience to be repeated again in Afghanistan. As the Iraq government denied signing U.S.'s servicemen immunity accord.

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<sup>364</sup> Abdulkarim Khorim, "Chel Sal dar Tupan" Forty Years in Storm", Aksos bookstore, 2019, Kabul, p. 608

On the other hand, due to deteriorate security situation and increased in violence in country and a negative perception from situation among the Afghan over the withdrawal of the foreign troops and return of Taliban. The public and some of Afghan political leaders as supporter of this accord were optimist regarding BSA result. Their interpretation regarding this agreement was two countries closer cooperation in field of security, economic, politic and fighting terrorism and ensuring global security and political stability in Afghanistan. They believed despite signing BSA and U.S. support of Afghan Government there would be the possibility of civil war, dissolved and collapse of security forces which has been funding supporting, equipping by U.S. and allies and economic failure.

President Karzai's preconditions for signing BSA was; (a), unconditionally prepare ground for peace talks (b), the coalition forces should stop operation airstrike in villages a which caused civilian casualties (c), closing or handing over all coalition troop's detention centers located in Afghanistan to Afghan government, (d), returning Guantanamo prisons Afghan detainee, (e) holding 2014 presidential election without delay. The countless effort by U.S. and allies was not successful to persuade president Karzai to sign BSA. And also there had some problem in content of agreement which slowed the progress of finalizing the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA).

Eventually the BSA was signed by President Ashraf Ghani immediately after assuming office as president of NUG and with supported by Dr. Abdullah CEO on September 30, 2014. President Ghani was one of the supporters of BSA and was optimist about its result. The signing this agreement was interpreted in sense of the priority of security issues and closer cooperation between the two signatory countries in order to better fight terrorism and ensure the political stability of country. Ghani stressed that, "this agreement is assure national interest of country". It will not posed any threat to our neighbors as Iran was opposite of BSA and did not miss any opportunity to prevent disrupt the agreement.

The BSA was signed by newly appointed National Security Advisor Hanif Atmar, and U.S. Ambassador James B. Cunningham and NATO Ambassador to

Afghanistan Maurits R. Jochems in Kabul.<sup>365</sup> The content of agreement was signed in 26 articles the key points of agreements which U.S. agreed as side of agreement with Afghanistan as follow.

- ***Purpose and scope of agreement:*** The parties agreed to collaborate closely to improve Afghan government's security and defense ability to defend its territory, combat terrorism, contribute to regional and international peace and stability. The U.S. agreed to assist ANDSF's developing capabilities including; advising, training, equipping, supporting, and sustaining, establishing and upgrading ANDSF transportation and logistics system, developing intelligence sharing capabilities, and supporting Afghanistan's Air Force capabilities.<sup>366</sup>
- ***Laws Obligations:*** The U.S. has agreed that it's all members of force and civilian component have a duty to respect the Afghan constitution and other applicable laws and to abstain from any move opposite to the spirit of this agreement in particular from any political activities in the territory of Afghanistan. The U.S. agreed that its force will not conduct combat operation in Afghanistan unless the parties agree on. The civilian causality due to airstrikes, night raids operation in villages caused by coalition troops was a serious point of contention between Karzai and U.S. in this agreement the U.S. and allies agreed that its force will not conduct combat operation, entering Afghan homes, searching arresting and imprison Afghan neither maintain or operate detention facilities in Afghanistan. In case of any specific circumstances for right of self-defense the parties are obligated to act under international law.<sup>367</sup>
- ***Developing and Sustaining Afghanistan's Defense and Security capabilities:*** as the very important part of this agreement and in accordance to the Strategic Partnership Agreement of Chicago in 2012 the U.S. agreed that

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<sup>365</sup> TOLONews, "New Government Signs BSA and SOFA", (last retired, 01 October, 2014), <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/new-government-signs-bsa-and-sofa>

<sup>366</sup> SECURITY AND DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, (30 September, 2014) p.5

<sup>367</sup> Ibid, p.7

it will continue its close cooperation with Afghan government in order to develop and sustain support for ANSDF's capabilities beyond 2014. The U.S. will provide funds on a yearly basis to support, the training, equipping, advising ANSDF, so that be able to provide security and defend itself and Afghan government and people against internal and external threats and prevent terrorists from infiltrating the country.<sup>368</sup>

- **External Aggression:** In the case if Afghanistan has been subject to any encroachment by foreign states or externally based or supported armed groups inconsistent with the UN Charter under this agreement the U.S. will strongly oppose any use of force or threats to the territorial integrity, political independence of Afghanistan including support for armed groups. The U.S. will work with Afghan government to strengthen its defense capabilities against such threats. One of the controversial parts of this agreement which had many critics from Afghanistan is the ambiguity of this article herein, U.S. did not describe clearly that if in case of such threat the U.S. will back Afghan government. According to agreement, "if such external aggression takes place the parties will consult regularly in order to take potential political, diplomatic, military and economic action."<sup>369</sup>
- **Use of Agreed Facilities and Area:** Afghanistan agreed to extend and provide facilities and areas for U.S. and NATO in its territory. The agreed facilities and areas included; military bases, airports, land ports, in Kabul, Bagram, Herat, Kandahar, Helmand, Gardez and Shindand. Under this agreement U.S. has all rights of use, operation and defense or control within the agreed facilities and areas.<sup>370</sup> However the agreed facilities and area provided is not permanent but it had a wide range of objection from some of its opponents inside and outside of the country. Including Iran which has been opposite to the existence of U.S. in the region.

In General, the BSA's strengths and weak points in terms of Afghanistan's national interests is including; the BSA secured U.S. and allies support for the Ashraf

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid, p.8

<sup>369</sup> Ibid p.9

<sup>370</sup> Ibid p.11

Ghani administration particularly for ANDSF until its collapse. As the U.S. was paying 80 % of ANDSF's spending budget. Afghanistan also gained the status of major non-NATO ally until collapse of Ashraf Ghani government. as the prior to BSA agreement the U.S. was accused by Afghan authorities for the; a) violation of Afghanistan law; b) undermining national sovereignty, territorial and political integrity; c) conducting military operation on the rural areas without coordination with Afghan government. while after the Bilateral Security and Defense agreement was signed; U.S. promised its committed to respect the Afghan law and constitution while they are in Afghanistan, they will be commitment to the national sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in Afghan political affairs, they also reaffirmed their commitment if the military operation needed to be conducted in rural area, it will be in coordination with Afghan government.

The agreement legally authorized U.S. to use Afghan territory and have access the military facilities for their presence Afghanistan beyond 2014. As the part of this agreement U.S. pledged its financial, political and military contribution to Afghan government to fight terrorism and ensure global security and political stability in Afghanistan, but over the time, after the security situation deteriorated, the political instability increased, the content of this agreement limited only to financial support which was about \$4 billion assistant for ANDSF annually and somewhat politic and diplomatic support from Afghan government. The BSA lost its legal status after the Afghan government collapse to Taliban.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **PEACE PROCESS AND POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN**

#### **9.1. INTRODUCTION**

The peace process and political settlement in Afghanistan has been taken place on multiple occasions, particularly since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan until end of U.S. military involvement in this country. During this period several reconciliation and political settlement efforts have been made between the parties in Afghanistan but none of these efforts resulted with durable peace and political stability in Afghanistan. In this chapter the peace process and political settlement in Afghanistan and also Donald Trump's Afghanistan policy is described. From the historical perspective the reconciliation and political settlement in Afghanistan is divided into two periods prior to 2001 and after 2001, which included the U.S.-led peace talks with Taliban and Afghan government-led peace efforts. In this chapter along with the U.S. four presidents' policies for negotiation with Taliban the reason behind the failure of the ongoing peace process which did not result with a successful outcome is elaborated.

#### **9.2. PEACEBUILDING AND POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN**

The consecutive political changes as a result of external intervention and incompatibilities in the country's socio-political structure have plunged the country into almost five decades political instability and insecurity. It has turned this country into a competition ground for the international and regional actors pursuing their respective interests. The persistence of power struggles choosing undemocratic approach has caused the destruction of political and social structures. This chaotic situation has paved the way for the emergence of many actors on the political scene with distinct ideology and goals. Since the communist PDP's violent coup against Prime Minister Sardar Daoud Khan until reemergence of Taliban many political settlement attempts have been made through negotiation and reconciliation process

to maintain a sustainable political settlement in Afghanistan. But none of these efforts have helped to bring durable and sustainable political stability to Afghanistan.

Despite consecutive conflict and instability in Afghanistan, at the same time several efforts have been made to consolidate peace and political settlement. In this part, in order to have knowledge of reconciliation and political settlement efforts in Afghanistan it is necessary to shed light on efforts fulfilled in this trend. To have clear understood it is needed to divide these efforts into three parts, the reconciliation and political efforts in Afghanistan from violent coup against Dawood Khan in 1978 to collapse of Taliban regime in 2001. In the second phase, the efforts for peace and political settlement from 2001 to 2014. In third part, the political settlement post-2014 between U.S. - Taliban direct engagement in peace talk.

### **9.2.1. The Conflict Resolution and Political Settlement Effort Between (1978 - 2001)**

As the primary focus of part three is on the peace talks and political settlement in Afghanistan post-2014, but since four decades of efforts to achieve political solution and political stability haven't resulted in the desired result to guarantee a durable peace and stability in Afghanistan. thus a brief overview of political solution efforts in Afghanistan before 2014 helping us to better understand the manner of failure and the obstacles on way of negotiation process. Understanding the failure of conflict resolution and stalemate of political settlement efforts in Afghanistan requires multidimensional evaluation to find out the main causes of failure in details. By narrowing the topic, the stalemate in settlement process has been caused by two factors; domestic and external. The Internal factors could include the Afghan society's political and social structure, ethnic diversity, and power distribution. But with huge extend the internal dynamic of failed political instability over the last five decades has been derived from the external factors. In as much as during five decades Afghanistan has been subjected to military and political intervention of regional and global powers, one could argue that one aspect of conflict and political instability is somewhat directly related to these intervening powers.

In this context, foreign intervention has resulted in emergence of many actors on ground with distinct interests' political goals as well fragility in Afghan's sociopolitical life. The existence of several actors on ground have made it difficult

for great power rivalry during cold war and aftermath to achieved their goals, it also has been often challenged the post-conflict political settlement in Afghanistan. Barnett R. Rubin, linked the “the failure of conflict resolution in Afghanistan post-Soviet invasion from 1979 to 1993 has ethnic divisions to cold war rivalry between superpowers and their regional allies which they have provided competing Afghan elites with access to ideologies, organizational models, and financial and military resources”.<sup>371</sup>In the historical context the efforts for the political settlement in Afghanistan from 1978 to 1994 are including

#### ***9.2.1.1. Geneva Accord in 1988***

The first attempt which made for the political settlement on international level was the Geneva Accord, the negotiation for the political in Afghanistan post-Soviet invasion started in 1981, under the UN mediation and after almost 7 years discussions the final agreement was signed on April 14, 1988 in Geneva. The accord was signed between Pakistan and Afghanistan backed by U.S. and Soviet Union as guarantors. The instruments of Geneva accord included of; a) withdrawal of Soviet forces; b) cessation of aid to the Mujahidin and; c) return of Afghan refugees.<sup>372</sup> As the part of accord the parties have agreed that after the Soviet Union withdrawal the parties would not aid Mujahidin and Afghan government. But unlikely aftermath of Soviet withdrawal the U.S. and allies particularly Pakistan has continued supporting mujahidin.<sup>373</sup>

The Geneva accord basically aimed facilitation of Soviet’s withdrawal from Afghanistan and it was more likely as a compromise between the outside power rather than a comprehensive solution for political settlement. Post-Soviet troop withdrawal conflict has continued as the Moscow had continued supporting Dr. Najibullah government on the other side U.S., Pakistan, Gulf States and Iran have aided Mujahidin. The U.S. and Pakistan was in favor of Mujahidin’s military victory. The U.S. and allies as main backers of mujahidin have demanded the

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<sup>371</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, “From the Archives: Post-Cold War State Disintegration: The Failure of International Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan”, *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 66, No.2 winter of 1993, page. 3

<sup>372</sup> International Crisis Group, “ Talking about Talks: Toward a Political Settlement in Afghanistan” *Asia Report N221* ( March 26, 2012), p.6

<sup>373</sup> Amin Saikal, William Maley (edited), *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 18

removal of Dr. Najibullah and establishment of an Afghan interim government.<sup>374</sup> In March 1989, the Pakistani ISI organized a mujahidin offensive intended to install the Interim Islamic Government of Afghanistan in Jalalabad city across the Durand line.<sup>375</sup> The U.S. and Pakistan pressured resistance leaders to hold a gathering for filling a political vacuum by establishing an Interim government. The first council meeting was held in Rawalpindi, Pakistan on February 10, 1989 but due to internal dispute over the structure of Interim government it was rejected by parties.<sup>376</sup> The Geneva accord was a great opportunity for a conflict resolution and comprehensive political settlement in Afghanistan, but due to its failure it couldn't result with durable peace.

#### ***9.2.1.2. Dr. Najibullah Government's National Reconciliation Efforts***

The National Reconciliation Program was launched as internal effort for conflict resolution and a comprehensive political settlement in Afghanistan. The NRP process under Dr. Najibullah leadership from 1986 to 1992 was one of the most serious efforts at domestic level to conflict resolution and political settlement. Between 1986 and 1992, Dr. Najibullah demonstrated political flexibility toward mujahidin and he was appointed by PDPA congress as head of National Reconciliation Commission.<sup>377</sup> The objectives of the NRP were to establish an inclusive government by integrating and including all opposition into the political system, and allocating key ministerial posts for jihadi parties and figures, and also laying the groundwork for election.<sup>378</sup> However NRP had positive result and achieved its effectiveness between 1988-1989 with notable agreement and protocol signed with local commander country.<sup>379</sup> But during six years until the fall of Dr. Najibullah's government the NRP program failed to gain the support of mujahidin leadership circle. The Jihadist groups based in Pakistan and Iran express no interests to this program and refused its terms. The failure of NRP

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<sup>374</sup> Barnett R. p. 10

<sup>375</sup> Barnett R. p.9

<sup>376</sup> Human Right Watch, "Towards A political Settlement in Afghanistan: The Need to protect Human Rights", (last update, August 30, 1991). <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1991/afghanistan2/>

<sup>377</sup> International Crisis Groups, *ibid*, Pp.7

<sup>378</sup> ACKU, "Asnad Tarihi dar Bari Mesaliha Milli", archive document , p. 3-18, <http://afghandata.org:8080/xmlui/handle/azu/16036>

<sup>379</sup> Crisis Groups , *Ibid.*, p.7

could be attributed to the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent cessation Moscow aid to the Dr. Najibullah government, as well as Pakistan and U.S. demands for the regime's removal, as well the ideological factor of opposition.

### ***9.2.1.3. Reconciliation during Civil War 1992-2001***

Afghanistan's political landscape has become more fragmented following the failure of Dr. Najibullah's National Reconciliation Program (NRP) and the UN conflict resolution peace plan. Notably after Najibullah's government collapsed in 1992, and mujahidin began vying for power. All the efforts for peace and political settlement in country, since the fall of Najibullah's government until the Taliban regime's collapse, failed. Attempts made for political settlement during this period were including; a) UN's mediation on May 1991, as a framework for post-Soviet conflict resolution and settlement came from Perez de Cuellar known as "transition mechanism", the general tenets were as follow: all the external aiding parties should stop supplying weapon to Afghanistan, and all internal party should adopt a ceasefire, and the free and fair election accepted by Afghan should held. The UN plan was accepted by the U.S., Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Soviet Union.<sup>380</sup> But this plan of a coalition government with Dr. Najibullah was refused by Jihadist parties. b) In April 1992 Mujahidin in Peshawar city reached an agreement that led to the transfer of power from Dr. Najibullah to Jihadist parties.<sup>381</sup> As the Peshawar accord was heavily influenced by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, therefore Hezb-e- Wahdat an Iran base and Tehran supported Shia party was not given role in transition government. Therefore it paved the way for internal quarrel between jihadist parties over the power-sharing agreement the Peshawar deal broke down in August 1992 and triggered further political fragmentation and civil war. c) The Islamabad Accord as power-sharing agreement which was mediated by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia was signed on

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<sup>380</sup> Human Right Watch, " *Towards a Political Settlement in Afghanistan: The Need to protect Human Rights*", (August 31, 1991), <https://www.refworld.org/docid/45c9a57f68.html>

<sup>381</sup> United Nation Peacemaker, " Peshawar Accord" ( April 24, 1992), <https://peacemaker.un.org/node/635>

March 7, 1993 between jihadist parties to establish coalition government.<sup>382</sup> But shortly the deal broken and Ittehad-I Islami led by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf and Hezbe-e Wahdat Shia Hazara supported by Iran involved in heavy clash. Followed by many scattered inter-faction agreement including; ceasefire agreement between northern alliance and Hezbe-i-islami party on May 1992, the rejection of Pakistan's peace plan in June 1994 by Burhanuddin Rabbani. By May 1996 the Taliban captured Kabul city and ousted Burhanuddin government another chapter in the history of Afghanistan opened.<sup>383</sup>

To conclude, all the internal and external efforts to achieve a political settlement in Afghanistan, including the conflict resolution plan and peace agreement, reconciliation effort, coalition government scheme, which began with the Geneva Accord in 1988 and ended with the Tashkent declaration in 1999, have been unsuccessful in bringing sustainable peace and stability. Generally, the reasons for these efforts' failure have both external and internal dimensions. The external factors included the following: (a) the defeat Soviet Union against U.S. and allies in proxy war marked the beginning of misery in Afghanistan. The collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 and the cut-off Moscow's support for Dr. Najibullah government weakened the Afghan government's morals. (b) The financial, military and diplomatic support of U.S., Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and China from Mujahidin. (c) Shift in Soviet policy toward PDPA most notably the lack of support from NRP process. (d) The United States' lack of interests and commitment to conflict resolution post-soviet withdrawal caused that Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia become more involved more in Afghanistan and pursuing in their goals and interests. (e) The UN's inability and passive role as a mediator in enforcing the terms of agreements.

However, the UN's efforts to resolve the conflict in Afghanistan continued from the Soviet invasion until collapse of Taliban; during this period several resolutions passed and few plans including transition mechanism, interim government scheme, were proposed, but as the UN's behavior toward

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<sup>382</sup> United Nations Security Council, "Afghan Peace Accord" ( March 19, 1993), s/25435 p. 2-7, <https://www.peaceagreements.org/view/409>

<sup>383</sup> CNN, " Who are the Taliban of Afghanistan?", ( last retrieved, October 5, 1996), <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9610/05/taleban/>

Afghanistan was more effective by great power policies, so it was not more effective. Even most of Afghans blame Benon Sevan, the UN's envoy for Afghanistan during 1992, for misguiding and defrauding Dr. Najibullah with his husky plan for conflict resolution. Dr. Najibullah's government Interior Minister Mohammad Nabi Azimi cited in his notes, "I never imagined that a representative of UN for Peace in Afghanistan Mr. Benon Sevan would play with the fate of a government and people of Afghanistan with his hasty plane and false optimism, by his deceptive promises he misguide Dr. Najibullah to leave the country, no one believed that such a prominent figure was fascinated by money and played with Afghan destine".<sup>384</sup>

The internal factors included (f) the Jihadist parties' lack of interest in forming a coalition government with Dr. Najibullah, owing to the fact that their decisions were heavily influenced by their supporters. Following the withdrawal of the Soviets, Washington and Islamabad concentrated their efforts on achieving the mujahidin's ostensibly military victory. They insisted seven recognized Sunni mujahidin parties to chosen an Interim Islamic Government of Afghanistan in 1989.<sup>385</sup> On the other hand, Dr. Najibullah government was in weak position after lost Moscow's support, and unlikely mujahidin were on the verge of victory, so they wanted to form an Islamic government without the presence and the remnants of PDPA government, as the same happen with Ashraf Ghani government. (g) The lack of coordination and consensus among jihadist parties to form an inclusive government unlike their rivalries for power. (h) The escalation of ethnic and religious issues among both mujahidin and Kabul government which has led civil war. (i) Internal opponent inside Kabul government over the NRP plan.

At the height of violence and conflict among jihadist factions for the power, the Taliban has emerged and capture the Kabul city in 1996, and by 2001, most of the country fell into its hand. On the one hand, Taliban's swift territorial

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<sup>384</sup> Mohammad Nabi Azimi, "Az Benon Sevan Ta Kay Aydi" (from Benon Seven until Kaydi", Mashall magazine, (October 25, 2009),

<http://archive.mashal.org/content.php?t=%D8%A7%D8%B2%20%D8%A8%DB%8C%D9%86%D9%86%20%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%20%20%D8%AA%D8%A7%20%20%DA%A9%D8%A7%DB%8C%20%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AF%DB%8C&c=maqalaat&id=01080>

<sup>385</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, Ibid, p. 9

gain which has given them more confident over ruling the country by their own. On the other hand, Northern Alliance front's resistance and not surrounding to Taliban due to lack of guarantee of their future opened a new chapter of violence made it more complicated to reach a peace deal. However some efforts were made including UN mediation between Taliban and Northern Alliance but it wasn't succeeding. Pakistan's support to Taliban movement has dragged regional power including; Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia and India into Afghanistan and paved the way for the proxy war.

### **9.3. POST-2001, PEACE PROCESS AND POLITICAL SETTLEMENT EFFORTS**

The efforts to reconcile with the Taliban and reach a comprehensive political settlement in Afghanistan came after the United States and its allies failed to maintain stability security and a sustainable peace in Afghanistan through coercion, state-building initiatives and counterinsurgency strategies. The desire for the political solution became as an undeniable fact, while the Taliban has reemerged initially as military than as political reality in Afghanistan, and as well as the level of violence increased due to conflict, and the human and economic costs of this war brought U.S. and its allies leadership circle under serious objections of public in back home. Particularly, Taliban's military resistance and territorial gain bolstered this principle that the way to durable peace and stability in Afghanistan and in region would not come through militaristic option.

In this part, the focus is on the peacebuilding process and efforts to reach a political settlement with Taliban in Afghanistan through different stages since Bonn Agreement in 2001 until complete withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2021. In historical context, the peace process in Afghanistan during two decades of U.S. military involvement in this country has come a long way in various stages. Overall, the Afghan peace process since its inception in 2001 has gone through four stages with several approaches. Omer Sadr the authors of book title "The fallacy of Peace process in Afghanistan; People's perspective", divided the peace process in Afghanistan into three phases: (1) phase of uncertainty; (2) a two-

pronged approach which includes of high-level political negotiations and low-level reintegration efforts (3) hasty efforts for a political agreement with the Taliban.<sup>386</sup>

The peace processes in Afghanistan between U.S.–Taliban, as well Afghan government-Taliban has wended a long milestone. The involvement of many actors with disparate interests has complicated this trend. In order to find out the multiple dimensions of this complexity it is necessary to take more comprehensive view toward the events and efforts which have occurred thus far in this track.

Herein in general, the Afghan peace process is divided into two parts in the context of U.S. and Afghan Government -oriented efforts: The U.S.-oriented peace trend which are including; (a) the initial peacebuilding effort in Afghanistan through state-building initiatives with contribution of international community. During President Bush era the negotiation and reconciliation doors was closed to Taliban, during this phase the U.S.’ approach toward Taliban has based on coercive approach of surrender or detentions; (b) In the second phase, during President Obama’s era the U.S. efforts for peace and stability was included of peacebuilding through state-building and counterinsurgency strategy in the response to growing insurgency. In this phase on one hand, as the drawdown deadline of U.S. and its allies NATO was approaching by the 2014. On the other hand, the Taliban’s resistance, and successive military gain on the battlefield has made Obama Administration to back down its repressive strategy and open the closed doors of negotiation toward Taliban; (c) In third stage the peace process and political settlement efforts was through direct dialogs which began in Trump era and ended during with President Biden withdrawal announcement.

The second part is devoted to the Afghan government-oriented peace process with Taliban post-2001. This part covers all the peacemaking effort during two decades from Hamid Karzai to Ashraf Ghani’s second term presidency. Afghan government-oriented peacebuilding efforts include the following; (a) from the Bonn conference political settlement effort followed by Disarmament and Demobilization and Reintegration process (DDR) and Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG), in this stage the Afghan government’s approach to the Taliban is similar to that the U.S. and NATO; The Taliban leadership circle is marginalized from political

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<sup>386</sup> Omar Sadr, *The Fallacy of peace process in Afghanistan: The People’s Perspectives*, Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies, Kabul, 2018, Pp. 12

settlement; (b) The second stage is known as reintegration and demobilization phase which consist of “Program Tahkim-e- Sulh” (PTS) and Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP). in this phase the mid and low-level Taliban members are invited to lay down their weapons and to respect the constitution of Afghanistan in exchange for amnesty and security; (c) In the third stage, as the Taliban became as military and political power the Afghan government suggest them peace and their political participation in future of Afghan political scene.

### **9.3.1. Conceptualizing State-Building**

Following the collapse of the Taliban regime, a roadmap for long-term sustainable development and reconstruction in post-conflict Afghanistan was required, and also in order to prevent a recurrence of the tragedy after Soviet withdrawal and to maintain peace and stability the International Community pledged their support for the newly established interim administration in Afghanistan at the Bonn conference in 2001. The Bonn Agreement is known as an initial political settlement initiative which was signed by Afghan leaders and international community with the purpose of providing a legal framework for the involve nation’s activities in Afghanistan and their support from interim government.

Aftermath of Bonn agreement the U.S.-led engagement in Afghanistan justified under a “State-building” and “Peacebuilding” approach to address security, politic economic and humanitarian challenges.<sup>387</sup> From the historical perspective, state-building initiative as an approach to peacebuilding being used aftermath of cold war and the peacebuilding assumption swiftly turned as an approach for intervention after the cold war and during war on terror. After 1990, from Africa to Balkans and Afghanistan the international community has intervened in post-conflict or in-conflict society under a variety of different title, including peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, responsibility to protect, state building etc..., in order to reconstruct these societies economically, political and socially and keep their presence there to secure their government from possible threat as well protect their interest.

