



ANKARA YILDIRIM BEYAZIT UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN
AFGHANISTAN (2001-2021)**

MASTER'S THESIS

Saadudin KARIMI

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ANKARA, 2022

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Supervisor

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ANKARA, 2022

APPROVAL PAGE

The thesis entitled “The Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Process in Afghanistan (2001-2021)” prepared by Saadudin KARIMI has been accepted by jury members in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Political Science and Public Administration at Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University by unanimous vote.

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Director of Institute of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Yaşar YİĞİT

PLAGIARISM PAGE

I hereby declare that all information in this thesis has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work; otherwise, I accept all legal responsibility. 20/09/2022.

Saadudin KARIMI



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ABSTRACT

Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan (2001-2021)

The Long decades of war in Afghanistan destroyed most of the infrastructures in the country. It became more fragile and depended on foreign aid. The history of insurgency and the use of violence for holding power in Afghanistan goes back to decades. Due to its strategic location and diverse demographics, Afghanistan has been the center of conflict and competition between the world's great powers, regional players, and neighboring countries.

The study overviewed the roots of conflicts, the rise of insurgency, domestic causes of instability, and religious extremism in Afghanistan, as well as evaluated external influence over the country both from the east and west and regional powers. The research also discussed steps and initiatives authorities took to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. These initiatives included the Bonn Agreement, which was the basis of the Afghanistan Interim Government, the establishment of the High Peace Council, and The High Council for National Reconciliation. The research concentrated on the previous two decades (2001-2021). This study faced some limitations, including the unavailability of sources on the issue of peacebuilding and conflict resolution and a lack of publications from domestic resources. To achieve the objectives of this study by using secondary data, a descriptive and qualitative method is used to conduct this research. According to the findings of this study, the peacebuilding process and conflict resolution in Afghanistan had resulted negatively. Foreign-oriented initiatives, the intervention of neighboring countries, and domestic socio-economic obstacles were regarded as the main elements of the failure of the peacebuilding process in Afghanistan.

Key Words: Afghanistan, Conflict resolution, Peace, Peacebuilding, War.

ÖZET

Afganistan'da Barış İnşası ve Çatışma Çözümü (2001-2021)

Afganistan'da uzun yıllar süren savaş, ülkedeki altyapıların çoğunu yok etmiştir. Bu nedenle, ülke kırılgan bir yapıya bürünmüştür ve dış yardımlara bağımlı hale gelmiştir. Afganistan'da gücü ve iktidarı elinde tutmak için şiddet kullanımının tarihi onlarca yıl öncesine dayanmaktadır. Stratejik konumu ve çeşitli demografik yapısı nedeniyle Afganistan, dünyanın büyük güçleri, bölgesel oyuncular ve komşu ülkeler arasındaki çatışma ve rekabetin merkezi olmuştur.

Bu çalışmada, Afganistan'daki çatışmaların köklerini, güvensizliğin yükselişini, istikrarsızlığın iç nedenlerini ve dini aşırılıkçılığı gözden geçirerek, ayrıca ülke üzerindeki hem doğudan hem de batıdan ve bölgesel güçlerden gelen dış etkileri değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmada yetkililerin Afganistan'a barış ve istikrar getirmek için attığı adımlar ve girişimler de ele alınmıştır. Bu girişimler arasında Afganistan Geçici Hükümeti'nin temelini oluşturan Bonn Anlaşması, Yüksek Barış Konseyi'nin kurulması ve Ulusal Uzlaşma Yüksek Konseyi yer almaktadır. Araştırma, önceki yirmi yıla (2001-2021) odaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, barış inşası ve çatışma çözümü konularında kaynakların bulunmaması ve yerel kaynaklarda yayın olmaması gibi bazı sınırlamalarla karşı karşıya kalmaktadır. İkincil veriler kullanılarak bu araştırmanın amaçlarına ulaşmak için, betimsel ve nitel bir yöntem kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın bulgularına göre Afganistan'daki barış inşa süreci ve çatışma çözümü olumsuz sonuçlanmıştır. Afganistan'da barış inşası sürecinin başarısız olmasının ana unsurları olarak dış kaynaklı girişimler, komşu ülkelerin müdahalesi ve iç sosyo-ekonomik engeller görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afganistan, Barış, Barışın İnşası, Çatışma, Savaş.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACAA	: Afghanistan Civil Aviation Authority
ACCI	: Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries
AIHRC	: Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
AISS	: Afghanistan Institute of Strategic Studies
ANA	: Afghanistan National Army
ANSF	: Afghanistan's National Security Forces
CIA	: The Central Intelligence Agency
HCNR	: High Council for National Reconciliation
HIG	: Hizb-e Islami Gulbuddin Hikmatyar
HPC	: High Peace Council
ISI	: Inter-Services Intelligence
NDS	: National Directorate of Security
NSF	: National Security Forces
UNSC	: United Nations Security Council
USA	: United States of America
USSR	: Union of Socialist Soviet Republics

1. INTRODUCTION

The long-term ongoing war in Afghanistan destroyed most of the infrastructures in the country, it became more fragile, and depended on foreign aid. The history of insurgency and the use of violence for holding power in Afghanistan goes back to decades. Due to its strategic location and diverse demographics, Afghanistan has been the center of conflict and competition between the world's great powers, regional players, and its neighboring countries. Historically, Afghanistan has been regarded as a land of the bridge that connects Southeast Asia to the Central Asian counties (Hyman, 1997). In other words, it has been called the heart of Asia or the door of India (sub-continent) and the hub of different civilizations. Because of its geo-strategic importance, in its contemporary history Afghanistan has been the center of various internal and external conflicts and encounters among various interest groups (Shah, 2012). Until 1973, Afghanistan was ruled by monarch rulers. However, in 1973, the last monarch of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah, was overthrown by Mohammad Daud Khan, the king's cousin and the former prime minister, in a bloodless coup. He ended the monarchy rule and established a republic system in the country. It was when Afghanistan fell into the politics of the Cold War and became a conflict zone for the rivalry of the great powers of East and West (Wafayezada, 2017).

After the political unrest of the 1970s in Afghanistan, which resulted from the Soviet Union-backed regimes' rivalries in the country for holding power, the Soviet forces eventually launched their attack in Afghanistan in December 1979 (Brown, 2013). The main objectives of the invasion of Afghanistan were the pretext of maintaining the Soviet-Afghan Friendship Treaty. According to the terms of this accord, the two nations agreed to give each other economic and military support when the pact was signed in 1978. Afghanistan's border with Russia has traditionally been seen as crucial to the country's security and a route to Asia. With centuries-old interests, Russia had long strived to forge solid connections in Afghanistan (McCann, 2021).

Mohammed Ehsan Zia in his article, *An Analysis of Peacebuilding Approaches in Afghanistan* affairs, asserted that the leading cause of long years of conflicts in Afghanistan was the Soviet Union's occupation (Zia, 2000). The occupation of Afghanistan brought civil war between political factions that fought against the Soviet Union troops. The United States of America and Afghanistan's neighboring countries

(Pakistan, Iran,) as well as Islamic countries, especially Arab countries, provided intelligence, financial, and military support for Mujahideen and resistance forces against the Soviet Union (Tariq, 2011). After the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan, a power vacuum emerged, and it caused the civil war. After the civil war, Taliban forces, with the support of Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), took control of Afghanistan. Although most of Afghanistan's territory was controlled by the Taliban, the resistance continued against them under the command of the charismatic leader Commander Ahmad Shah Masoud in the northern part of Afghanistan. After the 9/11 events in 2001, the United States of America, with the support of its allies, launched an attack known as the war on terror in Afghanistan (Liakhovsky, 2000).

With the USA's intervention in Afghanistan, the Taliban regime was toppled, and the Bonn Conference was held. Participants of the Bonn conference formed a new political system and administrative structure for Afghanistan. Even though the Bonn Agreement was not a comprehensive peace agreement and lacked crucial provisions, most people in Afghanistan believed that Bonn Conference offered the best chance for establishing peace, security, and protection of human rights in Afghanistan. However, peacebuilding attempts failed to consolidate peace in the country, pessimism grew continuously, and Afghanistan's state was unable to provide essential protection to its people. Taliban's insurgency activities and operations were increased gradually. They were not accepted their defeat as a result their operations increased in the remote parts of Afghanistan. Critics of the Bonn Agreement claimed that exclusion of Taliban from Bonn Conference was the main cause of growing conflict, however, Lakhdar Brahimi who were appointed as United Nation's (UN) Special Representative for Afghanistan, argued that the Taliban were simply unable to attend Bonn Conference. Due to their collaboration with Al-Qaeda and their obstinate support of terrorists, which prevented them from taking part in the peace negotiations (Brahimi, 2003). On the one hand, the "War on Terror" launched by the USA and its allies destroyed the Taliban's regime development. On the other hand, it strengthened the sense of insurgency and uprising among the locals, especially in the southern parts of Afghanistan (Lewa & Akundzadah).

Consequently, the peacebuilding process in Afghanistan has not been successful, as the hypothesis of this research will indicate and assess it in the upcoming chapters.

1.1. Statement of Purpose

Recent efforts to foster peacebuilding in Afghanistan have failed. This is owing to the Taliban's resurgence and the fact that conflict parties did not intend to improve relations and hold talks among themselves as well as between families, communities, and tribes which are regarded as the fundamental pillars of Afghanistan's society. The war vastly damaged the social structures of the country which also resulted in an ongoing extreme poverty, local disputes, and clashes among diverse demographic population of Afghanistan. It enlarged the battlefield to all corners of the country. The international community held some initiatives on the issue of peacebuilding in Afghanistan; however, there is no practical method for assisting Afghanistan's people in resolving their disagreements harmoniously and constructively unless they do not compromise.

There is a vast range in the nature, causes, and impacts of insecurity in Afghanistan; therefore, there is an extensive range of the most efficient ways in which insecurity can be tackled. Generally, various actions in varying degrees are necessary to strengthen the rule of law, develop professional security forces, combat poverty, or enhance the governance system. One crucial strategy for reducing insecurity is peacebuilding, although the issues of conflict, reconciliation, and causes of insurgency are addressed somehow both by scholars and practitioners. Due to the connection of warlordism, corruption, disarmament, failure in law enforcement, and other essential issues, ultimately reaching a peace deal and dissolve of conflicts will remain impossible. The nature and causes of the conflicts in Afghanistan are complicated. This research seeks to review and discuss the complexity of the roots of Afghanistan's conflicts and assess the peacebuilding process.

1.2. Research Question

This section is crucial for scientific study. Both qualitative and quantitative studies benefit significantly from it. However, as this study focuses on qualitative methods, it is necessary to develop scientific research questions. Because the research question links the inquiry to the research's hypothesis and problem statement, thus, this thesis poses the following inquiries considering Afghanistan's peacebuilding and conflict resolutions process:

- I. Which factors determine the peacebuilding process and conflict resolution in Afghanistan?
- II. What are the obstacles to peacebuilding in Afghanistan?
- III. Did the peacebuilding process initiatives in Afghanistan help the country towards peace and prosperity?
- IV. How can demolish the roots of conflict and insurgency in Afghanistan?
- V. How can Afghanistan overcome its internal and external issues peacefully?
- VI. Why did the world's great powers and Afghanistan's neighbours tend to intervene in the country?

1.3. Hypothesis

The hypothesis tests and validates the constructive ideas related to the respective topic. It uses the null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis to test the credential ideas created from the case. This study develops the following hypothesis to test and validate the arguments in connection to Afghanistan's peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

H1: The peacebuilding process (2001-21) successfully helped the people of Afghanistan towards peace.

H2: International and regional interventions were the main obstacles to peacebuilding in Afghanistan.

H3: Diverse ethnographic structure is an obstacle to peacebuilding in Afghanistan.

H4: Taliban (insurgency) have been the main obstacle to peacebuilding in Afghanistan.

1.4. Methodology

This study uses qualitative research to find answers to research questions by considering the "Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Process in Afghanistan." The peacebuilding and conflict resolution process in Afghanistan and the factors behind its failure have been evaluated by utilizing primary and secondary sources of information. This study was primarily based on utilizing scholarly articles, books, reports, internet documents and reliable internet websites mainly in English, Persian (Dari) and Pashto.

The research focuses on the context of peacebuilding and conflict resolutions in Afghanistan for the period of the United States of America intervention in Afghanistan between 2001 and August 2021. The research contexts are insurgency, conflict, reconciliation, internal factors, and regional and international factors towards Afghanistan's stability and security.

1.5. Conceptual Framework

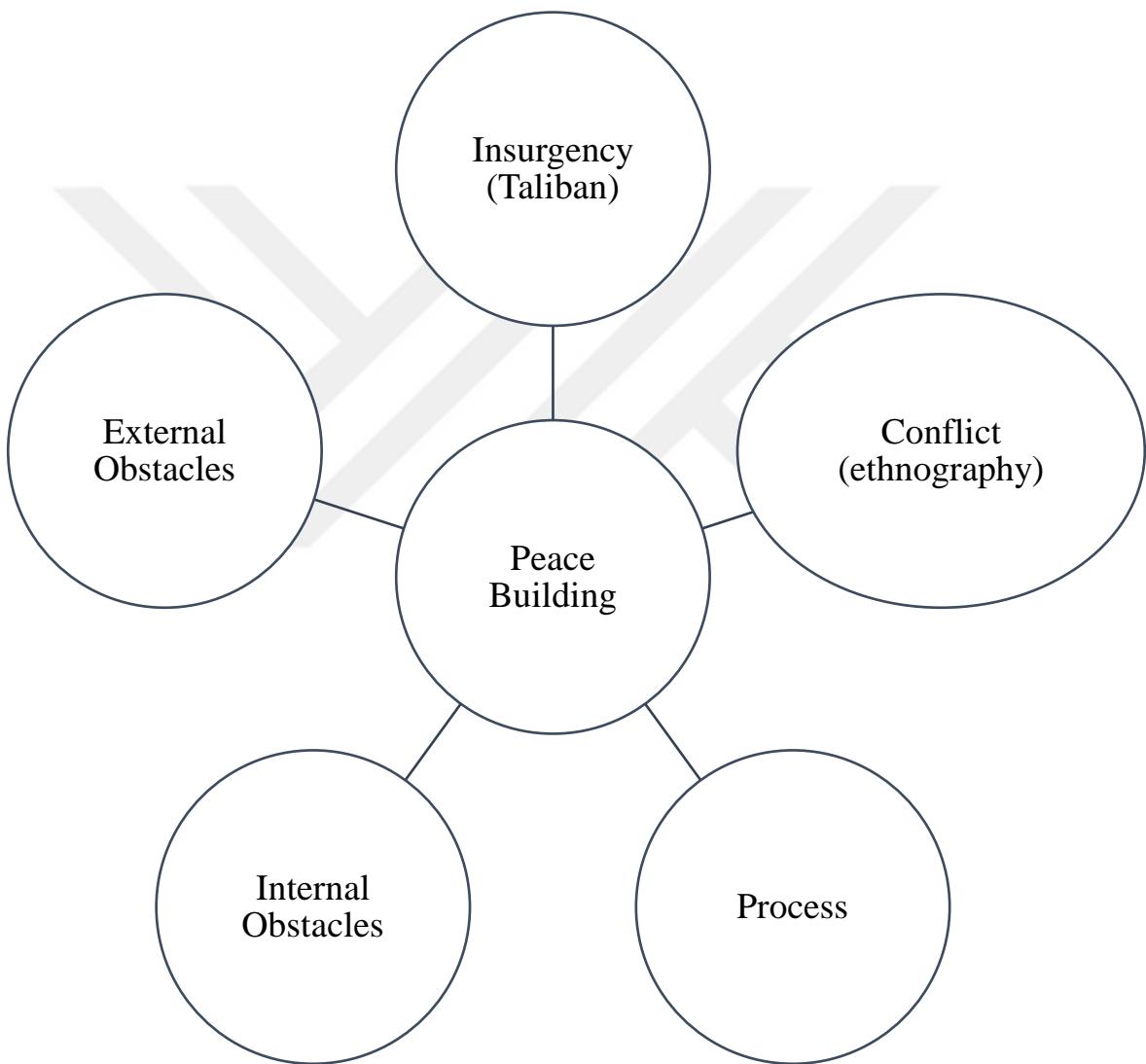


Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Computed by the Author

A conceptual framework constructs the primary selection of any research. The conceptual framework for this thesis developed from study's research problem and research questions. Furthermore, five variables were set as the main variables to understand the topic of peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021. The main variables as shown in figure 1.1 are as follows: External obstacles, internal obstacles, peacebuilding process, Taliban (insurgency), and ethnographical conflicts and disputes.

