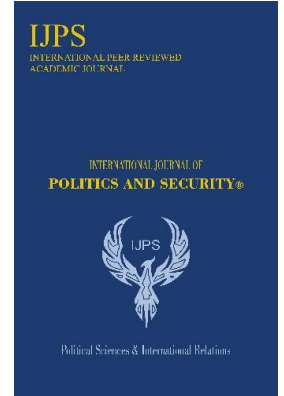


International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS)

ISSN: 2667-8268

<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/ijps>



Analysis of the Intra-State Conflict in Afghanistan

Author(s): Mudassir FATAH

Source: International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS) / Vol.2 No.3 / May 2020, pp.34-63.

Received Date: 18.11.2019

Accepted Date: 02.12.2019

How to cite this article:

Fatah, Mudassir. "Analysis of the Intra-State Conflict in Afghanistan". *International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS)*, Vol.2, No.3, 2020, pp.34-63.

All intellectual property rights of this article belong to International Journal of Politics and Security (IJPS). It cannot be republished, reproduced, distributed, sold or made available to the public for free / paid use in any way, without any prior written, written communication, copying or broadcasting system. Academic citations are outside this rule. The ideas stated in the article belong only to the author(s), not represent of standing of IJPS.



Analysis of the Intra-State Conflict in Afghanistan

Mudassir FATAH*

Abstract

Afghanistan has been the hotbed of the international conflict since the Soviet invasion in December 1979. The decade long foreign troop presence mainly initiated the conflict within the different communities in Afghanistan the withdrawal of the Soviets in no way marked the end of the Afghan conflict. With the Soviet withdrawal gave rise to a power vacuum and then the Taliban. The withdrawal of the Soviets intensified the intra-state conflict in Afghanistan and also the involvement of the external actors. The involvement of the external actors further intensified the intra-state conflict and the same continued till 1996. Afghanistan witnessed a kind of a stability for a brief period with the rise of the Taliban. The Soviet invasion and the civil war had already given rise to multiple militias and they continuously engaged the Taliban government/forces, and Afghanistan never saw the peace. The Taliban government too was not elected, so the challenges were bound to rise. The conflict continued till 2001. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US, the conflict in Afghanistan took a new turn. US intervened in Afghanistan to dislodge the Taliban government and started the war on terror. Again, number of international actors fiercely got involved in Afghanistan. The United Nations, the NATO, Pakistan, Iran, India, Turkey, etc. all are now involved in the race for dominating Afghanistan, which further intensified the conflict in Afghanistan.

Keywords: *Afghanistan, Intra-State Conflict, 9/11, International Actors, Taliban*

Afganistan'da ki Devletiçi Çatışmanın Analizi

Özet

Afganistan, 1979 Aralık'ındaki Sovyet istilasından bu yana uluslararası ihtilafın merkezi olmuştur. Yabancı askerlerin yıllara kadar Afganistan'da bulunması, oradaki farklı etkin gruplar arasındaki çatışmalara yol açtı. Sovyetlerin geri çekilmesi hiçbir şekilde Afgan ihtilafının sona ermesine sebep olamadı. Aksine bu bir güç boşluğuna ardından Taliban'ın ortaya çıkmasına neden oldu. Sovyetlerin geri çekilmesi Afganistan'daki devlet içi çatışmayı ve dış aktörlerin katılımını arttırdı. Dış aktörlerin katılımı, devlet içi çatışmayı daha da yoğunlaştırdı ve aynı, 1996'ya kadar devam etti. Taliban'ın yükselişiyle Afganistan, kısa zamanlık bir tür istikrar gördü. Sovyet istilası ve iç savaş çoktan milislere yol açmıştı. Bu miliseler sürekli olarak Taliban'la savaş halinde olduğundan Afganistan da huzuru

* Postdoctoral Research Fellow, International Relations Department, Faculty of Political Sciences, Sakarya University, Email: mudassirparray@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-9670-9860