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<sup>387</sup> Mohammad Rasouli, “ The U.S. Approach to peacebuilding in Afghanitan; A Comparative Analysis of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump Administration Policies in Afghanistan”, The City University of New York, ( 2020) Master thesis, p. 3

In theoretical framework, these efforts are linked to the liberal peace theory, particularly in the case of Afghanistan in according to peacebuilding studies literature the U.S. and allies involvement in Afghanistan beyond the Bonn Agreement and establishment of Afghan interim administration has been in liberal peacebuilding theoretical framework.

The liberal peacebuilding assumption derived its theoretical basis from Emmanuel Kant's liberal peace theory which indicates the assumptions that, republic constitutions are necessary ground for peace and that democracies are less likely to go to war with each other. The states that adhere to liberal democratic values, such as human rights, freedom, justice, and a free market, are more peaceful and serve as a foundation for global peace rather than illiberal states.<sup>388</sup>

Based on this assumption International community has engaged in Afghanistan Institutional reconstruction, social reconstruction, and democratic values promotion, in order to address the country's long-standing problems and to prevent Afghanistan's territory from becoming a safe haven for terrorist organization. In regards to U.S. approach to peacebuilding in Afghanistan in context of liberal peace theory there are many academic debates over the theoretical and empirical feature of this assumption and its implementation nature in Afghanistan. Herein the purpose is only to draw theoretical framework of U.S. approach to peacebuilding in Afghanistan, regardless considering its positive or negative aspects.

### **9.3.2. Bush Administration's Peacebuilding Approach (2001-2009)**

Since the U.S.'s military involvement in Afghanistan in 2001 until complete pullout of troops in 2021, The U.S.-oriented peacebuilding and peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan have gone through various stages. As the nature of war in Afghanistan wend through complicated track, similar the peace process has the same nature. To gain a better understanding of this trend, it's necessary to evaluate each period separately in the terms of time and policies of each president.

Generally, the U.S.'s approach toward the Taliban has been based on two approaches over the last two decades. (1) Coercive approach; adoption of a repressive policy against the Taliban high-profile members. In this stage since

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<sup>388</sup> Hojatullah Fazly, "The Deadlock of Afghan Peace Process" International Institute of Social Studies, (December, 2016) master thesis. Netherlands p.15-16

beginning of the U.S. military intervention of Afghanistan in 2001 until end of Obama's first terms in 2012, instead of compromising approach toward the high-profile Taliban members and negotiating with them, unlikely their demand has been not taken serious and their presence in politic has been ignored, even they have been suppressed and detained. (2) The second is orientation based approach for peace talks with the Taliban. The U.S. is adopting flexibility policy towards the Taliban for peace negotiation. This approach is adopting at the time when the Taliban's military presence in rural areas becoming undefeatable reality, and the military options are becoming ineffective in establishing security and stability in Afghanistan.

The United States' diplomatic contacts or in other words unofficial diplomatic talk with the Taliban is believed took placed before 9/11 attacks. The United State-based "Unocal" oil company efforts to obtain the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan and India Gas Pipeline Project "TAPI" during Taliban dominance over the route of pipeline has paving the way for the primary contact between Clinton administration and Taliban. But later the project did not start due to raisin tensions between U.S.-Taliban.<sup>389</sup> During this period despite the growing tension and schism between U.S.-Taliban over the drug and human rights, the matter of Bin Laden expulsion, from Afghanistan was another turning point in U.S. approach toward Taliban.

The Clinton Administration has pressured Taliban by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia as their closed allies to compel them to exile Bin Landen and end al-Qaeda presence in Afghanistan, which was a hard decision for them because of Al-Qaeda's military, financial support for Taliban, and they disagreed over the Bin Landen's deportation demand. Especially, After the U.S. embassies were attacked by Al-Qaeda in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, in a retaliatory response to the attack U.S. missile strikes hit Al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan on August 20, 1998. Which has come with strong reaction from Taliban leader Mullah Omar and publicly declared, "The Taliban will never hand over Bin Laden to anyone and will protect him with our blood at all cost".<sup>390</sup> However the negotiation has continued between

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<sup>389</sup> Wahid Muzhda, Afghanistan ve Fanj sal saleta Taliban, (Translation); *Afghanistan and the five year of Taliban rule*, Tehran, Nashrani, 2003, Pp. 154-155

<sup>390</sup> The National Security Archive, "1998 Missile Strikes on Bin Landen May Have Backfired; Extensive 1999 Report on Al-Qaeda Threat Released by U.S. Dep of Energy Taliban Told U.S. They

Washington and Taliban. In March 2001, a delegation of Taliban officials, including Rahmatullah Hashimi, one of Mullah Omar's ambassadors, was invited to Washington to discuss a couple of issues including the extradition of Bin Laden, human rights, drug trafficking, and the Trans-Afghanistan pipelines project. But, the talks failed to produce a positive outcome, and the Bush administration threatened the Taliban regime if they did not comply with American demands.<sup>391</sup> Prior to 9/11 attacks, Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban's ambassador to Pakistan, Christina Rocca, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asian Affairs, met on August 2001.<sup>392</sup>

Pursuant to the 9/11 attack, negotiation between U.S. and Taliban over the circumstances surrounding Bin Laden have continued through Pakistan's mediations; as a close ally Pakistan sought to preserve Taliban regime. Accordingly, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence's (ISI) Chief Mahmud Ahmad met Mullah Omar Taliban's leader in Kandahar on September 17, 2001 to persuade him to surround al-Qaeda leader to U.S. other was the consequence will be not on your side. Mahmud Ahmad's efforts did not give any positive result due to the narrowness of time.<sup>393</sup> Subsequently George W. Bush declared a new approach to foreign policy in response to the attacks "Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda but it doesn't end there, it will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, and defeat."<sup>394</sup> It was a non-compromising signal to the Taliban, particularly when Bush has addressed the joint session of the 107th congress on September 20, 2001 he gave an indisputable ultimatum to Taliban to surround all the leader of al-Qaeda, release all foreign nationals including American citizens, protect foreign journalist, diplomat and aid workers in your country and close the al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan, the demand is not open to negotiation.<sup>395</sup> Due to two factors, Taliban found it difficult to make a quick decision; the time constraint left no room for

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wanted to Bomb Washington", NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 253,( August 20, 2008).  
<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB253/index.htm>

<sup>391</sup> Mona K., Sheikh & Maja T. J. Greenwood, (edited) " Taliban Talks Past, Present and Prospects for the US, Afghanistan and Pakistan", Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen , DIIS Report 2013:06, p. 13

<sup>392</sup> DIIS Report ibid, p. 13

<sup>393</sup> Steve Coll, Ibid, Pp. 76-77

<sup>394</sup> Gary L. Gregg II, " George W. Bush: Foreign Affairs", University of Virginia Miller Center, Archived, <https://millercenter.org/president/gwbush/foreign-affairs>

<sup>395</sup> White House, " Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush 2001-2008), George W. Bush White House Archive, p. 67, [https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected\\_Speeches\\_George\\_W\\_Bush.pdf](https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf)

diplomatic efforts, and also the Taliban was skeptical of the U.S. allegation that Bin Laden was involved in the attack. The Taliban believed it was a conspiracy believing that even if they surround Bin Laden to U.S. still the U.S. would oust the Taliban regime.<sup>396</sup> The given ultimatum to Taliban reached its deadline, the Bush Administration's war team headed by Donald Rumsfeld announced the strategy of war in four stages; (a) deploying a CIA and Special Force team in areas controlled by Northern Alliance to conduct intelligence operations; (b) the air campaign; (c) deploying ground forces, and to launched stabilizing operation. The attack order on Afghanistan was given on October 7 by Bush the invasion name as "Enduring Freedom Operation."<sup>397</sup> The Taliban regime collapse quickly some of their leadership circle members flew to Pakistan and some remained in southern part of Afghanistan, in Kandahar, Helmand and Zabil Provinces.

Following the collapse of Taliban regime, Bush administration maintained its uncompromising and repressive approach toward Taliban. In December 2001, a group of Taliban leaders in Kandahar drafted a letter of surrender in which they accepted Karzai's appointment as leader of the interim government in exchange for the immunity from arrest and punishment by U.S. and new establishment government.<sup>398</sup> The deal known as the *Shah Wali Kot* agreement, according to this agreement the Taliban agreed to lay down their weapons and resume normalcy in exchange for no retaliation against them. But the agreement did not approved by Bush Administration and the Karzai was forced to cancel it. The same efforts to broker a deal with Karzai interim government was made by Jalauddin Haqqani the former Taliban military commander and the leader of Haqqani network. On December 20, 2001 Haqqani sent members of his family, close friends and political allies from Paktiya province to Kabul to congregated Karzai and express their loyalty and support for his government. But convey has come under the U.S.'s air strikes resulting in the death of 50 people.<sup>399</sup> Despite the event Haqqani sent his brother Ibrahim Omari to pledge allegiance to the new government but he was arrested by CIA officials in Kabul.

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<sup>396</sup> Steve Col, Ibid, p. 85

<sup>397</sup> Steve Col, Ibid, p. 87

<sup>398</sup> SIGAR, Ibid, p. 17, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-19-58-LL.pdf#page=40>

<sup>399</sup> SIGAR. Ibid. p. 19

The U.S. detention operation for the detention of Taliban, and al-Qaeda began on November 24, 2001 initially in Northern Province than other part of country. The high-ranked Taliban members including Mullah Fazal Mazlum the former Taliban Army Chief, Khairullah Khairkhwa former governor of Herat province, Abdulhaq Wasiq former deputy intelligence Minister, Mullah Noorullah Nori a close person to Mullah Omar, and Mohammad Nabi Omari were send to Guantanamo prison which later five them were freed in exchange for captured American army Sgt. Bow Bergdahl in 2014.<sup>400</sup> And the low-profile Taliban members were detained in U.S.'s detainee facility in Bagram.

Overall, the nature of uncompromising and suppressive strategy of U.S. toward the Taliban remained until March 2009. According to the SIGAR's September 2019 reports, "Key Taliban leaders were interested in giving new system a chance, but the U.S. government didn't give them a chance",<sup>401</sup> Even the Karzai government was restricted over the Peace talks with Taliban. According Steve Coll, "Karzai was not allowed to negotiate with a thirty listed Taliban's high-profile members". Most importantly Taliban were marginalized from the political settlement process in Bonn conference. Most of the analyst and scholar linked the Taliban post-2001 reemergence to their exclusion from the political and social sense. The harsh situation has forced them to sought refuge into Pakistan and felled into the trap of Pakistan military and ISI.

The Bush administration's approach to post- 9/11 world affairs stems from the foreign policy which known as the Bush Doctrine that generally focus on three points: (a) a preemptive war, in which the U.S. would neutralize the risk of a possible attacks on U.S. territory or its interests anywhere; (b) the unilateralism, in which the U.S. would act alone to defend itself either at home or abroad if necessary; (c) The third point was to spread democracy and freedom around the world, with an emphasis on concepts such as free market, free trade, and individual liberty.<sup>402</sup> Based on the principles of Bush doctrine, the model of liberal state-building initiative was

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<sup>400</sup> Kathy Gannon, "5 Freed from Gitmo in exchange for Bergdahl join Taliban's political office in Qatar", Military Times, (last retrieved October 30, 2018). <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/10/30/5-freed-from-gitmo-in-exchange-for-bergdahl-join-insurgents-in-qatar-taliban-says/>

<sup>401</sup> SIGAR. Ibid, p. 19

<sup>402</sup> Gary L. Gregg II ibid, <https://millercenter.org/president/gwbush/foreign-affairs>

put into practice as an approach to the peacebuilding in Afghanistan post-2002, in the response to the growing insurgency. The Afghan policy team under the Bush administration believed that liberal institutions, sound governance, democracy would promote peace and stability. Accordingly, from 2001-2009 during Bush era the peacebuilding through state-building initiatives was preferred over the reconciliation with Taliban.

### **9.3.3. Peacebuilding within State-Building Initiatives in Afghanistan**

The term peacebuilding is used in two different ways, many academics and practitioners use the term peacebuilding as a pervasive term, which refer to the overall set of post-conflict security, humanitarian, and development activities. On other hand, on diplomatic environment especially at the United Nation, the term is being use to refer to post-conflict recovery, peacekeeping.<sup>403</sup> Based on this definition peacebuilding is a broad post-conflict agenda with a step-by-step process for the consolidation of sustainable peace and security.

Following the demise of the Taliban regime, the United States-led peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan began in two stages, concurrent with the signing of the Bonn Agreement at the end of 2001. The state-building initiative was adopted as a post-conflict peacebuilding strategy by US and international coalition forces in the first stage. In the context of state-building initiative the U.S. and international community pledged \$4.5 billion US dollar in Tokyo conference between 2002- 2006 to rebuild the infrastructure, economy, and governmental institutions as the part of a state-building program.<sup>404</sup> The pledged financial assistance was spent for rebuilding and development of Security, governance, economic management, education, health, infrastructure reconstruction, and agriculture. The greatest emphasis was placed on the establishment and improvement of government institutions, in order to provide essential services to conflict-ravaged Afghans. During the initial phase of state-building efforts, known as the transition period from Bonn Agreement to London conference in 2006, a large amount of money flowed into Afghanistan and was spent

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<sup>403</sup> Rahul Chandran, *Conceptual Issues in Peacebuilding*, United Nations University Center for Policy Research, ( February 2015) p. 2

<sup>404</sup> UNDP, “Afghanistan: Donors pledge \$ 4.5 billion in Tokyo”, (retrieved date, January 22, 2002). <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-donors-pledge-45-billion-tokyo>

on the recovery process. According to liberal peace theory principles, the foreign stakeholder believed that the presence of a government committed to democratic values would pave the way for sustainable peace and political stability in Afghanistan. In second step the focus has been placed on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of illegal armed groups rather than a peace settlement program with Taliban.

Within the framework of peacebuilding initiative, in the support of new transitional Afghan government's legitimacy, sovereignty and monopoly as well reintegration of illegal armed group. In 2003, the United Nation Development program (UNDP) launched a program under the name of "The Afghanistan New Beginnings Program" (ABNP) in collaboration with the Japanese government, the Canadian government, the Afghan government, and the United Nations Assistant Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) the program aim was the reintegration and proliferation Afghan militia forces illegal armed groups.<sup>405</sup> Several programs have been implemented under the ABNP, including the Disarmament, Demobilizing and Reintegrating Program (DDR), the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG), the Tahkim-Sulh (Strengthen peace program), and Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration.<sup>406</sup> From 2001 to 2009 the implementations of the aforementioned programs were the all U.S. international community Afghan government strategy for peacebuilding.

#### ***9.3.3.1. The DDR Program, (2003–2005)***

The DDR Program which was outlined in Petersburg conference in 2002 and was launched in April 2003 and ended in 2005. The program aimed to disband illegal armed groups or reintegrated them under the Interim authority in post-Taliban Afghanistan.<sup>407</sup> The DDR program as part of security sector reform was supported by international community in Petersburg Conference in Germany in December 2002. The four commissions were announced by transitional government which

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<sup>405</sup> United Nation, "Partnership for Peace Afghanistan's New Beginnings program ANBP", <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/42065012/afghanistans-new-beginnings-programme-cmi>

<sup>406</sup> SIGAR, "Reintegration of Ex-Combatant: Lesson from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan", (September 2019). <https://www.sigar.mil/interactive-reports/reintegration/index.html>

<sup>407</sup> SIGAR, Ibid, ", (September 2019). <https://www.sigar.mil/interactive-reports/reintegration/index.html>

were consist of disarmament commission with responsibility of collecting weapons from illegal combatants, demobilization and reintegration commission with task to demobilizing and reintegrating the disarmed militant and two other commissions with the responsibility recruitment and training of DDR personal for the new Afghan National Army .<sup>408</sup> In the wake of this program from 2003 to 2006 in the six phases 61,417 former combatants who mostly belong to anti-Taliban alliance have been disarmed and 34,726 light and medium weapons have collected.<sup>409</sup> The DDR targeted Afghan Militia Force a state-aligned non-state armed militia groups consist of Northern Alliance, Junbush-e-Islami, and Wahdat-e-Islami, factions, warlords and commanders. Despite that the process in its four dimension including; political/ strategic level, operational level, tactical level had ebbs and flow, but it was an initial step of transition from war to peace in Afghanistan. The DDR process helped the interim authority to bring some of warlords and various power Island under the cohesive umbrella of government. Under the DDR process the Taliban's low-profile members as well mid-level commander were covered but it wasn't effective to prevent reemergence of insurgency. During DDR process the illegal armed groups did not disbanded completely and they has been seen still a hug risk for the legitimacy and rule of law of new established government, Hamid Karzai government in coordination with donor countries has lunched another program name, “ DIAG” in 2006 until 2016.

### ***9.3.3.2. Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG)***

The DIAG program as the successor of DDR started in 2005 and ended in 2011. The program was mainly sponsored by Japan and implemented by UNDP and Afghan Government. Its main goal was to disarm and disband all illegal armed groups which were not part of the Afghan Military forces and had not been dismantled through the DDR.<sup>410</sup> Prior to the reemergence of insurgency in

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<sup>408</sup> Peter Dahl Thruelsen, “FROM SOLDIER TO CIVILIAN: Disarmament Demobilization Reintegration in Afghanistan” , Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen, 2006. p.14

<sup>409</sup> United Nations, “ Afghanistan: UN-backed disarmament program officially ends” ( June 30, 2005), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2005/06/143152-afghanistan-un-backed-disarmament-programme-officially-ends>

<sup>410</sup> SIGAR Ibid, p. 24

Afghanistan the existence of almost 1800 illegal armed groups has been seen as threat stability. These groups have been accused of illegal activities like drug trade, lawlessness, crime, imposing levy, violation of human rights. Most of these groups had strong ties to factional leaders and influential government bureaucratic inside and outside of the government. In the head-up to the 2005 Parliamentary election these illegal armed groups has been seen as threat to undermine election process and pose a serious menace to the legitimacy of local government. To mitigate the threat to the parliamentary election posed by IAG Afghan government in partnership with UNDP has launched the DIAG a combination of weapon collecting and development project in the districts and province where the DIAG program took placed. According to UNDP reports, “since the beginning of DIAG 759 Illegal Armed Groups were disbanded and 54,138 weapons were collected”.<sup>411</sup> Post-2011 the DIAG program activities came under the umbrella of peace Building through Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APPR) to target the Taliban mid-level and low-profile members and to integrate them into society. To conclude the DDR and DIAG programs however had some success with collecting weapons from illegal armed groups which has been seen as threat to peace and stability. But the program do not include Taliban member wasn't targeted by two , therefore in order to reintegrate Taliban members into society and to alleviate the threat of insurgency the Karzai Administration has adopted a program under the name of “Program Tahkim-e Sulh” Strengthening Peace Program in 2004 as Afghan government effort for reintegration of Taliban members.

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<sup>411</sup> United Nations Development Program in Afghanistan, “Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) Annual Project Report 2010”, p. 3.  
<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/22941040/diag-annual-project-report-2010-undp-afghanistan>

#### 9.4. AFGHAN GOVERNMENT-LED PEACE EFFORTS

As the part of Afghan government's efforts for the peace and reintegration of Taliban in post-2001 Afghanistan, the first peace related entity named "Program Tahkim-e- Sulh" (Strengthen Peace Program) was established by former President Hamid Karzai's decree in 2005.<sup>412</sup> The commission was headed by Sibghatullah Mujaddid a political and religious leader as well former Chairman of Meshrano Jirga, upper house of National Assembly of Afghanistan in 2005. The PTS had main office in Kabul with 12 regional offices in province. The purpose of establishing PTS was in response to growing insurgency in 2005 by Taliban and in order to encourage the Taliban to reconcile with Karzai government and return to civil life, accept the new constitution, desist from violence respect the law.<sup>413</sup> In the exchange they were given amnesty and security and modest stipend as compensation. In addition the PTS was in charge of laying the ground for releasing and securing Taliban detainees from the U.S.-controlled prisons in Bagram and Guantanamo as well Afghan government prisons.

The PTS administrator claimed that from 2005 to 2011 under their reconciliation commission had been reconciled and demobilized 8,700 insurgent.<sup>414</sup> Including the high ranked member of Taliban officials such as; Ahmad Mutawakil Taliban's government foreign minister, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef Taliban's Ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Khaksar, Abdul Salam Rakati senior commanders of Taliban.<sup>415</sup> And also in 2008 PTS claimed that they have facilitated the release of 721 detainees from U.S. prisons and 500 militant from Afghan government Prison.<sup>416</sup>

Despite PTS's claims of its achievement there have been plenty objections and negative views over PTS's inefficiency in order to have a political strategy to reintegrate Taliban high-level members. The International donors discontinued their support for the PTS due to concerns about transparency of program, lack of political strategy, and insufficiency to follow up programs participant or reintegrated

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<sup>412</sup> BBC New, "afzayish talash ha devlet afghanistan baray nazdiki ba Taliban meyana ro", (last retrieved, November 12, 2005), [www.bbb.com/persian/afghanistan/story/2005/11/051112\\_s-karzai-taleban](http://www.bbb.com/persian/afghanistan/story/2005/11/051112_s-karzai-taleban)

<sup>413</sup> SIGAR, *ibid*, p.30

<sup>414</sup> Crisis Group, *Ibid*, p. 19

<sup>415</sup> BBC, *Ibid*, [www.bbb.com/persian/afghanistan/story/2005/11/051112\\_s-karzai-taleban](http://www.bbb.com/persian/afghanistan/story/2005/11/051112_s-karzai-taleban)

<sup>416</sup> Equality for Peace and Democracy, "The Roadmap to Peace; civil society and process of peace in Afghanistan", (May 30, 2016), p. 17. [www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Roadmap-to-peace-June-2016-Dari.pdf](http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Roadmap-to-peace-June-2016-Dari.pdf)

members in their social life or provide them security and job insurance. Over the time, as the security situation had deteriorated day by day the Afghan government was in condition to get more practical step to counter growing insurgency, therefore it has dismantled the PTS and replaced by “Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Process in 2011”.

The U.S. and its NATO allies have been in quest to find a political solution before reaching withdrawal deadline by 2014. The first step toward a political solution was creation of mindsets for peace process among parties and finding a specific address because most of the Taliban leaders were living in Pakistan without having any corresponding address. In the framework, of internal efforts for the political settlement the Afghan High Peace Council was established by former-president Hamid Karzai on the September 2010 aimed to keep doors open for reintegration of Taliban members and facilitate political reconciliation.

The HPC was initially chaired by Burhanaddin Rabani jihadist leader which was assassinated later in 2011. The membership of HPC was consisting of jihadist leaders, religious figures, women and some of former Taliban leader. The HPC was dismissed in 2019 by President Ashraf Ghani due to critic over its ineffectiveness in peace talks and replace with the Ministry of State in Peace Affairs.<sup>417</sup>

In context of internal efforts for reintegration of militant including Taliban, Hezbi- Islami and Haqani network a bureaucratic framework for the peace negotiation was created under named of “Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP). The APRP was suggested by A National Consultative Peace Jirga (Council) which was held in June 2010 in Kabul and internationally-supported and funded in London Conference in January 2010 for the peace efforts. The goal of APRP was cited as (a) attempt for talk at the political level to achieve a peace settlement with Taliban and other militant groups consist of an initiatives or a mechanism to pave the way for direct peace negotiations and promote national, regional and international consensus and support for the Afghan-led peace process, and (b) working as the Government’s most viable entity for preparing ground for the

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<sup>417</sup> ToloNews, “ Reis Jamhor Ghani Daber khana shurah aly solh ra laghwa kard, translate, President Ghani dismissed the High peace council”, ( June, 2019), <https://tolonews.com/fa/afghanistan>

reintegration of armed groups.<sup>418</sup> The achievements of APRP have cited as an initiative ground for national, regional and international consensus and supports for peace talk. At national level it has given the opportunity for government members to establish important contacts with Taliban leadership. Under the APRP it's assumed that almost 11,074 former combatants were reintegrated to peace program around 9,380 different types of weapons were collected from them.

At the regional level, The High Peace Council as a specific address from Afghan government for national reconciliation has made efforts to create mindset and a regional consensus for national reconciliation program it has tried to convince countries in region that stability in Afghanistan mean stability in region which results in increased regional and international support for peace talk.<sup>419</sup> But overall despite some achievements gained under the different programs for reintegration and peace in Afghanistan it was not seemed more effective and did not help to facilitate political settlements. The reason behind the failure of reconciliation and political settlement in Afghanistan prior to U.S. direct engagement with Taliban in peace talks could be contradiction of interest by actors. The administration challenges and the political disagreement among internal and external players including political leaders, which most of them were in war against Taliban over the power-sharing approaches.

Most importantly prior to the Coalition troop's withdrawal Taliban was not in position to be recognized as military threat and political power. Based on this the U.S. and NATO commitment for reintegration of Taliban political environment was not serious on the time when Taliban was in weak positions, On the other side the condition which was adopted by Taliban for peace talk was completely in conflict with U.S. and Afghan government interest, no flexibility and desire was seen among parties for peace talk. Taliban condition for peace was the withdrawal of all foreign troops and changing Afghan constitution and establishment of an Islamic government based on Sharia Law. While Afghan government condition for Taliban was to lay down their weapon respect the constitution and take power through the democratic process (election),

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<sup>418</sup> United Nation Development Program, "Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program", <https://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/projects/APRP.html>

<sup>419</sup> UNDP, Ibid,

The peace process under President Ashraf Ghani government since 2014 until its collapse resulted into signing a peace treaty with Hezb-i- Islami headed by Gulbiddin Hakmatyar in 2016. But President Ghani administration peace talks with Taliban remained without any result. However, the Intra-Afghan peace dialogue efforts increased after 2018, the Afghan government established a Higher Council for National Reconciliation headed by Dr. Abdullah, the HCNR consist of Leadership Committee, General Assembly, and Negotiating Board, additionally, Ghani formed a State Ministry for Peace, regardless of all efforts for peace the Intra-Afghan peace dialogue did not result a positive outcome. In 2018 after the violence increased due to Taliban offensive, President Ghani proposed unconditional peace talks to Taliban by offering them releasing their prisoners and recognition of them as legal political party, but Taliban rejected the offer. Since the Intra-Afghan peace talks began the both sides negotiation teams met couple of time, but the dialogue was not fruitful. the Intra-Afghan peace talks failed due to few factors, when Donald Trump administration started direct talk with Taliban it undermined Intra-Afghan Peace talks, particularly the U.S.-Taliban Peace talks agreement signed in 2020, it gave military moral and political leverage on peace talks, they more focus on military options rather than peace talks with Afghan government, the situation get more worsen when President Biden announced U.S. troops withdrawal by end of September 2021, Taliban was wasting time, and instead they start focusing taking power through military as they achieved their goals by Augusts 15, 2021.