Conceptual frameworks offer a boundary outline to provide focus and meaning, as well as limits within which to raise questions and consider a particular course of action. By implication, it is part of the research process pertaining to the quest for perspectives that are relevant, to guide the study and to contribute to an answer to the research question. In other words, the conceptual framework, when used as a pragmatic instrument to create several themes for inquiry, revealed crucial challenges that demand attention throughout a prolonged term of peacebuilding.

1.6. Significance of Study

This study aims to enlighten the dynamics of Afghanistan's peacebuilding and conflict resolution process and identify and explain the unsettling roles of internal, regional, and international factors in the country. The study will contribute significantly to a better understanding of the eternal war in Afghanistan and clarify the internal and external factors behind the peacebuilding failure from 2001 to 2021. The study findings will also help to get a deeper knowledge about Afghanistan's conflict in general, as well as its political, military, diplomatic, economic, and social-cultural positions regarding the peacebuilding process in Afghanistan.

The most important contribution of this study is to provide an opportunity to perform a holistic and comprehensive analysis by considering peacebuilding with the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. This way, the importance of Afghanistan's conflict can be understood by comparing the whole picture. This study will pave the way for political analysts and policymakers to adopt a more realistic discourse regarding Afghanistan's conflict and peacebuilding issues.

The study will contribute to the existing literature on peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Afghanistan. But, in addition to that, the revealed result will help the

policymakers in Afghanistan to take a decision and develop policies that will lead to strength and improve the peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Afghanistan.

1.7. Purpose of the Study

This research aims to evaluate and review “The Peacebuilding Process and Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan” in the last two decades. By discussing the peacebuilding process and conflict resolution, this research aims to contribute to existence literature in the field of peace studies in general and the peacebuilding process in Afghanistan in particular. This study provides students and scholars, as well as practitioners and policy makers, to understand the roots of conflict and causes of the rise of insurgency and extremism in Afghanistan. The readers will understand the steps and initiatives taken in the last two decades by the government of Afghanistan, other international organizations, and the international community.

1.8. Limitation of Study

The critical drawback of the study is the lack of internal literature from inside Afghanistan. In both official languages of Afghanistan (Persian (Dari) and Pashto) rarely academic or scholarly articles could be find. The leading cause of the unavailability of materials regarding this issue is lack of established academic institutions, research centers and the prolonged ongoing conflicts in the country. The subject of peacebuilding in Afghanistan is extensive, and further studies are needed. This study has made every effort to highlight the critical dynamics of the issue. More scholarly investigation and access to reliable data and information are necessary for a deeper comprehending of the subject. For future studies to better understand peacebuilding and its circumstances, in Afghanistan, more factors should be incorporated. Another challenge for conducting this study was the COVID-19 pandemic, Kabul's overtaken by the Taliban, and the fall of the previous administration in Afghanistan on 15 August 2021 are also caused problems for conduction this research.

1.9. Structure of the Thesis

For better understanding, this research titled “Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Process in Afghanistan” is divided into separate chapters. The first chapter consists of an overview of the situation in Afghanistan and a statement of purpose. The research question, which is the central constructive part of this thesis, is followed by the hypothesis. The hypotheses constructed for this research are the pillars of this scientific research. In this chapter, methodology, conceptual theory, and conceptual framework have been discussed. In the final part of chapter one, this thesis's objectives, significance, and limitations are discussed.

Chapters two and three of this study mainly discuss the roots of conflicts and the rise of insurgency and religious extremism. The peacebuilding process, initiatives, and efforts at regional, domestic and international levels with various parties are followed in the third section. Chapter four of the thesis followed, examining of internal and external obstacles to Afghanistan's peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The final chapter of this dissertation consists of the conclusion part, in that chapter; the hypothesis is accepted or rejected according to the findings of this research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Like most other social science concepts, “peacebuilding” is also a term used and interpreted with different meanings by different scholars. Chetai and Jütersonke defined peacebuilding as “all efforts to foster a sustainable peace through the establishment of institutions that promote and enable the non-violent resolution of tensions and disputes.” They also differentiate between concepts (Peacekeeping) which refers to “maintaining a balance of power and keeping the warring of the tension” (Jütersonke & Chetai, 2015). Michael et al. argued that “peacebuilding is generically understood as external interventions that are intended to reduce the risk that a state will erupt into or return to war” (Barnett, Kim, O'Donnell, & Sitea, 2007). Indeed, the phrase was first used by Johan Galtung in his book "Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding" in 1975. Another notable expert on the topic of peace studies is John Paul Lederach. He claims that peacebuilding "is more than just post-accord rebuilding" and "is seen as a complete notion that embraces, creates, and supports the whole array of processes, techniques, and phases needed to turn conflict into more enduring, peaceful partnerships." (Initiative, 2021). The Secretary-General's Policy Committee of the UN defined peacebuilding as “a series of targeted measures reduce the risk of recurrence or recurrence conflicts due to strengthening national capacity at all levels for dispute resolution laying the foundations for sustainable peace, developments (Office, 2010). Wendy Lambourne also defined peacebuilding, as “strategies designed to promote a secure and stable lasting peace in which the basic human needs of the population are met and violent conflicts d does not recur” (Lambourne, 2004, p.3).

Conflict Resolution: Conflict appears when there is disagreement among conflicting parties over a matter or situation. Conflict resolution can be outlined as a formal or informal procedure used by two or more people to settle a dispute satisfactorily. Like peacebuilding, there are several interpretations and definitions for conflict (Shonk, 2022). Oxford learner's dictionaries defined conflict “as a situation in which people, groups, or countries are involved in a serious disagreement” (Dictionaries, 2022). Karl Marx developed conflict theory in which society is constantly in a state of dispute or war over scarce resources. With an understanding of the concept of conflict, conflict resolution refers to the procedures and techniques of mediation, adjudication, and institution-building that support the peaceful resolution of social conflict and hostilities in society or between

parties. According to Rothman, “as applied research, conflict resolution seeks to help uncover disputants' core motivations and values and pave a path for peace through which essential needs and interests may be merged and met.” In this sense, this conflict resolution tries to find out the causes and roots of disagreement and disputes among the parties or different groups or societies (Rothman, 1997).

The literature on peacebuilding is rich and vast, and it gained the consideration of scholars of politics, peace, and conflict studies in international security. From think tank centers' papers to the practitioners' and policy makers' intellectual works, the concept of peacebuilding has taken various perspectives. In 1992, the United Nations (UN) publication of an *Agenda for Peace* used the phrase "peacebuilding," which helped the idea become more widely accepted. Since then, it has emerged as one of the most commonly discussed ideas in international politics, peace and conflict studies, and development studies, giving rise to a considerable body of literature on the topic (Ryan, 2013). Y. Uesugi et al., in their study, “*A Brief Sketch of Hybrid Peacebuilding*,” classified the peacebuilding theories into four main discourses: *Liberal Peacebuilding Discourse*, *Critical Peacebuilding Discourse*, *Economic Peacebuilding Discourse*, and *Feminist Peacebuilding Discourse*. (Uesugi, Deekeling, & Ingstedt, 2021). As Autessere asserted, peacebuilding refers to acts intended to establish, maintain, and reinforce peace, which also involves reestablishing a measure of security. By using Galtung's (1969) well-known distinction, “peacebuilding initiatives aim to create not only “negative peace.” The absence of war and violence but also “positive peace” the conditions that make peace sustainable over the long term both in interstate wars and in civil conflicts” (Autessere, 2017).

As Galtung, distinction of positive and negative peace indicated, in literature, peace is sometimes interpreted as the absence of war. While the absence of war does not guarantee the removal of existing challenges in society, including violence and conflict. Simply, sometimes it can be said that negative peace is a prelude to achieving positive peace and lasting peace. But sometimes it may not happen, peace is created in a negative way and only with the cessation of war, but this type of peace lacks the elements of real peace. In other words, a negative peace is a peace in which there is no effort to eliminate the challenges, factors and structures that endanger peace, but only the minimum peaceful situation or the emphasize is on the absence of war.

According to Diehl, the disappearance of severe levels of violent conflict is an important component of peace, but it is not the only one. There is no agreement on all other aspects of peace, which may differ depending on context for example, relationships, in the international level, national level and in group level relationships (Diehl, 2016). Peace has taken on a broad concept, peace has gone beyond the situation in which only the absence of war is realized and has included many elements such as justice, immunity, freedom, etc.

Positive peace is a transition from minimum peace to majority peace. in which there was no war was not a condition and it includes different dimensions. In other words, positive peace means considering peace as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, in which rights (rights of women, ethnic, sectional, racial, and religious minorities) are protected. The main difference that can be stated between positive peace and negative peace is that negative peace does not pay attention to justice, freedom and development and has more of a political aspect, but positive peace is a peace in which justice is at the center of attention and it covers various dimensions of social life.

According to Suhrke, Harpviken & Strand (2002) view, peacebuilding is a set of transitional reconstruction activities undertaken in a postwar phase, designed to lay the foundation for longer-term developments such as democratization, economic development and social justice.

To sum up, there are several definitions of “peacebuilding” in literature. Mainly the concept implies as a set of measures and initiatives that provide security and stability in society. At the same time, it demolishes and puts an end to the existing conflict and insurgency in that society. There are discussions about the effectiveness of peacebuilding theories. Autessere and Michael Pugh argued that a successful peacebuilding process must involve local communities. In their opinion, “local ownership of peacebuilding is likely to result in more legitimate processes and sustainable outcomes” (Autessere, 2017).

Although there are some studies significantly scholarly articles, like Jonathan Goodhand’s, “*Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace? The Drugs Economy and Post-conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan*”, his emphasize is much more on the issue of the conflict-to-peace transition that occurred following the signing of the Bonn Agreement with a central examination of drug economy (Goodhand, Corrupting or Consolidating the

Peace? The Drugs Economy and Post-conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan, 2008). Also, Goodhand with Sedra have another article “*Who owns the peace? Aid, reconstruction, and peacebuilding in Afghanistan*”. They investigated how aid policies and programs have become entangled in a complicated bargaining process involving foreign players, domestic elites, and social groupings which is shadowing the peacebuilding efforts and peace talks in the country (Goodhand & Sedra, 2010). Chuck Thiessen is another scholar who wrote book about “*Local Ownership of Peacebuilding in Afghanistan, Shouldering Responsibility for Sustainable Peace and Development*” covered issues including local ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan, reports on the perspective of international and Afghan peacebuilding leaders working in Afghanistan on the path to local ownership of peacebuilding, locally conflict transformation system were also discussed (Thiessen, 2013). Despite of all above mentioned studies on the issue of peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Afghanistan, there is still much more needed to be done for the topic of peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Afghanistan. The previous studies much focused in a more narrative approach which does not include all issue of peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan. This study efforted to fill those gaps and cover all dimensions of peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Afghanistan by considering important aspects like roots of conflict, factors and dynamics that impact peacebuilding process in Afghanistan, alongside the obstacles to peacebuilding and conflict resolution were emphasized.

3. ANALYSIS OF ROOTS OF CONFLICT AND INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN

Peacebuilding is a critical duty that requires continuous efforts. After the end of the cold war, many countries experienced different types of conflicts, mainly raised from inside those countries by insurgency or support of militia groups or revolutions. With the rise of insurgency and conflict, the likelihood of mass murder and genocide or committing other crimes has increased. The rule of law, universal values of human decency, and holding legitimate governments are all threatened. Conflict and instability in a country give terrorists and illegal drug traffickers a haven and financing opportunities for their businesses and cultivate an environment conducive to their growth in every field. States have become less equipped to combat infectious illnesses like the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, they cannot concentrate on other issues and programs such as development projects or improvement of life conditions for their people. Additionally, when there is domestic unrest and violence, the possibility of intervening of great powers, including the United States of America, its allies, China, and Russia, increase. Those countries may engage militarily or politically in the targeted country with intervention or invasion, resulting in disruptive geopolitical conflicts, internal displacement, and vast immigration.

Afghanistan has been the cradle of civilizations and the transit area of cultures and goods since prehistoric times, and strong states have emerged from this land throughout history. Due to its geo-strategic location, diversified population, and being neighbors to essential countries, the people of Afghanistan have consistently maintained their freedom and sense of national identity and belonging to their country. For the historians and scholars who tend to focus on the issues of Afghanistan, it is evident that Afghanistan has a reputation as being difficult to control. The present territory of Afghanistan has been attacked by empires and great powers, including Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States of America. Despite victories in battle and territorial advances by mentioned great powers, Afghanistan had earned the nickname "Graveyard of Empires" (Ataullahjan, 2021). War has always been a component in the socio-political history of Afghanistan, which has complex and multi-layered dimensions. The historical complexity and multi-layered nature of the concept of this war bring difficulties in studying and covering the comprehension challenges of the country (Autesserre, 2017).

Afghanistan's conflict is composed of several actors and factors. It has witnessed unending bloody wars, revolutions, and interventions throughout history. Afghanistan's affairs Scholars believe that internal factors and socio-economic conditions are the dominant reasons for the long ongoing conflict in the country. Furthermore, existence of religious extremism and the use of violence for achieving political goals are the primary causes of the conflicts in the country. On the other hand, it is also argued that Afghanistan has become a competitive region due to its geostrategic location and external circumstances. The blame goes to the superpower's pressure and the interference of the great powers as the main reasons for the conflicts (Rustayee, 2021). Why has this war existed continuously in different formats, perceptions, and mechanisms? Where does the root of this destructive war come from? What invisible hands and bloodthirsty ideologies have turned the war machine into the country?

3.1. Roots of Conflict in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a landlocked country in South Asia bordering China, Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Instead of posing an opportunity for Afghanistan's people, the geopolitical and geostrategic location of Afghanistan has always been a problem or trouble for the Afghanistan's nation throughout history. Afghanistan has an exceptional geographical location in the middle of three economic, cultural, and geopolitical regions. Afghanistan's location could be a transit hub that easily connects Central Asia with South Asia and Middle East countries through Iran (Emadi, 2005).