Received: 18.11.2019

Accepted: 02.12.2019



görmedi. Taliban hükümeti de seçilmiş bir hükümet olmadığından zorlukların artması tabii idi. Böylece çatışmalar 2001 yılına kadar devam etti. ABD'ye yapılan 9/11 terörist saldırısının ardından Afganistan'daki çatışma yeni bir hal aldı. ABD, Taliban hükümetini yerinden etmek için Afganistan'a müdahale etti ve terörle mücadeleye başladı. Yine, Afganistan'da uluslararası aktörlerin yoğun sayısı yer aldı. Birleşmiş Milletler, NATO, Pakistan, İran, Hindistan, Türkiye, vs. hepsi Afganistan'da kendi etkisini arttırmak çabasında olduğundan Afganistan sorunu daha da büyümektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Afganistan, Devlet-içi çatışma, 9/11, Uluslararası güçler, Taliban*

1. Introduction

Afghanistan has been lingering in the conflict at least since 1979 when the Soviet forces invaded the country, and the conflict still goes on. Passing from the different phases, the conflict in Afghanistan needs to be analysed in the light of intra-state conflict as the same has majorly relied upon the community to community conflict, called either as a Civil War or an intra-state conflict. The Soviet withdrawal gave rise to the new possibilities which finally culminated in the Civil War followed by the emergence of the Taliban. Again, the intra-state conflict dominated the politics of Afghanistan where the Pushtun's governing body (Taliban) tried to suppress all other ethnic groups, and the intra-state conflict continued.

The paper analyses the intra-state Afghan conflict in the light of theoretical approach and the research methodology designed. The theoretical approach of the research demands that the Afghan conflict may be looked into as an intra-state conflict and the involvement of international actors. The research method drawn demands that the Conflict Mapping Approach be followed which demands the response towards the five-basic questions, which include; I) What is a conflict? II) How and why do conflicts arise? III) How and why do conflicts evolve? IV) What elements constitute a conflict? and V) What can be done with a conflict?.¹ In the light of these five-basic questions and other requirements, the discussion will be followed and the reasons and stages of the conflict will be discussed extensively, their support base and their gains will also be looked into. The paper is qualitative in nature and draws its strength extensively from the secondary sources. The actors to the conflict will be identified, their

¹Programa Compartim, *Conflict Mapping: Theory and Methodology, Practical Application in Juvenile Justice*, (Department of Justicia, 2014), 20.



expectations, demands and capabilities will be discussed as needed by the research design of the research project, as the Conflict Mapping demands these to be identified and thoroughly looked into. The discussion will be followed by the search for the positivities and the way forward, which will be in a way focusing on the peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict.

2. Theoretical Approach: Role of International Actors in the Intra-State Conflicts

International actor(s) are the ultimate source(s) for solving the intra-state long-drawn conflicts, as “71% of conflicts that ended through agreement involved third party intervention.”² The international actors join hands when they realize that some intra-state conflict has the expanding ability beyond borders, which can ultimately disturb regional or international peace. As the actions of the state(s) are fully driven by their interests, states vulnerable to conflicts are taken care of by the international actors to limit the conflict and to give peace a chance. History bears the witness to many such conflicts which eventually engulfed other states.

There are many conflicts where international actors came forward and started the peacebuilding initiatives. Some failed, but some changed the discourse of history and peace prevailed. The United Nations had been involved in the Palestinian-Israeli war since 1947, when the British cabinet decided to refer the problem to it. Since then the UN has been actively involved on different fronts in this intra-state conflict, but all in vain. No solution could be found, and the conflict is still lingering. The United States also had been actively involved in this conflict and had been mediating between the duo from time to time, but again all in vain. Palestine-Israel issue is the failure of the international community when it comes to their role in these types of conflicts.

Bosnian war was put to an end by the efforts of the international community. The war had started in 1992 and had claimed more than 100,000 lives and also created two million refugees.³ The efforts by the US and the UN are praiseworthy, and the war was put to an end

² Jonas Baumann and Govinda Clayton, “Mediation in Violent Conflict”, *Center for Security Studies*, no. 211, 2017, <https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse211-EN.pdf> (02.12.2019).