#### **9.5. THE U.S.-TALIBAN PEACE TALKS UNDER BARACK OBAMA ADMINISTRATION**

The notion of U.S.'s uncompromising and non-dialog or in other words a coercive approach toward Taliban's high-profile members remained until Barack Obama assumed office in March 2009. The escalation of war and violence and also the growing insurgency in Afghanistan prior to Obama assumed the office on the one hand, and the existence of a consensus, both domestically and among coalition allies, based on perception that "war in Afghanistan could not won by military means alone", in somewhat convinced President Obama that alongside fight

“counterinsurgency strategy” in Afghanistan adopted the talk “policy of compromise and reconciliation” with the Taliban.

In an interview with New York times in August 2009, he categorized the Taliban in “good” and “bad” as he said, “ as the U.S. is not winning the war in Afghanistan the door will remain open for the reconciliation process in which we would reach out to moderate elements of the Taliban”,<sup>420</sup> In September 2010, a tasked team made of interagency members who named, “Secret Conflict Resolution Cell” had reached out point on talking directly to the Taliban about peace. Pursuing political settlement initiative during Obama era was initiated by Richard Holbrook Obama’s special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The new strategy for the reconciliation with Taliban was signed and authorized by Obama and announced publicly by General David Petraeus in Kabul which marked first time public announcement of U.S. for reconciliation with Taliban.<sup>421</sup> However the secret talks with the Taliban via back channels had been occurred in different occasion. Washington and Kabul have made uncoordinated and fragmented attempts to reach Taliban leaders. Karzai chose Pakistani military authorities as the easiest and quick way to reach Taliban leaders because it was strongly believed that the Taliban leadership circle was under the protection and sanctuary of Pakistan army and Inter-service Intelligence (ISI) agency. On the other hand, U.S. was in favor of direct talks to Taliban leaders. The discrepancy over the reconciliation process with Taliban between Obama administration and Karzai government had created an environment of mistrust and lack of cooperation in peace process. U.S. direct contact with Taliban undermined the APRP process launched and leaded by Afghan government. The direct contact between the U.S. and the Taliban gave them false sense of cognition and legitimacy and consistently refused to talk to Afghan government. But following the U.S. public announcement of talks with the Taliban, a consensus and agreement were reached on the paper regarding the concept of an “Afghan-led and Afghan-owned” peace process between Washington and Kabul. The three principles each; abandoning violence, cutting ties with al-

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<sup>420</sup> Helene Cooper and Sheryl Gay Stolberg, “Obama ponder the outreach to elements of Taliban” New York Times, ( March 7, 2009). <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/08/us/politics/08obama.html>

<sup>421</sup> Steve Coll, Ibid p. 519

Qaeda and other terrorist groups, and abide by Afghan constitution were set up as precondition for the possible reconciliation with Taliban.<sup>422</sup>

However, efforts to reconcile and integrate Taliban's middle-level and low-profile members began in 2005 under the name "Program Tahkim-e-Sulh" (strengthen peace process) and this process was accelerated in 2010 with the establishment of Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program in 2010 which later the APRP changed to High Peace Council in 2011. The domestic effort for reintegration and disarmament and demobilization has been supported financially by U.S. and allies. In London conference in 2010 the international community pledged \$ 140 million to the reconciliation and reintegration process.<sup>423</sup> But in political lines direct negotiation with Taliban undermine the Afghan-led reconciliation effort. The support for reconciliation and a political settlement in Afghanistan get more attention while the Obama announced the pull out of 30,000 troops by end of 2012 and final drawdown of the rest troops by 2014 and the transition of security responsibility to ANDSF by the same year.<sup>424</sup>

Prior to inauguration of Taliban's official office in Doha capital of Qatar for the first time the direct contact between U.S. and Taliban was facilitated by German and Qatari officials in Munich in November 2010. The U.S. officials met Tayyab Agha known as close person to Mullah Omer in Munich on 28 November.<sup>425</sup> The exchange of prisoners and the restoration of the rights of Taliban prisoners in U.S. custody, the abolition of sanction against the Taliban leaders and opening of a Taliban political office in the Gulf were Tayyab Agha's precondition for the further negotiation.<sup>426</sup> Followed by second term talks between Tayyab Agha and U.S.'s representatives in Doha on February 15, 2011 which was facilitated by Qatari Emir.<sup>427</sup> Following the Taliban and U.S. representative meeting a statement came

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<sup>422</sup> The White House, "Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan", White House Archived, ( June 22, 2011), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/22/remarks-president-way-forward-Afghanistan>

<sup>423</sup> Julian Border, "Afghanistan conference sets out plan for two-tier peace process" The Guardian, ( last retrieved, January 28, 2010). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/28/afghanistan-london-conference-analysis>

<sup>424</sup> Mark Landler and Helen Cooper, " Obama to Announce Plans for Afghan Surge Pullout", The New York Times, ( last retrieved, Jun 20, 2011), <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/21/world/asia/21policy.html>

<sup>425</sup> Coll, Ibid p. 526

<sup>426</sup> Coll, Ibid p. 528

<sup>427</sup> Coll Ibid p. 545

from Hillary Clinton Secretary of State, while speaking at the Asia Society at 18 February she described that the Obama administration's strategy to find a political solution to end the ongoing war in Afghanistan is including an Afghan-led political process by which it would give chance to those Taliban who renounce violence and accept Afghan constitution and would reintegrated into Afghan social and political society.<sup>428</sup>

The contacts between Taliban and U.S. officials have continued until the Obama administration agreed to open an office as the specific address for the Taliban in Qatar. In June 2012, a Political office for the Taliban was unofficially inaugurated in Doha. The purpose of opening Doha office was to create an atmosphere for peace talks and mutual understanding and also as addresses that Taliban would be negotiating with U.S., Afghan government and international community over the further negotiation about peace in Afghanistan. Since the inauguration of Doha office Taliban were able to conduct diplomatic tours to regional countries.

#### **9.5.1. Taliban's Political Office in Doha**

The indirect talks between the Taliban and the U.S. mediated by Germany in December 2011, resulted in the U.S. agreeing to open an unofficial Taliban Political office in Doha, Qatar's capital in June 2012, which later officially inaugurated by the Taliban, the U.S. and Qatari authorities in June 2013. Facilitating office for Taliban in Doha aimed as confidence-building measure and as way to provide security for Taliban leaders to take part in peace talk with U.S. and Afghan government and to have a permanent address where they could be easily tracked. It was supposed that Obama administration's envoys would sit down with Taliban leaders for the first time in direct talks, following the office inauguration ceremony, but the meeting has cancelled due to the Afghan government protested to the inauguration of political office for Taliban with the concern that Taliban had been given de-facto diplomatic status and the Afghan government is being marginalized and isolated from ongoing peace deal between US-Taliban.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Remarks at the Launch of the Asia Society's Series of Richard C. Holbrooke Memorial Addresses", (February 18, 2011)

<sup>429</sup> Dan Robert, Emma Graham Harrison, "US-Taliban Afghanistan Peace Talks in Qatar cancelled", The Guardian, (last retrieved, June 20, 2013), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/20/afghanistan-talks-taliban-qatar-cancelled>

The Kabul objections have further risen when the Taliban hoisted their early Islamic Emirate white flag over the office building and installed their logo reading as “*Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan*” behind the speaker podium. Former President Karzai accused the Taliban for intending to designate the office as the representative office of an independent government. Additionally, he boycotted the US-led talks with the Taliban and halted negotiations on a long-term security deal that would keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan after NATO withdraws in 2014. President Karzai was concerned that the office would be used by the Taliban for recruitment, fundraising and as a point of contacts with other countries.

The Doha office flag incident fueled more tension and increased distrust between Kabul and Washington and created an uncertainty among Afghan people about the Afghan government’s role in this process. But the outbreak of further tension was prevented by removing Taliban's flag from the office. And the Obama administration has assured Afghan government that the office will not use for other purposes rather than Afghan-led peace talks. Prior to US-led peace talks with Taliban and the inauguration of office of Doha office, Afghan government has made several peace negotiation attempts with the Taliban, but they have shown no interest in the process and always refused to meet President Karzai and his government, and branding them as puppets of US.

Taliban temporarily closed their office in response to the flag and symbol removal blamed the U.S. for broken promises, but the office reopened two weeks later. The indirect U.S.-Taliban dialogue was resurrected in mid-2014 through Qatari authority mediation, and the ongoing negotiations resulted in releasing of five Taliban key members from Guantanamo prison in June 2014, in exchange for an American soldier (Bowe" Bergdahl) who was captured by the Taliban in June 2009 in Afghanistan.<sup>430</sup> The exchange of prisoners rekindled hopes for further progress and a path toward political settlement and sustainable peace in Afghanistan. But not too late, the upcoming progress has marked changes in Taliban leadership and

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<sup>430</sup> Adam Entous and Julian E. Barnes “ Behind Bowe Bergdahl’s Release, a Secret Deal that Took Three Years”, Wall Street Journal, (Last retrieved, June 1, 2019), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/behind-bergdahls-release-a-secret-deal-that-took-three-years-1401673547>

political commission, as well as the transfer of power through September 2014 election and the establishment of National Unity Government in Afghanistan.

### **9.5.2. Taliban's Political Commission**

Post-2001 Taliban reemergence in Afghanistan alongside military wing, they have formed a commission named political commission within their organization. With the formation of a consensus in Afghanistan for a political solution through dialog, the commission was renamed the Taliban's political office, and new members were added to the political commission in 2011, to pursue negotiation goals. The members of Taliban Political Commission (TPC) moved to Qatar and accommodated there, which later in 2013 the Taliban's political office was officially opened in Doha. In Taliban statement, the purpose of forming political commission and opening Doha office was to facilitate peace talks and lead the Taliban's political affairs. But since the establishment of Doha its activities has been further than what was being claimed, in addition to peace talks with U.S. and Afghan government, the Taliban through Doha office has established diplomatic relation with regional countries. This include official and unofficial visit to China, Russia, Pakistan, Gulf States, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan. The Qatar government and U.S. have finically supporting Taliban Doha office paying Taliban political commission member's salary and providing accommodation, security and education for their children.

#### ***9.5.2.1. Taliban's Political Commission Members***

Since its establishment until 2015, the political commission was headed by Tayyab Agha, a close confident of Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar. He has played a constructive role in U.S.-Taliban dialogue and establishment of the Doha political office. Tayyab Agha resigned in August 2015, due to internal factional dispute over the movement's power transition" after the death of movement leader Mullah Mohammad Omer in 2013, whose death was kept as secret for two years by movement which later leaked to the public in 2015.<sup>431</sup>

Mullah Omar's death had created a power vacuum within the movement and sparked a growing rift among the Taliban leaders regarding the appointment

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<sup>431</sup> Arab News, "Taliban's Qatar chief quits as leadership rift deepens", (Last retrieved, August 4, 2015), <https://www.arabnews.com/world/news/786541>

of the movement's next leader. But, soon Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour was named Mullah Omer's successor, but some members of the movement's leadership circle including Mullah Omar's Brother Mullah Manan and Mullah Rasool, refused to recognize him as the Taliban's new leader.<sup>432</sup> But the stalemate was broken and Mullah Mansour was appointed as Taliban's new leader.

Mansour has appointed Shir Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai another member of movement and a former deputy of health minister from 1996-2001 as the head of Qatar office. Abbas Stanikzai headed Doha office until Mullah Abdul Ghani Beradar was appointed by Taliban leadership council as the head of Taliban's Qatar office in January, 2019.<sup>433</sup> Following Mansour's appointment as Taliban leader he has made some drastic changes in the group's leadership in Doha five non-Pashtun members were replaced with five previous members.

Taliban's Qatar based Political Office was consist of Political commission which was headed by Mullah Beradar and the negotiating team consist of 14 senior Taliban members headed by Shire Mohammad Abass Stanikzai and six committee for different regions affairs, including the committees for Europe, African, Asian, America countries, Middle east, Central Asia. Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, most of the negotiation team members have appointed as acting authorities for new established cabinet. Among the thirty-three caretaker's cabinet members of Taliban, Mullah Abdul Ghani Beradar and Abdul Salam Hanifi two Doha Office members appointed as acting first and second deputy Prime Ministers, and other members as acting ministers.

#### ***9.5.2.2. U.S.-Taliban Peace Talks during Akhtar Mohamad Mansour***

Akhtar Mohammad Mansour was appointed as Taliban's Emir (leader). He was elected as the Taliban's new leader by top representatives known as the Rehbari Shura (leadership council based in the Pakistani city of Quetta and Peshawar) in

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<sup>432</sup> Khaama Press, "Tayyab Agha resigned as Taliban's head of Qatar office", (Last retrieved, August 4, 2015), <https://www.khaama.com/tayyab-gha-resigned-as-talibans-head-of-qatar-office-9563/>

<sup>433</sup> Rajab, Taieb, "Taliban Appoints Mullah Baradar as Head of Qatar Office", ToloNews, (Last retrieved, January 24, 2019). <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/taliban-appoints-mullah-baradar-head-qatar-office>

July 2015.<sup>434</sup> Mansour was Mullah Omar's second deputy and served as Taliban's early regime's civil aviation minister from 1996-2001 in Afghanistan. His appointment as the momentum's new leader had created a crack and deepening internal divisions within movement. It was Taliban's biggest leadership crisis since 2001, which increased the likelihood of factional split. Some of senior commanders and other Taliban influential and authoritative figures appeared dissatisfied with the decision, and also with ignoring the role of movement's top military commander Mulla Quam Zakir as well as Tayyab Agha, Mulla Rasool the head of political office in Qatar in the decision-making process over election of leader. The split faction preferred Mullah Yaqoob, the son of Mullah Omar, to succeed his father, and accused Pro-Pakistani circle of imposing Mullah Mansour on the movement.<sup>435</sup>

The movement's divisions harmed peace talks with the Afghan government, as the Taliban were split between fighting and talking. Some of the field commanders have voiced opposition to the peace talks, preferred to fight for takeover. Even so, several members of the movement have reportedly defected and pledged allegiance to Islamic State of Khorasan Province.<sup>436</sup> The Taliban splinter group has elected Mullah Mohammad Rasool as new leader with four deputies each; Abdul Manan Niazi, Mansoor Dadullah, Mohammad Akhundzada as the military affairs deputies and Mullah Baz Mohammad Haris as the political affairs head. The opponent claimed that Mansour was pro-Pakistani military establishment and appointed by Pakistani's ISI.<sup>437</sup> In March 2016, fighting erupted between the two groups in Herat's Shendand district according to reports nearly 300 militant from both sides were killed. The splinter group head had showed green light for peace talks with Afghan government if the foreign troops leave the country. On the other hand the Afghan government's High Peace Council delegation has met

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<sup>434</sup> The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, "Zingday Nama Shahid Emir-ul-mominin Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour Rahimullah", *translation (the Biography of martyred Supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Akhtar Mansour)*, (Last retrieved May 22, 2021), <http://alemarahdari.net/?p=112394>

<sup>435</sup> BBC, "Mullah Omar: Taliban choose deputy Mansour as successor", (Last retrieved, July 30, 2015), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33721074>

<sup>436</sup> Jibril Ahmad, "Afghan Taliban name a new leader, but peace talks delayed", Reuters, (last retrieved, July 30, 2015). <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-afghanistan-taliban-fighting/afghan-taliban-name-a-new-leader-but-peace-talks-delayed-idUKKCN0Q40EW20150730>

<sup>437</sup> Tolonews, "New Leader of Taliban Splinter Group chosen in Farah", (last retrieved, November 05 2015), <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/new-leader-taliban-splinter-group-chosen-farah>

Taliban Qatar office members hosted by Pakistan in July 2015 before the leadership crisis.<sup>438</sup> It was supposed that the next round of talks would take place in upcoming weeks, but it was cancelled due to rise of internal division within movement.

The movement's new leader Mansour has inherited a fragmented movement and he faced enormous challenges in his attempt to unify the movement, it his raising doubts about his legitimacy, but he began to bring huge changes and reforms within movement's military, administrative establishments. Alongside military structure, the administrative unites in the form of commissions and committees were established, each of which functioned as the ministry and each had full authority in carrying out duties. Additionally, military achievements on the ground including the fall of Kunduz province fully by Taliban in September 2015, for the first time since 2001, enhanced Mullah Mansour's leadership popularity and credibility among the Pakistan based Taliban's Quetta Shura.<sup>439</sup> He overcame the problem by consolidating movement's splinted faction as unify front.

There are two distinct viewpoints about Mansour's views on peace process in Afghanistan, an optimists camp has believed, that Mansour was in favor of political solution and he was strong advocate of pursuing peace talk with Afghan government. But on other hand the pessimists including Afghan authorities have believed that Mansour was not only in favor of peace in Afghanistan but also an obstacle to Taliban and Afghan government peace and he was prohibiting Taliban leader from peace talk with Afghan government. they have been arguing that the recent violence and deadliest battels in Afghanistan including fall of Kunduz province in 2015, the fall of Nawzad, Musa Qala districts in Helmand in august 2015, and the suicide attack in Kabul in 2016 which killed 60 people showed that he did not believe in peace and political solution and he wanted to take power through waging war.

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<sup>438</sup> Jon Boone, "Afghan delegation travels to Pakistan for first know talks with Taliban", The Guardian, (last retrieved, July 7, 2015). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/07/afghan-delegation-pakistan-talks-taliban>

<sup>439</sup> Hidayatullah Hamdard, "Kunduz City reportedly falls to Taliban insurgents", Pajhwok, (last retrieved, September 28, 2015). <https://old.pajhwok.com/en/2015/09/28/kunduz-city-reportedly-falls-taliban-insurgents>

Mansour was killed in U.S.'s drone airstrike on May 2, 2016 in Pakistan's south in Baluchistan it's believed that he had crossed earlier that day Iran border into Pakistan via Baluchistan border crossing. After his death in two separate statements issued by Pentagon and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry stated that, "Mansour was a threat to the peace effort the reason of targeting him was that he was obstructing peace process".<sup>440</sup>

But what was Mansour's supporter's perspective on him? According Taliban sources he has established ties with regional actors and neighbors by visiting some of them including Gulf States and Iran. Taliban's secret ties with Iran under Mansour had leaked to public after his death.<sup>441</sup> His supporter believed he had played a significant role in mobilizing the movement as unified frontline in military lines and also gained political and diplomatic identity for Taliban movement as well paved the way for establishing Taliban ties with regional power. According to an article published in Alemarah website belong to Taliban citing, "Mansoor traveled to various regional countries and convince them of the legitimacy of Taliban war against American's occupation of Afghanistan and he also lobbied for U.S. and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan", Author also added, "Mansoor creative diplomacy led to that Security Council's permanent veto members sought to reach out Taliban".<sup>442</sup> Mansour's death and leadership vacuum has temporarily stalemated the peace talks between U.S.-Taliban, but the peace negotiation resumed between parties under the Donald Trump as the 45<sup>th</sup> president of U.S. assumed the office in January 2017, and Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada Taliban's new appointed leader on 25 May 2016 as the replacement for Mullah Akhtar Mansour.

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<sup>440</sup> Fazul Rahim, Mustaq Yusufzai and F. Brinley Bruton, "Analysis: Why Afghanistan Peace Prospects Look Worse After Mansour's Death", NBC News, (last retrieved, June 7, 2016). <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/amp/ncna585186>

<sup>441</sup> Nic Robertson and Jamie Crawford, "Obama: Taliban Leader's death marks 'milestone'", CNN, (last retrieved, May 23, 2016). <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/21/politics/u-s-conducted-airstrike-against-taliban-leader-mullah-mansour/index.html>

<sup>442</sup> Ahmad Mokhtar, "Shahid Mansoor chara shahid karda shod?", translation (Why Martyred Mansoor martyred?), the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, (last retrieved May 22, 2021). <http://alemarahdari.net/?p=112411>

### 9.5.3. Conclusion

To sum up, since the beginning of Barak Obama term in 2009 until the end of his second term as president of U.S. in late 2016, Obama administration in general pursued two policies in dealing with the Taliban it consist of “Talk and fight”. The two approaches of talk and fight, or in other words “suppression and reconciliation” were maintained until the signing of peace deal between the U.S.-Taliban in September 2020. From 2009 to 2011, as the part of its peace efforts, the U.S. supported and tracked the reconciliation and reintegration approach of Taliban’s foot soldier to middle-level Taliban members a process that was initiated by the Afghan government and backed by the International community. Throughout this time period, the U.S. and International community jointly supported Afghan initiated peace and reconciliation efforts such as the Program Tahkim Sulh ( Peace Strengthen Program) launched from 2005-2011 and Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) between 2010-2016 and High Peace Council Program. These attempts were made in absence of a political settlement program time.

During same period from 2009 to 2011 on battle field Obama Administration pursued three strategies; (a) deployed 33,000 additional troops in the support of counterinsurgency strategy. General McCrystal as the Commander of ISAF and then General David Petraeus intensified ground war based on the Clear-Hold-Build principle of COIN strategy. The coalition and Afghan troops joint ground offensive was conducted in 2009 in Helmand province which was known as the Taliban’s stronghold, followed by Operation of Moshtarak (Joint Operation) in Marjah district of Helmand province in 2010.<sup>443</sup> (b) The night raids as another part of COIN strategy was coalition force and Afghan force joint operation from 2009-2013.<sup>444</sup> The operation known as “kill/capture” campaign had conducted by Joint Special Operation Command they were authorized of killing and capturing of Taliban members. (c) The C.I.A’s drone war in against Al-Qaeda and Taliban members in Afghanistan.

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<sup>443</sup> Semper Fidelis, Larry D. Nicholson, “ Operation Khanjar”, Small war Journal, (last retrieved June 2, 2009). <https://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/operation-khanjar>

<sup>444</sup> VOA, “Report: NATO Night Raids Draw Ire of Afghans”, (Last retrieved, September 18, 2011). <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia/report-nato-night-raids-draw-ire-afghans>

From 2011 to 2017 in contrast to the previous policy of peace and war, at this phase Obama administration pursued a slightly different approach to war and peace in Afghanistan. Killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan and the drawdown of 10,000 U.S. troops by the end of 2011 and 20,000 troops by its next year was turning point in Obama's policy toward Afghanistan. Following the troops downsizing the U.S./NATO identified five lines of efforts in Afghanistan; (1) reducing military operations and the transition of security responsibility to Afghan Security forces; (2) withdrawing of remaining troops by 2014 and changing combat mission to non-combat mission known as the Result Support Mission (RSM) it aim was to provide additional training, advice and assistance to Afghan security institution; (3) In order to legalize their long-term presence in Afghanistan Post-2014 U.S. and NATO signed some strategic and security agreements with Afghan government; (4) to ensure a responsible withdrawal and an end long-term military involvement, the U.S. pursued political reconciliation with the Taliban through direct talks.

Obama Administration's efforts to achieve a political settlement in Afghanistan were accelerated and took on more pragmatic tone, when military strategy on the battlefield was not effective in ensuring peace and security. From 2009 to 2013, heavy repressive operations were carried out against Taliban positions, but these operations did not help Afghan government to establish local government in the south and east, and the situation increasingly deteriorated. Accordingly, Obama's special representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan, Richard Holbrook, entered into a diplomatic negotiation with Taliban. The negotiation with Taliban was begun clandestinely through backchannel in early 2011 and resulted in recognizing them as the political, diplomatic party and opened them officially an office in Doha in June 2013. The US-Taliban peace talks under the Obama term between 2013-2017 experienced ups and down.

Karzai's objection over keeping his government in margin from ongoing peace talks between US-Taliban and also the crisis of power vacuum and power transition in Taliban leadership slow down the process. The huge achievements of peace talk between US-Taliban under Obama administration are; confident-building and censuses for political resolution, opening a political office in Doha for Taliban, and exchange of prisoners. During this period both sides compromised to begin

peace negotiation, but the efforts did not result with peace agreement by the end of Obama's presidency. Regardless the result, it marked the beginning of the U.S. negotiation with the Taliban. The peace process was followed during Donald Trump Presidency period.

## **9.6. DONALD TRUMP'S AFGHANISTAN POLICY (2016-2020)**

Donald Trump assumed the office as the 45<sup>th</sup> President of USA and as the third President of United State of America since its country military involvement in Afghanistan, while U.S.'s Afghanistan war dossier remained open on the oval office's resolute desk. The Obama administration Afghanistan's "surge, transition and withdrawal strategy" was at the final stage (drawdown) by December 2016, when Trump took office. The transition of security responsibility to ANDSF was completed by 2014, and the U.S. and NATO have continued its support from Afghan government in framework of non-combat mission "Resolute Support Mission" consists of training, advice, equipping of ANDSF. Due to violence, insecurity and political instability in Afghanistan Obama had reversed his decision of drawdown of 8400 U.S. troops to 5500 troops by end of his term.<sup>445</sup>

The Trump administration assumed responsibility for the U.S. war in Afghanistan, whereas the 9,000 American troops in framework of RSM were still in on ground in country. Additionally, the deterioration of the security situation and political instability were major concerns for Afghan government and its International partner. Despite ANDSF's progress in terms of training, equipping and well performing on ground by taking on security responsibilities and launching offensive and defensive operations, the ANDSF's casualty rate was shocking. According to SIGAR reports, "from January first 2016 through august 19, 2016, 5,523 ANDSF service member killed and 9,665 members wounded".<sup>446</sup> Taliban launched aggressive attacks and operation on government-controlled city and districts. They seized 16 districts and province (Kunduz city) for the first time since their collapse in 2001.