Afghanistan has always been the focus of attention by the west and, recently, by regional governments. To better understand the causes of instability and dynamics of Afghanistan's conflict, it is necessary to interpret the internal and external factors of the conflict in the country. Since the establishment of the Durrani Empire, the predecessor of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which Ahmad Shah Durrani founded in 1747, a long-term stable environment in Afghanistan has not been created. Modernization and nation-building efforts were unsuccessful because Afghanistan had become a buffer state between Soviet Russia and British Empire in the XIX century (Nabizada, 2022).

The internal factors that cause instability in Afghanistan, such as geostrategic and geopolitical location, economic problems, corruption, multi-cultural social structure, ethnic diversity, ethnic conflict, and drug trafficking, have been the biggest challenge to the

stability of the country. After the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1989, the opium economy expanded as part of the Golden Crescent with Pakistan and Iran. During the civil war, the drug economy, which was allowed by the west because of the financing of Mujahideen groups fighting against the Soviet Union, also funded the armed groups. Afghanistan's deeply embedded political and economic instability has mobilized militant groups and organized crime syndicates. Recently, the security problems that have arisen in Afghanistan have affected countries in the region and have caused global security problems due to the political structure generated by complicated relations in the age of globalization (Mudassar, 2020).

The internal and external dynamics in Afghanistan's conflict have played a critical role in long-term instability in the country throughout history. The geostrategic and geopolitics location, corruption, multi-cultural social structure, drug trafficking, and higher number of ethnicities with external factors are the crucial dynamics of conflict in Afghanistan. Through literature review and evaluation, this chapter focuses on the internal dynamics of conflict and analyses how Afghanistan became a battlefield for the regional and global powers in the post-USA intervention (Nabizada, 2022).

Some historical structural problems in Afghanistan's political, cultural, and economic system are related to internal factors. The pressures of the Soviet Union and the British Empire's modernism and nation-building attempts have not been successful. In the late XIX century, Afghanistan became a buffer state in the great game played between the British Empire and Russian Empires due to its strategic location. Since the late 1970s, Afghanistan has experienced a continuous state of civil war punctuated by foreign occupations in the forms of the 1979 Soviet invasion and the 2001 USA-led intervention that toppled the Taliban government (Gökirmak, 2011). Afghanistan has assumed importance due to its potential to influence the societies and politics in its bordering countries. There are several factors both internal and external circumstances that determines the peacebuilding and conflict resolution process in Afghanistan. Factors, such as; geostrategic and geopolitical location, economic problems, multi-cultural social structure and so on. Considering internal factors that affect the conflict in Afghanistan, this chapter will explain some concepts that have historical roots in the country and some other factors that emerged after the intervention of the USA in Afghanistan in 2001.

3.1.1. Internal Factors of Afghanistan's Conflict

This section focuses on the internal factors of the conflict in Afghanistan. It is necessary to determine the most important domestic dynamics that lead to the extension of the conflict in the country. This way, the internal factors that affected the war in the last five decades and how it has been over time will be discussed. To better understand this development, this chapter deals with six specific domestic dynamics that have played a critical role since 2001 and led to the peacebuilding efforts failure in Afghanistan. The reason for the inclusion of these factors is due to their interrelations with regional and international dynamics. For these reasons, analysis of the domestic dynamics of the conflict in Afghanistan needs to be well examined.

1. Geostrategic and Geopolitical Location
2. Economic Problem
3. Corruption
4. Multi-Cultural Social Structure
5. Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict
6. Drug Trafficking

3.1.1.1. Geostrategic and Geopolitical Location

Afghanistan's history shows it has a crucial role in South and Central Asian geopolitics. Afghanistan sits at the heart of Central Asia, at the meeting point of ancient trade routes, the "Silk Road" and connects three economic, geopolitical, and cultural regions: South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. The geostrategic significance of Afghanistan increased following the end of British colonial control in the years that followed World War II and the rise of the Soviet Union as an eastern superpower and the United States of America as a western superpower. To resist the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and its efforts to reach the warm seas of India, the bloc of the west supported Pakistan to stand alongside Afghanistan's resistance forces and Mujahideen against Soviet Union troops (Arslan, 2016).

After the Soviet Union forces withdrew from Afghanistan, the USA-led Mujahideen took control of the state. The lack of USA support for Mujahideen caused a power vacuum that led to the ethnic conflict that resulted in Afghanistan's civil war, the

rise of sectarian divisions between Shia and Sunni, and the emergence of the Taliban. After Al- Qaeda's attack on the World Trade Centre in the United States of America, the USA claimed the existence of the terrorist group in Afghanistan. In October 2001, the USA intervened in Afghanistan to eliminate the terrorist organizations. The global war on terrorism, which the USA and its allies launched, has led to more turmoil in Afghanistan. Since 2001, Afghanistan has become a battlefield and a competition area for regional and global powers. Besides other domestic structural problems in the society of Afghanistan, the geostrategic and geopolitical location remained the main reason for long-term conflict and instability in the country (Nabizada, 2022).

3.1.1.2. Economic Problem

The economic problem is another reason for instability in Afghanistan, especially after the Soviet Union invaded the country in 1979. During the civil war and the Taliban's regime sovereignty, all existed infrastructure and economic development was destroyed. After the USA and her ally intervened in Afghanistan in 2001, there was a relative economic improvement compared to the civil war period, but it wasn't enough. Even after 20 years of international community assistance in Afghanistan, the economy is still in a terrible situation, and there is no sustainable development as expected. The uncertainty of domestic and foreign politics in Afghanistan is the main obstacle for foreign entrepreneurs investing in Afghanistan. According to the 2020 Asian Development Bank statistics, around %49.4 of the population lives below the poverty line, the unemployment rate is %35, and approximately %80 of the population's daily income is below one dollar. Afghanistan is an importer country. More than %90 of essential everyday goods is imported from neighboring countries. Although these numbers indicate a very high poverty rate in the country, the actual number and a more comprehensive survey can increase these numbers as the country's situation worsens daily. The country's economic dependency directly enhances the possibility of neighbors intervening in Afghanistan's internal affairs (Jain, 2018).

3.1.1.3. Corruption

The corruption phenomenon has been another obstacle to stability and long-term economic development in Afghanistan's society since 2001. Corruption has created severe

problems like slowing economic growth and increasing uncertainty by discouraging foreign investors from investing in the country. Instead of rebuilding Afghanistan, the fact that the USA tended to use local commanders' abilities and forces in the fight against terrorism by bringing them to critical positions created disappointment for the ordinary people of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the educated technocrats from western countries were also one of the leading causes of corruption and nepotism in Afghanistan's society. According to Afghanistan's experts, corruption, drug trafficking, and high lawlessness have been the biggest threat to Afghanistan's long-term stability. Afghanistan has gone from first to third on the list of the most corrupted administrative systems worldwide in the last ten years. According to the research conducted by the Afghanistan Institute of Strategic Studies (AISS), insecurity was the biggest problem, followed by the Unemployment issue and corruption of the people of Afghanistan in their society. As a result, corruption was why the Afghanistan's government could not make good use of much foreign capital and investments. In general, corruption has occurred chiefly in cities with higher insecurity and unemployment rates. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2010 research, the people Afghanistan have bribed \$2.5 billion to carry out their administrative operations, accounting for %23 of Afghanistan's GDP (McDevitt & Adib, 2018).

3.1.1.4. Multi-Cultural and Social Structure

Afghanistan is a country that has not yet transformed from a traditional social structure to a modern society. The local norms of the tribes have not been suited to the central government's rule. In Afghanistan, powerful institutions such as the national army, national police, or a well-established administrative system are lacking. A lack of an education system to raise awareness and a business and industrial infrastructure would lead people to establish a genuine relationships in society is tangible. The political culture has not developed less because the existing political parties refer to ethnicity and religion rather than an ideology. They do not achieve a competitive improvement and cannot raise awareness in society. The main problems are lack of education, isolation from modern developments, self-standing in conflict, distrust, suspicion, and corruption as the Afghanistan community is more respected for its tradition and values, which is the reason why the local elites play a vital role in identifying and meeting the needs of society. The existence of multi-cultural social structures like language, tribes, religion, and sectarian

differences encourages external forces to form alliances with these local leaders and gives them the courage to stand up against the central government (Sadr, 2014).

3.1.1.5. Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict

There was never a general comprehensive fair population census in Afghanistan to accurately determine the country's population. According to available data mainly provided by the dominant Pashtun ethnic group, mostly in charge of prominent statistical institutions, 24 different ethnic groups live in Afghanistan. The data shows around %42 of the population are compound Pashtun, % 27 Tajik, %11 Turk, %9 Hazara, and %11 other ethnic groups, which is demonstrated in Figure 2.1 (World Population Review). Because of the existence of different religious, sectarian, and ethnic groups in Afghanistan, the political demands of each group are different. The higher number of ethnicities in a country like Afghanistan always facilitates and creates a vacuum for regional and global power intervention. Since the period of empires in Afghanistan, the processor of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan that Ahmad Shah Durrani founded in 1747, considered the beginning of modern Afghanistan's statehood, there has not been a long period of stability in Afghanistan. The pressures of the Soviet Union and the British Empire's modernism and nation-building attempts have not been successful. After the USA and its allies' intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, the ethnic conflict and tensions in Afghanistan's society increased, the rise of the sectarian movement at the beginning of the 1990s, and failed attempts toward state-building and creation of nation-state in its comprehensives sense. Still, unclear political and economic instability in the country remained the most important problem for the people of Afghanistan.

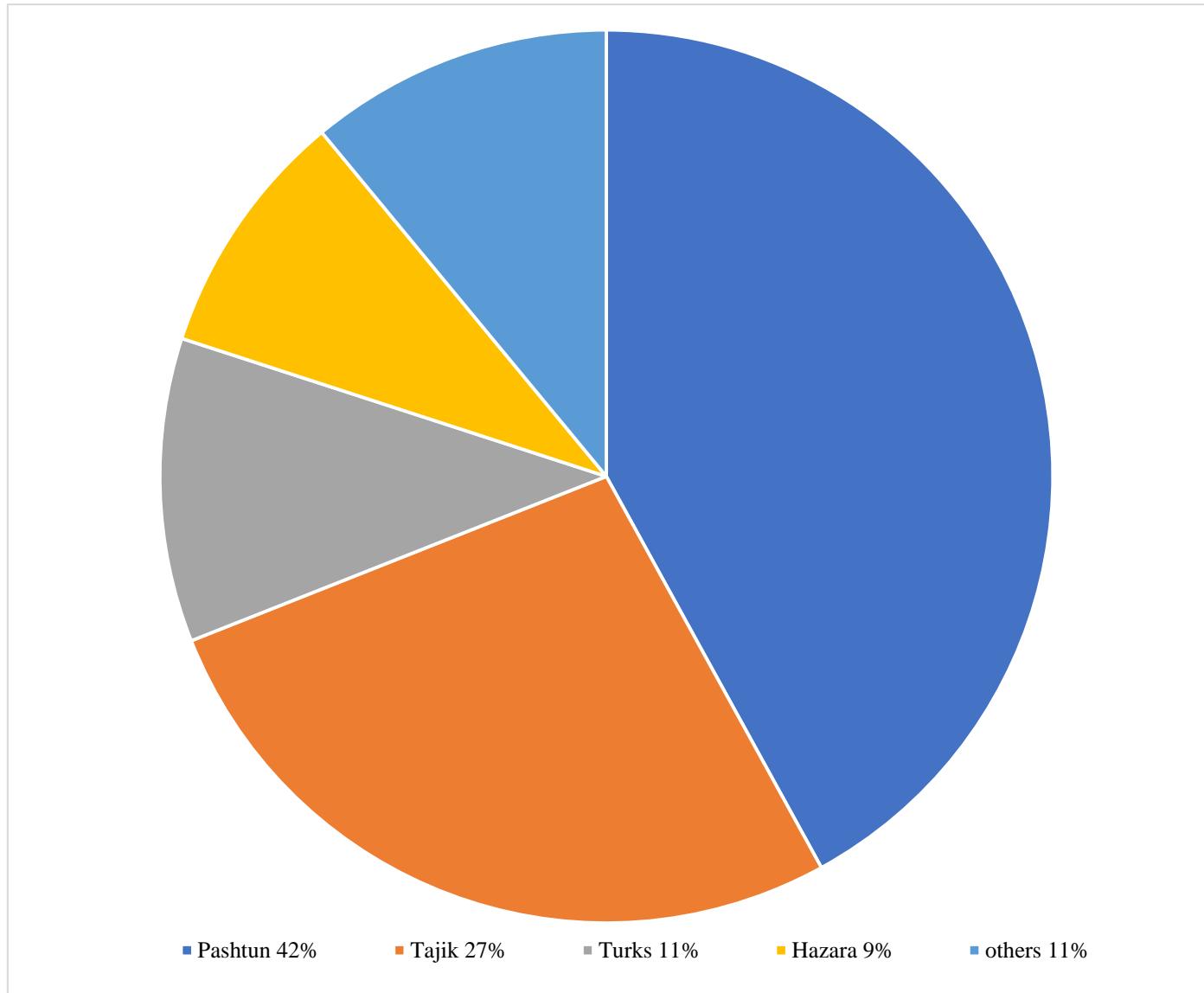


Figure 3.1. Afghanistan Demographics

Source: World Population Review

3.1.1.6. Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking is another critical factor in the destabilization and increased ongoing conflict in Afghanistan since the 1980s. After 40 years of war and prolonged economic depression, opium cultivation became a source of income for Afghanistan's farmers, particularly in the southern provinces of Afghanistan. The fight against the Soviets adversely affected Afghanistan's rural production and employment sector, disrupted the monetary and financial system, and eliminated the education system. Drug

production has become an obstacle to the economy of Afghanistan because opium production has destroyed economic infrastructure, especially the agriculture sector, which directly increased the country's unemployment rate. In Afghanistan, the tribal warlords protected the cultivation areas of opium and paid for the arms and personnel. The poor farmers are obliged to plant in return for their land and get the least amount of money (Arslan, 2016).

The most damaging effect of opium cultivation in Afghanistan is the creation of instability, insecurity, and funding of terrorist groups like the Taliban. In Afghanistan, there is a direct relationship between war and opium because around %80 of opium production comes from the region where violence and conflict are intense. According to the data %60 of the Taliban's funds come from opium. The correlation between the Taliban and drug trafficking is providing arms, finance, and logistical support to riots in exchange for protection; they mutually assist the transport of drugs to finance warlord operations (Karimi, 2018). The high opium production in Afghanistan led to a rapid expansion of the illegal economy in 2017. In 2017 around %20- 32 Afghanistan's GDP shares came from opium production, equal to the share of the agriculture sector in Afghanistan's GDP in 2017. Approximately %90 all poppies in the world originate from Afghanistan. The unemployment rate is even higher than in the Taliban's first rule, with over 6 million unemployed people. Unemployment, economic crisis, war, insecurity, and ease of drug production increased drug addiction in Afghanistan. According to the 2010 UNODC data, over 3 million addicted persons are in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's annual drug trade exceeds \$70 billion, most of which are under the control of the international drug mafia (UNODC & Research, 2019).

3.2.1. Afghanistan at Crossroads of Regional and Global Powers

3.2.1.1. East and West Competition: Russia and West Block

The Soviet Union and the United States of America failed in their plan and strategies while the former invaded and later intervened in Afghanistan. It is necessary to look over their goals and objectives to understand the critical differences between the two global power wars in Afghanistan. The USA intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 was to overturn the Taliban's regime when the 9/11 attacks happened in the World Trade Centre

USA. On the other side, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 aim was to establish a communist regime and use Afghanistan as a project authority to expand its borders further to the South (Riedel, 2009).