³ Katherine Brisson, "International Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia from the 1990s Through



successfully in February 1996. Kosovo is one of the finest examples of the intra-state conflicts where the conflict ended with its secession. In Kosovo's war a limited military intervention was done by NATO in March 1999. Finally, with the help of international community, particularly the UN and the US, Kosovo war was ended, and Kosovo declared its independence in February 2008. It was all because of international efforts the wars, like in Bosnia and Kosovo, were put to an end. While Palestine-Israeli war represents the failure of the international community, Bosnia and Kosovo represents the success of the same. There are many more such instances of establishing peace, but it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss them all.

International actors can play different roles towards the solving the intra-state conflict, like, the Deployment of United Nations Peacekeeping Mission, Conflict Solving, Peacemaking (*In-Conflict Negotiations*), *Mediation*, Peace Enforcement, Diplomacy, Economic Sanctions, Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding (*Conflict Transformation*), etc.

3. Introducing Afghanistan as an Intra-State Conflict

After the Soviet withdrawal in February 1989, Afghanistan became the hot bed of intra-state conflict between different *Mujahedeen* groups, earlier united against the Soviet occupation. The different *Mujahedeen* groups started fighting each other with new vigor for political supremacy of Afghanistan, and the war flared up. The ethnic enmity between different groups started dominating the scene once again. The intensity of the conflict increased with each passing day. Several wars were going on at the same time, 'Mujahedeen *versus* Najib; Pushtun Mujahedeen *versus* non-Pushtun mujahideen; Shia *versus* Sunni; mercenary *versus* nationalist; Peshawari *versus* local commander Masood-Rabbani *versus* Hekmatyar-Dostum.'⁴

The then President of Afghanistan, Dr. Najibullah managed to be in power till April 1992. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the foreign aid and support stopped, Najibullah too stopped fighting against the *Mujahideen*. The situation in Afghanistan changed and escalated into a human tragedy. The intensity of the conflict increased with each passing

the 2000's", *Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects*, 1004, (2017): 22, [https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/1004_\(13.03.2019\)](https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/1004_(13.03.2019)).

⁴ Aabha Dixit, "The Afghan Civil War: Emergence of the Taliban as Power Broker", *South Asian Survey* 2, no. 1, (1995): 111-118.



day. In August that year, a tragedy was implanted on Kabul wherein 3,000 people died in the bombardment of rockets. As Afghanistan is tribal, multiethnic, multilingual society, marked by factionalism and military fiefdoms, the warfare had slipped into a virtual anarchy.⁵ The country became battle of battlegrounds, where everybody was against everybody, it was a Hobbesian State of Nature where all were against were the enemies of all.

On the other hand, efforts were going on by the international community, the United Nations power-sharing arrangement was put in place. An interim government with fifteen-member council were selected among several *Mujahedeen* groups and Wattan Party, the former Communists. But everything did not go well according to the UN plan, as the Najibullah's government crumbled. Abdul Rashid Dostum abandoned the regime and formed an alliance with rebel military officers and leaders of some major guerrilla parties. The other powerful *Mujahedeen* leader, Ahmad Shah Masood also formed an alliance in the northern Afghanistan and went beyond the UN plan of neutral government.

In view of the above incidents and defections, the Peshawar Accord was signed on April 24, 1992, headed by academician Sibghatullah Mojaddedi for two months, followed by Burhanuddin Rabbani for four months. After President Najib's exit from power, the Peshawar Accord was first significant step towards the establishment of stable government. The Peshawar Accord consisted of fifty-one persons, an amalgamation of almost all the *Mujahedeen* parties.⁶ But, unfortunately, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who was an important stakeholder at that time in the Afghan politics, did not attend this meeting. The agreement was to prevent further bloodbath in Afghanistan, hailed by Nawaz Sharief, Prime Minister of Pakistan, as "the biggest achievement of the Afghan war and expressed the hope that *Mujahedeen* coalition would smoothly take over power in Afghanistan."⁷

The Peshawar Accord could not achieve its goal in *toto*. Once Rabbani took over the Presidency from Mojaddedi, he changed his policy and refused to hold elections for his

⁵ Shah M. Tarzi, "Afghanistan in 1992: A Hobbesian State of Nature", *Asian Survey* 33, no. 2, (1993): 165-174.