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<sup>445</sup> Jim Garamone, "Obama: 8,400 U.S. Troops to Remain in Afghanistan through January", US Department of Defense, ( last retrieved, 6 July, 2016), <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/827640/obama-8400-us-troops-to-remain-in-afghanistan-through-january-2017/>

<sup>446</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "QUARTERLY REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS, ( October 30, 2016), p. 106, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2016-10-30qr.pdf>

Taliban territorial gains bolstered their confidence of their victory in war against U.S. and Afghan government; it has paved the way for their political and diplomatic appearance. Along with the Taliban's military presence the most violent radical group known as ISIL emerged in 2014 in Middle East, and established a foothold in Afghanistan and announced their new branch as Islamic State of Khorasan in 2015. The IS-K branch led by newly appointed Emir Hafiz Saeed Khan was composed primarily of Pakistani and Afghan Taliban members who pledged their allegiance to Al-Baghdadi in 2014. The IS-K has conducted the most violent attacks against civilian in Afghanistan. Overall the uncertain situation in Afghanistan giving difficult time for a new elected president which has a radical view on its countries troops fighting abroad, to take a quick decision over the new strategy for Afghanistan.

#### **9.6.1. Donald Trump Administration's Strategy for Afghanistan**

The choice and decision in Afghanistan was not easy for a newly elected president who was not only opposed to the longest and costly war in American history, but also stuck between two blocs of anti-Afghanistan engagement group and pre-Afghanistan engagement group inside its administration. Before to assume the office Trump belonged to anti-Afghanistan engagement camp, he was one of the most tenacious critics of U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan and Iraq. In many occasions during his campaign rally he had showed his opposition to U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan. In 2013, he tweets, "let's get out of Afghanistan, our troops are being killed by the Afghanis we train and we waste billion there, in March, "we should leave Afghanistan immediately, in April, "our government is so pathetic that some of the billions being wasted in Afghanistan are ending up with terrorist. In November, "do not allow our very stupid leader to sign a deal that keeps us in Afghanistan through 2024 with all cost by USA. In December, 2015 Trump tweeted, "A suicide bomber has just killed U.S. troops in Afghanistan. When will our leaders get tough and smart? We are being led to slaughter."<sup>447</sup> Despite early pessimistic stand over the U.S. troop's presence in Afghanistan, by taking office his cabinet led him to take wise and responsible decision based on U.S.'s interests and gain in Afghanistan.

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<sup>447</sup> Bob, WoodWard, Fears Trump in the White house, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2018, p. 69

Prior to the announcement of new policy the Trump administration's policymaking team has begun an interagency debate over the US military presence or withdrawal beyond 2016. The pro-military presence team had an optimistic view over U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. As they believed maintaining entails preserving the achievements and interests of nearly two decades in the country and preventing Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other affiliate groups which are posing a threat to US national security and its interests abroad. And also according to them, the U.S. Strategic presence in the region enables them to keep an open eye on Iran's nuclear program, and to pursue a containment strategy against China's and Russia's economic and military presence in region, and to maintain a balance of power. On the other hand, pro-troops withdrawal group believed that prolonged military presence or possible additional troop's deployment, as requested by General John W. Nicholson a senior US Commander in Afghanistan to train, advise and assist ANDSF, would be risking more U.S. soldier's lives and wasting more money of US's taxpayers in war with no clear future.<sup>448</sup> According Woodward, the author of book, "Fears Trump in White House" that "Lindsey Graham A Republican Senator was aware of the internal warfare in Whitehouse our Afghanistan strategy, among the opponent figures General Kellogg, NSC chief of Staff was siding with Bannon and stressing to get out from Afghanistan".

On March 2017, Lieutenant Colonel Fernando Lujan chaired the first interagency middle-level meetings in the Trump administration regarding Afghanistan, the representatives from the State Department, Pentagon, and the intelligence Agency attended the meeting. In the framework of "withdrawal or Enduring Presence" debates parties articulated four broad objectives; (1) pursuing a political solution and political settlement with Taliban through negotiation; (2) pushing for institutional actions by Afghan government to counter the Taliban; (3) Increasing pressure on neighboring Pakistan to avoid playing double game which has been nominally allied with U.S. but also supporting and hosting Taliban in its

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<sup>448</sup> Dan Lamothe, "Top U.S. commander in Afghanistan opens door to a 'few thousand' more troops deploying there", The Washington Post, (last retrieved, February 9, 2017), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/02/09/top-u-s-commander-in-afghanistan-opens-door-to-a-few-thousand-more-troops-deploying-there/>

territory; (4) Maintain International support from the 39 countries allied with the U.S. coalition.<sup>449</sup>

As the ongoing debates on new strategy for Afghanistan had continued, on March 28, McMaster, Trump's National Security Advisor, proposed a strategy known as "R4s: (1) Reinforce; meant more equipment and training, (2) realign meant targeting funding for areas under the control of the Afghan government, (3) reconcile meant trying to get Afghan government to work inclusive power brokers in government (4) regionalize meant the U.S. working with regional actors such as India".<sup>450</sup> It was a seemed a little bit difficult task for Afghan war strategy optimist camp to convince Trump which has barely spoken about Afghanistan as a candidate or president, to keep troops in Afghanistan until finding reasonable solution for responsible withdrawal, even pro-announcement of strategy on July 19 National Security Council meeting to brief Trump on Afghanistan and Pakistan strategy, Trump said to McMaster and General James Mattis new appointed Defense minister, "I have been hearing this nonsense about Afghanistan for 17 years with no success, we are losing big in Afghanistan it's a disaster, our allies aren't helping. NATO is a disaster and a waste".<sup>451</sup> After a long discussion over Afghan strategy, Trump was convinced by his team to authorize the Pentagon to send 4,000 additional American troops to Afghanistan, the majority of whom would train, advise, and assist ANDSF in fought against Taliban and ISIS.<sup>452</sup> The Trump Administration was on the verge of reaching an agreement on Afghanistan's strategy within the context of the South Asian Strategy.

On August 21, 2017 at Fort Mayer, Virginia Trump announced his administration's new South Asia strategy, which also included Afghanistan strategy. Notwithstanding his prior instinct and tendency to get out all troops from Afghanistan, unlike Obama Administration's "time-based" strategy he decided to set a "condition-based" approach as fundamental pillar of his administration strategy for Afghanistan.

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<sup>449</sup> Woodward, Ibid, p. 71

<sup>450</sup> Woodward Ibid, p. 72

<sup>451</sup> Woodward ibid, p.73

<sup>452</sup> The Guardian, "US sending almost 4,000 extra forces to Afghanistan, Trump official says", (last update, June 15, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jun/15/us-troops-afghanistan-trump-administration>

In the framework of its new strategy Washington decided to keep 8,500 U.S. troops and order to deploy somewhat 4,000 additional troops in Afghanistan focusing on condition on the ground. The decision to delay the drawdown and exit plan was made consideration on three U.S.'s interests in Afghanistan; (1) preserving the achievements of long-running efforts in Afghanistan; (2) a hasty withdrawal would severely jeopardize the U.S. interests in Afghanistan including U.S. its security and counterterrorism interests; premature withdrawal would create a vacuum that terrorists organizations such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda would quickly fill it, and it would result U.S.'s hard-won gains slipped back into the hands of Taliban, and Al-Qaeda, as it happened in Iraq; (3) as the security and political situation remains highly precarious in Afghanistan , therefore without U.S. and allies military presence and assistance to Afghan government it will most probably collapse and another civil war is very likely to happen, and country will be once again turned as safe haven of terrorism.<sup>453</sup>. The strategy included more options including regional consensus on Afghanistan looking for comprehensive solution by involving Pakistan and India as two influential actors in region in Afghanistan issues.

Following a shift from a “time-based” approach to a “condition-based” approach, as core pillar of new strategy, in which the decision of full withdrawal or staying U.S. troops in Afghanistan was based by considering the conditions on ground. The second key pillar of new strategy was the integration of multiple instruments of U.S. power including; diplomatic, economic and military toward a successful outcome. In this context, Trump administration pursued Obama’s talk and fight strategy, on one hand, Washington has continued supporting the Afghan government and particularly the ANDSF in flight against the Taliban. On other hand, the effort to reach a political settlement in Afghanistan has begun through negotiation with Taliban. In September 2018, Trump appointed Zalmay Khalilzad as the United States’ special representative for Afghanistan and tasked with assisting Washington in its reconciliation efforts and to pursuing a political solution to end longest ongoing military engagement in Afghanistan.

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<sup>453</sup> National Security & Defense, “Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia”, White House, ( Last retrieved, August 21,2017), <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-south-asia/>

Within the framework of a regional consensus on ending its military engagement in Afghanistan, the Trump administration's approach toward Pakistan shifted to more strictly approach and demanded Islamabad's a clear stance on Afghanistan, rather than playing a double game. Trump has strongly criticized Pakistan for playing two-face policy on one hand, receiving billions of dollars from U.S. by partnering itself with Washington, on the other side, it provides safe havens for terrorist organizations and Taliban in its territory whom are in fight with U.S. and its allies.<sup>454</sup>

In September 2018, the Trump Administration cut \$300 million in military aid to Pakistan as sanction for not being loyal in fighting terrorism and supporting peace process in Afghanistan.<sup>455</sup> But due to the U.S. dependence on Pakistani territory to resupply its troops in Afghanistan and Islamabad's strong influence on Taliban and the probability of bringing them on negotiation table. Washington found it hard to keep durable pressure and sanction on Pakistan. Not long by 2019, as Pakistan role in peace process in Afghanistan was needed, Trump has demanded Islamabad's help with the Afghan peace process, Pakistan has shown strong desire and Imran Khan released Mullah Beradar the deputy leader of Taliban who had been in Pakistan custody. In July 2019 Imran Khan visited Washington and the strained relation resumed.<sup>456</sup>

In an effort to integrate regional actors into the U.S.'s Afghan war, the third pillar of Trump's Afghanistan strategy was a call on Modi, to help him get out from quagmire. India as an important player in the region and a strategic neighbor and partner of Afghanistan, has been deeply involved in Afghanistan affairs for a long period of time. Afghanistan relationship with India has been founded on historical, cultural and social commonalities. Despite Pakistan, India has tried to keep state-centered relation with Afghanistan. During communist regimes and Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, however India had adopted neutral approach and did not joined anti-Soviet coalition which was led by U.S. but still Delhi had friendly relations with

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<sup>454</sup> White House press, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-south-asia/>

<sup>455</sup> Memphis Barker, "US military confirms \$300m cut in aid to Pakistan", The Guardian, ( last retrieved, September 2, 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/02/us-military-confirms-300m-cut-in-aid-to-pakistan>

<sup>456</sup> BBC News, "Imran Khan: Pakistan PM meets Trump in bid to mend ties", ( last retrieved, July 23, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-49032495>

communist regimes in Afghanistan particularly with Dr. Najibullah government. Since the collapse of Dr. Najibullah government until Taliban emergence India had a low profile engagement in Afghanistan's political scene, but during Taliban era India has joined Moscow and Tehran coalition and supported North Alliance in war Against Taliban. Since the overthrow of Taliban regime, India keeps high profile engagement in Afghanistan and Delhi-Kabul multidimensional ties have improved.

However, India has been accused by Islamabad on its anti-Pakistan policy in Afghanistan. But in the framework of its commitment to Afghanistan reconstruction from 2001-2017 India by pledging \$2 billion became the fifth largest development assistance provider nation to Afghanistan.<sup>457</sup> The committed fund has been assigned to infrastructure projects, education, agriculture, health sector, energy, governmental institution capacity building. In addition, in framework of the Indio-Afghan bilateral strategic partnership Agreement India has committed security and stability in Afghanistan by helping to promote ANDSF capacity.

Due to political and diplomatic challenges in U.S.-Indo relations during Obama era, Washington not only has seen Delhi's less effective role as ally in Afghanistan, but also saw India as challenge to Afghanistan security and stability by engaging in anti-Pakistan confronting and containment policies. Unlike, previous administration's stand Trump in his South Asia strategy has calculated India great role in region and saw it as part of the solution to the Afghan conflict. Washington has demanded Delhi's furthermore involvement in development on Afghanistan and valuable role in the security and stability of Afghanistan. While giving remarks on South Asia Strategy Trump said, "we appreciate India's important contributions to stability in Afghanistan, and we want them to help us more with Afghanistan".<sup>458</sup> Not so long, after Washington's efforts to compel India to increase its military contribution in Afghanistan had failed. Trump has mocked India, over building a library in Afghanistan" as he said, "its U.S.'s five hours work making a library I

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<sup>457</sup> Rani D. Mullen, "India in Afghanistan: Understanding Development Assistance by Emerging Donors to Conflict- Affected countries", STIMON, (August, 2017), Pp. 6

<sup>458</sup> White house, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-south-asia/>

don't know who is using it in Afghanistan".<sup>459</sup> Mocking India's two decades development efforts in Afghanistan has drawn widespread anger in country.

Finally, Trump has urged NATO allies and global partners to support their strategy in Afghanistan and contribute more by sending more troops and enhancing fund for Afghan war. At the NATO Summit in Brussels in July 2018, member countries reaffirmed their commitment to sustaining and extending their support for ANDSF capacity-building under the "Resolute Support Mission", and extending financial sustainment in the framework of ANA Trust Fund through 2024.<sup>460</sup>

### **9.6.2. Trump Afghanistan's Strategy Assessment on the Ground**

With the slogans of "Our troops will fight to win", and "We will fight to win" the Taliban will be prevented from taking over Afghanistan. Donald Trump has announced a new strategy in the hope of winning the war and put an endpoint to a suffering long-lasting war in his four years term. But unlike his expectations untying the Gordian knot rapidly was not easy. Despite all efforts through different channels including military pressure, diplomatic solution, and efforts of creating a regional consensus to find a solution for a withdrawal that do not undermine the U.S.'s interests in Afghanistan and region the consequences were not in favor of United States. In the last two years of his presidency Trump administration efforts more focus on reconciliation with Taliban in order to find a way for the responsible withdrawal. Khalilzad has engaged in peace direct talked with Taliban that until end of Trump term to sign a peace deal with Taliban as it happened. A peace deal was signed with Taliban in June 2020, but the peace deal did not end with the favor of U.S., the complete withdrawal decision remained to Joe Biden administration on the other hand, the Intra-Afghan dialogue was undermined by U.S.-Taliban peace deal. As the Afghan government collapse to Taliban on 16 August 2021, there is wide range of blame game situation between Biden and former president Trump administration for putting the responsibility of huge fiasco on one another

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<sup>459</sup> Zeenat Saberin and Shereena Qazi, "Indians, Afghans react to Trump's 'Afghan library' dig at PM Modi", (last retrieved, Jan 6, 2019), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/1/6/indians-afghans-react-to-trumps-afghan-library-dig-at-pm-modi>

<sup>460</sup> NATO, "NATO and Afghanistan", (last retrieved, February 11, 2021), [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_8189.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm)

## **9.7. U.S.-TALIBAN PEACE NEGOTIATION UNDER DONALD TRUMP PRESIDENCY 2017-2020**

Donald Trump, as the 45<sup>th</sup> President of U.S. inherited an incomplete mission from his predecessor; when he assumed the office in January 2017, there were already 8,179 U.S. troops alongside 13,496 NATO troops in Afghanistan as part of the “Resolute and Support” mission.<sup>461</sup> According to USFOR-quarterly report, “from a total of 407 districts within 34 provinces, 88 districts or (170) were under Taliban controlled (8) or influence (25) and 116 districts were contested”.<sup>462</sup> Despite the Taliban offensive against foreign troops and Afghan government the emergence of ISIL-KP in eastern Afghanistan in 2015 posed a grave security threat to the country and regions. Thus, these three lines of efforts; political settlement, troop’s withdrawal, and counter ISIL-KP and Al-Qaeda were the Donald Trump administration’s top priorities in Afghanistan.

Prior to taking office, President Trump was a vocal opponent of U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan; during his presidential campaign rally several times he has criticized Obama administration for U.S. long-term involvement in Afghanistan. After lengthy debate within his team, he announced the South Asia Strategy in August 2017.<sup>463</sup> The withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan has been delayed, and 4,000 additional troops have been deployed to Afghanistan to assist the Afghan government and fight ISIL-KP and Al-Qaeda. For a responsible withdrawal, alongside deploying additional troops the door has kept open for peace talk. Therefore, the quest for the political settlement and solution through the regional diplomacy has been accelerated. In the context of a regional solution for political settlement in Afghanistan, Trump took a tougher stance on U.S. policy toward Pakistan; he accused Pakistan for providing a safe haven for the Taliban and other terrorists groups, and threatened Islamabad with cutting U.S. aid, if it not be clear on peace process in Afghanistan.<sup>464</sup> In October 2018 Pakistan released Mullah Abdul

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<sup>461</sup> DOD, “Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan”, Report to Congress, (June, 2016), p. 11

<sup>462</sup> SIGAR, “Quarterly Report to the United States Congress”, (October, 2016). Pp. 104- 105, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2016-10-30qr.pdf>

<sup>463</sup> Aljazeera, “Trump vows US will keep fighting in Afghanistan”, (last retrieved, August 22, 2017). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/22/trump-vows-us-will-keep-fighting-in-afghanistan/>

<sup>464</sup> Yeganeh Torbati, “U.S. puts more pressure on Pakistan to help with Afghan war”, Reuters, (last retrieved, August 21, 2017). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-afghanistan-idUSKCN1B109Q>

Ghani Beradar, a co-founder of the Taliban movement who was arrested by Pakistani ISI agency in 2010 in Pakistan to demonstrate Islamabad support for the Trump Administration's peace talk with Taliban.

### **9.7.1. US-Taliban Direct Peace Talks**

In an attempt to end America's longest war in Afghanistan and ensure a safe, secure and responsible complete withdrawal from the country after two decades of involvement which has cost trillion of dollars and thousands of lives, Donald Trump as third president of U.S. since its country's military intervention in Afghanistan has entered into a direct negotiation with Taliban. Trump as the one of tenacious opponent of U.S. military presence in Afghanistan by assuming office has elevated the total withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan on the top of agenda. To this end, the efforts to accelerate this process were stepped up. In this context the initial bilateral efforts toward peace talks by both sides were setting negotiating teams. Donald Trump appointed Zalmay Khalilzad, (an Afghan-born veteran American, academician, diplomat and expert on Afghanistan politics), as the U.S. special representative for Afghanistan reconciliation.<sup>465</sup>

Khalilzad in his early background served in many positions within U.S. different administrations including; as U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan from 2004 to 2005 under President Bush and from 2005 to 2007 as an Ambassador to Iraq. Khalilzad who accompanied by civilian and military experts has led the U.S. negotiating team in negotiations with the Taliban. On the other side, Taliban has announced the negotiating team comprised of eight members of the Doha office's political commission, led by Sher Mohamad Abbas Stanikzai. Which later the negotiating teams' members expanded to 14 members after the Mullah Ghani Beradar was elected as the head of Doha office.<sup>466</sup>

In July 2018, Ambassador Alice Wells, the U.S. special representative for South Asia, accompanied by a group of American experts met Taliban's negotiating team in Doha, which was described as the first time meeting between Senior U.S.

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<sup>465</sup> Faridullah Hussainkhail, "Khalilzad to facilitate Peace process between Govt, Taliban", TOLONews, (last retrieved, September 22, 2018). <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/khalilzad-facilitate-peace-process-between-govt-and-taliban>

<sup>466</sup> Aljazeera, "Taliban name negotiating team before new talks with US", ( last retrieved, February 12, 2019). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/2/12/taliban-name-negotiating-team-before-new-talks-with-us>

officials and Taliban leaders.<sup>467</sup> Since the beginning to end the eleven rounds of negotiations and then followed by a peace deal between U.S.-Taliban during eighteen months was done as the following.

- ***The Frist Round of Negotiations:*** Following the introductory talks between Alice Wells, the U.S.'s special representative to South Asia, with Taliban delegation in July 2018 in Doha, which its details unrevealed to the public, this time the first round of the official face-to-face talks between U.S. special representative Zalmay Khalilzad and the Taliban's political office delegations headed by Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai held on October 12, 2018 in Doha capital of Qatar.<sup>468</sup> The purpose of the first round of talks has concluded as the complimentary, confidence-building and preparing the agenda for second round of talks. As the result of political agreement between Khalilzad and the Taliban negotiating teams, Mullah Abdul Ghani Beradar was released from Pakistan prison and was appointed head of the Taliban's political office in Doha.
- ***The Second Round Talks:*** was held between Khalilzad and Taliban negotiating team in November 2018 in Doha. However no details of talks have released so far, but in early month it was reported that Doha based Taliban negotiating team had traveled to Pakistan to consult with their leadership council over the upcoming peace talks. With the inception of second round of talks, the U.S.'s ramped up its air campaign against Taliban, in order to put pressure on them to set for peace talks.<sup>469</sup> On other hand, the Taliban have stepped up their violence and claimed for having total control over the 61 districts in Afghanistan.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> Jessica Donati, "U.S. Envoy, Taliban Officials Meet to Discuss Afghan Peace Talks", The Wall Street Journal, (last retrieved, July 25, 2018). <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-envoy-meets-taliban-in-push-for-afghan-peace-talks-1539377851>

<sup>468</sup> Aljazeera, "Afghanistan: Taliban confirms talks with U.S. Peace envoy in Qatar" (last retrieved, October 13, 2018). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/10/13/afghanistan-taliban-confirms-talks-with-us-peace-envoy-in-qatar>

<sup>469</sup> Craig Nelson "U.S. Envoy Meets High-Ranking Taliban Officials in Push for Peace" Wall Street Journal, (last retrieved, December 17, 2018). <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-envoy-meets-high-ranking-taliban-officials-in-push-for-peace-11545069737>

<sup>470</sup> Ayaz Gul, "Iran Hosts Bilateral Talks with Taliban on Afghan Peace", VOA, (last retrieved, December 31, 2018). <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/iran-hosts-bilateral-talks-taliban-afghan-peace>

- ***The Third Round of Talks***; the third round of US-Taliban talks was held in the capital of the United Arab Emirates Abu Dhabi on December 17, 2018.. The meeting lasted for three days, along with the representatives from United States and Taliban, the representatives of Saudi Arabia and UAE also attended the meeting.<sup>471</sup> The Afghan government's 12-member delegation was also invited to attend the meeting, but the Taliban representatives refused to meet them. The outcomes of third round talks were including; the UAE and Saudi Arabia offered three month ceasefire to Taliban, but the Taliban responded that they hand no authority to discuss the matter. At the end of third round meeting the issue of establishing an interim administration was leaked to public. The reports have indicated that the U.S. and Taliban discussed to establish an interim government in Afghanistan prior to inter-Afghan dialog. However, the negotiation parties had denied the allegations, but the Afghan government reacted to the report and the National Security Council had declared that the Afghan people would not accept a "hasty deal" in which ignores their sacrifice and violate their right of choice. And also added no one has rights to decide on upcoming government structure.<sup>472</sup>

Aftermath of meeting, Taliban threatened if they would be pressured to relocate, the ongoing peace talk will be stope, they asserted, "They would have proceed the peace process from their political in Doha, any country willing to help find a solution to the Afghan problem must contact the Doha office". Following the diplomatic maneuvers to the regional countries; first Pakistan and then Russia this time at the end of third round talks, Taliban's Doha office negotiating teams traveled to Iran. The purpose of visit was indicated to gain the political and moral support of the regional countries and their cooperation to end the occupation and bring peace and security to Afghanistan.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> Aljazeera, "Taliban meet US officials in United Arab Emirates", (last retrieved, December 17, 2018). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/17/taliban-meet-us-officials-in-united-arab-emirates>

<sup>472</sup> TOLONews, " Interim Govt Plan Not Applicable in Afghanistan; Ghani", ( last retrieved, Febuary 23, 2019). <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/interim-govt-plan-not-applicable-afghanistan-ghani>

<sup>473</sup> DW, " Afghan Taliban begins peace talks in neighboring Iran", ( last retrieved, December 31, 2018). <https://www.dw.com/en/afghan-taliban-begins-peace-talks-in-neighboring-iran/a-46906337>

- ***The Fourth Round Talks:*** the fourth round of U.S.-Taliban negotiations was held in Doha on January 20, 2019 with a week delay. The reason of delay was expressed as the disagreement on the agenda of talks. According to Taliban the withdrawal of foreign troop as well not use of Afghanistan soil by any groups against U.S. and allies were on the agenda, but U.S. negotiation delegation raise new issues. By the end of talks both sides announced that they discussed withdrawal of foreign troops as well they will not allowed any one to use Afghan soils Afghan anyone.<sup>474</sup>
- ***The Fifth Round Talks:*** the fifth round of the U.S.-Taliban talks was held in Doha on February 25, 2019, it last for two weeks. At this round of talks, Mullah Abdul Ghani Beradar had joined Taliban's negotiating teams for the first time and had meeting with Khalilzad. The two weeks talk was articulated by both sides as the constructive and fruitful. During this round of talks; (a), the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan (b), the effective counterterrorism measures, Taliban's non-cooperation with terrorist organization such as al-Qaeda and ISIS, (c) the establishment of a ceasefire and (d) Inter-Afghan dialog was the main principle of talks. The agreement between both sides had been reached withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and a guarantee to fight terrorism.<sup>475</sup> The agreement over the ceasefire and Inter-Afghan talks did not reach.
- ***The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Round of Negotiations:*** the sixth round of the US-Taliban talks in Doha end on May 10, 2019. The Agenda of sixth round was the same as the fifth round the ceasefire was demand from Taliban but they denied, but the progress made toward Intra-Afghan dialogue. It was supposed that the Intra-Afghan dialogue start within sixth round, but it was canceled due to the large number of Afghan government delegation participation. The seventh round of talks between was held on June 30, 2019, in which Taliban agreed on Intra-Afghan dialogue. On the outskirts of these two rounds of talks (a) the trilateral meeting between the representatives of U.S., Russia, and China was

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<sup>474</sup> Ayaz Gul, "Taliban, US Open Afghan Peace Talks in Qatar", (January 21, 2019).