By considering of recent developments in the region, Russia increasingly concentrated on playing an active role in Afghanistan. The Russia federation government has consulted with Tajikistan on expanding security cooperation on the border with Afghanistan. Recently Russia has increased diplomatic engagement with the Taliban, and even according to Afghan and USA officials, Russia provided military assistance to the Taliban. In February 2019, Moscow hosted peace talks with the Taliban and Afghanistan's opposition representatives. Moscow's hosting peace talks of the Taliban and senior Afghan politicians aimed at speeding up the USA's exit from Afghanistan. Besides these arguments, Afghanistan's ex-president Hamid Karzai and other Afghan officials traveled to Moscow to show how they were eager to influence Afghanistan's politics (Stratfor, 2017) .

Afghanistan is being positioned in an impossible situation as international political maneuvers become more complicated between the United States of America and Russia. It could lead Afghanistan into more compressed trouble between the blocs of the West and the East, created in the orientation of the world's two great powers. At the same time, the USA and Russia have not grown into complete allies since World War II. Their relationships gradually collapsed after Russia integrated Crimea and the Syrian conflict. The tensions have reached even a more critical point after allegations of Russia's interference in the USA's 2016 presidential elections, causing the Obama administration's subsequent sanction on Moscow. The above scenario made the ground even more complicated for Afghanistan's people to reach a lasting peace (Khaliq, 2020).

The USA has spent more than \$1.5 trillion in Afghanistan since 2001. It has also aided Pakistan with more than \$33 billion in military compensation as an ally in the war on terror. The strategy has not been successful as Pakistan continues sheltering the Taliban. Pakistan has been the primary funder and backer of the Taliban as a proxy tool to gain strategic depth and continue her aggressive war with India in Afghanistan. The negotiation effort for peace by Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani has failed to determine Pakistan's aggressive approach toward Afghanistan (Nabizada, 2022). The Pakistani military and officials have repeatedly admitted that they actively support the Taliban despite USA's

pressure on them. The Taliban are responsible for killing more than 104,000 Afghans over 15 years. In 2016 alone, Afghanistan's security forces lost over 15,000 personnel in war, and more than 1,600 Afghanistan's civilians were killed. In December 2016, President Obama affirmed that the USA could not defeat the Taliban utilizing military forces. The Soviets thought a vacuum needed to be filled and hosted a conference on Afghanistan with China and Pakistan. After the USA labeling Pakistan as a "state sponsor of terrorism," Pakistan started seeking a new ally in Russia besides China. Then Pakistan tried close relations with Russia, and Moscow also used Pakistan to approach the Taliban to reform its relationship with the Taliban. Taliban have reportedly met with Russian officials in Tajikistan and elsewhere and received tactical warring directions (Arif, 2017).

3.2.1.2. Saudi Arabia and Iran Rivalry in Afghanistan

Afghanistan and Iran share a 925 km border and cultural, historical, and linguistic similarities that Saudi Arabia has not. Saudi Arabia and Iran compete to shape Afghanistan's domestic politics for their national interests. Both countries use their connections and bonds with various ethnic and religious groups within Afghanistan. On the other side, both countries try to increase economic ties and attempt to influence insurgent groups. Saudi Arabia, since the exit of the Soviets from Afghanistan, has tried on to develop its power by funding the Taliban and Hizb-e-Islami Gulbuddin Hikmatiyar (HIG) through Pakistan networks. To add to Afghanistan's political turmoil, Iran has been lately arming the Taliban and funding their insurgent activities for three significant reasons. Firstly, to harass the USA mission in Afghanistan. Secondly, to take advantage of the instability in Afghanistan. Lastly, to conscript Afghan Shias for its proxy wars in the Middle East and constrain any developmental projects on rivers flowing to Iran from Afghanistan (Tadjbakhsh, 2013).

As an ally to the leading actor in Afghanistan politics, Saudi Arabia is the United States of America strategically interested in preventing Iran's influence in Afghanistan. Iran and Saudi Arabia's rivalry in Afghanistan will be analyzed in four areas; The politics and practice of aid; both countries have provided numerous assistances to the Afghanistan's government. There is no precise data on how much Saudi Arabia provides financial support to the state. Still, Iran's investment mainly has contributed to the western province of Herat and border cities. Trade is another crucial factor that made Iran a critical

player in Afghanistan politics. According to the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) data, Iran was Afghanistan's biggest trade partner in 2017- 2018, with a value of \$2 billion. Around % 25 of Afghanistan's economy is contributed by Iran (Mohammadi, 2018).

Influence on the political process and negotiations with the Taliban; Saudi's past relationship with the Taliban made them a prime candidate to facilitate the negotiation process with Afghanistan's government. Iran, by contrast always had been against any Sunni extremist regime to be formed in Afghanistan. Iran repeatedly objected to the Talibanization of Afghanistan and was concerned about USA forces' use of Afghanistan soil to conduct attacks on its territory (Tadjbakhsh, 2013). Recently Afghanistan's officials claimed that Iran provided financial and military assistance to the Taliban in the border cities. On the other hand, Iranian officials claimed they started meeting with the Taliban leaders to facilitate peace talks negotiations. It shows how Iran attempts to influence Afghanistan politics (Siddique, 2018).

Support for Ethnic groups (Sunni/ Shia); is the third area where the rivalry between two countries is projected in Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia's support of Wahhabi (Salafist) Sunni ideology in Afghanistan sees Iran as a threat to its Shia domination. Iran's cultural and linguistic affinity in Afghanistan automatically increases its influence in Afghanistan's internal affairs, and Iran has historically considered itself the guardian of Shi'ism. The competition and approach of rival countries with various ideologies toward Afghanistan have created serious trouble for Afghanistan since the Soviet invasion.

Geography contiguity: the long border shared between Iran and Afghanistan has always been a problematic issue. Common borders raise problems such as drug trafficking, sharing water resources, and migration of refugees and workers. Even though China is the most influential part of the quartet (China, Iran, Pakistan, and Russia), it has not engaged in hostility in Afghanistan so far. However, some evidence shows that China also tied relations with the Taliban through Pakistan. The economic competition between China and USA has been in full swing for a long time, especially after establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, visa-versa the World Bank. China could extend its territorial speculation to South and Central Asia, with Afghanistan being the most strategic country. The USA already has trusted partners in Afghanistan and India. It only needs to come to decisive terms with Pakistan. While Russia speculates on forming a Cold War-like

bloc alongside Iran, China, and Pakistan, the USA-China trade partnership and shared interests in global leadership will play a deterrent role in developing that alliance. It would not be optimal for China to wrest militarily with the USA of that quartet. Iran pledges to extend its Shiite hegemony throughout the Middle East by projecting violence and proxy wars. Pakistan also has proved to be an “unworthy ally” and terrorist-sponsoring state that can change sides at any given time. Russia seeks to cement its unchallenged grip on Central Asia. All those agendas are against the international order USA and NATO perceived for the world after the Second World War. Any USA effort would be in vain until Pakistan stops its state sponsorship of terrorism. The USA needs to go beyond its use of soft power on Pakistan. USA’s military experts assert that time for the imposition of economic sanctions and targeting militant leaders has come. Afghanistan and India are the two like-minded and genuine partners of the USA in that region. The USA needs to team up with those nations and foil the making of a China-Russia-Pakistan-Iran bloc that would prolong the conflict in Afghanistan and put the USA's national interest at risk (Saif, 2019).

3.1.2.3. Pakistan and India's Hostility in Afghanistan

When the USA took down the Taliban regime in 2001, the Afghanistan people's hope for long-term peace, stability, and prosperity was raised. However, 20 years into the conflict, their aspiration for political stability diminished. The regional rivalry in Afghanistan has been a serious issue since the end of the cold war. The rivalry between Pakistan and India in Afghanistan declined the hope for peace and stability. India and Pakistan have struggled to enhance their influence in Afghanistan while limiting each other at the cost of further destabilizing the nation (Tadjbakhsh, 2013).

The competition between India and Pakistan in Afghanistan is very high because recent tension between Pakistan indirectly affects Afghanistan. Pakistani officials claimed that if India continues to attack Pakistan, it will affect Taliban peace negotiation over Afghanistan. Pakistan closed its airspace to all commercial flights in late February 2021 after escalating tensions with India. The airspace was opened to specific flights, but it is yet to be opened for Afghanistan's people flights to India. Afghanistan Civil Aviation Authority (ACAA) estimates that closing Pakistan's airspace to commercial flights costs Afghanistan at least \$8 million in more than a month (Jhanmal , 2019).

The proxy war between Pakistan and India destabilized Afghanistan as the Indian authorities claimed that Pakistan used terrorism as a weapon in its proxy war with India. In conclusion, since the end of the Cold War, Pakistan, by its proxy (Taliban), started to influence Afghanistan to cut off Indian influence expansion in Afghanistan. On the other hand, India also sees Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan as a threat to its national security. Since 2001, India has invested in significant economic and military projects. Afghanistan's people view India as a friend and Pakistan as an enemy (Putz, 2015). In other words, to understand the dynamics of conflict in Afghanistan, evaluation of the internal and external factors is essential. Afghanistan's geopolitical and geostrategic location, with her domestic severe political and economic difficulties, has been a problem for the nation of Afghans throughout history. Afghanistan has a unique geographical location connecting the three economic, cultural, and geopolitical regions. Afghanistan's location could be a transit hub that easily connects Central Asia with South Asia and Middle East countries through Iran. Afghanistan has always been the most attractive place for western politics.

Furthermore, related to the internal factors, some historical structural problems exist in Afghanistan's politics, cultural and economic system. The pressure of Russia's and Britain's Empire's modernism and nation-building attempts have not been successful. In the late 19th century, due to its strategic placement, Afghanistan became a buffer state in the Great Game between the British and Russian empires (Atmar & Goodhand, 2002).

Since the late 1970s, Afghanistan has experienced a continuous state of civil war punctuated by foreign occupations in the forms of the 1979 Soviet invasion and the 2001 USA-led invasion that toppled the Taliban government. Afghanistan has assumed importance due to its potential to influence the societies and politics in its bordering countries. The domestic parameters that some have deep roots in the country's history would determine the Afghanistan conflict. There have been some structural and functional reasons for instability in the country. Geostrategic and geographical location, the higher number of ethnic groups, and drug trafficking are other factors that couldn't stabilize Afghanistan's current situation.

Afghanistan has long been a location of geopolitical competition among external powers between the global power east and the west. The recent rise of China as a competitor with international actors and also the effect of Saudi Arabia and Iran rivalry, and the Pakistan and India proxy war in Afghanistan have a shared interest in containing

the spread of militancy and securing their interests. Recent Russia's close relations with Pakistan overlap with growing attempts to involve itself as a mediator in Afghanistan. Suppose Russia succeeds in bringing Kabul and the Taliban to the same table. In that case, the accomplishment will heighten Putin's leverage over negotiations to end a NATO-backed conflict that Washington has failed to resolve. Moscow seeks a diplomatic victory to strengthen its leverage while its relations with Washington remain tense. This plays into the Taliban's desire to become a serious political actor. The India and Pakistan rivalry in Afghanistan is another important factor for the continuation of the war in Afghanistan. India seeks to limit Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan and will not allow any regime to emerge in Afghanistan that is hostile toward India. The Saudi Arabia and Iran rivalry competition through various concepts in the internal affairs of Afghanistan has made the situation more complicated with an unknown future for the people of Afghanistan.



Figure 3.2. Afghanistan's Map

3.2. Definition of Extremism

Extremism is a term used to describe various ideas and behavioral patterns in different parts of the world. It is defined by changes in tolerance and differing degrees of a tendency for violence. Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) described extremism in a paper as functional changes in behavior and ideology in social and political

environments, interactions between individuals and groups, and rivalry and interaction among them. Extremism as a process occurs at three levels: individual, group, and masses. According to the AISS, "religious extremism is a deviation from moderate religious views and practices and a turn towards a radical interpretation of religious teachings." An interpretation of religion often associated with intolerance and discrimination calls for violent resistance.

According to another study of AISS, "fundamentalism thoughts gradually had been raised among students in Afghanistan's universities. The term refers to "a violent and extreme form of protest that, from a social standpoint, is brought on by students' experiences with ethnocentrism, ethnic and religious discrimination, and diverse political ideologies." Additionally, these components make it stronger (Etilaatzoz, 2016).

Religious convictions, illiteracy, widespread poverty, continuing external power presence in Afghanistan, corruption, and the unequal distribution of economic incomes and resources have once again provided a base for the growth of extremism. Religious extremism in Afghanistan is fed by the massive amount of money collected from various sources in the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, the religious aspects of the capitalists and local people of Afghanistan, and even the production and trade of narcotics (Etilaatzoz, 2016).

As a new phenomenon, Extremism, which is the product of violent behavior and the spread of terrorism, targets a society's structures, norms, and values. Extremism has always been a concern of the world. The serious and fundamental question is what factors and motivations cause extremism and the growth of extremist thinking in the world and what are the main bases of extremism in Afghanistan's society? Extremism is "a set of political, social, cultural, historical and economic factors in a society work hand in hand in a network to facilitate the fields of extremism in collusion and cooperation with each other." Extremists use religious ideologies and specific interpretations of Islamic texts and values as the most effective tools to create, promote, and institutionalize extremist thought by linking spiritual readings with political, social, and cultural variables appropriate to the circumstances of societies.

The political record of countries like Pakistan lies in "political Islam" and exporting specific manifestations of political Islam to other countries. Political Islam has become the

dominant ideology of Pakistan. In the history of this country, religious institutions in the form of political parties and tendencies have used all kinds of non-Islamic activities to achieve political goals and defend the identity borders of this country. As long as this fundamental problem is not addressed, extremist thought will be presented to the world on a larger scale and systematically in a political-religious framework supported by governments. Historical and social deprivations of an ethnic group in political-social structures, cultural invasion and the destruction of cultural values and wealth of a nation, lack of equal economic opportunities, discrimination and prejudice, and ethnic, linguistic, and religious supremacy are the main factors and grounds for the maturation of extremist ideas and incentives for perceived extremism. In many cases, it has been seen that despite the provision of educational and work opportunities and the provision of basic services by the government, people have had extremist tendencies and praise the activities of extremists and armed opponents of the government, while extremist thinking wins, all opportunities and facilities will be taken from these people, and they may suffer the most. Such a regressive point of view goes back to society's ruling and dominant mentality and thinking. In this case, despite significant progress and achievements, there is an atmosphere where intellectual efforts and civic activities do not have significant results. It facilitates the production of extreme thoughts and behaviors. The curriculum of educational centers and universities is the main cause of extremism. In the curriculum, the subjects are not presented scientifically and coherently, and the lack of continuity and adaptation of religious concepts with the realities and needs of the new world in the curriculum of religious centers has caused the production of extremist thought and the spread of radicalism in educational institutions, has become a serious concern in the face of stability, security, and development of the country. On the other hand, the ideological division of the world into "the world of infidelity" and "the world of Islam," which is circulating in the process of globalization of values, identities, principles, and patterns from one region of the world to another, causes the emergence of extremist ideas. Also, the lack of alignment of the curriculum with the thoughts, behavior, values, and concepts of the new world, which is produced through discourses and intellectual currents at the world level, science and thought, in the less developed and backward world, has provided the basis for the development of extremist perceptions and views (Sadaat, 2018).