⁶ Khalid Manzoor Butt, Azhar Javed Siddqi, "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations from 1978 to 2001: An Analysis", *South Asian Studies* 31, no. 2, (2016): 723-744.

⁷ Quoted in, Siddqi Butt, "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations from 1978 to 2001: An Analysis".



successor. Afghanistan was now further plunged into a new phase of fighting. Once again foreign powers had to intervene and join hands for the promotion of another accord. With the blessings of Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia, a fresh accord, known as 'Islamabad' Accord, was signed on March 7, 1993. The irony of the Accord is that it endorsed the continuation of Rabbani as the President of Afghanistan and in addition elected Hekmatyar as the Prime Minister.⁸ This accord was again aimed at bringing peace and putting an end to the armed hostilities. President Burhanuddin Rabbani was to continue with his position for next eighteen months and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was given the post of Prime Minister. Ceasefire between all *Mujahedeen* groups was to come into force with immediate effect. Election Commission was to be constituted and a national army was to be formed too. Unfortunately, all the efforts (the Peshawar Accord, the Islamabad declaration, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as well as the UN) failed to yield any permanent peace.⁹

While this Accord bizarrely endorsed the Rabbani's continuation, the new Accord in itself violated the Peshawar Accord in letter and spirit. With this endorsement, President Rabbani and his forces became more powerful and left the peace in lurch. Although it was an attempt by the foreign actors to stabilize Afghanistan and to avoid the internal war, but these kinds of agreements never worked, the fight over who would govern continued. Zalmay Khalilzad believes that although the Mujahedeen groups rose to power, "but they have failed to govern the country and the war has turned into a brutal civil conflict." He further believes that the fight in Afghanistan has been majorly about 'who should govern.'¹⁰

The Islamabad Accord was a corrupt case of who should govern as the one who violated the Peshawar Accord was openly endorsed for the continuation of power. Rather than providing the solution to the problem, the Rabbani's corrupt practice that he should govern further increased the dispute.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Kamal Matinuddin, *the Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997*, (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2000), 12.

¹⁰ Zalmay Khalilzad, "Afghanistan in 1994: Civil War and Disintegration", *Asian Survey* 35, no. 2, (1995): 147-152.



As the Civil War and switching sides continued, diplomatic/political search for a settlement also continued. In 1994, several proposals were put forward to end the Civil War. President Rabbani proposed that a Loya Jirga (grand assembly) should be convened to choose a new leader. His proposal was that the leader should be chosen from the interim parliament and the parliament should set procedures for future elections of National Assembly. He was ready to turn over the Presidency to the leader selected by Loya Jirga. Hekmatyar could not digest the Rabbani's plan, he wanted him to resign first and turn the control of Kabul to an interim administration before an assembly would be organized. Hekmatyar wanted this interim administration to organize elections, and then the future of the country could have been decided. Hekmatyar with others did not recognize Rabbani as a legitimate President as his term had ended in June 1994.¹¹

Commander Haqqani also put forward a peace proposal in 1994 himself. He called for the formation of an Islamic Council composed of religious scholars, Mujahedeen leaders, tribal leaders, intellectuals, and also three representatives from each of the country's administrative units. Haqqani wanted this council to decide on the President and Prime Minister who would in turn decide on the division of power between them. Haqqani also called for the expulsion of all Communists from the government, but the proposal was rejected by Rabbani and Dostam.¹²

Another plan for peace was proposed by three neutral parties headed by Pir Ahmad Gailani, Nabi Mohammadi and Mohammad Asif Mohseni. They proposed that power should be transferred from Rabbani and Massoud to a council composed of the leaders of nine Mujahedeen parties. Then this council was to decide about the convening of Loya Jirga which was to take a call on the future political system of Afghanistan. President Rabbani had rejected this proposal as well.¹³