<https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/taliban-us-open-afghan-peace-talks-qatar>

<sup>475</sup> Fay Abuelgasim and Katha Ganon, "Longest US-Taliban Peace Talks see 'progress' in Qatar", Associated Press, (last retrieved, March 12, 2019). <https://apnews.com/article/zalmay-khalilzad-ap-top-news-qatar-international-news-doha-ed7c4e471cbb44bba5b71d4ad03f9241>

held in Moscow in April 2019, the meeting was as the part of regional cooperation on Afghan peace.<sup>476</sup> (b) The Loya Jirga (grand assembly) was held in Kabul began on April 29, 2019 and last for three days, 3200 delegates from 34 provinces had attended the Jirga the aims for holding this gathering was to drafted a common approach to peace talks with Taliban.<sup>477</sup> A 23 article resolution was passed as roadmap for peace talks with Taliban.

At the sidelines of the seventh round of talks, the Afghans delegation consist of Afghan government delegation the civil society, women and minority rights groups met Taliban negotiation team in Doha for the first time.<sup>478</sup> This meeting took place in the midst of the Taliban's repeated refusal to negotiate with the Afghan government. The meeting was mediated by Qatar and Germany. Despite the ongoing efforts for peace and political solution, the violence continued across the Afghanistan.

- ***The 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Round of Talks:*** the 8<sup>th</sup> round of talks, which began on August 3, 2019, both sides emphasized on effectiveness and progress of talks, in this round the focused was placed on technical details. The ninth round of talks was held end at August 30, 2019, this round of talks has been called one of the most important talks between two sides. In this round alongside the discussion over the reduction of violence on ground by Taliban and beginning of Intra-Afghan dialogue the four key issues including complete withdrawal of foreign troops, inter-Afghan dialogue, Security guarantee by Taliban that they would allowed any groups to use Afghan soil against U.S. and allies and the permanent ceasefire had discussed.<sup>479</sup>
- ***The 10<sup>th</sup> Round of Negotiation:*** prior to the inception of 10<sup>th</sup> round of talks between U.S.-Taliban negotiating teams, which was supposed that both sides will reach an potential agreement, but the talks had paused due to a suicide attack in Kabul that killed 12 people including U.S. and Romanian soldiers,

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<sup>476</sup> TOLONews, "Moscow To Host Trilateral Meeting On Afghan Peace" ( April 23, 2019).

<https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/moscow-host-trilateral-meeting-afghan-peace>

<sup>477</sup> The Embassy of The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Australia, " Communique - The Consultative Peace Loya Jirga 2019", ( May 14, 2019).

<https://www.canberra.mfa.af/news/communique-the-consultative-peace-loya-jirga-2019.html>

<sup>478</sup> Shereena Qazi, " Intra-Afghan talks with Taliban under way in Qatar", Aljazeera, ( July 7, 2019).

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/7/7/intra-afghan-talks-with-taliban-under-way-in-qatar>

<sup>479</sup> Reuters, " Ninth round of U.S., Taliban peace talks start in Qatar", ( August 22, 2019).

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-afghanistan-talks-idUSKCN1VC2A7>

the Taliban took the responsibility of attack. Following the attack, a tweet has come from Donald Trump that he called off peace talks with the Taliban as well he canceled a scheduled secret meeting with Mullah Abdul Ghani Beradar and President Ghani which was supposed that it would be taking place in Camp David.<sup>480</sup> This diplomatic crisis has caused the process halted for three months. But the U.S. resumed talks with the Taliban in Doha on December 7, 2019. The reduction of violence, ceasefire was the main topic of this round.<sup>481</sup> At the end of tenth rounds of talks three senior members of the Taliban including Anas Haqqani the top member of Haqqani Network were released from Afghan government's prison in exchange for two western academics American Kevin and Australian Timothy which were kidnaped by Taliban and held hostage since 2016.

- ***The 11<sup>th</sup> Round of Talks and Reduction in Violence:*** The eleventh round of talks between Washington and the Taliban began on January 11, 2020, in Qatar. A ten-day ceasefire with U.S. and NATO troops, as well the reduction in violence with Afghan government had agreed between two parties. Neither Taliban militants nor ANDSF launched operations against Taliban during the week of reduction in violence that started on February 22, 2020.<sup>482</sup> The reduction in violence scheme was in fact a precondition of U.S. for the signing a peace deal with Taliban. Despite the agreement during the reduction in violence weeks the violence continued and 41 people killed and 65 injured, Afghanistan Human Rights Independence Commission reported.<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>480</sup> Dennis Romero, Dan De Luce, Mushtaq Yusufzai and Ahmed Mengli, "Trump says he's canceling Afghan peace talks, secret meeting with Taliban leaders", NBC NEWS, ( last retrieved, September 8, 2019). <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/trump-says-he-s-canceling-afghanistan-peace-talks-secret-meeting-n1051141>

<sup>481</sup> DW, " US resumes Taliban talks in Doha", ( last retrieved, December 7, 2019). <https://www.dw.com/en/us-resumes-taliban-talks-in-doha/a-51567644>

<sup>482</sup> U.S. Department of State, " Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for bringing Peace to Afghanistan", (February 29, 2020). <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/02.29.20-US-Afghanistan-Joint-Declaration.pdf>

<sup>483</sup> Etilaatroz, " Comesion Hukuk Bashar: 41 nafar dar Jeryan Hafta Kahish khoshonat kushta shoda and , (translation), Human Right Commision: 41 people killed during the reduction in violence week", ( February 26, 2020). <https://www.etilaatroz.com/93797/human-rights-commission-41-people-killed-during-violence-reduction-week/>

### **9.7.2. The U.S.-Taliban Peace Deal**

After eighteen months of negotiations between U.S.-Taliban, a peace deal was finally signed in Doha on February 29, 2020 by U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad and the Taliban's political deputy and head of the political office Mullah Ghani Beradar in the presence of Mike Pompeo U.S. Secretary of State. The peace agreement outlines four main goals including:

1. Guarantees and enforcement mechanisms that will prevent the use of the Soil of Afghanistan by groups or individual against the security of the United States and its allies.
2. Guarantees, enforcement mechanism, and announcement of the timeline for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan.
3. After the announcement and guarantees for implementation of one, second part in above which is the foreign troop's withdrawal and guarantees from Taliban side that Afghan soil will not be used by any groups against U.S. the security of the U.S. and its allies. The Taliban will start Intra-Afghan negotiation with Afghan government on March 10, 2020.
4. A permanent and comprehensive ceasefire will be an important part of the Intra-Afghan dialogue agenda. Both side will be discuss the date and modalities of ceasefire including joint implementation mechanism which will be declared along with the completion agreement over the future political roadmap of Afghanistan.<sup>484</sup>

#### ***9.7.2.1. U.S.'s Commitment to the Agreement***

As the first part of this agreement the United States is committed to withdraw all its military forces, including its allies, coalition partners, including all non-diplomatic civilian personnel, private security contractors, advisors, trainers,

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<sup>484</sup> U.S. Department of State , “ Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban and the United States of America”, ( February 29, 2020). <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Signed-Agreement-02292020.pdf> . p. 1

supporting service person within fourteen months following the declaration of this agreement and will take following measures in this regard:

- A. The United States, its allies and the Coalition will take the following measures in the first one hundred thirty-five days;
  1. They will bring down the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan to 8600 and proportionally bring reduction in the number of its allies and Coalition forces.
  2. The U.S. its allies will withdrawal all its forces from five (5) military bases.
- B. With the commitment and action on the obligation of Taliban in part two of this agreement, the U.S. its allies and Coalition will execute the following:<sup>485</sup>
  1. The U.S., its allies, and the Coalition will completely withdrawal its remaining forces from Afghanistan within nine and a half months
  2. The U.S., its allies and the Coalition will withdraw all their forces from remaining bases.
- C. The U.S. is committed to start immediately to work with all relevant sides on a plan to release facilitate the release and exchange of Taliban 5000 prisoners from Afghan government prison and 1000 Afghan government prisoners from Taliban prison. This will take place on March 10, 2020 the first day of Intra-Afghan negotiations.
- D. With the inception of Intra-Afghan talks the U.S. will initiate an administrative review of current U.S. sanctions and the regard list against members of Taliban. This sanction will be removed by August 27, 2020.
- E. With the beginning of Intra-Afghan negotiations the U.S. will start diplomatic engagement with other members of the United Nations Security Council and Afghan government to remove Taliban members from sanction list it will take place on May 29, 2020.
- F. The United States and its allies will refrain from the threat or the use of forces against the territorial integrity or political independence of Afghanistan or intervening in its domestic affairs.
- G. The U.S. will request the Unite Nation council to recognized this agreement

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<sup>485</sup> Ibid, p. 2

H. The U.S. Will seek economic cooperation for reconstruction of the post-settlement Afghan Islamic government as determined by the Intra-Afghan talks.

**9.7.2.2. *The Taliban's Commitment to the Agreement***

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the U.S. and is known as the Taliban is committed to take the following steps to avoid any group or individual, including Al-Qaeda from using of Afghanistan to threaten the Security of U.S. and its allies:<sup>486</sup> (1) The Taliban will not allow any one including its members to use the Afghan territory against U.S. and its allies; (2) The Taliban will not cooperate with anyone that threatening the security of U.S. and its allies; (3) The Taliban will prevent any group and individual which posing threat to U.S. and its allies form recruiting, training and fundraising and will not host them; (4) The Taliban is committed to deal with those seeking asylum or residence in Afghanistan in according to international migration law; (5) The Taliban will not provide visas, passports and travel permits or other legal documents to those who pose a threat to the security of the U.S. and its allies to enter Afghanistan.

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid, p. 3

## CHAPTER TEN

### THE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS AND THE COLLAPSE OF AFGHAN GOVERNMENT IN HAND OF TALIBAN

#### 10.1. JEO BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY FOR AFGHANSITAN

Following the collapse of the Afghan government in hand of Taliban and the failure in evacuation which caused a humanitarian crisis in Kabul, as well as the last suicide attacks carry out by IS-K which killed more than 100 civilian and 13 U.S. Marine troops, the Biden administration faced harsh criticism at home and internationally and even some of his critique calls for his impeachment and resignations as a result of his administration failure on Afghanistan.

In this chapter before to find out reason behind the shocking collapse of Afghan government into hand of the Taliban within only two weeks, it's necessary to shed light on Biden policy toward Afghanistan. The early records indicate that Biden was not in favor of U.S. troop's long presence in Afghanistan, while he was vice president under Obama he has repeatedly stressed that the U.S. troops should leave the Afghanistan in 2014. In his 2012 debate, he asserted; "It's the responsibility of the Afghans to take care of their own security, it's not depending on us, we are leaving in 2014".<sup>487</sup> Despite his opposition against U.S. troop's presence post-2014 in Afghanistan, the Obama administration has kept around 9,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan beyond 2014. However, the root of this crisis which is labeled as the Biden foreign policy failure has lied in early administration.

Trump administration signed a peace deal with Taliban on February 29, 2020 and announced the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops by May, 2021, the declaration of troops' pull out came while there was no progress in Intra-Afghan dialogue. The U.S.-Taliban peace agreement undermined the Intra-Afghan dialogue and has given political leverage to Taliban on negotiation table, it has strengthened

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<sup>487</sup> Jason Leman, "Joe Biden's 2012 Comments about Leaving Afghanistan period in 2014 resurface", Newsweek, (Last retrieved, April 21, 2021). <https://www.newsweek.com/joe-bidens-2012-comments-about-leaving-afghanistan-period-2014-resurface-1583394>

their confidence on military takeover as it happened. When the Biden assumed office in January 2021 as the 46<sup>th</sup> president of United State, he has inherited the full pull out pending decision from Trump administration. However initially the report leaked that Biden will reverse Trump's decision over the withdrawal, but not late, Biden declared his strategy for Afghanistan in which he reaffirmed the U.S. troop's complete withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Biden administration moved forward the Trump entire pull out date which was May 1, 2021 to September 11, 2021, which coincided with 20th anniversary of 9/11 attacks. The reason for postponing the pull out was asserted as the logistic and technical matter, and inability of U.S. and its allies that properly evacuate its personal and its Afghan allies.

The announcement of troops withdrawal was a turning point in battlefield, it negatively affected ANDSF moral in combat with Taliban because with declaration of troops withdrawal most of the U.S. and NATO contractor who was technically and logistically supporting ANDSF left Afghanistan, it has put the Afghan Airforce in weakened position , unlike strengthen Taliban position on combat ground. The conflict and violence unprecedentedly escalated since May 2021, Taliban has launched massive territorial takeover operations between May and June Taliban claimed for taking control of more than 100 districts all over Afghanistan.

On the other hand, no progress has been made at the negotiating table between Taliban and Afghan government. The Political division among the Afghan leaders and their failure to take a unify position and made a comprehensive censuses on peace talks and backing ANDSF on the battleground as well as the Biden administration limiting its support to political and financial contribution to Afghan government, strengthened Taliban position on battlefield and made true their dreams of military victory on ground.

## **10.2. PRESIDENT GHANI'S OFFICIAL VISIT TO WASHINGTON**

At the height of violence, conflict escalation and uncertainty as well the unknown destiny of Intra-Afghan dialogue, President Ghani made an official visit to Washington to meet his counterpart. The visit was dubbed as the new chapter in relationship between Afghanistan and United State. During this visited Ghani met Biden and his administration team and demanded white house to support ANDSF on

battlefield in war against Taliban by providing Air support for six additional months and also to push the Pakistan and Qatar to force Taliban by having its influence on them to set for peace talks. The Biden administrations assured its U.S. diplomatic, economic and humanitarian support for the after drawdown continues, and also reaffirmed its contribution to ANDSF by quipping and pledging \$3 billion as the financial aid after the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan.

On the same time Biden emphasized on supporting Intra-Afghan dialogue. It was clear signal for President Ghani that the U.S. will end its war in Afghanistan and it's up to the Afghans leaders that how they will overcome ongoing situation.<sup>488</sup> Simultaneously with President Ghani travel to Washington the conflict and violence escalated, the military and intelligence experts alarmed the unpleasant consequence of Taliban gain. In an interview with ABC news prior to the U.S. troop's evacuation from Bagram Airfield, General Scott Miller the Commander of Coalition troops in Afghanistan expressed his deep concerns over the security situation in Afghanistan post U.S. troops complete withdrawal as he said, "the Security situation is not good the Afghan is recognizing it's not good, the Taliban moving forward".<sup>489</sup> Despite, the deteriorate security situation and alarming intelligence reports over the ANDSF inability in pushing back Taliban, Biden administration and its allies step up its troops withdrawal from Afghanistan.

### **10.3. THE WITHDRAWAL AND COLLAPSE OF AFGHAN GOVERNMENT**

The downsizing of a total 9,592 Coalition troops from 36 Coalition nations as the part of Result support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan started when the Biden announced the total withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan in mid-April 2021. During his remarks on Afghanistan on April 14, 2021, he expressed that, "War in Afghanistan was never meant to be multi-generational, we achieved our goal we killed Osama Bin Laden, I am the fourth President of United State since our

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<sup>488</sup> The White House, "Readout of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. Meeting with President Ghani and Chairman Abdullah of Afghanistan", (last retrieved June 25, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/25/readout-of-president-joseph-r-biden-jr-meeting-with-president-ghani-and-chairman-abdullah-of-afghanistan/>

<sup>489</sup> Luis Martinez and Martha Raddatz, "An Inside look at the US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan: ABC News exclusive", ABC News, ( last retrieved June 29 2021), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/inside-us-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan-abc-news-exclusive/story?id=78534258>

evolution in Afghanistan I would not pass this longest war to the fifth president of United State”.<sup>490</sup> The drawdown process officially began on May 1, the Germany exited its last 250 troops from early 1300 troops in June, 2021 and followed by Italy and other NATO nations. Pursuant to the pull out plan the U.S. left Afghanistan Bagram Airfield on July 5, 2021 at night by shutting off the electricity and slipping away in the midnight without notifying the Afghan government.<sup>491</sup> With the withdrawal of 2,000 U.S. troops from Bagram airfield which was U.S. and its allies largest military facility in Afghanistan and during 20-years of its military presence in Afghanistan, this base was used as the epicenter against Al-Qaeda and Taliban. With the U.S. evacuation from Bagram airbase, Taliban increased their offensive on districts and the Afghan government controlled districts were falling one by one to Taliban and the large cities seized circle was getting close day by day. The ANDSF demoralized on battlefield due to the lack of U.S. air support and weak leadership.

How did the Afghan government and army collapse swiftly and easily? To address this question it requires reviewing the U.S., Afghan government and Taliban triangle and each role in triggering the collapse of Afghan government. The scandalous collapse of the Afghan government into hands of Taliban not only shocked the international community but also shocked the Taliban movement over the quick fall of ANDSF. As the academician, politician and experts believed the four presidents of United State unwise policies contributed to the humiliated failure of U.S. and its allies’ mission in Afghanistan. But more criticism is on Donald Trump and Joe Biden addresses. The Donald Trump administration undermined the Afghan owned and Afghan led reconciliation process by directly involving in peace talk with Taliban which led to a hasty peace deal that give political leverage to Taliban and just grounded the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. In fact the peace agreement just served U.S. and Taliban interests’ not Afghan government. Most importantly as the part of agreement, U.S. pushed Afghan government to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners as precondition for Intra-Afghan dialogue.

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<sup>490</sup> Terri Moon Cronk, “Biden Announces Full U.S. Troop Withdrawal From Afghanistan by Sept. 11”, U.S. Department of Defense, ( last retrieved, April 14, 2021), <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2573268/biden-announces-full-us-troop-withdrawal-from-afghanistan-by-sept-11/>

<sup>491</sup> Kathy Gannon, “ US left Afghan airfield at night, didn’t tell new commander”, AP News, ( last retrieved July 6, 2021), <https://apnews.com/article/bagram-afghanistan-airfield-us-troops-f3614828364f567593251aaaa167e623>

Accordingly the prisoners were released from Afghan government in September 2020, a condition was set, that they would not return to battlefield, However the Taliban has committed that the released members would not join battlefield, but according to Afghan authority, 580 skilled released prisoners returned to the battlefield which strengthened the Taliban frontline.<sup>492</sup>

With U.S. troop's withdrawal, unlike their commitment that they will not attack the big cities, but Taliban started their offensive on cities centers strategic location. Initially they placed large cities under the economic siege by collapsing the districts, in which Afghanistan has customs border with neighbor countries, Taliban secured Afghanistan's 7 border posts cutting off a key source of government revenue, and also took in large-scale the control of roads with that cut off the Afghan government supply routes. Followed by organized attacks on large cities in northern, within five days nine provincial capital including; Faizabad, Taluqan, Kunduz, Sar-E-Pul, Sheberghan, Aybaak, Farah, Zaranji collapse to Taliban with all its military facilities, followed by Mazar Sharif, Qandahar, Herat, Helmand fall to Taliban. as the Taliban fighters approached to Kabul, president Ghani with its cabinet member fled the country and Taliban entered Kabul, The Taliban claimed that they did not have plan to enter Kabul, because they wanted that the Kabul government officially transfer the power to them, but when Ghani and its administration fled the country, the power vacuum created in order to avoid social disorder and misused of government facilities by people we entered Kabul.

Afghan government led by Ashraf Ghani initially collapse politically the division among the politician and the lack of a comprehensive consensus over the peace talks and most importantly the lack of politician support from the ANDSF caused that Afghan security force lost their faith on government and demoralized, on the other hand Taliban penetrated into army and promised them amnesty and safety if they do not fight and lay down their weapon, which it has worked well on the favor of Taliban, most of the provinces fall to them without any resistance.

The catastrophic collapse of Afghan government repeated the history of Vietnam for U.S. and fall of Kabul in 2001 for Afghans. The U.S. and its NATO

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<sup>492</sup> Hashte Subh, "Released Taliban Prisoners Return to Battlefield; what about the Guarantee?", (last retrived, November 11, 2020), <https://8am.af/eng/released-taliban-prisoners-return-to-battlefield-what-about-the-guarantee/>

allies blamed Afghan government for their failure in achieving peaceful solution, and criticized ANDSF for giving up against Taliban, on the other hand, the Afghan government authorities criticized their western allies for leaving them alone on ground without support. The miscalculation of Biden from the situation on the ground caused him to pay heavy price, regardless the military and intelligence teams warned him about unpleasant consequence of pull out, but still he did not pay attention to what will happen.

During president Biden drawdown remarks at white house, on July 8, 2021, he emphasized on his decision that by the August 31, 2021 the American troops will return home. As he said, “we went 20-years ago Afghanistan to deliver justice to Bind laden and dismissed the al-Qaeda organization we did. We did not go to Afghanistan for nation-building, the future is in Afghans hand, and they most build their future”.<sup>493</sup> When a journalist asked him, “Is a Taliban takeover of Afghanistan now inevitable? He replied; No its not.”<sup>494</sup> Two impressions can be made from his decision; a) he ignored and abandoned the people of Afghanistan and the 20-years hard gained achievement; b) he was misled by making him overconfident on the ability of ANDSF that they will fight against Taliban, at least for three more months if not a year. It was not just a military and intelligence failure for the U.S. but also a moral failure which seriously undermine the U.S. worldwide reliability and credibility, it low down its prestige and trust among its allies. Most importantly the sadden collapse of Kabul to Taliban has created a chaotic and traumatic situation in Kabul, it made hard for U.S. and other allies to evacuate their personal. The disasters after disasters caused humanitarian crisis in Kabul airport.

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<sup>493</sup> The White House, “Remarks by President Biden on the Drawdown of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan”, ( last retrieved July 8, 2021). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/07/08/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-drawdown-of-u-s-forces-in-afghanistan/>

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

#### **10.4. THE EVACUATION OPERATIONS FROM KABUL AIRPORT**

Following the fall of four important big cities; Herat, Kandahar, Helmand, Mazar Sharif to Taliban, they approached to Kabul, after capturing Ghazni province in 150 km of capital Kabul and Logar province in 70 km of capital the Kabul sieged circle was getting tighter. However, initially Taliban has announced that they will not enter Kabul until the Afghan government does not officially transfer power to their leadership. But their fighters entered Kabul on August 15, 2021, without facing any resistance, when President Ashraf Ghani left Afghanistan and other Ghani cabinet members fled the country. The capital gripped by fear, with helicopters were flying over Kabul sky to evacuate personal from diplomatic missions. The sudden collapse of Kabul shocked the world, it made difficult for U.S. and other western mission to properly evacuate their embassy, the smoke was rose from U.S. embassy as the staffs were burning the important documents.

The foreign mission, international organization, and NGO staff were initially transferred to the Hamid Karzai International Airport. The agreement made with Taliban over the chosen HKIA as the safe zone for evacuation. As the part of evacuation operations from Afghanistan Biden administration authorized deployment of 6,000 troops to Kabul aimed to evacuate U.S. civilian personals, Afghan allies and vulnerable Afghans.<sup>495</sup> Followed by U.K. announcement of deploying 600 troops to HKIA to help its nations out of Kabul, respectively Germany, France, Italy, and Belgium, sent their plane to bring out their citizens and Afghan allies from Kabul.

The chaotic situation turned into a humanitarian crisis around Kabul airport, while hundred thousand of desperate Afghans including foreign countries citizen, legal permanent residents and non-resident marched into airport in order to emancipate from the Taliban execution and punishment. The news quickly spread among people that the U.S. and its western allies are evacuating everyone from airports. The situation got out of the control when people tried to cross the security checkpoint and illegally entered to airport. The terrifying footages of crowd keep running behind U.S. military AC-70 plane on runway and some clinging on to a wing of plane to out from Afghanistan recalled the humiliating fall of Saigon in 1975. The

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<sup>495</sup> The White House, “Remarks by President Biden on Afghanistan”, (last retrieved, August 16, 2021). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/08/16/remarks-by-president-biden-on-afghanistan/>

heartbroken sense from Kabul airport in which more than 20 people killed due to firing and pushing, not only grave a setback for credibility of the U.S. but also it was a slur for the International community over their failure of humanitarian assistance.

As the result of the U.S. and other allies' diplomatic efforts, Taliban agreed with securing outside of airport and letting the process of evacuation of all foreign citizens including diplomat, civilian, Afghan allies take place through airport passage. As the airport entry gates were surrounded with crowd of people the U.S. set up a secret gate at the airport and through that gate they were guiding U.S. citizen which was escorted by Taliban. At the height of evacuation crisis, two explosions and gun fire took place at Hamid Karzai airport through crowds waiting for evacuation in which more than 100 people were killed including 13 U.S. troops, the IS-K took the responsibility for attack.<sup>496</sup> The attacks marked the deadliest day for U.S. troops since 2011, the Biden administration widely criticized by Americans for its failure to handle the situation. In retaliation the Pentagon claimed that they killed the mastermind of Kabul airport attack in drone strike in Jalalabad, followed by another drone attacked in Kabul on August 27 as the Washington claimed IS-K fighter were target, but according to reports the target was civilian 10 family members including 6 children age between 2 to 6 years.<sup>497</sup> From August 14 to 31 August 2021, the U.S. claimed that they and their allies jointly evacuated 120,000 U.S. citizens, citizen of their allies and the Afghan allies from Kabul. According to the White House press sources, since August, 14 U.S. military aircraft evacuated more than 79,000 civilians from Kabul.<sup>498</sup> But reports from ground shows that 250 U.S. citizen and thousands of Afghan allies that worked with U.S. government in Afghanistan left behind, the U.S. and its allies had moral responsibility for their evacuation, however the Biden administration reaffirmed its commitment for granting visa to them from second country. As the U.S. and its allies did all the

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<sup>496</sup> Yarsolav Trofimov, Nancy, A. Yousef, SUNE Engel Rasmussen, "Kabul Airport Attack Kills 13 U.S. Service Members, at Least 90 Afghans", The Wall Street Journal, (last retrieved, August 27, 2021). <https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghanistan-kabul-airport-explosion-11629976397>

<sup>497</sup> Ali M Latifi, "Kabul families say children killed in US drone attack", Aljazeera (last retrieved, August 30, 2021), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/30/an-afghan-family-killed-by-a-us-airstrike-in-kabul>

<sup>498</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Secretary Antony J. Blinken's Remarks on Afghanistan", (last retrieved, August 30, 2021). <https://www.state.gov/secretary-of-antony-j-blinken-remarks-on-afghanistan/>

efforts to extend the evacuation mission date beyond the August 31, but Taliban refused and emphasized on complete U.S. and NATO evacuation from Afghanistan.