3.3. The Emergence of Extremism in Afghanistan

Throughout the history of Islam, the people of Afghanistan have accompanied and progressed with a balanced traditional Islam, which arose from the impact of customs and social traditions on society. The structure of society in Afghanistan is the result of the integration of religion and social traditions. The combination of religious and social traditions has led to the formation of the society in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's nation consists of different tribes and ethnic groups, and the position of "tribe" and its affiliations is still influential in the social structure. Tribal customs and traditions have cast a shadow on people's religious beliefs to a large extent. On the other hand, the majority of people in Afghanistan follow the Hanafi rite, and everyone knows that Imam Abu Hanifa was the preacher of one of the most balanced and moderate jurisprudential attitudes in Islam. For this reason, until the 1980s, views such as Saudi Wahhabism and Deobandi Salafism in India and Pakistan did not have much impact on the religious culture of the people in Afghanistan.

After the Marxist administration in Afghanistan staged a revolution on April 27, 1978, and the Soviet-backed regime assumed control, the religious "Jihad" as a duty ignited the flames of war in Afghanistan (Arwin, 2016). Apart from the United States of America's support for the Mujahideen against the former Soviet government and forces, the Arabs and Pakistanis not only provided a lot of weapons to the Mujahideen to support the "Jihad" in Afghanistan but also participated in the trenches.

The attitudes of Wahhabism and Salafism gradually spread in Afghanistan with the presence of Arabs. The influence of that mindset in Afghanistan eventually developed as a result of a significant portion of Afghans receiving their education in Pakistani religious institutions where Salafism was taught. In the last two decades, the governments could not react to the rapid growth of extremism due to the continuous conflict with the Taliban and the military opposition. This fear continues until now, while they know very well that the followers of Salafism in Afghanistan provide the ground for recruitment for the Taliban. Salafi movements, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat Islah, although they claim to be against the methods of the Taliban, in general, they are the same for both, and these movements, knowingly or unknowingly, facilitate the recruitment of Taliban in Afghanistan. These movements, which are much more dangerous than the Taliban, have targeted academic and educational institutions. So far, the security institutions have

arrested several university professors on charges of promoting extremism and even fighting against the government. Still, the process of strengthening Salafism in Afghanistan has not stopped (Ajwand, 2020).

3.4. Taliban and Insurgency and the USA Intervention in Afghanistan

According to popular stories, the Taliban organization was founded in 1994 due to the abduction and sexual exploitation of two local girls by a warlord in Kandahar province. Whatever the circumstances, it is generally accepted that the Taliban movement began as a local response to the country's pervasive chaos and lawlessness. In 1994, Afghanistan had already endured ten years of resistance to Soviet occupation, followed by five years of devastating civil war. By the time the Soviets withdrew, the nation's populace was well-armed due to the massive supplies of weaponry and other support provided to the Mujahideen in the 1980s. Previously, society had been built on tribal laws and customs. Still, the protracted fight against Soviet occupation and the ensuing civil war had fractured society and replaced tribal legacy with military dominance. As a result, warlordism, a new phenomenon, began to emerge in Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s. It brought about a time of ruthless population repression, corruption, disorder, and unlawfulness.

The Taliban movement sought to transform this society by advocating a return to a "pure" Islamic society regulated by a strict application of Sharia, or Islamic law (Stenersen, 2010). The Taliban organization was founded in 1993–1994 by Afghanistan's Sunni Muslim clerics and students, most of whom were Pashtuns from rural areas. Many were former Mujahideen or anti-Soviet fighters. A civil war between Mujahideen factions began in the wake of the Soviet Union's exit in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet-backed Afghanistan's government in 1992. The Taliban's core was composed of former combatants who had lost hope in the civil war. Several Taliban militants studied seminaries in neighboring Pakistan to separate themselves from the Mujahideen. After seizing control of the southern city of Kandahar in November 1994, the Taliban began a series of armed operations across the nation that ended on September 27, 1996, with the conquest of Kabul (Dixit, 1995).

According to reports, Pakistan provided the Taliban with significant direct military assistance during their military campaigns. As the Taliban imposed strict adherence to its interpretation of Islam in the areas it controlled and used severe punishments, including

public executions, to enforce its decrees, including bans on television, music, and dancing, the group quickly lost support on both the domestic and international levels. Ultimately, the main factor influencing how the world viewed and interacted with the Taliban was their protection of Al- Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. Pressure from the USA on Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, two countries that officially recognized the Taliban administration and the UAE, to use their clout to persuade the Taliban to expel the Al-Qaeda head was equally ineffective. Sanctions were placed on the Taliban by the USA, and the UN on the Taliban leadership was unaffected; although their connection with Bin Laden was "occasionally difficult," it had a "deep and personal base" (Thomas, 2021).

Nearly 3,000 people were killed in a series of terrorist strikes carried out by Al-Qaeda members on September 11, 2001, in the USA. President George W. Bush demanded that the Taliban turn over Al-Qaeda leaders, permanently close terrorist training camps, and grant the USA access to such camps in a speech delivered across the country on September 20, 2001, adding that the Taliban "must hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate." Taliban authorities rejected the offer, citing Bin Laden's status as a guest and what they perceived as a lack of proof of his involvement in the attacks. Following a permit authorizing military action against those responsible for the attack and anyone who helped or protected them. Beginning on October 7, 2001, American military activity in Afghanistan consisted of airstrikes against Taliban targets across the nation and close air support for Afghan forces fighting the Taliban (known as the Northern Alliance). Less than two weeks later, a small contingent of USA's Army Special Elements, The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) paramilitary forces, and conventional ground forces started deploying in Afghanistan. The Taliban left Kabul by November 13; Afghan troops backed by the USA quickly took control of the city (Thomas, 2021).

It is not possible to defeat the rebellion by military means. Although counter-insurgency operations have occupied the minds of many Western militaries over the past two decades, the military element of defeating the insurgency is to weaken or prevent its growth from providing the ground for political agreement and reconciliation between different parties in society. Despite nearly two decades of operations and military conflict by Western forces in Afghanistan, many common misconceptions about what drives this conflict have not disappeared. Without a clear understanding of the issues that have caused violence and conflict in Afghanistan, the military and political actions will remain decentralized and likely to have unexpected results and effects. There is a single reason or

motive alone that can explain why insurgents continue to fight, but there are factors that are key to understanding the roots of this conflict. Instead of dividing the enemy into "fundamentalists" and "moderates," as Western experts tend to do, Afghans see it differently. Part of the reason the conflict in Afghanistan has dragged on for so long is that the factors driving the insurgency are not generally understood, leading to the implementation of the wrong plans and poor metrics for measuring success (Dixit, 1995).

Below is the List of Real Issues that are Driving the Insurgency in Afghanistan:

Widespread Corruption in Afghanistan: Pervasive corruption is the main driver of insurgency in Afghanistan. After the fall of the communist government in Kabul and the defeat of the Soviet Union by the Mujahideen groups, a war broke out between the Mujahideen themselves, and the administration system of Afghanistan collapsed. During the civil war period, the defeat of some political factions including the northern alliance (Hezbi Jamiat Islami, Hezbi Wahdet-i- Islami) by the Taliban in the 1990s was praised by some ordinary Afghanistan people (Singh, 2020). But later in the 2000s, those factions who were fighting in the battle against the Taliban defeated the Taliban group with the support of USA intervention. Many rebels who joined the Taliban point to the grievances and sufferings they have faced because of government officials in the last two decades. Their criticisms were on the issues of abuse of power and authority, depriving of others' power and resources, and lack of law enforcement by government officials in cases where those in their political factions were regarded as the reason for the joining of rebellion on their war against government officials (Halton, 2018).

Personal Immunity: The need for personal immunity, paradoxical as it may seem, has caused many to remain active as insurgents and is a wartime motivation to expel the Soviets from this country. It is undoubtedly difficult to survive without fighting in a war-torn and conflict-ridden country like Afghanistan. Humphreys and Weinstein argued that anyone who has once participated in an insurgency, a comfortable return to "civilian" life is not a viable option (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008). Militants who have given up their insurgency continue to face widespread threats from Western forces, the current government, former victims, and their comrades. According to these conditions, there is not much motivation left for a militant person to stop rebelling after he enters to insurgent group's ground (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008).

Loss of Opportunity: Despite spending huge sums of foreign money on economic development across Afghanistan, there has been increased conflict between factions competing for a "piece of the pie." This motivation exists even in fields that are not considered mainly economic, such as the recruitment of security forces or appointments in administrative positions. In addition to being unstable, foreign governments and non-governmental organizations' huge direct investment also weakens Afghanistan's economic structures and government and causes negative effects in other areas. Even there were claims that American contractors were also part of corruption regarding their military logistical contracts or rebuilding contracts for the Afghanistan government.

Economic Motivations: Poverty in Afghanistan is endemic, partly due to structural fractures and disruptions caused by four decades of war. Financial incentives have been used to try to reconcile and reintegrate former rebels. These efforts have produced little lasting impact. In Afghanistan, more money can be made from drug production in many cases, and the rebels have succeeded in using this opportunity by encouraging farmers to cultivate and produce opium. On the one hand, this has created economic opportunities, relatively. Still, it has mainly enabled the insurgents to take revenge on government forces, economic competitors, and other rival groups in the country (Arslan, 2016).

Xenophobia: Afghanistan people have a dominant cultural narrative that their country has long been used as a "big game" arena for world powers. From Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan to the British Empire and the Soviet Union, foreign presence in this country has been a source of mistrust and suspicion. A survey conducted in July 2010 in Kandahar and Helmand showed that only % 12 of the respondents felt that the presence of foreigners in this country was to establish peace and security. This creates a paradox in which the very presence of foreign military forces makes the same insurgency they are deployed to defeat (Halton, 2018).

The Issue of Culture and Identity: Afghanistan's culture, especially Pashtun culture, includes a strong sense of honor, personal dignity (zealousness), and a commitment to make amends for humiliation and minor insults. Counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan typically include such things as house searches, property seizures, and destruction of agricultural products, as well as unintentional civilian casualties. All of these tend to arouse the zeal of surrounding communities, whose members may feel compelled to do something. Afghanistan's traditional culture has

mechanisms to negotiate and overcome such conflicts, but conventional social structures have been weakened by decades of war and the targeting of leaders from both sides (Halton, 2018).

Religious Factors: The moral values supported by insurgent groups, especially the Taliban and the Islamic State, are interesting because these groups claim that these values are not only theirs but the traditional values of rural communities, which probably do not exist externally, and many of its advocates themselves probably, have not lived in such societies. This ideal society or village that the Taliban refers to is only an interpretation of a simpler and earlier era. Still, it is viewed through the lens of a broken society. These groups' relatively simplistic understanding of Islam differs significantly from the diverse religious and academic systems developed by other Islamist groups in Egypt, Palestine, and elsewhere.

Afghanistan's Tribal Conflict: Ethnicity and tribalism are also often wrongly mentioned as factors of the current violence. There are indeed many ethnic and tribal differences between the sides of Afghanistan, but the West's understanding of the tribal structures of this country is mostly superficial and unchanged. Tribes and clans merge and separate over time for expedient reasons, and inter-tribal relations and positions are constantly changing. These changes are now more common as tribal structures have been weakened by years of war and targeting by conflicting parties (Halton, 2018).

The War in Afghanistan is Part of the Global Jihad: Even though the Taliban sheltered Al-Qaeda's leadership for years, the Afghan insurgents have expressed little interest in expanding the conflict outside Afghanistan and Pakistan. Global jihad is not an important factor because the grievances and demands of the Afghan insurgents remain deeply rooted in Afghanistan and at the local level, despite efforts by foreign groups to radicalize them to fight elsewhere.

The oversimplification of the root issues has been used as a tool to make the roots of the insurgency in Afghanistan appear incomprehensible, while these roots are merely foreign and complex. The complex and intertwined set of insurgency drivers together creates a powerful narrative. This narrative makes organizations like the Taliban undeniably attractive among some people in certain parts of Afghanistan. Recognizing these drivers and motivations and the fact that many of them are rooted in valid grievances

is a necessary first step in finding a way to end this insurgency and conflict through negotiation and building lasting peace.

Terrorist groups mostly use religious extremism to gain a foothold in society. They present a one-sided and dark definition of religion to the people, and their use of religious rituals is a basis for recruiting soldiers and creating fear in the public's minds. Extremist groups active in Afghanistan, especially the Taliban, are because of four main factors: religious beliefs, citizens' lack of access to reliable religious information, illiteracy, and economic weakness. Finally, attracting the public's mind toward extremist groups is used all over Afghanistan to provide a suitable platform for recruiting more extremists to their camps. Along with the Taliban group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group also became a global threat by using extremism for propaganda and recruiting fighters. Religious extremism is now a good breeding ground for terrorist groups and terrorist-sponsored countries. Referring to the quote of Rahmatullah Nabil, the former head of Afghanistan's national security, would present a clear picture of extremism. He said, With the formation of a new country based on religious ideology and promotion of extremism and terrorism in the name of Pakistan in 1947, this country started establishing religious schools using different names." According to the official statistics published by that country in 2018, more than 150,000 schools under Islam are busy teaching extremism and promoting violence. 25,000 Of these schools are registered officially. The rest are engaged in recruiting and facilitating terrorist activities where 51 terrorist groups are considered active in that country (Khan & Waqar, 2019).

The direct connection of the Pakistani military with terrorist groups such as the Taliban proves that that country is the origin of terrorists and has direct control over them. For example, in 2016, the Pakistani delegation entered Afghanistan without coordination with a military helicopter in the Azra district of Logar and exchanged six prisoners with the Taliban group. It can be seen that active jihadi groups in Pakistan are engaged in recruiting young people through religious schools, who are the most important part of the war cycle. In designated areas, they are involved in terrorist activities in pre-determined situations by leaders, and Leaders of terrorist groups enter Afghanistan and fight for their goals (SubheKabul, 2020).

The root of fundamentalism in Afghanistan should be sought in the extremism sources currents of Pakistan, whose main origin is India (before it was divided into India,

Pakistan, and Bangladesh). With the arrival of colonialism in the Indian subcontinent, Muslim scholars tried to renew religious thought. The first trend among them was the trend of extreme fundamentalism, which is rooted in the thoughts and ideas of Shah Valiullah Dehlavi. Shah Waliullah's movement was at the beginning of an intellectual-cultural movement that had set the main goal of reforming religious thoughts and eliminating superstitions from the life of the Indian Muslim community. But after him, his son Shah Abdul Aziz and his grandson Shah Ismail turned it into a socio-political movement and took a stand against British rule. The Deobandi school gradually became a special school of thought, which is referred to as "Deobandi" to people educated in it or affiliated with its way of thinking. The founders of this school were strict Hanafians. Their school focused on the revival of theological sciences in Islamic India, and it is stated that they removed science subjects from its curriculum. The founders announced the main goal of establishing this school was to strengthen the foundations of Islam, based on the Hanafi religion. Jamiat Ulema Islam belonging to the Deobandi School is mainly composed of Pashtuns from Baluchistan and Khyber Pashtun Khah state. During the Afghan Jihad, it established close relations with Afghan Pashtun groups (Setiz, 2021).