On the other hand, the involvement of the United Nations also increased in 1994 for the peaceful resolution of the Civil War. The UN dispatched a special mission to Afghanistan

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.



headed by Mahmoud Mistri of Tunisia. The mission started with a fact-finding tour of Afghanistan and adjacent areas in March and April. The mission concluded that ‘a military victory by either side was impossible.’ During the second phase, Mistri unsuccessfully tried to negotiate a political settlement acceptable to both sides fighting in Kabul. Rabbani was attributed by Mistri for the failure of the same. Rabbani had once again stalled any peace accord as he was not having any positive inclination towards the United Nations efforts.¹⁴

When all the efforts failed, the Mujahedeen factions once again started fighting each other, thus resulted in severe intensity of Civil War, and peace never came to Afghanistan. Unfortunately, all the factions were highly distrustful towards each other, even after belonging to same nation and same religion. Every group wanted to have full access to and control over the central government. Ethnic enmity again dominated the scene and all the religious values came to an end. The lust of power filled their hearts by hate towards other fellow citizens, and nothing except power mattered for them.

The Soviet withdrawal had generated optimism for peace, but unfortunately all the militant factions with high distrust, started barbaric killing of other groups. All the Mujahedeen factions were fully armed by the US and Pakistani officials during the Soviet occupation. The weapons, which were used to kill the Soviets, were now being used to kill fellow citizens of Afghanistan. Destruction, chaos and confusion again rang the bell of the Afghan people. Now, the Civil War was going on at its peak, with everyone’s hand on the throat of every fellow citizen. During the Civil War from 1992-1994, 45000 Afghans died. Burhanuddin Rabbani and Hekmatyar were now involved in a severe fight for power.¹⁵

4. Causes of the Afghan Civil War

4.1. Soviet Invasion: the conflict in Afghanistan started with the foreign invasion in 1979. The Soviet Union deployed the forces upon the direct request by the Noor Mohammad Taraki and later by Hafizullah Amin.¹⁶ Once the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, the conflict got

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Matinuddin, *the Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997*, 10.

¹⁶ Oleg Yegorov, “Why did the USSR enter Afghanistan”, *Russia Beyond*, (2019), <https://www.rbth.com/history/329948-why-did-ussr-enter-afghanistan-war> (09.07.2019).



internationalized. The Soviet invasion invited further international actors to actively pursue and get involved in Afghanistan, like Pakistan, the United States and Saudi Arabia.

The international aid from the United States and Saudi Arabia helped the Afghan Mujahedeen to bleed the Soviets, finally after the decade of war and destruction, the Soviets withdrew their forces from Afghanistan. This withdrawal gave rise to a power vacuum, which now was eyed by different armed groups. This tussle over power and the control over the government is the first and foremost reason, which pulled the trigger of Civil War in Afghanistan.

After the Soviet withdrawal, the international involvement took a new turn. Pakistan, Iran and India etc. started aiding their own favorites to fulfill their own national interests. This in turn increased the intensity of the Civil War to an unimaginable level. The Afghan state collapsed, and it caused a local anarchy, as is well defined by Yilmaz, “State collapse causes a local anarchy in which individuals and groups find themselves in a state of serious insecurity. In the absence of a central authority, security is inevitably subjectively pursued, and social conflicts occur out of it.”¹⁷ Exactly the same happened with Afghanistan.

4.2. Ethnic factor is the second most important cause of the Civil War in Afghanistan. As referred earlier, once the Soviets left, the reason of unity between different *Mujahedeen* groups no longer existed. The old ethnic enmity returned to the Afghan politics and the price paid was too heavy to bear. All the ethnic groups with their own armed forces started marching towards Kabul for fulfilling the power vacuum left void by the Soviets. The earlier mentioned international factor is well much connected with the ethnic cause of the Civil War, as the outside powers started helping some particular ethnic group, like Pakistan started supporting Pushtun’s,¹⁸ Iran and India started arming Hazara’s and Northern Alliance.