Finally, The U.S. last aircraft left Kabul at August 31, 2021, at night, with that the U.S. and its ally's longest war in Afghanistan came to an end. America forever war finish, after 20 years, four American presidents over quarter of million lives lost, and the end was punctuated by single image a green night vision shot a Major General Chris Dohanu as the last U.S. soldier left Afghanistan. Not only the U.S. and its NATO ally's military presence came to an end, but also their diplomatic mission ended by locking down their embassy in Afghanistan. the chapter in military history that will be remembered for consecutive failure, broken promises and a tragedy departure, that cost the lives of more than 150 afghan and 13 U.S. troops.

Taliban celebrated their victory after the last U.S. aircraft left Afghanistan, according to the movement's spokesmen Zabihullah Mujahid, "this victory belong to us all, we are free and sovereign nations, it's a historic movement for all of us, America was defeated they could not achieved their goals via military mission".<sup>499</sup> Prior to the U.S. exit the Taliban set the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan as the condition for creating a new government. The movement is facing huge pressure over the establishing inclusive governments in which all Afghan find themselves as well respect the International laws and particularly women rights.

## **10.5. THE WORLD REACTION TO U.S.'S EXIT**

After the Biden administration decided to withdraw all the U.S. troops from Afghanistan by extending the Trump's May 1, 2021 date to September 11, 2021, the conflict escalated in Afghanistan, the dysfunctional Intra-Afghan process turned to a time wasting trend. As the full pull out deadline was approaching the Taliban already dreams their military victory, and the U.S. and allies were predicated the collapse of Afghan government. Regardless the Taliban advancement and intelligence reports over the collapse of Afghan government President Biden repeatedly emphasized on his decision of withdrawal and ending the U.S.' "forever war" at any cost even with turning back to 20-years of blood and treasure cost. The world differently reacted to

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<sup>499</sup> Aljazeera, "Afghanistan is 'a free nation': Taliban celebrates US defeat", ( last retrieved, August 31,2021). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/31/afghanistan-now-a-free-and-sovereign-nation-says-taliban>

what happen on the ground. Biden's approach to the pullout has drew strong rebukes from Republicans and his own Democrats, and Americans at home, as well as international allies, dented his job approval ratings and raised questions on his judgement. It opened the door for his political adversaries to utilize this problem as a political weapon and undercut his credibility.

Former President Trump called Biden's Afghanistan exit greatest embarrassment in the history of Afghanistan.<sup>500</sup> the former VP Mike Pence, asserted, "The Biden administration's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan is a foreign-policy humiliation, it has embarrassed America on the world stages, it caused our allies to doubt our dependability, and emboldened enemies to test our resolve, and worst of all, it has dishonored the memory of those heroic Americans who sacrificed their lives and helped bring terrorist to justice after 9/11".<sup>501</sup> Mike Pompeo the Former U.S. secretary of State criticized Biden by tweeting, "this withdrawal and the nature of this exit is not a victory for America, and it undermined our world leadership credibility. Leaders around world are questioning if America will be a good ally".<sup>502</sup> The bipartisan Congress members also backlashed Biden on handling the withdrawal. They were divided into two group; opponents and defender, Republican criticized Biden Administration's actions, and the Democrats while emphasizing that Biden was carrying out the policy of his predecessor. Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky, called Biden Administration pullout a shameful failure of American leadership". The House minority leader Kevin McCarthy stated, "Biden's Poor Judgment produced the worst possible outcome in Afghanistan in only a matter of weeks, it has done a long-term damage to America's credibility and our capabilities". On the other hand, a Republican Sen. Ben Sasse a member of the Senate selected Committee on Intelligence, called, "History must be clear about this: American troops didn't lose this war; Donald Trumps and Joe Biden deliberately decided to lose". Respectively, the Republican Sen. Mitt Romney tweeted, "he can't understand why withdrawal has been done with such tragic human cost; without an

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<sup>500</sup> Mark Niquette, "Trump Calls Biden's Afghanistan Exit the Greatest Embarrassment", Bloomberg, (last retrieved August 18, 2021). <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-18/trump-calls-biden-s-afghanistan-exit-greatest-embarrassment>

<sup>501</sup> Mike Pence, "Mike Pence: Biden Broke Our Deal With the Taliban", WSJ OPINION, (last retrieved, August 17, 2021), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/mike-pence-biden-broke-our-deal-with-the-taliban-11629238764>

<sup>502</sup> Mike Pompeo, [@mikepompeo]. (2021,09, 01)

effective strategy to defend our partners”. GOP Sen. Josh Hawley blamed the Biden Administration for incompetence and failure of leadership”.<sup>503</sup> Even some of the Congress Senates called on Biden Impeachment. a national opinion poll, conducted on August, 25-26, by Reuters/Ipsos poll, it shows President Biden’s popularity declined after Taliban control of Afghanistan, according to poll, 49% of U.S. adults approved of Biden’s performance while 46% disapproved and rest were not sure.<sup>504</sup>

World leaders spoke out about the Afghanistan tragedy, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson pin blamed Biden for what happened in Afghanistan. According to the U.S. decision triggered unfolding situation on ground. The Canadian Prime Minister, Justine Trudeau, expressed his sadness over the situation on ground.<sup>505</sup> The Russia and China did not miss any opportunity these two rivals authorities constantly criticized U.S. policy in Afghanistan particularly two government state controlled media. In an interview on September 1, 2021 President Vladimir Putin slammed U.S. policy in Afghanistan, he said, “the U.S. 20-years campaign in Afghanistan ended in tragedy and losses”.<sup>506</sup> Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Yi, also blamed U.S. for its hasty withdrawal that caused Taliban takeover and humanitarian crisis in Kabul.<sup>507</sup> The Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman, wang Wenbin, added, “U.S. force and their allies killing civilian over the 20-years must be investigated thoroughly and the killer must be brought to justice”.<sup>508</sup> In a question he was asked about U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan he added, “The U.S.’s 20 years military occupation of Afghanistan show that intervening in other countries and the policy of imposing

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<sup>503</sup> Barbara Sprunt, “There’s A Bipartisan Backlash To How Biden Handled The Withdrawal From Afghanistan”, NPR, ( last retrieved, august 17, 2021).

<https://www.npr.org/2021/08/16/1028081817/congressional-reaction-to-bidens-afghanistan-withdrawal-has-been-scathing>

<sup>504</sup> Chris Kahn, “ 49% of Americans approve of the President” Reuters, ( last retrieved, August 27, 2021). <https://graphics.reuters.com/USA-BIDEN/POLL/nmopagnqapa/>

<sup>505</sup> Michael Lee, “World leaders blame Biden, express disappointment with Afghanistan”, Fox News, ( last retrieved, August 15, 2021). <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/boris-johnson-blames-us-and-biden-for-afghanistan-collapse>

<sup>506</sup> AFP, “ Putin says the U.S. Presence in Afghanistan ended in Tragedies”, The Moscow Times, ( Last retrieved, September 1, 2021). <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/09/01/putin-says-us-presence-in-afghanistan-ended-in-tragedies-a74947>

<sup>507</sup> Associated Press, “ China blames US over Afghanistan, but says will work with it”. ( last retrieved, August 17, 2021). <https://apnews.com/article/china-afghanistan-80b6d1b2d880aac25542b2efa5820be5>

<sup>508</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin’s Regular Press Conference on September 1, 2021” ( last retrieved, September 1, 2021). [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/t1903755.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1903755.shtml)

values and social systems onto other countries will lead to nothing rather than a failure”.<sup>509</sup>

The victims of 20-years futile war who have given big sacrifices also gave the right to themselves that strongly criticized their allies who left them behind in a tragedy. The Afghan people and its authority also harshly condemned the western allies for leaving them behind, particularly those, who helped them in 20-years. However the Afghan people were not in favor of U.S. and NATO long-term presence in Afghanistan, but leaving them in such manner was completely a catastrophic, when the president Ghani asked Biden for the air support in war against Taliban to be extend for six more month to push Taliban to set for talk, Washington turn its back on. Sami Sadat the lieutenant-General of the ANA, who was fought in Helmand province against Taliban, write to New York Times, “The Afghan army lost its moral in war against Taliban because of the growing sense of abandonment by the American partners.”<sup>510</sup>

In spite of wide range of drawn criticism on the address of Biden administration domestically and international the defiant Biden has rejected all the criticism and engaged in blame game pointing Afghans and the Trump administration for what happen to Afghanistan. In a televised address on August 31, 2021, on ending the American longest war in Afghanistan, President Biden defended his decision of complete withdrawal from Afghanistan. In his speech he cop-out of what happened on ground by engaging in blaming game. He defended his withdrawal decision regardless of how catastrophically the end was, and he point out his Predecessor, Donald trump that he inherited unstable situation from him, according to him when he assumed the office Taliban was in very strong position, and had controlled or contesting over the half country, so he decided that will not extend this war to another generation. Biden blamed Afghan politician and ANDSF, according to him the Afghan politician failed to find a solution and end the war, and also slammed the Afghan Security Forces for given up and did not hold on. Biden praised

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<sup>509</sup> Ibid, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/t1903439.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1903439.shtml)

<sup>510</sup> Sami Sadat, “I Commanded Afghan Troops This Year. We Were Betrayed”, New York Times, (Last retrieved 25, 2021). <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/25/opinion/afghanistan-taliban-army.html>

his administration effort on evacuation process in which 120,000 people were evacuated safely from Afghanistan.<sup>511</sup>

Biden reaffirmed his administration support to Afghan people through diplomacy, international influence and humanitarian aids. And will keep commitment to counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan and anywhere it threaten U.S. interests.

## **10.6. AFGHANISTAN UNDER THE TALIBAN'S RULE**

After two decades of military then political and diplomatic struggle the Taliban took control Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, following the fall of the Afghan government. After the complete takeover of Afghanistan, Taliban declared an amnesty for all previous administration's military and civil employees, regardless of their pervious background. In the wake of U.S. and its allies evacuation from Kabul, the Taliban held a news conference in Kabul on August 17, in Kabul, and declared that they will not harm anyone in Afghanistan, including all foreigners, diplomat, International organizations members, foreign mission members, and they also stated that the consultations among the their leadership council on establishing an Islamic and inclusive government is ongoing. Shortly thereafter, the Taliban announced their 33-members Cabinet for their interim government, on September 7, 2021. Regardless expectations and their given promises to establish an inclusive administration in which everyone would see themselves, their interim government's announced cabinet, which was not only inclusive, but also an unprofessional Cabinet in which the membership to group was taken in consideration for nominees. The Taliban caretaker Interim government's Cabinet is including the movement's leader Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada is above all, followed by acting Prime Ministry Mohammad Hasan Akhund known as (Reis-u-l Wazara), and two acting Deputy Prime Ministers each Mullah Abdul Ghani Beradar as I-Vice Deputy PM and Malawi Abdul Salam Hanifi as second Vice Deputy PM, and Sarajuddin Haqqani as Acting Interior Minister, Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid son of Mullah Mohammad Omar as Acting

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<sup>511</sup> The White House, "Remarks by President Biden on the End of the war in Afghanistan", (last retrieved, August 31, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/08/31/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-end-of-the-war-in-afghanistan/>

Defense Minister, and Amir Khan Muttaqi as Acting Foreign Minister, and the rest of Ministry and other independent offices.

The Taliban's newly formed Interim Cabinet has been criticized for its lack of inclusivity on both a domestic and international level. The international community widely criticized Taliban's announced Cabinet for being exclusive and not adhering to the norms of ethnic and gender inclusion. There are no women in Taliban cabinet, and ethnic balance is also not taken into account. Despite the criticism the Taliban's approach to the international community's demand remains unchanged, on the other hand, the precondition of International community including five UN security council permanent members, U.S., China, UK, Russia, France, and European union, regional countries including, countries close to Taliban such Pakistan, Qatar, Iran and some other Gulf states countries, Turk speaking countries led by Turkey for the recognition of Taliban new government is based on three conditions; (1) the establishment of an inclusive government; (2) Respecting women rights and allowing them to work and get education; (3) respecting accepting the International law in regards to human rights.

The Taliban's newly established interim administration is having difficult time due to economic and humanitarian crises, lack of legitimacy abroad, and unprofessional administration. Taliban are struggling with an empty bank and financial crises, the U.S. has frozen Afghanistan's central bank's \$9 billion reserves, and group also lacks access to external aids; all the International organizations suspended their aid prior to Kabul's collapse. The government employee was not paid for three months, the prices of foods, daily consumable goods are very high in country, and the manufacturing sector is paralyzed due to raw material scarcity. Most importantly the Taliban government yet lacks international and regional legitimacy even it is officially recognized by its close allies Pakistan, and Qatar. In recent UN General Assembly 76<sup>th</sup> session which was held on September 20-24 Afghanistan set was empty, nonetheless, the Taliban requested to address world leaders at the UN General Assembly as representatives of Afghanistan, but this did not happen.

The opportunities and challenges on way of Taliban rule in Afghanistan are numerous; based on the current situation, the Taliban's new government faces experiencing these challenges; economic and political crisis, poverty, lack of

government legitimacy regionally, and internationally, humanitarian crisis, brain drain, and security challenges due to IS-Khorasan presence in eastern part to country. These challenges can be transformed into opportunities if the Taliban accept international community preconditions, interact with the world by adopting effective strategic decisions rather than emotional and ideological based approach, and reduce their extremist ideological demands. In result of these opportunities will be created; they will be recognized by International community, which will enable them to overcome their ongoing political instability and matter of legitimacy of their government, many regional and international governments, international organizations are ready to engage with Taliban's new government and provide humanitarian assistant. Developing economic relations with the world will lead to more economic and trade opportunity in Afghanistan. China is eager to engage in economic relations with Taliban and pave the way for regional connectivity, because China's approach toward Afghanistan is based on economic perspective. The expansion of economic connectivity will set ground for other countries such as Russia, central Asian countries and Iran, Turkey, middle eastern countries, European countries to engage in economic competition in region which will be in favor of Afghanistan, when the economic and trade chains are circulated, it will positively contribute to social stability and will prevent flow of migration from Afghanistan.

If the Taliban government insist on its strict and uncompromising approach and do not adhere to the adopted international principles, it will isolated itself internationally, causing political instability and dragging Afghanistan to another war, Taliban government will experience economic crisis, which will cause poverty and hunger that it will intensively impact the social order and uprising in country.

## **10.7. CONCLUSION**

To summarize, since the United States and its allies' military intervention in Afghanistan until complete withdrawal in 2021, the US-led peace efforts in the term of approaches and performance is divided into two phases. The first stage is a general approach toward peacebuilding in post-conflict Afghanistan, which was began with the Bonn Accord 2001, and has resulted in a political settlement and formation of an interim government with participation of all fractions and political parties except

Taliban and Hiz-e-Islami (Islamic party) lead by Gulbiddin Hekmatyar in new established government. Followed by the peacebuilding efforts in the context of liberal state-building initiative mostly focused on institutions rebuilding policy. During this period the U.S. and its allies pursue two policies regarding peace in Afghanistan. From 2001-2009 liberal peacebuilding policy was preferred over the reconciliation with Taliban, the Bush administration's approach toward the Taliban remained coercive and uncompromising, the strategy widely focused on state-building as the pathway to peacebuilding and stability in Afghanistan. In framework of peacebuilding efforts the illegal armed groups including Afghan militia, ex-combatant and Taliban foot soldiers were disarmed. In context of DDR and DIAG programs from 2001 to 2009 almost 115000 illegal armed groups were disbanded. But the lack of a plan for political reconciliation and the reintegration of Taliban high-profile members into government and also the deficiencies in implementation of DRR and DIAG process made this programs ineffective which over the time it has led to the re-emergence of insurgency.

The notion of U.S.'s uncompromising and non-negotiation approach toward the Taliban's changed when the Obama took the office. From 2009-2016 Obama administration's policy for peace and political reconciliation was based on "Fight and Talk" approach. In order to reintegrate the low-level Taliban members and pressure the high-profile to set for negotiation with Afghan government the counterinsurgency strategy went into practice from 2009 to 2011. The COIN strategy had short term success in battlefield, but failed to achieve long term goals. By the end of 2011 the security situation deteriorates, this time the Obama administration had set for direct talks with Taliban leadership circle. The initial talks resulted with inauguration of Taliban's political office in Doha capital of Qatar in 2013 followed by formation of Taliban's political commission as the negotiating teams in direct talks with Washington. The peace process during Obama term has experienced many ups and down and did not result into a political reconciliation in Afghanistan.

With the Donald Trump arrival to White House, a new chapter has opened in peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. To expedite the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, Trump administration took more practical steps toward a hasty peace agreement with Taliban. Two sides started direct peace talks on the July

2018 and ended on February 2020. After the nine rounds of talks finally both sides signed a peace deal known as the “Agreement to bring peace to Afghanistan”. The peace agreement consisted of four main parts and many subsidiary parts; (1) the guarantees and enforcement mechanism that will prevent groups and individuals from using Afghan soil against the security of the United State and its allies. (2) The withdrawal of U.S. and allies troops from Afghanistan, (3) the inception of Intra-Afghan Peace talks, (4) a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire with Afghan government.

The process of putting the agreement’s terms into action began in May 2020, when the trump administration ordered the withdrawal of the U.S. troops from Afghanistan. The withdrawal of all US and NATO forces started on May 1, 2021 and is expected to be completed by September 11, 2021.<sup>512</sup> By the June 13, 2021 there were 2500 U.S. troops and 7300 NATO troops in Afghanistan that draft to zero by end of August 2021. With beginning of the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, it was supposed that the Intra-Afghan Talks would begin on March 10, 2020 but due to disputes over the manner of negotiation as well as the agenda of talks, the Intra-Afghan dialogues have been postponed for the six months. The release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners in Afghan government detention was the part of U.S.-Taliban agreement as well as a precondition of Taliban for beginning of Intra-Afghan dialogue, but the Afghan government denied releasing 5,000 prisoners for no guarantee of rejoining combat frontlines, despite the government’s denial, the process of releasing Taliban prisoners took place in the middle of middle of 2020 and all prisons were released by September 2020. According to Afghan government the released prisoners joined combat frontline and engaged in war against Afghan government.

Overall, the Bush’s administration, coercive approach toward Taliban, Obama Administration late decision over reconciliation with Taliban, as well as Donald Trump hasty decision over the signing the peace deal with Taliban, as well Biden hasty withdrawal decision resulted in failure Intra-Afghan peace talks and political leverage of Taliban.

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<sup>512</sup> NATO, “Resolute Support Mission”, (February 2021).  
[https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/2/pdf/2021-02-RSM-Placemat.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/2/pdf/2021-02-RSM-Placemat.pdf)

## CONCLUSION

This thesis was submitted shortly after the U.S. and NATO troop's complete withdrawal from Afghanistan and the collapse of the Afghan government into the hands of Taliban. The full withdrawal of U.S.' troops have occurred at the time that the U.S. longest war goals have not achieved, and the potential harsh consequences of this move was clearly visible in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule. The U.S. government under the George W. Bush presidency launched a military intervention in Afghanistan to dismantle al-Qaeda and oust the Taliban regime, and prevent this country from returning to being a safe haven for terrorism, as well as to bring democracy, stability and reconstruct Afghanistan and form an efficient government. These policy goals have pursued by Barack Obama's military engagement on the ground and by Donald Trump and Joe Biden's Administration at the negotiating table with the Taliban. The questions arise; are these policy goals achieved? It gives us two answers "yes" and "probably no". From the short term perspective the U.S. and its allies achieved a decisive military victory, al-Qaeda safe haven was demolished in Afghanistan, its leader Osama Bin laden was killed in 2011, the Taliban who were charged with harboring al-Qaeda leader and violation of human rights and enemy of democracy was ousted, the new government based on democratic values was established.

But from long-term perspective, they have not been able to protect the decisive victory and hard winning gains. Amin Saikal cited, "the U.S. war strategists have proved very effective in invading a country, but have got unstuck when it comes to winning the war. When the Biden Administration decided to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, they left behind Afghanistan in hands of the Taliban as it was before 2001. Despite the fact that the U.S. and its allies have predicated three scenarios after their withdrawal in Afghanistan; (a) the collapse of Afghan government, (2) the beginning of civil war (3) the re-emergence of al-Qaeda or IS-KP under the Taliban umbrella.

The three main question and two sub-questions which were set out in the introduction part of this thesis as the follow, (A), why has security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated since 2014? (B) Why has the political instability increased

post-2014 in Afghanistan? (C) Why has the U.S.-Taliban peace deal failed to bring durable peace to Afghanistan? (a) Why has Afghanistan turned into a quagmire to U.S. and NATO? (b) Why did the U.S. and NATO fail to achieve their durable and long-term goals in Afghanistan? In this thesis the answers to the questions are provided in the theoretical framework of “failed state” by taking in consideration the fragile and failed states index as the model and by analyzing the theoretical and empirical collected data. The fragile state indexes data with the combination of literature on Afghanistan have been used in order to provide answer to our questions. Since the nature of this study is explanatory and the data which is collected and analyzed in this paper is based in context of qualitative research method.

In regard to the these questions, I herein draw my conclusion based on three perceptions: the reason behind the insecurity, instability in Afghanistan since 2014 has its roots in internal factors, regional factors, and aspects related to the United States and its allies’ strategies in Afghanistan. The contemporary history of Afghanistan has witnessed many repeated incidents. throughout this time many factors including the nature of multi-ethnic Afghan society, the ideological disputes, the struggle for power, and foreign intervention laid out the seed of regime collapse, political instability and insecurity. The literature on failed states or failing states indicates that the internal factors, including, authority failure, capacity failure, and legitimacy failures, as well as several other sub-category variables, are the primary factors in a state or a nation’s failures or collapse. The literature also focuses on external factors as tools that facilitate state’s failure and its collapse including; external military interventions; regional actors interfering in weak states’ internal affairs; transitional terrorism; crime and drug-trafficking; insurgency with its outside roots, violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity. While evaluating the collected data in failed state theoretical framework the aforementioned characteristic and indicators are plainly visible in the case of Afghanistan. The failure of U.S./NATO in Afghanistan is examined in the context of failed states three very important factors which are domestic factors, regional factors, and the factors related to U.S./ NATO policies and strategies failure.

***The Domestic Factors:*** The consecutive failure of governments and regimes to sustain itself for long term in Afghanistan is one of the serious matters for Afghans, and also for involved countries. Since the Cold War this country has become the battlefield for great powers, regional power and non-state actors, regardless the regional and global factors the domestic factors which have derived from external factors caused fragility, failures and collapse. These factors are not limited to security, political fragmentations, group grievance, state legitimacy, government capacity, external interventions, there are however more other elements, but herein to narrow down the topic the aforementioned indicators will be enough to provide the answer to our search questions.

***Security Apparatus:*** Post-2005 Afghan government has been vulnerable to serious security threats such as the transitional terrorism, insurgency, and crimes. Notably these security threats enhanced since 2014, and have seriously threatened government permanence. The presence of national and international designated terrorist organizations in region such as al-Qaeda, ISIS the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan, Lashkari-el-e Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Tehrek-Taliban Pakistan and many other regional groups have been a major challenges to Afghan government. More than that, the Taliban and Haqqani network military combat against coalition troops and Afghan government during two decades undermined U.S. and NATO presence and Afghan government legitimacy and caused its gradual collapse. The security situation and its assessment are described in details in *Chapter 8* in details.

***Factionalized Elites:*** Afghanistan's ethnic diversity has been considered as a factor in triumphs against foreign occupier, it has been also seen the center of politics and conflict since the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, until now. after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the phenomena of ethnic divisions has expanded across Afghan society, particularly during civil war 1992-94, than during Taliban regime from 1994-2001, and followed by the U.S. and its allies military intervention of Afghanistan. After the collapse of Taliban regime the political settlement in Afghanistan however was schemed as the nations-state, but in practice, it was an ethnic representative government system rather than a meritocracy nation-state government. The ethnicity-based governance has paved the way for the warlords, strongmen, and patronage networks to influence into governmental and political

institutions, over the time, it made impossible to eradicate the ethnic dependency of any political actors. While the participation of political leaders in post-2001 government on the basis of ethnic, clan, tribe quotas system was however the emblems of inclusivity and democracy, but in reality it has jeopardized the legitimacy of government and rule of law due to the prevalence of spoil system, cronyism, and nepotism in government and placing this principle as a culture. When the personal interests of these groups came under the risk, they had played the ethnic card which caused ethnic division, the ethnic tensions have undermined the legitimacy and credibility of central government and caused people's distrust, discouragement and separation from their government. The ethnic tensions have led to political instability and social disorder the both phenomena had a direct impact on security situation in Afghanistan.

The 2014, presidential elections in Afghanistan caused a political crisis and deep ethnic divisions; The Independence Election Commission announced Ashraf Ghani as the winner, but his electoral rival Dr. Abdullah rejected the result and he claimed the result as the fraudulence. Dr. Abdullah's supporter declared the parallel government which later with the mediation of U.S. both sides had agreed with a power-sharing agreement and established a National Unity Government which is explained in *Chapter 9*. Followed by the 2019 presidential election the same scenario has repeated, President Ghani has sought to consolidate his authority, and Abdullah sought to claim a set on the negotiation. Taliban has been taken advantage of such condition and using it as the propaganda for showing the Afghan government as the divided, corrupted and unable to bring the security and stability to Afghans.

***Social Grievance:*** In post-2001 Afghanistan, one of the big challenges was grievance in the society. The unfair distribution of resources among classes, groups and ethnic, as well as discrimination, marginalization, repression of citizen which is explained in *Chapter 6* have raisin ethnic tension and discontent of population from government, it resulted in which public referred to the Taliban. At the first step the inequality was existed in the format of class struggle between elites and lower class regardless of their ethnic, faith and political tendency. The elite classes including political leaders, bureaucrats, and parliament members have had access to all resources on the other hand; the lower class was suffering from economic problems,

lack of access to basic services, corruption and discriminations. In the second step there was a difference between urban and rural areas population in term of their accessibility to resources, the rural areas population in comparison to urban areas were more subjected to unfair distribution of resources. Likewise the trend of class struggle in term of privilege and grievance continued among the ethnic, clan, which given rise to social inequality, conflict and people proximity and support from Taliban.