4. PEACEBUILDING PROCESS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN AFGHANISTAN

In recent years, people of Afghanistan have witnessed several wars, civil conflicts, insurgency, and various types of violence. After a short period of peace and truce, the country was again involved in an internal conflict. Due to various socio-economic reasons, the less developed Countries are involved in internal strife often because of a lack of central authority, a lack of powerful national military establishments, and the ineffectiveness of political and legal systems. Democratic institutions and other necessary mechanisms for governance have been less effective in less developed or underdeveloped nations. The third world countries which are deprived of strong political systems are mainly prone to return to internal conflicts (Chengizadah & Sahraei, 2015). In Afghanistan in the post-Bonn agreement period and after the USA intervention in 2001, second Taliban insurgency activities began. After establishing a new government system and approving a new constitution as the basis of a democratic regime in Afghanistan, international community efforts and Afghanistan's government's intention to include the Taliban in the government were not serious. However, insurgency and attacks of the Taliban against the government forces and coalition soldiers in Afghanistan increased daily. After the 2009 presidential election, the United States of America held peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghanistan government to bring lasting peace to the country. Since then, internal and international actors have made several attempts to establish peace and end Afghanistan's long years of conflicts. Many of these initiatives and programs opposed each other and finally did not lead to a tangible result in changing the conflict and getting a lasting peace between different groups in the country. At the conceptual level also, regarding the perspective of the peace process in Afghanistan, there have been many views. While some argue reaching a significant peace agreement with the Taliban is necessary, on the other hand, others argue that peacebuilding in Afghanistan through local confidence-building measures and piecemeal negotiations with distinct factions of the Taliban rebellions is important (Sadr, 2018).

In other words, following the international coalition's military intervention in Afghanistan in September 2001 and after the signing of the Bonn Agreement in the same year. Peace-making efforts to prevent the recurrence of civil war and create the necessary political, economic and social foundations for establishing sustainable peace in

Afghanistan have been beginning. However, since the Bonn Agreement's signing, Afghanistan's peace process faced many challenges, and providing security and a lasting peace agreement remained a puzzle (Chengizadah & Sahraei, 2015).

Unless the roots of the conflict between rival groups in a country have not been addressed or eliminated, the resumption and continuation of war and internal conflict in that country is always possible. Analysing how to help a country involved in a conflict while overcoming the challenges ahead and not facing internal strife and war again is an issue that is investigated in the framework of the concept of peace making. This concept, which has received the serious attention of international institutions, including the United Nations, in recent years, includes a set of measures aimed at preventing the recurrence of internal armed conflict, its management, and the continuation of peace after the end of the conflict. The meaning of this concept is to institutionalize peace in countries that have lost their political, economic, and civil structures due to extensive and prolonged armed conflicts (Chengizadah & Sahraei, 2015).

Since the new government in Afghanistan in 2001, some important measures and efforts have been made to establish a lasting peace deal with the Taliban group and other militia groups who were at war with the Afghanistan Islamic Republic and coalition forces in the country. These initiatives were holding secret peace talks, supporting regional and international cooperation with the Afghanistan government to strengthen government rule in the country, and promoting national goals for developing peace conditions. The Bonn Agreement, Heart of Asia, and the June 2010 National Consultative Peace Jirga, followed by the High Peace Council Commission (CPH), were among these efforts. The last efforts to bring peace in Afghanistan were establishing the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR) and the signing of the Doha 2020 agreement between the United States of America and The Taliban.

4.1. Bonn Agreement and Reconciliation Processes

In the contemporary history of Afghanistan, the Bonn Agreement is merely a first step toward a postwar order. As part of the transitional and peacebuilding process, significant decisions of power-sharing in the political and military spheres and principles for social and economic reconstruction were made in the Bonn Agreement for

Afghanistan's different political factions, which were organized under United Nations directions, another international actor (Astri Suhrke, 2010).

The Bonn Agreement is not a peace treaty between hostilities; it establishes a legal and political framework for postwar activity. It is primarily a declaration of broad goals and anticipated power sharing among the victorious parties in their struggle with the Taliban. However, the military victory by the alliance forces was much more the result of an external power led by the United States of America. As it is stated in the (S/2001/1154) UN document, the purpose of the Bonn Agreement was to end the conflict in Afghanistan and bring an end to Afghanistan's conflict and enhance national reconciliation, long-term peace, stability, and protection of human rights, reaffirming Afghanistan's independence, national sovereignty, and territorial integrity, accepting the Afghan people's right to select their political future in accordance with Islamic, democratic, pluralist, and social justice values (Letters, 2001).

The Bonn Agreement was a core basis for forming a new political system and governance structure in Afghanistan in the post 11 September 2001. The majority of Afghans believed that the Bonn Agreement offered the best chance for establishing peace, security, and the protection of human rights in Afghanistan. However, it was not a comprehensive peace agreement. It did not contain essential provisions, such as formal commitments by Afghanistan's neighbors to respect the country's neutrality and end outside support to various military factions.

The accord provided optimism to some of the world's most oppressed and mistreated people with the involvement of Afghanistan's different factions and the assurance of political and economic backing from the major countries. Finally, the people of Afghanistan could envision a future for their children, an end to the carnage, and better living conditions. However, the enormous obstacles that lay ahead dampened this optimism. The parliament, the courts, a large portion of the civil service, and the majority of the educational and health systems were among the nearly all-destroyed institutions of a functional civil society. Half of the population (females) were denied the right to work and education during the Taliban's rule of Afghanistan. Landmines were all over the place. The shelling, gunfire, and general disregard that had become a way of life mainly devastated its infrastructure before starting the new era (Rashid, 2004).

In other words, The Bonn Agreement and comparable agreements were just able to offer a temporary solution to all these issues. Reconstruction will, at best, take years. A new political culture that values civilian power above all else, national interests above local or sectarian ones, and peaceful conflict resolution will take time. Afghanistan is still a country where, using force and violence to settle conflicts and reconcile competing claims to authority has become the first option, even after the formal signing of the Bonn Agreement. In promoting the rule of law, the warlords present a significant obstacle. Strong worldwide commitment, as well as several complex strategies, are needed. For the sake of development and prosperity in a country, it is necessary to break the patron-client bonds that foster loyalty to regional actors or foreign missions rather than national interests and national institutions. For instance, Afghanistan's leaders and donors need to create training and employment opportunities that will appeal to young men more than life as a soldier in a warlord's army. Creating a peaceful atmosphere, job opportunities, and education chances for the people of Afghanistan should be a priority of Afghanistan politicians and the international community. It is also asserted that prosperity, economic growth, and employment can decrease the recruitment of youths for the insurgency groups (Rashid, 2004).

Forming balance and order and dealing with warlords is just one aspect of the solution in the post-war countries. It is also necessary to institutionalize and strengthen administrative systems to eventually operate as a mechanism to provide accessible services for the people and prevent high corruption in Afghanistan. The Bonn Agreement's promise of a new Afghanistan was supposed to be supported by an effective and independent judiciary, a powerful Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), qualified educational institutions, health care professionals, and a competent civil service. Donors must act more rapidly to fulfill their aid commitments and provide the money required to launch the extensive reform process (Fields, & Ahmad, 2011).

4.1.1. Opportunities and Obstacles After the Bonn Agreement

The parties to the "Bonn Agreement" have firmly voiced their support to end the painful bloodshed in Afghanistan and advance national harmony, human rights, respect, and enduring peace and stability. They have also encouraged the international community to make clear that it will help with the rehabilitation, recovery, and rebuilding of

Afghanistan in collaboration with the Interim Authority since it has a crucial role in helping the people of Afghanistan to establish a better future.

In the aftermath of the Bonn agreement, international assistance of the international community, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) commitment to Kabul has also increased the sense of safety in the city and its surroundings provinces. Furthermore, early signs suggest that aid organizations' operations and maintenance planning has grown. Agencies affirm that they have access to all sections of the population, regardless of their location, ethnicity, or gender, and there are verified reports that all restrictions imposed by the Taliban on women's access to employment and education have been lifted during those years. Despite this progress, there had been definite prospects for the substantially wounded nation's rehabilitation to get meaningful international support. However, the complicated relationships between international assistance, rebuilding, and long-term development are crucial in the current unstable post-conflict environment (Mohammad, 2002).

According to Field & Ahmed, after the Bonn agreement in the newly formed structure, some achievable opportunities and signs of progress were created. But the deal had some drawbacks to be mentioned, including excluding the Taliban and Hizb-e Islami and alienating a big part of the Pashtun community in the political order of Afghanistan. However, this issue was justified by UN special representative Lakhdar Brahimi (Brahimi, 2003). The Bonn Agreement deepened the Pashtun sociopolitical issue and created the conditions for long-term issues. The delegates who attended Bonn represented the Northern Alliance and its many factions, predominantly Tajik, as well as the Rome Group, which included followers of the late king Zahir Shah, and two smaller delegations, such as Cyprus and the Peshawar Groups (Fields & Ahmed, 2011)

One widespread criticism is that the Taliban should have participated in the Bonn negotiations. This claim holds that if the Taliban's interests had been considered, the cost and the previous situation that the United States and the coalition were in would have been reduced or avoided. Although Brahimi refers to the Taliban's absence from Bonn as its "initial sin," he explained that Bonn would not have been possible had the Taliban been present due to 9/11 and other Afghan factions' opposition. Additionally, the Northern Alliance's substantial progress in the field and quick advancement, the USA's airpower assertiveness, the quantity of Taliban losses, and Pakistan's willingness to support USA's

operations all made it plausible to assume that the Taliban was nearing the maturity phase (Fields, & Ahmad, 2011).

4.2. Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process

Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (HoA-IP), some called the Heart of Asia Process (HoAP), is a cooperative project between Afghanistan and Turkiye that was unveiled at an international conference in 2011 (Nadirova, 2022). Through communication and initiatives that foster confidence for Afghanistan, the Istanbul Process aims to improve regional security and economic and political collaboration, particularly for Afghanistan and, in general, for the regional countries. In other words, the Istanbul Process emphasizes "connectivity," including Afghanistan as a landlocked country and protecting it from the isolation that has in the past pumped extremism and violence. Afghanistan and Turkiye jointly initiated the Istanbul Process with 12 other regional nations to establish a regional framework for developing cooperation and strengthening positive contributions to Afghanistan's development and progress. Additionally, thirteen other countries and nine international organizations supported the Istanbul Process. The government of Afghanistan's leadership and the region's ownership were also crucial to the Istanbul Process and Turkiye officials (Aras,2012).

The Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process seeks to advance and strengthen peace, security, stability, and prosperity in Afghanistan and the region through regional collaboration and confidence-building efforts. Since its inception, the process has established itself as a critical component of regional cooperation. It has given Afghanistan's immediate and distant neighbors, international backers, and organizations a forum for engaging in productive dialogue and tackling current and future regional challenges through greater cooperation with Afghanistan at its center. The procedure's three main pillars are Political Consultation, Confidence Building Measures, and Cooperation with Regional Organizations. As stated in the publication of the Heart of Asia- Istanbul Process official website, the Heart of Asia Process was driven by three key accomplishments: Firstly, most of Afghanistan's issues are regional in terms of their sources and impact. Secondly, Afghanistan's problems demand a regional strategy to solve. Thirdly, Afghanistan has been frequently considered more like an object than an active participant in conversations about the region's future. Afghanistan is given a central role in

the process under the Heart of Asia and the freedom to set its own goals in consultation with other regional countries (Foundation, 2022). One of the critical elements that have contributed to the success of non-state actors is their capacity to network and collaborate across political boundaries and cultural, socioeconomic, and educational divides. Governments have had difficulty keeping up with change's rapid pace and have been far less effective at networking and cooperating. (Foundation, 2022)

Within the Istanbul Process framework, Turkiye initiated trilateral talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkiye to strengthen ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan through Turkiye's close relations with both countries. The main goal of the Istanbul Process is to bring people across the region together to talk and work on problems that affect the entire area, but with a special emphasis on Afghanistan. Based on the Kabul Declaration of Good Neighborly Relations in 2002, serves as a broad model for the Istanbul Process. This proclamation was notable for recognizing several important concerns, including the UN's role in international relations, the battle against terrorism (particularly the destruction of terrorist bases), respect for regional territorial integrity, and non-interference policy. Under the leadership of the previous foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkiye had an assertive foreign policy; he saw Turkiye as an emerging power that got along well with both its neighbors and major powers. Afghanistan has a permanent seat in the Process. Each year, it rotates the process's leadership with a volunteer co-chair (Ghiasy & Saeedi, 2014).

A three-tier formation guides the Process: the ministerial tier, which meets annually for high-level political consultation; the diplomatic tier, which is shaped by regular senior officials' meetings and charged with coordinating and supervising and the technical tier, which is in charge of implementing the confidence-building measures. An interaction group for ambassadors adds to these tiers. The members of this organization are ambassadors from the participating nations based in Kabul (Ghiasy & Saeedi, 2014). In short, Cooperation between members of Heart of Asia countries brings the heart of Asia countries closer together to strengthen socioeconomic ties as well as stablizing peace in the region for the pursuit of economic growth in the neighboring states.

4.3. Establishment of High Council of Peace and its Structure

The Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) was founded in 2010 to negotiate with the Taliban and other rebel parties to assist in putting an end to the ongoing conflict and war in the country. It facilitates direct talks between Afghanistan's government, the Taliban, and other insurgent groups. It was intended for HPC to function as an independent entity, interact with the Taliban over the peace process, and operate as a conduit between them. However, the HPC could not make any headway after almost ten years. As a result, its secretariat was disbanded, and its powers were transferred to the recently founded State Ministry for Peace Affairs (Taieb, 2020)

Despite HPC initially attracting attention on a national and worldwide level and being seen as a potential means of bringing about peace, its poor performance later lost that interest. It progressively lost its place in the peace process. It is essential to mention that HPC was established as an independent entity to bring peace and act independently. In this regard, it provides a basis and structure for national reconciliation and conflict resolution. However, governmental intervention in the affairs of HPC caused disappointment for those expecting positive results from the process. The President commonly selected the Head of Provincial HPC according to Political tendencies, not a fair meritocracy.

4.4. Peace Agreement with Hezb-i- Islami Insurgent Group

The Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin abbreviation (HIG), also known as Hezb-e-Islami or Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA), is a major Afghan group and former militia. It was established in 1975 under the leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar as Hezb-e-Islami. The surviving portion of Hezb-e Islami, still led by Hekmatyar, became known as Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin after Mulavi Younas Khalis broke away from Hekmatyar and founded his political party, which took the name Hezb-i Islami Khalis. Hezbi Islami aspires to be like the Muslim Brotherhood and to create a single, undivided Islamic state in Afghanistan in place of the different tribal factions that already exist (Dbpedia, 2021).

Hezb-e Islami, under the leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, has been involved in the political affairs of Afghanistan and has been part of the conflicts in the country for almost a half-century. Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin received substantial funding from anti-Soviet forces through the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence during the Soviet-Afghan

War (1979–1989) (Phillips, 1989). Through Pakistan's ISI, anti-Soviet troops from across the world generously funded Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin. From 1992 to 1996, the HIG played a significant role in the Afghan Civil War and the temporary government. It is mainly responsible for creating the circumstances that allowed the Taliban to capture power. The rise of the Taliban in the middle of the 1990s sidelined the HIG from Afghan politics. However, in the new era the post-2001 in Afghanistan, HIG, excluded and underestimated in the Bonn Conference, reemerged as an aggressive militant group, claiming responsibility for many violent attacks against Coalition forces and the administration of President Hamid Karzai (Osman, 2022). Negotiations were started between HIG and the government in 2008. However, there were no changes in group attacks against the government administration and Afghanistan's National Security Forces (ANSF), as well as against coalition forces. Still, according to reports, Hamid Karzai, former President of Afghanistan, had received the HIG delegates several times at a high level.