4.3. Economic factor has also played an undefined role in the Afghan Civil War. War in itself has become “major employer” in Afghanistan, as the increasing unemployment pushes

¹⁷ Muzaffer Ercan Yilmaz, “Intra-State Conflicts in the Post-Cold War Era”, *International Journal on World Peace* 24, no. 4, (2007): 11-33.

¹⁸ Will Durant, “Civil War in Afghanistan”, www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/publications/se/6507/650706.html (27.04.2019)



the young men towards the armed groups and choosing the life of irregular soldiers to feed themselves and avoid poverty and starvation. Widespread poverty, destruction, millions of displaced refugees, wrecked infrastructure and poverty, etc. are some major contributors of the Afghan Civil War, dominantly economically.¹⁹

4.4. Domestic political factors have also played an important role in the Afghan Civil War, it majorly includes the warlordism, which dominantly increased after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Some ethnic leaders became warlords and they attempted for control over rival groups, their land and trade. Alliances and shifting alliances became a norm and the well-being of their own tribe became the priority, which increased the rivalry and led to the severe conflicts between different warlords.²⁰

5. Policies of External Actors Concerning Afghanistan

The intra-state conflict in Afghanistan is a protracted one, since its inception in 1979 it 'assumed strong elements of a proxy war between the former superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States.'²¹ The United States smelled an opportunity to bleed the Soviet Union and involve their security forces militarily without directly involving its own military. The Soviet invasion provided an opportunity to the United States to give them their own Vietnam that too on the foreign land. With this invasion, external involvement found its way to Afghanistan.

As earlier mentioned, the Soviet forces withdrew its troops from Afghanistan in February 1989 under the Geneva Accords of April 1988. The same marked a turning point in Afghanistan as Najibullah could hold on to the government at Kabul only till the foreign aid continued. He was removed from power in April 1992 followed by the failed seven Peshawar-based Mujahedeen Accord. Afghanistan was again plunged into the deep crisis, 'the war sank into international oblivion,'²² thus opened the floodgates for the wider external involvement,

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Citha D Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement", *Central Asian Survey* 18, no. 1 (1999): 65-78.

²² Ibid.



subsequently and successfully exploited by numerous outside actors for their own national gains. Every external actor started playing politics in Afghanistan and exploited the internal actors involved according to their own whims and wishes. This external involvement had a long lasting and devastating impact on Afghanistan, and it is yet to come out of that disaster.

Regional powers were deeply involved in the Afghan Civil War, which by 1995 had become a type of mini-great game for them. The policies of the regional countries added fuel to fire as the intensity of the Civil War increased. Competition between the outside actors increased and the Afghan Civil War became a proxy fight. Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Russia and India were some important outside actors who helped their own preferred proxies in Afghanistan.²³ Their support to their proxies helped them in extending their fight fiercely, which ultimately increased the Civil War violence.

5.1. Pakistan

Apart from the Soviet Union who got directly involved in the Afghan conflict with their military invasion in 1979 till their withdrawal in February 1989, Pakistan is the only external actor who has since then been aggressively involved in Afghanistan on multiple fronts. Among all external actors, Pakistan holds a strategic position in Afghanistan. During the Soviet-Afghan war, the US supplied arms and ammunition to the Afghan Mujahedeen only through Pakistan, giving it a leverage to decide on their own favorites, which was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar for a long time. As mentioned earlier, by 1994 Pakistan had shifted its stand and started aiding a new group, the Taliban. When in 1996 Taliban seized the power in Afghanistan with the Pakistan's blessings, it recognized the Taliban as the 'official' government 'prematurely' on May 25, 1997, only to be followed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates on May 26 and 27 respectively.

In consonance with the Pakistan's Afghan policy, the crazy and the hurried decisions were always taken in the backdrop of their security interests, particularly regarding their access to the Central Asian States, 'strategic depth' to Pakistan in Afghanistan *vis-à-vis* India, and their

²³ Zalmay Khalilzad, "Afghanistan in 1995: Civil War and a Mini-Great Game", *Asian Survey* 36, no. 2, (1996): 190-195.