***Governance Crisis:*** There are three preliminary signs of good governance which increased confidence of people on government and serve as bridge between people governments; the ability of government to provide adequate security, the enforcement and rule of law, providing basic service to people, and give the rights of democracy and freedom. After the collapse Taliban regime in 2001, a brilliant opportunity of forming government with the political, economic and military support of international community particular America was in hand. The new established government was expected that it will be based on meritocracy and will serve in its best for people, but it did not happen the way which was expected. The major challenges and problems which fueled the insecurity, political instability and undermine the government legitimacy in enforcing law and providing security during Karzai administration were corruption, lack of human capital, the abuse of power by the strongmen, injustice, unlawfulness, opium production and narcotic-trade.

Following Ashraf Ghani assumed the office in 2014, the political problem, the deteriorate security situation the corrupted security institutions, the worse economic situation were seriously threatened the survival of NUG. In five years of NUG the withdrawal of foreign troops, the political division, the ethnic tensions, the unemployment due to withdrawal of foreign companies from Afghanistan, the weakness of security institution in providing security caused serious insecurity. In second term of Ashraf Ghani government from 2019 until its collapse in August, 2021 however, some infrastructure development have took place but the government failed to provide and equally distribute the essential services to public including, health, employment, most importantly the government failed in providing security and protect population from Taliban violence's, the government resources was mostly in access of government elites.

**Corruption:** In Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index list of 2014, Afghanistan remained 3th and 4th as the most corrupted country after the North Korea and Somalia. Bribery and corruption has been one of the most critical and uncontrollable issue in Afghanistan during past 20-years. According to Washington post secret documents about Afghanistan war, “From 2010 to 2012, 40 percent of \$106 billion money went into the pockets of insurgent, criminal syndicates or corrupt Afghan officials.”<sup>513</sup> But, President Karzai accused foreigner for being involved in large scale of corruption.

However when President Ashraf Ghani assumed the office in 2014, he has taken more practical step in anti-corruption campaign. In 2020 Afghanistan descended from 3th to ranked 12 corrupted countries in world. An anti-corruption court was formed in NUG, this court involved in many corruption cases of government high authority including Kabul Bank Scandal. But the ugly phenomenon of corruption was still ruling Afghan society. The high volume of corruption in judicial system leads people to refer to Taliban’s courts. In a survey done in 2017 by Asia Foundation regarding corruption in Afghanistan, 83, 7% of respondents believe corruption as major issue.<sup>514</sup> In another survey done by Integrity Watch Afghanistan in 2018 finds that 43 % of Afghan agreed with claim, that “due to corruption in government people in rural area refer to the Taliban courts and 62 % agreed that corruption within the Afghan government paved the way for Taliban’s expansion.”<sup>515</sup>

**Strongmen/Warlordism:** During the post-2001 U.S. counterterrorism campaign, the U.S. used the jihadists and warlords accused of human rights abuses, crime and civil war, in war against al-Qaeda and Taliban and provided them with massive amounts of money and arms, after which in Post-Taliban government which is discussed in *Chapter 6*, they were reintegrated in transitional government in order to find themselves inside a system and it would reduce the risk of their rebellion against the central government. But unlikely, this powerful syndicate has infiltrated

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<sup>513</sup> Craig Whitlock, *The Afghanistan Papers A Secret History of the war: Consumed By Corruption*, Washington Post, (December 9, 2019).

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/afghanistan-war-corruption-government/>

<sup>514</sup> The Asia Foundation, “A Survey of The Afghanistan People Afghanistan in 2017”, ( 2017), Pp. 10, [https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017\\_AfghanSurvey\\_report.pdf](https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017_AfghanSurvey_report.pdf)

<sup>515</sup> Mathias Bak, “ Corruption in Afghanistan and the role of development assistance”, Anti-Corruption Resource Center, ( 2019), <https://www.u4.no/publications/corruption-in-afghanistan-and-the-role-of-development-assistance>

in government and become a state within a state, and huge challenge to central government until yet. In 2010 the US and UK, sponsored and armed a local militia under the name of “Afghan Local Police”, to fight against Taliban. Under the ALP recruitment plan 45,000 personal were recruited and deployed in districts and villages to protect their villages from insurgents, however the ALP operated as the part of Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs but still they have been accused of human rights abuse, misuse of power, narcotic trading and ties with Taliban, torture of civilian. The existence of irresponsible militia in security institutions which most of them were related to the strongmen and warlords, instead of being useful in providing security and protecting civilian from insurgent, contrary, they have involved in insecurity, criminal activities, which led to population support from Taliban in villages in order to be secure.

### **The Regional Aspects of Insecurity in Afghanistan**

In the framework of external interventions indicator of failed states which is describing the infiltration and interference of external actors in other states affairs and its impact on the victim government functioning. In this context in the case of Afghanistan, it has been battleground for many regional and international actors for many years. The history of these rivalries and competition for their interests goes back to 1800s when this region had served as the buffer state between British and Russia. Than during the late cold war era it has become a battlefield between East and West block ideological and geostrategic competition. By the end of Soviet invasion the regional actors including Pakistan, Iran, India, and Gulf States have engaged more actively in Afghanistan each actor competed for their interest. With the U.S.-led coalition’s military intervention of Afghanistan in 2001, the country have not remained safe from interfering, rivalries, and international and regional actor’s competition.

Along with the internal factors the external factors have also played a major role in ongoing war in Afghanistan by invading supporting, financing, the armed groups providing them safe haven and involving in the ethnic religious issues in last few decades. Describing each actor interests will help us to know regional aspects of conflict in Afghanistan

Pakistan government particularly military establishment has been accused of supporting anti-Afghan central government militant groups. The history of Pakistan's support from militant groups against Afghan government is explained in *Chapter 4*. The core interests of Pakistan in Afghanistan which are including, long-term strategy depth policy, economic interests, and military interests as well Pakistan India rivalry in Afghanistan is instability fueling factor in this region.

During 20-years of U.S. war in Afghanistan the Washington has not been able to change Pakistan's behavior. The Bush, Obama, Trump and Joe Biden administrations strategies failed in preventing Pakistan from harboring Taliban. Pakistan played the card of good and bad Taliban. During Obama administration Pakistan launched an operation across the Durand line to hunt the bad Taliban who were opposite the Pakistan government interests, with that Islamabad showed up their commitment in combating terrorism. But behind the scene Pakistan military establishment fully support Taliban.

Pakistan-India factors; Post-Taliban regime collapse Delhi-Kabul relation has strengthened, and India have played a significant role in reconstruction rehabilitation process in Afghanistan by providing around \$ 2 billion in aid.<sup>516</sup> India Political and economic role in Afghanistan have grown dramatically until collapse of Afghan government. Both governments signed multiple mutual relationship agreements including strategic partnership agreement in November 2011. The agreement included Delhi's military cooperation with Afghan government by providing training, light weapons to ANA and supporting Afghan Air force by providing few helicopters.

In the context of South Asia security complex, Afghanistan has been conflict ground of longstanding conflict between India and Pakistan. Both states have been involved in rivalry in Afghanistan for many years. Islamabad-Delhi interests in Afghanistan are essentially based on security objectives and restricting each other influence. Pakistan is trying to restrict India's growing role in Afghan territory by providing support to Taliban. India sees Pakistan influence over the Afghanistan as strategic depth against India. In 2008 and 2009 in two separate attacks on India Embassies in Kabul and Jalalabad which Haqqani network, close to Pakistan ISI took

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<sup>516</sup> Embassy of India in Kabul, "Development cooperation wing", <https://eoi.gov.in/eoisearch/MyPrint.php?0707?000/0001>

the responsibility revealed both countries intelligence activity in Afghan territory. Pakistan is accusing India intelligence agency “Research and Analysis Win” (RAW) anti-Pakistan activities from Afghan territory by providing support for Baluchistan militant groups. After the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan the Islamabad Delhi will continue their rivalry in Afghanistan by supporting different actors in role of proxy.

***Iran-Saudi Arabia Factors:*** the Tehran-Riyadh rivalry in Afghanistan is going back to post-Soviet Invasion. Saudi Arabia has provided support for Sunni mujahidin in war against soviet followed during civil war Saudi-Pakistan backed Peshawar based seven Sunni factions while Iran supported Tehran based eight Shia factions, during Taliban era Saudi and Pakistan had supported the Taliban, on the other hand Iran had backed Northern alliance. Post-2001 both states engaged in Afghanistan under the U.S. presence by increasing their role as an influential actors in ground. From the reconstruction to political settlement and from supporting the religious and ethics groups to insurgences both states have been competing for their interest and influence in Afghanistan. The Iran has close cultural, historical and geographic affinities with Afghanistan, while Saudi has religious, political and economic ties with Kabul. On the same time both states hardly compete to curb each other influence in Afghanistan. Iran support U.S.-led coalition efforts in ousting Taliban regime, hoping that, it will has influence in future government of Afghanistan and also via that, it will reconstruct its breaking relation with U.S. by being as part of solution to the Afghan security problem. But after Bush declared Iran as the “Axis of evil”, the both countries relations bitter, Iran in addition to strengthen its relations with Afghan government it also reproached Taliban. Iran-Taliban ties are explained in *Chapter 4*. After the withdrawal of U.S. from Afghanistan if the Intra-Afghan peace dialogue failed, alongside other actors Iran-Saudi Arabia rivalry will enter to a new phase in Afghanistan by supporting their proxy.

***Russia- U.S. and NATO:*** Despite that Russia was not optimistic about U.S. and NATO presence in its backyard but still support U.S.’s “War on Terror” strategy in Afghanistan. Post-2001 Moscow’s interests and concerns in Afghanistan based on (a) security concern, preventing Islamic fundamentalists mostly central Asian citizen who has been fighting under the al-Qaeda and Taliban flags and ISIL in Afghanistan,

from penetration into Central Asia region, (b) Russia was concerned by U.S. and NATO long-term presence in Afghanistan, but on the same time, Moscow take the U.S. presence in Afghanistan as an opportunity in fighting extremism and terrorism. Moscow also keep contact with Taliban, the relations between Moscow and Taliban get closer after the ISIL emerge in Afghanistan in 2015. Moscow has hosted Taliban's Doha office political commission delegation headed by Abdul Ghani Beradar. Following the U.S. troops withdrawal Russia expressed its concern regarding the ongoing conflict in northern Afghanistan, according to Russian authorities in the Taliban ongoing violence in Northern Province in Afghanistan is threaten central Asia security.

***China Interests in Afghanistan:*** China has supported U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, but Beijing has kept low-profile in U.S.'s 20-years war in Afghanistan. China-Afghanistan has signed multiple diplomatic, economic, to small extend a military agreement. China involvement in Afghanistan since 2001 was more based on economic factors, in order to preserve its investment in Afghanistan and Central Asia particularly the "One Belt and Road" project and also the security concerns including the terrorism, drug trafficking and cross-border crimes on top of Beijing list . After U.S. full pullout from Afghanistan by end of 2021, China involved in diplomatic, humanitarian relations with Taliban government without delay, and immediately resumed its diplomatic mission in Kabul and start lobbying for Taliban government to be recognized by International community and unfrozen the financial aids to Taliban government, on the other hand Taliban also expressed their interests in China rule in development of Afghanistan. additionally, Pakistan is an important factor in China-Taliban relation, China's "Belt and Road project" is an important part of Xing Jinping's foreign policy, and leverage in abroad, its protection and operation is vital for the Xing Jinping's administration, thus the motivation behind the China's efforts for peace and stability in Afghanistan after U.S. withdrawal is the protection and operation of "Silk Road" projects in region, including Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia. In this context, China wants to fill the United States' vacuum in Afghanistan in near future by involving in economic and development and investment in mining sector in Afghanistan.

### **The United States' Related Factors**

This part provides the argument regarding US-related and its ally's related factors that contributed to Afghanistan's insecurity after 2014, as well as the US's failure to maintain its achieved goals and objectives in Afghanistan.

After analyzing the collected data the findings of this study show that among the other elements of increasing insecurity which led to the failure of the United States in Afghan war, is associated with the lack of clear vision and strategy, inefficient coordination among the U.S. interagency as well among the allies: The increasing insurgency factor, contradictory view between the US and the Afghan government on war in Afghanistan, The inability of US policy toward Pakistan to change Pakistan's view of the Taliban, The lake of clear vision for the early reconciliation program and most importantly the peace agreement with Taliban in which it undermine Intra-Afghan talks, and finally the hasty withdrawal decision of Biden administration which triggered Afghan security forces collapse.

The incuriosity of the Bush administration to separate the Taliban from al-Qaeda and prosecuted them in the same court as al-Qaeda and the Bonn political settlement agreement in 2001, which has been identified as the first blunder of international community involvement in Afghanistan was the initial foundation of unstable Afghanistan. During Bonn agreement, as explained in *Chapter 5, and 9* not only were Taliban leaders excluded from Political settlement process but, their requests for amnesty and peaceful life were not considered as important, unlike they were captured and detained. This action caused that Taliban have taken refuge in Pakistan and regroup there and launched counterattack in Afghanistan against coalition troops and Afghan government. Bush Administration's coercive and uncompromising approach toward the Taliban, as described in *Chapter 9* paved the way for insurgency in post-2001 in Afghanistan. The other strategic failure of Bush administration in Afghanistan is being linked to Iraq invasion in 2003; this has led that more attention being paid to Iraq than to Afghanistan. On the other hand between 2004 and 2009 Taliban took this move as an opportunity and relaunched their insurgency in western province.

Following the Obama assuming the office in 2009, the Bush's "war on terror" strategy shifted to "Counterinsurgency" strategy the goal of new strategy was stated

to reduce the capability of insurgency and enhancing the capacity and capability of the ANSDF, facilitate improvements of governance, socio-economic development in order to provide secure environment for sustainable stability.<sup>517</sup> Under the COIN Strategy Obama deployed 30,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan that the total U.S.'s troops including NATO and U.S. other allies' troops reached 150,000. The goal of "Comprehensive Civilian-Military Strategy" was to fight Taliban and protect population. The COIN strategy from the theoretical perspective however was a sufficient version in combating Taliban reducing their influence in Afghanistan. In the consequence of this strategy Taliban positions relatively weaken, but from the long-term goals the following reasons challenged its long-term efficiency and success. (1) The time-based approach, when Obama announced the deployment of additional troops in 2009 simultaneously he declared the return of extra troops home by end of 2011, the decision limited U.S. leverage on negotiation with Taliban and undermined efficiency of COIN strategy. (2) The increasing civilian casualty due to coalition troop's night raid and air strikes increased the violence and undermined the population-centric strategy. (3) The lack of clear mechanism for early negotiation, whereas after the COIN strategy, the Taliban movement was in weak position and was eager engage in dialogue in order to avoid the movement's annihilation. (4) The limited sources for running the COIN strategy

With the end of COIN strategy in 2011, Obama administration focused on transition of security responsibility to ANSDF, and the downsizing of troop, as explained in *Chapter 8*. The inception of transition process was on its way, whereas the Taliban continued their offensive and had control of some districts. On the other hand, the ANSDF were ill-prepared, in the context of tactically, military equipment, professional training, they were not fully ready to assume all security responsibility. Particularly with Obama administration's hasty decision on drawdown of troop from 100,000 to 9800 by 2014, deteriorated the security situation and triggered political instability in 2011-2016. It has provided the opportunity for insurgent to control of more territory. The two factors began to undermine the U.S.' bargaining leverage; The bureaucratic friction in Obama administration on the approach to the war in

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<sup>517</sup> The Press democrat, "Confidential documents show failure of Bush, Obama administrations during Afghanistan war" ( December 9, 2019). <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/confidential-documents-show-failure-of-bush-obama-administrations-during-a/>

reconciliation in Afghanistan, as well as the Taliban's territorial gain which has strengthened their position on negotiation table and they consistently insisted for the total withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan as the pre-condition for further peace talks. By the end of Obama's term the violence increased dramatically the Taliban control 9 districts from 407 districts and influenced 32 districts as well 133 districts contested between Afghan government and Taliban.<sup>518</sup>

***Contradictory Definition of War:*** The false dichotomy regarding war in Afghanistan was one of the contradictory points between Afghan government and United State. The U.S. military diagnosed Afghanistan war as the indigenous insurgency, unlike the Afghan official assessment and realization from ongoing conflict as militant extremism exported from Pakistan. This two different definitions triggered mistrust among them. Former president Karzai in interview with BBC stated that "U.S. defeated in battlefield and the reason of failure is the wrong address, U.S. and allies were searching terrorism extremism in Afghan villages, while the al-Qaeda and Taliban were enjoying safe haven in Pakistan. Karzai was strongly opposed to the Obama administration's approach to the war in southern, he believed that military operation in Afghan villages and detaining innocent civilian would turn people into insurgents. That's what happened; a major part of people turn to insurgency was because the suppression, night raids, illegal detention, torture, killing by coalition troops. Thus, the two distinguished views during Obama administration has reached its peak of dichotomy, even Karzai refused to signed Bilateral Security agreement with Obama Administration.

By Donald Trump arrival to the White House in 2017, the U.S. and NATO mission in Afghanistan was on stage of non-combat mission "Resolute Support Mission" that included training, advice, equipping of ANDSF. There were 5,500 U.S. troops still in Afghanistan. After the long interagency debates Donald Trump announced his strategy for Afghanistan as described in *Chapter 10*. The new strategy was condition-based approach unlike Trump's early anti-U.S. military engagement in Afghanistan he postponed the withdrawal of remaining troops and also authorized the deployment of 40,000 more troops in Afghanistan. In the context of "condition-based" strategy three approaches has the trump administration pursued in

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<sup>518</sup> SIGAR, "Quarterly Report to the United States Congress", ( January 30, 2017), Pp. 90, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2017-01-30qr.pdf>

Afghanistan; (1) continued supporting Afghan government politically and ANDSF in war against Taliban; (2) accelerated the political solution by appointing Zalmay Khalilzad as the special representative of United States for Afghanistan to resume the peace talk with Taliban; (3) Within the framework of regional solution Trumps adopted a coercive policy toward Pakistan and criticized Islamabad for playing double game and also blocked \$300 million military aid to Pakistan, but it aid was freed after Pakistan released Mullah Beradar the Deputy leader of Taliban to facilitate peace talks between U.S.-Taliban.

The U.S.-Taliban direct peace negotiation started in July, 2018 in Qatar and after 11 rounds of peace talk both sides signed a peace agreement on February, 2020. The complete withdrawal of U.S. and allies troops by May 2021 from Afghanistan, the Taliban commitment that they will not allowed al-Qaeda and other terrorist organization to use Afghanistan soil against U.S. and its allies, the a comprehensive ceasefire as well the inception Intra-Afghan dialogue were the main points of agreement. Under the agreement the 8,500 U.S. and NATO troops would completely withdraw until May 2021. The Taliban entered into a negotiation with Afghan government in March 2020 followed by a seven-day reduction in violence week whereas both side avoided attacks on each other. But with the end of violence reduction week the Taliban resumed its offensive and the violence continued across country. From 1 January to 31 December 2020, almost 3035 civilians were killed and 5785 were injured, according to the UNAMA's annual reports.<sup>519</sup>

The U.S. hasty decision for the withdrawal of the troops from Afghanistan undermined the Intra-Afghan peace talks; it did not ground a pathway for a peaceful political settlement. The Taliban violated the agreement and launched the massive offensive against Afghan government forces. The Afghan officials are blaming U.S. for marginalizing the Afghan government from peace talks by involving in direct talks with Taliban and also accusing the Taliban for bad faith and no intention for solution through dialogues.

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<sup>519</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, “ Afghanistan protection of Civilians in armed conflict Annual report 2020”, ( February, 2021), Pp. 11  
[https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan\\_protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_report\\_2020\\_revs\\_3.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_protection_of_civilians_report_2020_revs_3.pdf)

In Biden new strategy for Afghanistan he decided to withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan and end America military presence in Afghanistan. He reaffirmed his administration commitment for diplomatic and humanitarian and financial engagement by supporting Afghan government as well the providing assistance to ANDSF after the withdrawal.

The drawdown of troops took place while the security situation has extremely worsened, since January 2021 until July 5, 2021 Taliban seized 150 districts across Afghanistan, which they claimed % 70 of territory gain and they encircled several provincial capitals, the ANDSF lost its moral on ground due to lack of leadership, logistics support and air support and Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar Sharif four big cities were under the Taliban siege all the supply routes were under the control of Taliban. Regardless possible collapse repeated warning Biden's decision did not change. It was supposed the U.S. will leave some troops in Afghanistan to protect diplomatic mission and Kabul's International Airport. But after the Taliban massive territorial gains which started in June and by August 15, 2021 whole Afghanistan fall to them led that U.S. and NATO end up their military and diplomatic mission in Afghanistan prior to withdrawal date. At very last movement as the Taliban was already in Presidential palace, Biden's Administration has attempted to keep some troops in Kabul Airport for evacuation process, Taliban insisted for complete withdrawal according to Taliban's spokesman, "Any troops remain in Afghanistan after the deadline will be invaders to us".<sup>520</sup> By end of August, 2021 all foreign troops left Afghanistan and with that Afghanistan entirely came under Taliban rule.

To summarize, in the context of failed state theoretical framework three interdependent factors and several sub-category indicators which are described provide the answer to our thesis questions. Therefore after the analyzing the collected data our finding is based on:

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<sup>520</sup> BBC, "Afghanistan: All foreign troops must leave by deadline- Taliban", ( July 5, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-57714808>

### **Key findings:**

1. The internal factors such as corruption, governance crisis, ethnicization of politics rather than promoting meritocracy system, infiltration of corrupted strongmen/warlords in government, unemployment, weak security institutions, and increasing violence due to conflict are the domestic aspect of insecurity in Afghanistan.
2. The regional and international actor's competition for their interests in Afghanistan has prolonged the conflict and led to further insecurity and instability and eventually the collapse of Afghan government.
3. The U.S. related factors as case of its failure in Afghanistan are including;
  - a. No clear vision and estimated strategy for Afghan war.
  - b. The lack of durability and stability of strategies, the constant changes in applied strategies have caused that it lost its efficiency on the ground.
  - c. The friction among the decision-makers and policy-maker at the bureaucratic level in the U.S. government as well the poor coordination among the allies on reinforcement adopted strategies.
  - d. The lack of early tendency for reconciliation, while the Taliban were in weak position and U.S. leverage were strong, the U.S. ignored the talks with the Taliban.
  - e. The transition of security responsibility to ANDSF and an irresponsible drawdown in 2014 weakens U.S. leverage on peace talks.
  - f. The failure of the U.S. to prevent Pakistan from supporting Taliban providing them safe haven.
  - g. The contradictory definitions of the U.S. and Afghan government from the ongoing war. As the U.S. diagnosed the ongoing war as the internal war of Afghans, unlikely the Afghan authorities diagnosed the conflict as the extremism exported from Pakistan.

### **The Future Sceneries**

The Taliban's new interim administration head by Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund is confronted with three primary problems; (1) the internal divisions over the formation of inclusive government; (2) a lack of legitimacy of government, since the interim administration's formation no nations have recognized Taliban government due to its lack of inclusivity and exclusion of women from new administration; (3) Taliban is struggling with economic crisis due to no money in National Bank reserves, Afghan government \$9 billion reserve is frozen by U.S. and other international financial organization cut of its assistant to Afghanistan since Taliban complete takeover. The United Nations and other observer organizations are warning about catastrophic humanitarian crisis due to lack of food, medicine, and unemployment. If the Taliban government does not recognized by International community, the humanitarian crisis, social instability, refugee flee, civil war, transitional terrorism, narcotic-trafficking are most possible to take place.