4.5. United Nations' Role in Afghanistan Peacebuilding Process

Mediating and resolving disputes between rival groups and countries through negotiation is one of the most important responsibilities of the United Nations. The first article of this organization's charter mentions maintaining international peace and security as one of its important duties. By enhancing national capacities for conflict management and laying the groundwork for lasting peace and development, peacebuilding is a term used by the United Nations to describe efforts to support nations and regions in their transitions from war to peace and to lower the risk of a country slipping back or relapsing into conflict (United, 2022).

In the argument of UN experts, it is a difficult task to bring enduring peace to communities that have experienced conflict. Peacebuilding calls for consistent international support for the widest variety of actions, including national initiatives. For instance, peacebuilders keep an eye on ceasefires, demobilize and reintegrate combatants, help refugees and internally displaced people return home, organize, and oversee elections for a new government, support reforms in the justice and security sectors, strengthen the protection of human rights, and promote peace after atrocities.

The United Nations aims to strengthen global peace and security by appealing to the cooperation of the international community and with methods such as development cooperation, removing threats to peace, and suppressing the actions of aggressors under the principles and justice of international law. Findings indicate that the United Nations actively and positively contributed to maintaining global peace and security after the Cold War ended, particularly in resolving issues between countries that had experienced war. According to Jacob, the author of "Methods and Approaches to Conflict Resolution in the 21st Century," the United Nations functionalism is what gives this organization its ability to play a role in fostering peace and security (Bercovitch & R. D. W, 2009).

The research asserted that, in addition to settling conflicts, the UN has helped foster positive ties between nations, encourage collaboration and coordination among all members, and consolidate the security of the global community. According to functionalism theory, the United Nations member nations must cooperate and coordinate well for global security and lasting peace. The likelihood of establishing security and battling international terrorism is limited in the absence of all nations' involvement in safeguarding the security of the global community (Qayoomi , 2022).

According to the theory of functionalism, international institutions are a tool for managing mutual relations between countries, including economic, political, environmental, free trade, and dispute resolution. On the other hand, according to this theory, a high level of international cooperation will gradually reduce violence and create sustainable peace. However, considering the positive performance of the United Nations in resolving the conflicts of war-torn countries, the effort has been made to analyze and investigate the possible role of this organization in establishing peace between the warring parties after examining the past performance of this organization in Afghanistan. According to the theory of functionalism, international institutions are a tool for managing mutual relations between countries, including economic, political, environmental, free trade, and dispute resolution. On the other hand, according to this theory, a high level of international cooperation will gradually reduce violence and create sustainable peace. However, considering the positive performance of the United Nations in resolving the conflicts of war-torn countries, an effort has been made to analyze and investigate the possible role of this organization in establishing peace between the warring parties after examining the past performance of this organization in Afghanistan (Qayoomi , 2022).

The United Nations has been present in Afghanistan for over fifty years and has been active in various sectors. After the fall of the Taliban's government and the formation of a new administrative system, the efforts of the United Nations in the country increased with a fresh approach and support for the state-building process and national institutions compared to the past decades. Over the last twenty years, due to the changing conditions and the possibility of the presence of international organizations in Afghanistan. The United Nations has focused its mission on supporting government institutions, the rule of law, fight against drugs, human rights, and humanitarian aid. In the above fields, it has had a positive effect. In addition, the United Nations has played a constructive role in the last two decades in coordinating international efforts to support good governance, holding elections, and providing military advice and training for the country's security forces (Etilaatzoz, 2016)

Historically, one of the serious efforts of the United Nations to end the war and establish stability in Afghanistan dates back to the 1990s. However, the efforts of the United Nations in Afghanistan at the end of Najibullah's rule did not end the war nor create peace between the government and the Mujahideen groups. But this same organization had already been able to provide the ground for withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan within the framework of its diplomatic efforts based on the 1988 agreement (Imran, 2016). After the departure of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan, the conditions to transfer the after-war environment to a peaceful situation were created among the people of Afghanistan. Benin Swan, the representative of the United Nations at that time in Afghanistan, was expected due to his close and personal relations with President Najibullah. The country's former leader was able to make progress in the process of national reconciliation between the government and the jihadi leaders; But it did not happen (Ponzio R. J., 2007)

Despite the diplomatic efforts of the United Nations representation in the peace process of Afghanistan, due to the lack of trust building between the heads of the government and the Mujahideen groups, no success was achieved in the national reconciliation process. Observers argued that the factor that caused the failure of the United Nations peacebuilding plan and the national reconciliation process with Najibullah's government and opposition forces. Before maintaining his neutral role as a peace mediator in resolving the Afghan conflict, Benin Swan was more influenced by his relations with Najibullah and his national reconciliation plan. However, the lack of progress in building

trust and creating a suitable environment for mutual understanding of Afghanistan's issues and the failure to establish direct and stable communication at the high level of leadership between the warring parties caused the failure of the United Nations' efforts to create peace (Imran, 2016).

In addition, Pakistan, as a country with influence among jihadist leaders at that time, not only did not support the peace talks between the Mujahideen leaders and Najibullah's government; Rather, it played a negative role by creating many challenges and obstacles to the process of national reconciliation. On the other hand, Jihadi leaders, dreaming of a great victory over Najibullah's government, think more about creating a Pure Jihadi-Islamic Government in Afghanistan. And they did not accurately calculate the future's bitter events. Rather than seeking to create peace and share political power with the opposing faction, they were pursuing their interests. Many jihadist leaders living in Pakistan thought that the ideology of communism influenced reconciliation with Najib's government and the formation of a cooperative system with him, which on the one hand, was in conflict with political Islam, and on the other hand, was considered a kind of historical failure for them. All in all, the jihadi leaders fell into the trap of extremism ideology, and their lack of understanding of national, regional, and international realities caused the people of Afghanistan to lose the most important historic opportunity to achieve peace (Qayoomi , 2022).

Having learned from the experience of the failure of the Benin-Swan peace plan, the United Nations should try to use the upcoming opportunities to advance the peace talks between the government and the Taliban properly and end this long and destabilizing war of the international system. Over the issue of Afghanistan, due to its experience and previous actions, the United Nations could play a more active role. To bring opposing parties together and suggest power-sharing mechanisms among them. On the one hand, the UN could stand against the totalitarianism of the opposing parties by implementing and guaranteeing the terms of an agreement that possibly could prevent a power vacuum in the country (Qayoomi , 2022).

4.5.1. Afghanistan's Peace Talks with United Nations Orientation

The conflict in Afghanistan can be analyzed in three circles: the power struggle between the government and the Taliban, the intervention of regional countries, and the

role of international actors. Therefore, as a peace mediator, the United Nations can search for a way out of disputes by establishing coordination between all three interested parties in the conflict and formulate a comprehensive plan to create and define a mechanism to overcome these conditions. It can also use the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 's valid levers to implement any deal or agreement between the parties.

Most of Afghanistan's peace talks observers analyzed that the possible role and function of the United Nations in advancing the peace process and solving the devastating and long conflict in Afghanistan is inevitable and can be very positive and constructive. It is also asserted that United Nations plays a more important role in developing and promoting peace talks and drawing a road map for peacebuilding in Afghanistan. As indicated, one of the United Nations' responsibilities and particular tasks is to manage and solve war-torn countries' (Qayoomi , 2022). Afghanistan. Due to its nature and experience in other war-turn countries, United Nations has a unique and special capacity and opportunity to handle and help the Afghan people reconcile and build the last peace in their country.

4.6. High Council for National Reconciliation and Doha Peace Agreement

The High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR) was established in order to lead the Afghan peace process. Indeed, the council was established to resolve a deadlock after the 2019 presidential election got suspicious. The two main rivals of the election (Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and President Ashraf Ghani) claimed their victory. However, it was evident that the election was not held according to universal suffrage and was widely criticized due to extensive fraud; as a result, it needed the compromise of rivals. After six months of discussions and ambiguity under foreign and international community pressure, the HCNR was established (Salehi & Rasikh, 2021) . According to a political agreement signed between Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and President Ashraf Ghani, the HCNR was given vast authority and privileges to lead intra-Afghan peace talks. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah was selected as the chairman of the council. The HCNR consisted of the Leadership Committee, General Assembly, Deputies, State Ministry for Peace, Negotiating board, and Senior Advisor (HCNR, 2022). Due to President Ashraf Ghani's continued intervention in the affairs of the HCNR and the establishment of parallel entities under his direction, the effectiveness of the HCNR declined after some time.

Before the beginning of face-to-face intra-peace talks between Afghanistan's government delegation and the Taliban's delegations in Doha of Qatar, President Donald J. Trump's administration in February 2020, reached a deal with the Taliban to withdraw United States of America's forces as well as NATO's troops from Afghanistan (Rubin, 2021). The value resulted from long years of Peace Talks between the USA and the Taliban in Qatar. A political office was opened for the Taliban to keep peace Talks with the international community and the Afghanistan government. The deal with the Taliban included the complete withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, which was regarded as the basis for ending the USA's longest war in history, or some called it endless conflict. The deal reached in Doha, Qatar, was not a definitive peace accord; instead, it was ambiguous and may potentially fall apart. After more than a year of periodic discussions, it was gone and prominently excluded the American-backed Afghan government. However, it was viewed as a first step toward forging a more comprehensive accord that some believe may finally end the Taliban insurgency. This militant group formerly controlled Afghanistan under a strict Islamic code (Mashal, 2020).

According to the terms of the Doha Agreement, the United States of America's withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan was contingent upon Taliban security guarantees that Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State would not use Afghanistan soil as a gateway for operations against the United States of America (E-Haider , 2021). Under the Doha agreement terms, the USA-backed Afghanistan government must release more than 5 thousand Taliban prisoners from Afghanistan's government prisons. President Ashraf Ghani gathered a traditional grand assembly known as Loya-Jirga (Grand Assembl) to approve and endorse the release of Taliban fighters from Afghanistan's prisons. Observers argued that after the Doha agreement, the Taliban gained more power, and the Doha Agreement approved the Taliban's fight against the National forces of Afghanistan's government.

Despite the steps mentioned above and initiatives for bringing lasting peace to Afghanistan, the peacebuilding process has not been successful in the country for the following reasons:

- I. The failed structure of the government and the lack of the rule of law, which impacted the government's ability to provide social services and guarantee people's security, and an increase in corruption, contributed to the people's

dissatisfaction with the government.

- II. The ineffective and inappropriate political system that has led to an unbalanced and unfair distribution of power in a multicultural society like Afghanistan also intensified conflict and lessened compromise among different factions.
- III. External interventions broadened rivalry among political factions, particularly in neighboring and regional countries.
- IV. Religious extremism also provided ideological support for the fundamentalist groups to recruit soldiers in remote areas.
- V. Increased criminal activities such as drug trafficking and human trafficking and factors such as nepotism and immunity for the influential figures' crimes in the judicial system strengthened dissatisfaction with the government.
- VI. The unwillingness of the Taliban and the international community to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict in Afghanistan also reduced the chances of lasting peace in Afghanistan.

5. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL OBSTACLES TO PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

The presence of international forces in Afghanistan to fight terrorism and the so-called war on terror mission, without knowledge about the structure and context of a society. The increase of militarism and suppression of the rebels was accompanied. Misunderstanding of the foreign forces from the society and the position of the opposing groups destroyed the relative chance of permanent stability in the country. On the other hand, in the post era of the establishment of a democratic government, the influence of rival regional powers has turned Afghanistan into their conflict arena (Rafii & Jami , 2014).

The prolonged conflict in Afghanistan caused several damages to the country in terms of people's lives and financial resources and opportunities. Seeing as the United Nations started keeping track of Afghan fatalities in 2009, the number of Afghanistan's people who have lost their lives has risen to above 100,000. Even after two decades of substantial allied security, financial, and political support, the country continues to be plagued by a crippling variety of conflicts fueled by internal and external reasons. These conflicts continue to threaten the country's ability to function normally. Afghanistan peace and reconciliation's internal and external drawbacks are mainly divided into four parts. Namely: lack of political and social consensus, failure of state and fragmentation of authority, absence of regional and international ground for peacebuilding in Afghanistan, and rule of Pakistan on the peace process and its influence over the Taliban insurgency group (Cogan & Nag, 2020).

5.1. Lack of Political and Social Consensus

According to a report recently made public by the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS), the primary barriers to peace negotiations in Afghanistan are a shortage of will, inflexibility in the positions of the opposing parties, and the difficulty of the environment for negotiation. The report's conclusions demonstrated a lack of choice on the part of the United States of America, its partners, and individuals working within the government of Afghanistan. These rulers placed a premium on victory through military

conquest. Undoubtedly, the unwillingness of the relevant parties in the disputes is one of the primary reasons why the peace process has failed (Nabikhel , 2017).

The Turkish diplomat (Oguzhan Ertugrul, former Turkey's ambassador in Kabul) has stated that he is "pretty hopeful" over the future despite the length of the ongoing peace process. "To maintain itself, peace must be all-encompassing so that it may fulfill Afghan society's peace requirements. However, the most significant problem in Kabul is an absence of political unity (Khaliq, 2020)

SHEN BO (China) emphasized the significance of fostering national reconciliation by stating that all parties involved in the conflict in Afghanistan should prioritize the country's long-term values through an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led system. He expressed his satisfaction with the anti-corruption and transformation initiatives taken by the Afghan government, stressing that political groups should work toward greater unity and settle their disagreements via dialogue. In the meantime, the global community should live up to its promise to assist Afghanistan and provide assistance for its continued economic and social growth. He stated that China hoped that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) would keep respecting Afghanistan's sovereignty and that Afghanistan had excellent opportunities for regional economic collaboration (Releases, 2017).

Afghanistan's challenges of forming an inclusive political solution and establishing the environment for long-lasting peace and reconciliation remain unsolved. The Taliban have not yet confirmed an inclusive government to substitute for the current "mentor" government, primarily of Taliban representatives and with token portrayal from other ethnicities in small cabinet posts. This "mentor" government is highly exclusive and covers only Taliban representatives. The Taliban stated that they are "ready for inclusion but not selection" in response to the demands that were put on them by the UNSC to become more "inclusive, official, and united." Particularly non-Western goals are regarded with mistrust in this context (Ponzio & Barakat, 2021).

The absence of a viable strategy to seek reconciliation with the insurgents and the shortage of an agreement among governmental entities on what it takes to pursue reconciliation with them significantly impede the peace negotiations progress. Regarding the ongoing peace negotiations, Afghanistan's many different power centers fail to speak

with a unified front on behalf of the Afghan government. It is brought to everyone's attention by the spokesperson of the HPC when she notes that the HPC faces the same difficulty as members of the Committee who disagree on specific issues. She claims that the High Peace Council does not possess the resources necessary to carry out the peace negotiations successfully. In addition, the efforts of the HPC and the state are not being coordinated with one another. As a result, she has a pessimistic outlook on the outcome of the peace negotiations. She believes it is unlikely to contribute to the acceleration of the pace in the country (Zaki, 2018).

5.2. Failure of State System and Fragmentation of Authority

Ad hoc adjustment meant to establish a split face of state and government chief has not successfully resolved power struggles between major factions and continues to violate the constitution. The validity and efficacy of President Ashraf Ghani's government have been called into question due to this predicament, which has also provided powerful ammunition to those who oppose the administration. The lengthy rivalry between regional actors and central authority leaders over the distribution of subnational powers and resources in pluralistic and isolated countries has been neglected at a more fundamental level. Therefore, contemporary disagreements regarding nominations, elections, resources and other similarly important topics are taking place against a backdrop of long-term skepticism, long-standing frustrations, and desires from players outside of the country capital for higher authority and tangible self-sufficiency (Their & Worden, 2020).