‘controlling irredentist Pashtun nationalism across the controversial Afghan-Pakistani border,’ the so-called *Durand Line*.’²⁴

All these reasons have deeply encouraged Pakistan to involve in Afghanistan, the opportunity was opened to them in 1979 with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. When the Taliban came to power, a success was smelled by the Pakistani government about having a pro-Pakistani government, which in fact was their proxy, although indirectly. The success of Pakistan was short-lived as Taliban within short span of time invited the international condemnation for their policies against women, the destruction of the 6th century Bamiyan Buddhas. It was further marginalised for having ties with the Al Qaida operatives and for providing them shelter and safe space in Afghanistan. The whole discourse of the Pakistani involvement in Afghanistan changed after 9/11, and Pakistan acquired a new role where it sided with the US forces who were to dislodge the Taliban government. With the US intervention in Afghanistan, a new phase for the Pakistani involvement in Afghanistan started.

5.2. Iran

Iran, like Pakistan, is also a ‘regional linkage state’ in relation to Afghanistan. Iran did also have a strategic position in the intra-state conflict in Afghanistan during the last decade of 20th century. Iran was also responsible along with Pakistan in internationalizing the Afghan conflict, although to a lesser extent in comparison to Pakistan. Iran is responsible for increasing the intensity of the Afghan conflict when it supported the opposing groups to those of who were supported by the Pakistani government. Iran had links with the Northern Alliance and was particularly supportive to the Shiite member parties. Iran had one fundamental reason to get itself involved in Afghanistan, to counter the US-led international isolation efforts. After the emergence of Peshawar-based Sunni Mujahedeen groups, primarily backed by Pakistan and allegedly by the US, Tehran smelled the ‘political-cum-Islamist containment attempt. To counterbalance it, Iran, like Pakistan, felt compelled to assume a special role in the Afghan conflict during the 1990s.’²⁵

²⁴ Maass, “The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement”.

²⁵ Ibid.



When the anti-Shia Taliban captured most of the Afghan provinces, including those bordering the Iranian territory, Iran had to intensify its support to the Shia-led parties which mostly came from ethnic Hazaras. With the advancement of the Taliban towards the government at Kabul, the Iranian authorities expanded their support to other parties of the Northern Alliance. Iran's primary objective in Afghanistan after the arrival of the Taliban has been their containment and it also wants to prevent the spread of 'radical ideology' over into the Iranian territory.²⁶

5.3. Afghanistan's Extended Neighbors: Saudi Arabia, Turkey and India

These extended neighbors of Afghanistan did also function as 'regional conflict parties due to their close engagement with either of the two war camps,' can be grouped accordingly:²⁷

a) *On the Taliban side:* Saudi Arabia and its Arab client states, having become *de facto* regional actors by closely siding with Pakistan;

b) *On the Northern Alliance side:* Turkey and India, the latter trying to gain influence by cooperating with Russia and Iran.

c) The Saudi Arabia's massive financial and political assistance to the Taliban was based on three motivations:²⁸

d) Religious-ideological interests in spreading its Wahhabis interpretation of Islam in Greater Central Asia;

a) Power political interests in extending the Saudi sphere of influence, using well-established secret service contacts;

b) Financial and geo-economics interests, i.e. backing the Saudi oil company Delta in its endeavour to secure a share in the gas pipeline, whose route, according to present planning, would lead through a Taliban-controlled region.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.



Turkey had no interests in directly projecting its power in Afghanistan and did not feel immediately threatened by the Taliban. Its support of the Northern Alliance was confined to granting political backing and was based on two motivations:²⁹

- a) A defensive interest in containing an Islamist subversion, and
- b) An offensive interest in propagating the Turkish secular social model among the 'brother states' of the Turkish peoples in the Central Asian region.

India, along with Russia and Iran, found a common ground during the 1990s war in Afghanistan. India's Afghan policy during this period was dependent on external powers. Lalit Mansingh, former Foreign Secretary of India (1999-2000) had in an interview put it:³⁰

"We [India] discovered that we could play a security role during the Taliban period when the Northern Alliance was formed. And since Russia and Iran were on the same page, we were very comfortable in giving military assistance. But then we didn't have to worry about the routes because we had the active support of the Iranians. Therefore, getting military supplies across to the Northern Alliance was not a big problem.... But the fact is that it also acknowledges that India can't work alone. India by itself cannot play a major role in the security situation of Afghanistan."