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## APPENDICES

### Annex 1: The Goals of Descriptive, Exploratory, Explanatory Research

Descriptive Research	Exploratory Research	Explanatory Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lay out an exact account of group, subject.</li> <li>• Express a trend, mechanism, or relationship.</li> <li>• Give a verbal or numerical illustration (e.g., percentage)</li> <li>• Find information to stimulate new explanations.</li> <li>• Give primary background information or context.</li> <li>• Create a set of categories or classify types.</li> <li>• Clarify a string, set of stages or steps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become familiar with the basic facts, people, and concerns involved.</li> <li>• Form a solid mental picture of what is occurring.</li> <li>• Comes up with a lot of concept and develop tentative theories and assumptions.</li> <li>• Evaluate whether more research is feasible.</li> <li>• Formulate questions and refines issues for more systematic inquiry.</li> <li>• Create techniques and a research plan for the future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the accuracy of a principle or theory.</li> <li>• Find out which competing explanation is better.</li> <li>• Advance knowledge about an underlying process.</li> <li>• Link different issues or topics under a common general statement.</li> <li>• Build an elaborate a theory so it becomes more complete.</li> <li>• Extend a theory or principle into new areas or issues.</li> <li>• Provide evidence to support or refute an explanation or prediction.</li> </ul>

**Annex 2: Key Characteristics of Descriptive, Exploratory, Explanatory Research**

Research process template	Exploratory Questions	Descriptive Questions	Explanatory Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nature of Research Questions.</li> </ul>	General and provisional, (what,where,when, how)	Fairly specific and largely definitive Focus on ( who, how) questions	Highly specific and definitive usually a hypothesis, focus on “why” questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research Design</li> </ul>	Flexibly overlapping and emergent.	Structured sequential and largely predetermined	Highly structured sequentially and predetermined
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data Collection</li> </ul>	Usually qualitative	Usually quantitative but may include qualitative	Usually Qualitative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research theory</li> </ul>	Seek to build theory	Seek to develop or elaborate theory	Seek to test develop theory

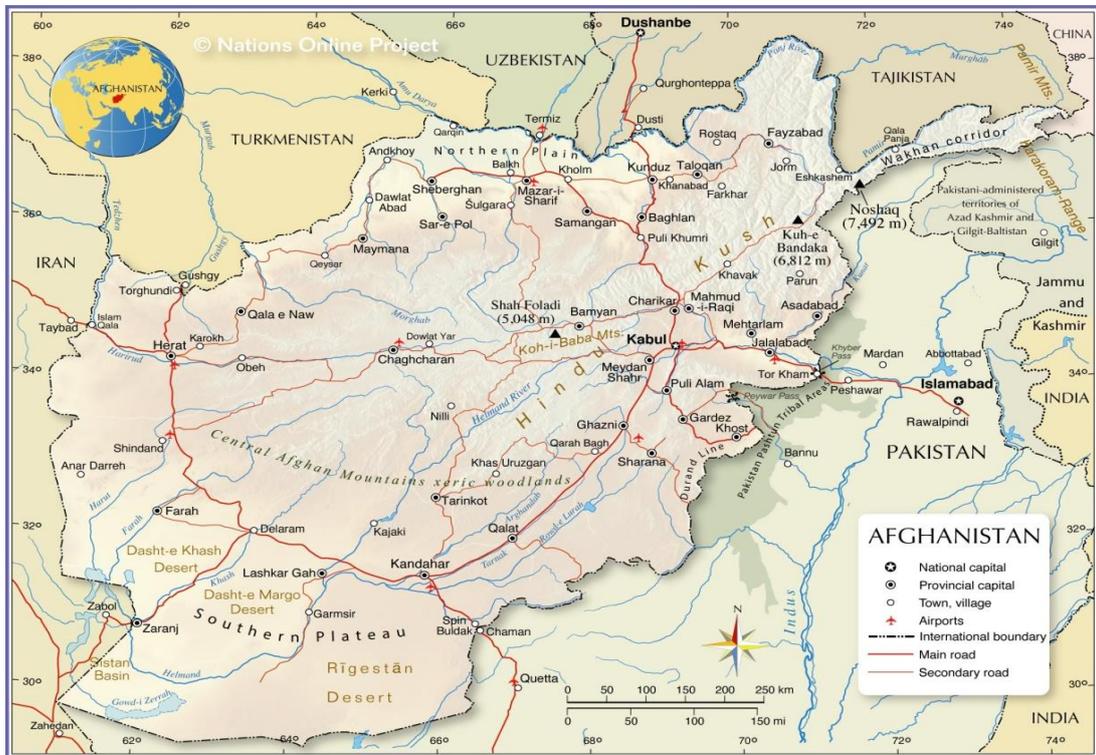
### Annex 3: Index of Fragile State in 2021

Country	Rank	Total Score	Cohesion Indicators			Economic Indicators			Political Indicators			Social Indicators		
			A-1	A-2	A-3	B-1	B-2	B-3	C-1	C-2	C-3	-D1	D-2	D-3
Yemen	1	111.7	9.4	10	9.4	9.8	7.7	6.7	9.9	9.8	9.7	9.8	9.8	9.7
Somalia	2	110.9	9.3	10	8.3	9.2	9.5	8.8	9.2	9.8	8.7	10	9.2	8.9
Syria	3	110	9.6	9.9	9.7	9.6	7.1	8.2	10	9.6	9.7	7.6	9.7	10
S. Sudan	4	109.4	9.7	9.2	8.8	9.2	8.9	6.7	9.5	10	8.7	9.5	9.9	9.3
Congo D. R.	5	108.4	8.6	9.5	9.4	8.5	8.5	6.8	9.2	9.8	9.2	9.8	10	9.1
C. Africa	6	107	8	9.7	8.1	8.5	9.6	6.6	9	10	9.3	8.9	9.7	9.6
Chad	7	107	8.9	9.5	8	8.6	8.7	7.9	9.4	9.8	8.2	9.6	9.3	7.9
Sudan	8	105.2	8.1	9.1	9.5	9.1	8.3	7.7	8.8	8.8	8.6	9.1	9.4	8.7
Afghanistan	9	102.1	10	8.6	7.2	9.2	8.1	7	8.7	9.8	7.4	9	8.8	8.3
Zimbabwe	10	99.1	8.6	10	6.1	9.4	7.7	7.1	8.8	9	8	9.3	8.2	6.9

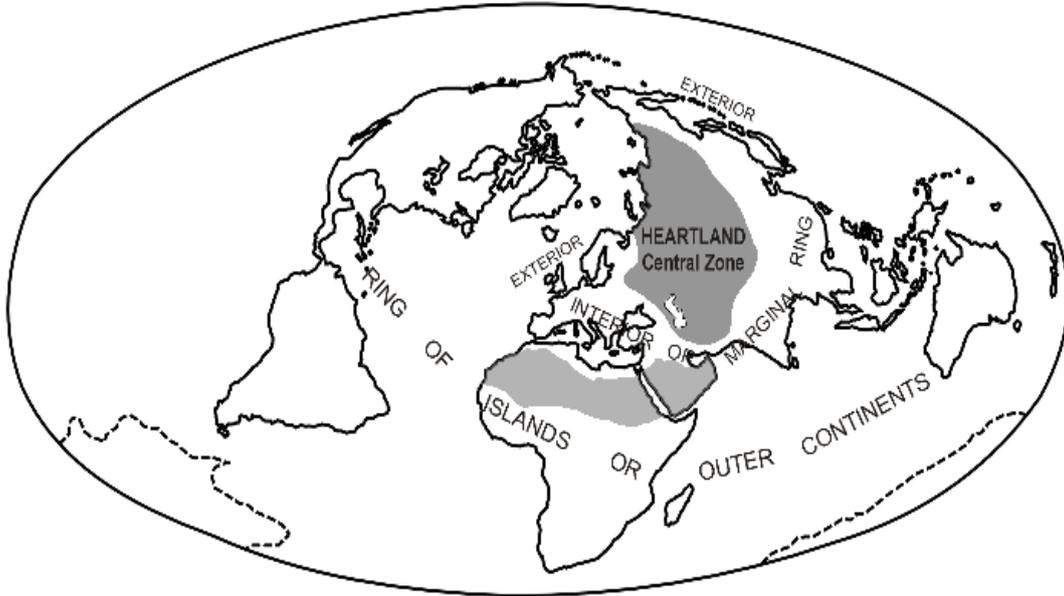
**Annex 4: Afghanistan State Fragility Index in 2010-2021**

Year	Rank	Total Score	Cohesion Indicators			Economic Indicators			Political Indicators			Social Indicators		
			A-1	A-2	A-3	B-1	B-2	B-3	C-1	C-2	C-3	-D1	D-2	D-3
2010	6	109.3	9.7	9.4	9.7	8.3	8.2	7.2	10	8.9	9.2	9.5	9.2	10
2011	7	107.5	9.8	9.4	9.3	8	8.4	7.2	9.7	8.5	8.8	9.1	9.3	10
2012	6	106.	9.7	9.4	9.4	7.7	8.1	7.4	9.5	8.5	8.5	8.9	9	10
2013	7	106.7	9.9	9.4	9.2	8.2	7.8	7.2	9.4	8.8	8.4	9.3	9.	10
2014	6	106.5	10	9.4	8.7	8.3	7.5	7.8	9.5	9	8.3	8.8	9.3	9.9
2015	8	107.9	10	9.3	8.9	8.6	7.2	8.1	9.7	9.3	8.6	9.3	9.1	9.8
2016	9	107.9	10	8.6	8.6	8.5	7.5	8.4	9.1	9.6	8.7	9.5	9.5	9.9
2017	9	107.3	10	8.6	8.4	8.3	7.5	8.2	9.1	9.9	8.5	9.3	9.8	9.7
2018	9	106.6	10	8.6	8.1	8.3	7.8	8.1	9.1	10	8.2	9.2	9.9	9.4
2019	9	105	10	8.6	7.8	8.6	7.5	7.8	9	9.8	7.9	9.3	9.6	9.1
2020	9	102.9	9.9	8.9	7.5	8.3	7.7	7.5	9	9.5	7.6	9	9.3	8.6
2021	9	102.1	10	8.6	7.2	9.2	8.1	70	8.7	9.8	7.4	9	8.8	8.3

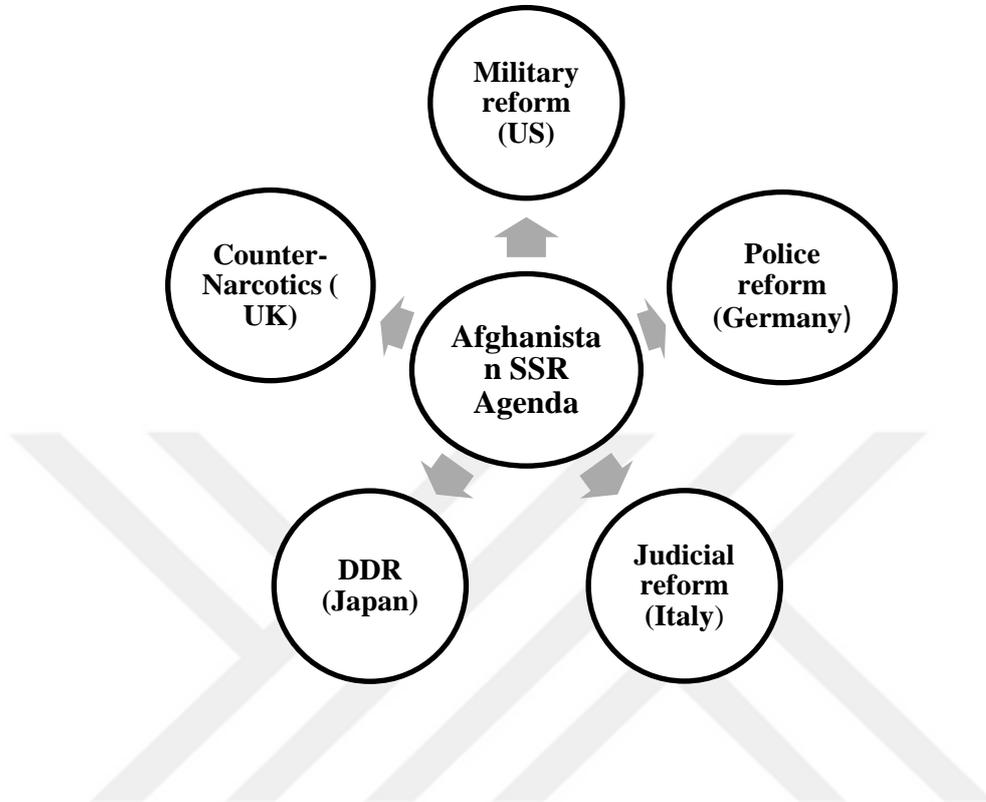
## Annex 5: Afghanistan Geographical Map



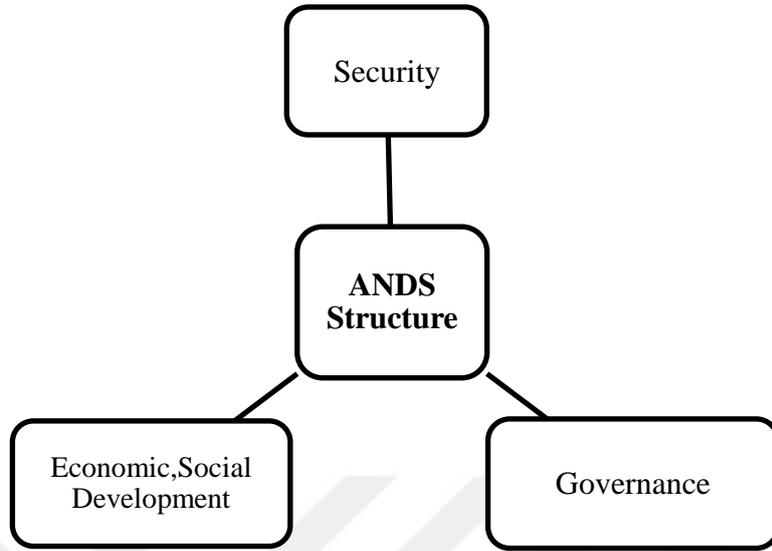
**Annex 6: Afghanistan Position on Heartland-Rimland Border**



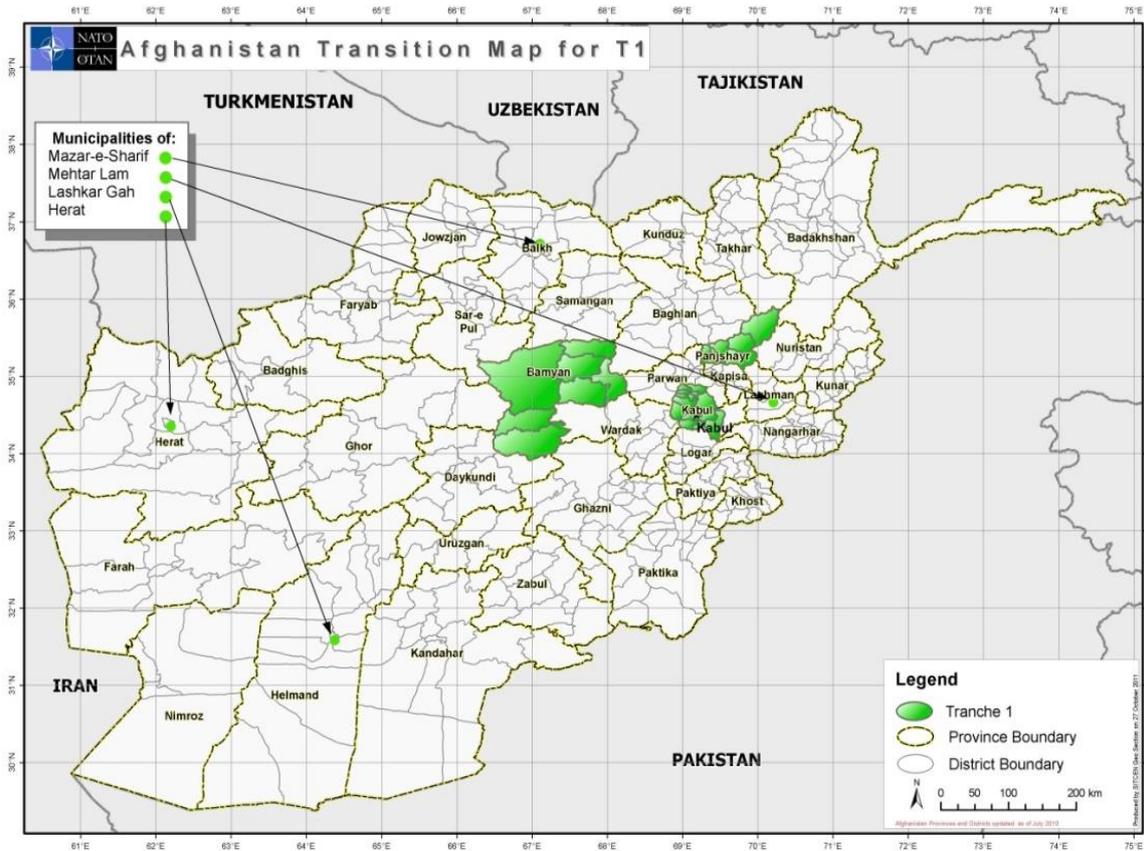
**Annex 7: Afghanistan Security Sector Reform**



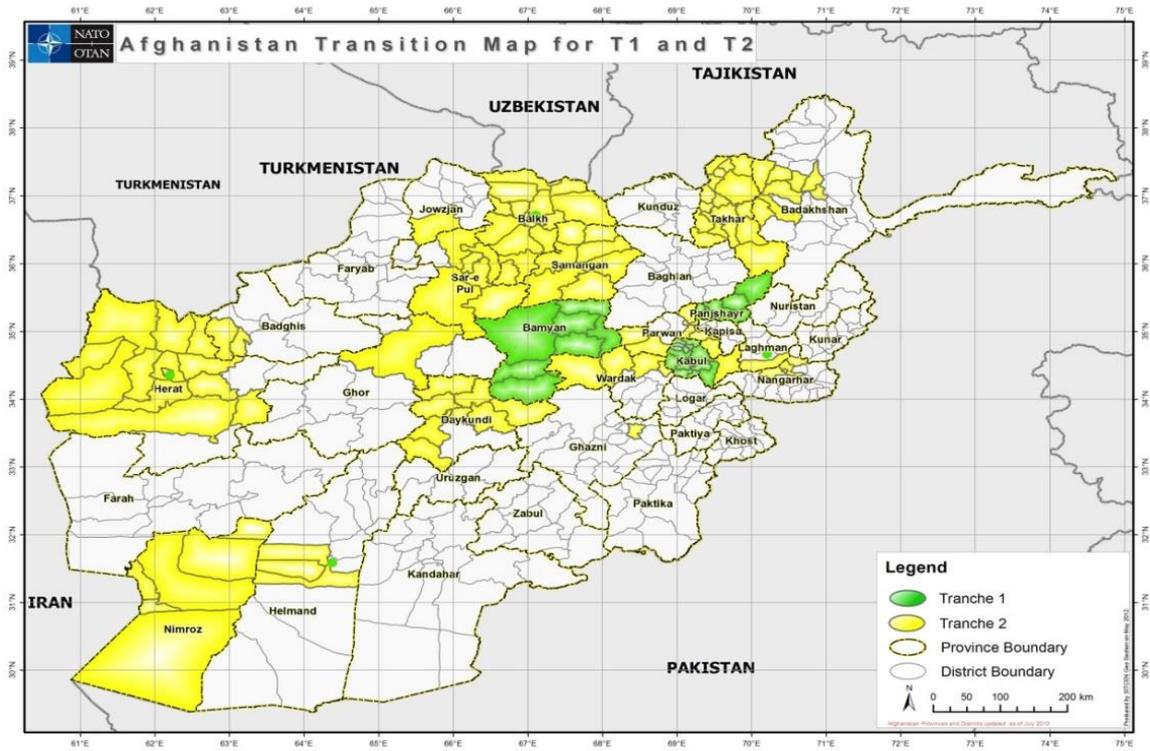
**Annex 8: Afghanistan Government Strategy Structure**



## Annex 9: Transition Process First Phase

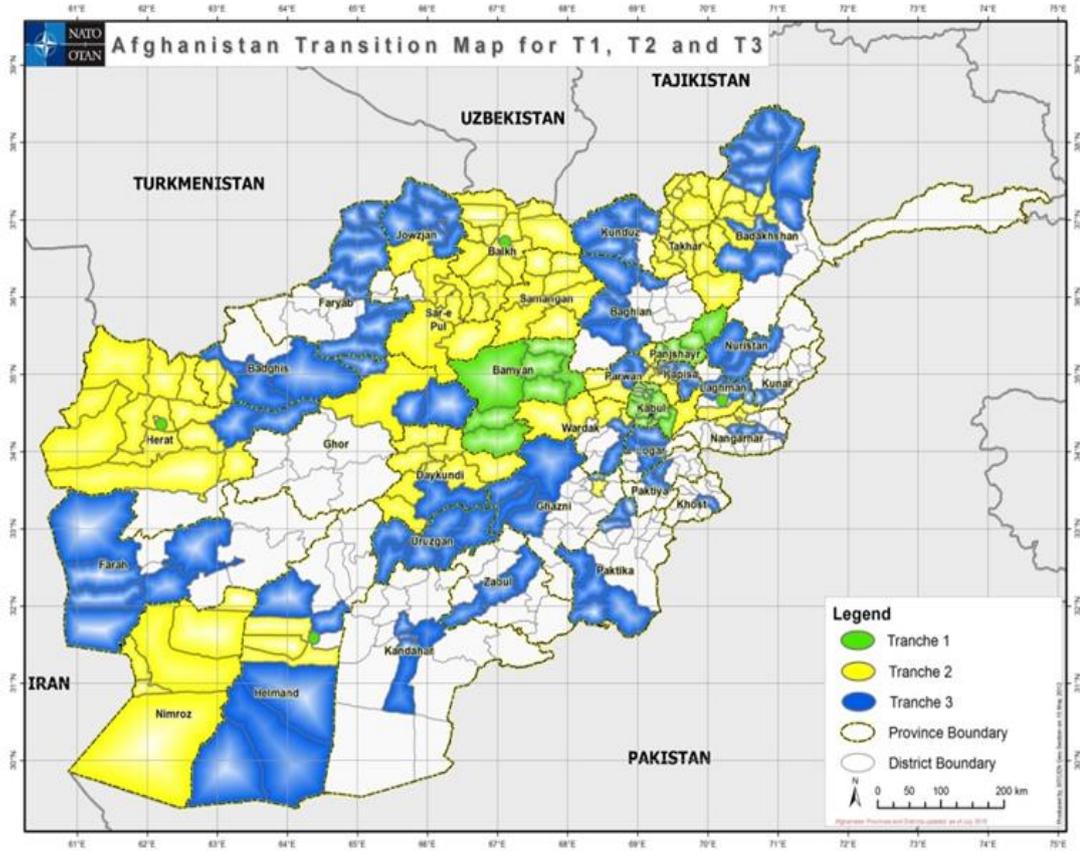


## Annex 10: Transition Process Second Phase

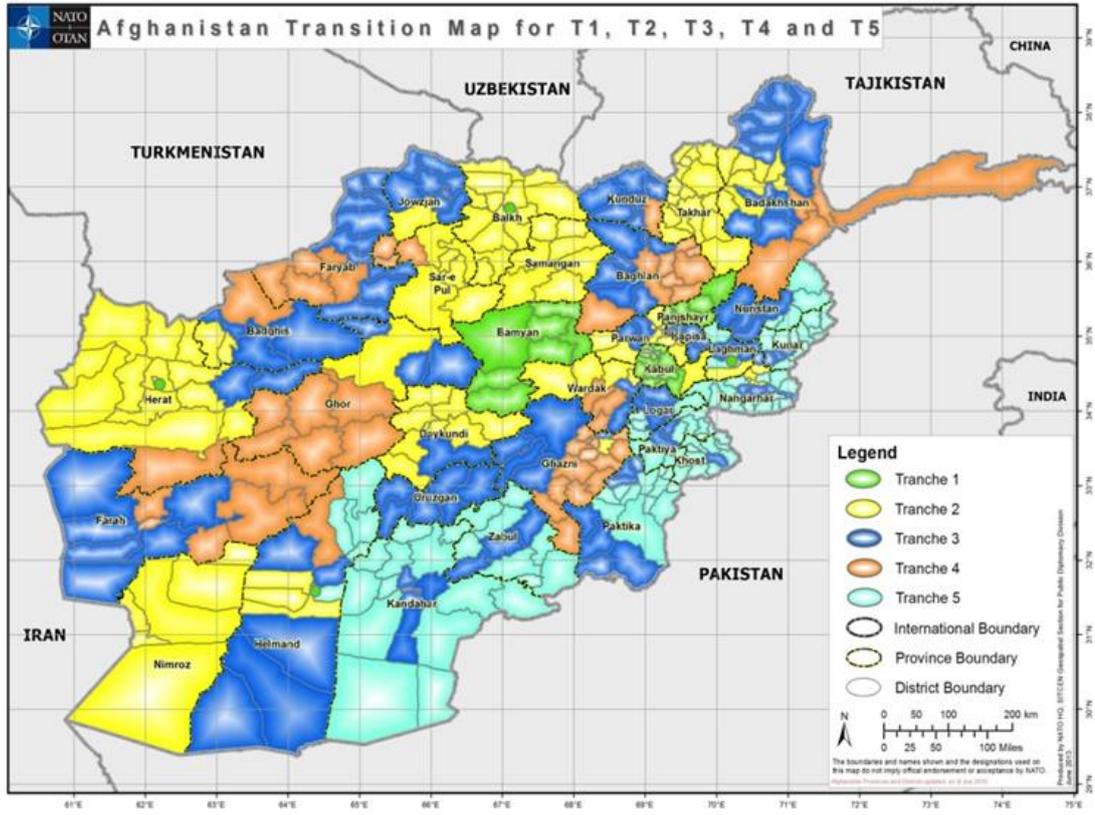




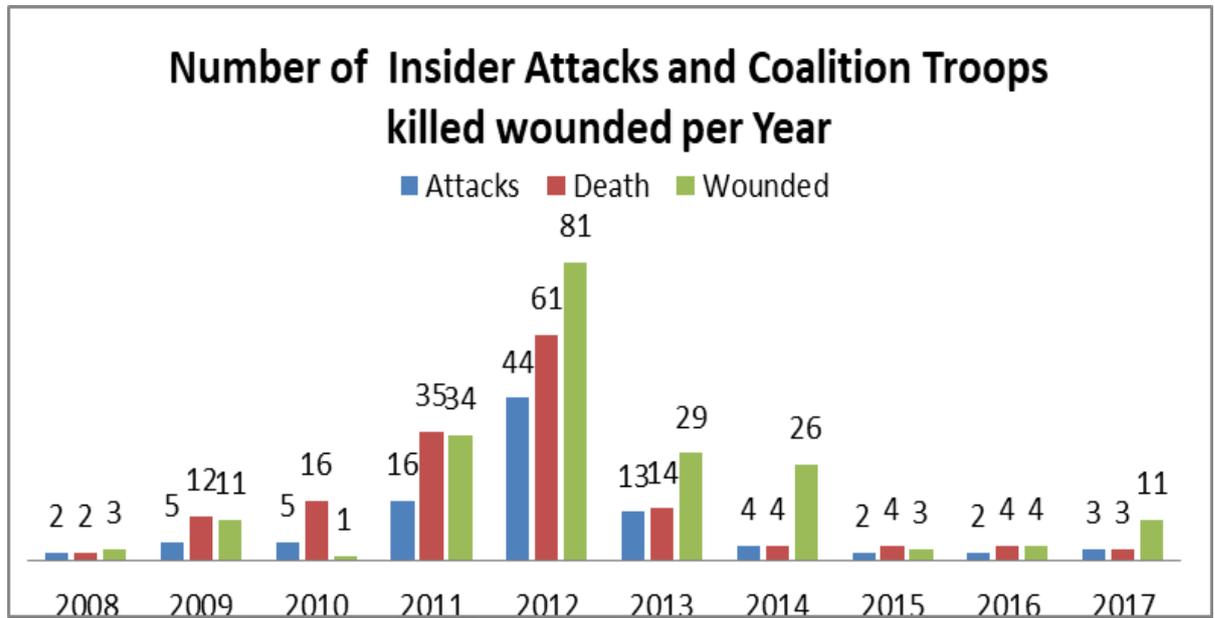
## Annex 12: Transition Process Fourth Phase



### Annex 13: Transition Process Fifth Phase



**Annex 14:** Blue on Green Attacks Graph



**Annex 15: Security Incidents Compare Graph of (2012-2013)**