Both internal and external elements that have led to the continuance of conflict and violence at every level and phase of the state's controversies have significantly affected the war in Afghanistan. Historically, in recent decades, the rows and disputes in Afghanistan are mainly oriented around the factors of ethnicities and sectarian divisions, which are accelerated from outside by external factors. On the one hand, the interactions of advancements and the maintenance of regional cooperation, the competition among the major powers, as well as the social and political shifts in Afghanistan, and the transformation process in the state, have all contributed to various types and levels of engagement of these factors over these four decades (Nabikhel , 2017).

The potential scenario in which an agreement is not reached involves a circumstance wherein the intra-Afghan peace process commences; however, the execution

of a provisional agreement runs into significant difficulties. The inability of the diplomatic teams to reach a consensus on heated debates like political power-sharing provisions at (the governmental, statewide, or county level), as well as the traditional values, the importance of religion, women's rights, ongoing violence, inmate returns, and election systems were one of the reasons that neglect progress for the peace talks. At the same time, these elements were not adequately addressed in the deal reached between the United States of America and the Taliban in February of 2020, even though they pose the possibility of significant difficulties in the country's future (Jones, 2020).

The initiatives undertaken after the intervention to change state–society ties and develop sustainable government infrastructure produced very little long-lasting progress over 20 years. The civilian structures of the state were virtually absent from the daily life of the vast majority of the people. Although economic plans did, to a certain extent, integrate the populace with foreign markets, these plans did not broadly assure the practice of individual financial liberty or the development of a native bourgeoisie. Conversely, direct investment from abroad was focused on what is sometimes referred to as the "rentier" industries of the economy, including the mining and mineral extraction industries. As a result, Afghanistan became utterly reliant on assistance from other countries and international donors (Dodge, 2021).

5.3. Absence of Regional and International Ground for Peacebuilding in Afghanistan

Kabul's authority is challenged by subordinate governments in the provinces and municipalities. Provincial or regional government leaders and militia could defy or decrease the central government's power in their regions or areas, eventually resulting in the central government's collapse. The last President of Afghanistan, Ghani, has a significant amount of authority to appoint and remove national, province, and local officials. However, suppose a regional governor, police commander, or other elected official openly refuses to be transferred or acts autonomously. This could be interpreted as a sign that the central government is becoming more fragile. The concern would also be warranted if there was a sizeable rise in the percentage of substate groups, as well as their size and capabilities, to the point where they began to outperform the National Directorate of Security (NDS) and Military Forces in terms of strength and capacity (Jones, 2020).

The Afghan state and citizens will have to make sacrifices to pay the price for reaching a peace agreement with the Taliban. Due to the Taliban's recent year's victories in the struggle, they would not willingly accept the arbitrary conditions established by the Afghan state. This is because the Taliban would not yield. The mentality that the Afghan administration has formed in signing a peace agreement with Hizb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA), wherein HIA was just not granted an authority deal, constrains the Afghanistan's government ability to make progress toward its goals. The HIA was once a significant challenge to the government's authority, but the Taliban posed an even larger challenge. While the peace talks were going on, the Taliban claimed they had command over more than half of the country's land and could infiltrate even the most heavily guarded sections of the government's jurisdiction. Therefore, the agreement that was presented to the Taliban ought to be tempting and sufficient for the Taliban to call an end to their combat and participate in the democratic process (Arsalai, 2017).

The regional level is similarly fraught with difficulties. Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and China are the six nations that surround Afghanistan. These nations' goals in the country's war are very diverse, as are their political approaches. All of these surrounding countries are affected by the Afghan conflict. Pakistan is one of the most alleged states in neighboring Afghanistan, which is involved in the instability and internal disorder in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Taliban's military capabilities have grown thanks to the efforts of this country's adversary, the United States, which regards Afghanistan as an important source of strategic depth in its strained ties with India.

Contrary to Pakistan's intentions, Iran's policy towards the Taliban is changeable. At the same time, in the instances, Iran's preferred and even helped the Taliban to fight against the common enemy of the USA. Nevertheless, Iran also supported the Northern Alliance to protect its interests. Iran's stance in Afghanistan has been influenced by its competition with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in a bigger context (Harpviken & Strand, 2001).

5.4. Role of Pakistan on the Peace Process and its Influence Over Taliban Insurgency Group

The USA's involvement in Afghanistan has traditionally relied heavily on Pakistan. The Taliban rebellion in Afghanistan has received backing from Pakistan for the last two

decades, despite Pakistan being a formal USA ally; however, Pakistan was one of the few three nations recognizing the Taliban administration in the 1990s. Religious schools (Madrasas) in Pakistan were the primary training grounds for the Taliban's top leaders and suicide bombers. They were targeting coalition forces and the Armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Although the Pakistani state was reluctant to cut its ties with the Taliban following 9/11, however, in reality, on the ground, they were tight on many levels. Indeed, due to clear evidence from the Taliban, which was left on the floor while targeting forces in Afghanistan, all evidence and findings showed that the Taliban forces and their leaders' heaven and safe zone were Pakistan. Furthermore, Besides the Taliban, other terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda have also safe zone in particular parts of Pakistan (Group A. S., 2021).

Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan and its relations with the Taliban go back several decades beyond 1996 when the Taliban organization established its Islamic Emirate. In 1947, Pakistan had the perception that Afghanistan was a part of its influence zone since it was going to acquire the western border of the British Indian colony, known as the Durand Line. This perspective is maintained, and Afghanistan is frequently regarded as a "fifth province" that relies on the "goodwill of a beneficent big brother." Traditionally, Afghans have taken offense by Pakistanis' sentiments toward their country. In addition, the Durand Line, with a length of 2640 km, is regarded as the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan; however, some leaders of Afghanistan, including, former president's National Security Council's advisor, Hamdullah Muhibb assert that the Durand Line is unacceptable for them. Pashtuns, claimed to be the dominant ethnic group in Afghanistan, also live across the Durand Line; as a result, tension erupts because some Pashtun leaders argue that borderline divides the Pashtun population in both is not fair (Group C. , 2021).

Following the USA's intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, the Afghan people have endured a great deal of suffering due to the war on terrorism, various security concerns, and political and economic upheaval. Pakistan, an essential neighboring country to Afghanistan, has the potential to play a significant role in easing the peace negotiations and bringing about solidarity and stability in the region. The administrations of the United States of America and Afghanistan have demanded that Pakistan exert pressure and draw the Taliban to the table for talks. For the sake of the wider interests of the neighborhood, Pakistan must keep her support for the stability of Afghanistan and play the part that is rightfully in the discussions for peace (Idrees , Rehman , & Naazer , 2019).

The mission of the major world powers that converged on Afghanistan was to eradicate the fundamental causes of religious extremism and drug dealing, terrorism, and drug running. As mentioned before, Afghanistan and Pakistan share a long border; however, in the last five decades, both countries don't have friendly relations. It is also argued that If peace is restored in Afghanistan, Pakistan will be the country that benefits the most from it. The conflicts and insecurity in Afghanistan have been the most detrimental to Pakistan's economy. In the so-called war on a terror mission, which the United States initiated, both countries have suffered losses amounting to several billion dollars and countless lives. Pakistani authorities state that Pakistan is supporting Afghanistan's peace talks, and they are also trying to persuade all parties involved to participate in work toward stabilizing the country (Mustafa, Yaseen, & Junaid , 2020) .

The political climate in both Pakistan and Afghanistan is influenced by the Taliban, whose primary stronghold is located along the border between the two nations. And during the war between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, Pakistan was the country that was accused of providing a haven for Afghanistan's adversaries (1979-1989). Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Afghanistan underwent a process that led to increased internal fragmentation and division. In 1996, the Taliban established itself as a significant political and military power. They received assistance from Pakistan through diplomacy and material aid, and they provided shelter for Osama bin Laden, who was also responsible for September 11 (Akhtar, 2008) .

Pakistan is distinguishable from the other external powers that are involved in attempts to prolong and influence the current conflict by both the scope of its goals and the size of its activities, which include requesting financing for the Taliban, financially supporting Taliban activities, giving diplomatic recognition as the Taliban's unofficial representatives abroad, organizing training for Taliban militants, enlisting trained and untrained labor to fight in Taliban forces, coordinating and commanding Taliban military operations (Watch, 2001) . Hence, Pakistan has a significant role in encouraging the Taliban insurgency for peace process and reconciliation.

In short, Due to its geostrategic location and demographic diversity, Afghanistan could not succeed in establishing a stable government and providing security and sovereignty over its territory in its contemporary history. Furthermore, the lack of political consensus among Afghanistan's politicians and ethnic leaders and dependency on foreign

aid prevented the country from becoming stable and defending its sovereignty. The rivalry of external powers, including the United States, Russia, Iran, and Pakistan, as well as China and India in Afghanistan, accelerated dependency, conflict, poverty, immigration, and instability in Afghanistan. On the one hand, the United States of America, under the War on terror, intervened in Afghanistan and tried to increase its influence on the region, particularly on Iran, Russia, and China. Meanwhile, the rivalry between Iran and Pakistan by supporting sectarian tensions is tangible. India also put efforts into influencing Pakistan from Afghanistan through its intelligence services. Pakistan also has a vast ISI network supporting the rival targets within Afghanistan. As a result of these opposite interests of external states, Afghanistan became a battlefield or war zone for the world and regional opponent powers.



6. CONCLUSION

In its contemporary history, Afghanistan is well-known as a ground of the world's great powers' conflicts or their rivalry field in the region. Due to its geostrategic location and socio-economic conditions, Afghanistan is an important country for the hegemony of imperial powers. For most of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century, the Russian Empire and the British Empire were engaged in political, economic, and diplomatic hostility over Afghanistan and surrounding countries. Later, the confrontation between the United States of America and the Soviet Union occurred there. Continued wars and insurgency mostly took place in Afghanistan as a result of external intervention and occupations and complex internal issues.

As the subject of this research, "Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan (2001-2021)", this study evaluated the peacebuilding and conflict resolution process in Afghanistan in the last two decades. However, the study faced some limitations, like unavailability of sources on the issue of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, lack of publications from domestic resources, and being far from the area of conflict. Firstly, by using secondary data in a qualitative method, an overview of the general situation in the country had conducted. Secondly, the study evaluated the roots of conflicts, the rise of insurgency, and domestic causes of instability. It focused on dynamics such as religious extremism and external influence from east and west and regional powers. The third chapter had come through steps and initiatives taken to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. These initiatives included the Bonn Agreement, the basis of the new interim government, approval of a new constitution, acceptance of democratic values, and practicing democracy in the country. After the country's second general presidential election in the aftermath of the USA's intervention, Hamid Karzai was elected as the president of Afghanistan.

The year 2009, when the Afghanistan presidential elections were held, coincided with the increased armed attacks by the Taliban's insurgent group against the government armed forces and government employees. At the same time, the High Peace Council was established in 2010. Besides the establishment of HPC, secret peace talks between the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban's insurgent group delegations within Afghanistan and in the neighbouring countries were began. The United States of America

and some other European countries, including Norway and Germany, encouraged and helped both government and the Taliban to engage in inter-Afghan peace talks. However, many of these initiatives and programs contradicted each other and did not lead to a tangible result in changing the nature of conflict and creating a lasting peace between different groups in Afghanistan.

To answer inquiries of this research respectively, what are the obstacles to peacebuilding in Afghanistan? Obstacles like lack of political and social consensus, failure of state system and absence of regional and international appropriate ground for peacebuilding in Afghanistan prevented the country to reach a lasting peace. The presence of international forces in Afghanistan to fight against terrorism and the so-called “war on terror,” operation without any consideration of social context alongside the increase of militarism and suppression of the rebels, were the primary obstacles to the reintegration of insurgents into society. According to the result of this study Hypothesis 2 is accepted. International and regional interventions are the main obstacles to peacebuilding in Afghanistan. Misunderstanding of the foreign forces from the society and the position of the opposing groups destroyed the relative chance of permanent stability in Afghanistan. Furthermore, in the post era of the establishment of a democratic government, the influence of rival regional powers has turned Afghanistan into their conflict zone.

Afghanistan's neighbor's negative approach toward the stability and development of the country also caused the failure of peace talks and reaching a lasting peace deal between the various interest groups. Additionally, appointments to governmental institutions were based on ethnic orientations. For example, leadership and first-level administrators or commanders in the ministry of defense belonged to a specific ethnic group. In contrast, the ministry of interior affairs general directors mainly belonged to other ethnic groups. These institutions became on the edge of weakness and collapse due to the appearance of multiple deficiencies within the national security forces, the decline in military backing of foreign troops, and the inability to pay costs.

After the 2014 general presidential election and the beginning of the newly formed national unity government, the polarization of the north and the south has strengthened within the government. This was also regarded as the reason for the failure of the government's goal of achieving national reconciliation. Ethnic tensions between the non-Pashtuns and the Pashtuns of the south have spread from the society to the power

institutions and military forces. The sense of national unity within the community and security forces declined. Taliban and its division into two main groups in the east and the west have increased the fears and hopes for establishing peace in Afghanistan. from the findings of this study its revealed that the hypothesis 3 is also accepted. Diverse ethnographic structure in Afghanistan resulted negatively and it eventually, formed obstacle to peacebuilding in Afghanistan.

In short, many internal factors, such as lack of political and social consensus, failure of the state system, fragmentation of authority, and external factors such as the negative role of Afghanistan's neighbors, determine the peacebuilding process in Afghanistan. The peacebuilding initiatives and steps did not result in peace and property in the country. As the hypothesizes of this research, assert that international and regional interventions are the main obstacles to peacebuilding in Afghanistan. Additionally, according to this research, diverse ethnographic structure of Afghanistan is also regarded as one of the obstacles to peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Afghanistan.

The last two decades rebuilding efforts, improvement in governance system, educational opportunities, and an increase in enforcement of law on the one hand, war, poverty, corruption, and nepotism on the other hand, made this study accepts the null hypothesis for the hypothesis one, because there were both progress and drawbacks in terms of peacebuilding efforts and its impacts in the society.

6.1. Policy Recommendation

Due to its difficult geographic location and diverse ethnography a decentralized model of a governmental system is necessary for Afghanistan for fair distribution of resources and power. To reach a lasting peace and prosperity all sides of conflict in Afghanistan need to compromise among themselves without influence from external factors. The obstacles toward peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan should be debated in the national discourse. Improving educational opportunities and eradicating of extremism and backwardness should be a priority for the policymakers in Afghanistan. Dealing with neighboring countries' concerns in terms of their national interests in Afghanistan, particularly those of Iran and Pakistan should be discussed among Afghanistan's politicians and decision makers in Afghanistan.

All peacebuilders, including the Afghanistan's people, and politicians, agencies, UN institutions, and the entire international community, must share clear aims and plans, develop new approaches and policies, and implement effective reconciliation initiatives for reaching peace in Afghanistan. By considering all factions of the society particularly, local communities and the people from the remote parts of the country, peacebuilding initiatives can be designed to meet the requirements of post-conflict's Afghanistan. In a traditional society like Afghanistan resolving post-conflict conditions necessitates teaching local community members or tribes. Using conflict resolution techniques may teach them to listen to understand and tolerate opposing viewpoints.



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