5.4. The United States of America (USA)

There is a belief in certain sections of scholars that the CIA took a leading role in Afghanistan six months before the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan. This belief was later confirmed by the revelations of declassified documents. On July 3, 1979, under the Presidential "finding" CIA was authorized to spend \$500,000 on propaganda and psychological operations. The third country whose help was taken in this funding was Pakistan. Medical equipment and radios were shipped to Pakistan to be distributed to the Afghan guerrillas through Pakistan's ISI. Some handful congressional leaders were also notified for the purpose.³¹ The US looked upon the Communist influence as a threat to whole world. That is why Pakistan

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Avinash Paliwal, "New Alignments, Old Battlefield: Revisiting India's Role in Afghanistan", *Carnegie India*, 2017, [https://carnegieindia.org/2017/06/15/new-alignments-old-battlefield-revisiting-india-s-role-in-afghanistan-pub-71272\(02.05.2019\)](https://carnegieindia.org/2017/06/15/new-alignments-old-battlefield-revisiting-india-s-role-in-afghanistan-pub-71272(02.05.2019)).

³¹ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 46.



was made one of the most important allies of the US, to preserve their interests in the region. It was through Pakistan that the US was having easy access to operate in this region.³²

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was perceived as a direct threat to Iran and Pakistan in particular and the Gulf region in general. After the Second World War, for the first time a direct Soviet intervention took place. Writing about the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, Zbigniew Brzezinski notes that the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan intensified the ‘two-pronged American response’, first, direct American assistance to the *Mujahedeen*, second, to think about the large-scale presence of the US in the Persian Gulf region. The motive behind these American responses was to deter the future Soviet expansion in this region.³³

Further, warning the Soviet Union, President Carter used very tough language on the part of the USSR’s activities in the Gulf region, while warning the Soviet Union against their expansionist policy, President said,³⁴

“Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force”.

With this the foreign policy of the US was made clear and a strong message was sent to the USSR. In fact, the US got a chance to engage the Soviet Union in the actual battlefield without engaging their security forces.

The primary goal of the US covert operation was the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. Even if the goal was not to be attained quickly it was to be made costly for the Soviets. In a top-secret memo, Brzezinski wrote, *“Even if this is not attainable, we should make Soviet involvement as costly as possible”*. As mentioned earlier, it was to give the Soviets their own Vietnam.³⁵ The CIA’s Covert action authorized by President Carter in late December 1979 and reauthorized by President Reagan in 1981, was to raise the costs of Soviet intervention

³² A. Z. Hilali, *US Pakistan Relationship: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, (Great Britain: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 70.

³³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *the Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*. (United States: Basic Books, 1997), 7.

³⁴ State of the Union Address, 1980, “Carter Doctrine”.

³⁵ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 50-51.



in Afghanistan. The other objective of this covert action was to break the Soviets in such a way so to deter their further expansion to any other Third World country. Having the belief that the rebels could not defeat the Soviets on their own, the covert aid through Pakistan was provided to them to resist and continue the war, with the intention to raise the costs of Soviet intervention.³⁶

Pakistan laid down the rules that no American, CIA or otherwise would be allowed to move to Afghanistan. Every movement and distribution of weapons would be handled by ISI. Training of *Mujahedeen* was also to be done by ISI.³⁷ ISI started buying new weapons. Lee Enfield .303s, RPG-7s were bought in vast quantities, 60-millimeter Chinese mortars and 12.7 millimetre heavy machine guns were also bought. CIA also bought old weapons from Egypt. From Turkey, sixty thousand rifles, eight thousand light machine guns, ten thousand pistols and hundred million rounds of ammunition were bought. Big arms deals were done with the Chinese government and it was unbelievable that Chinese were selling weapons used to be against the Soviets. One of the CIA officers involved in the Afghan program, said, “*can it possibly be any better than buying bullets from the Chinese to use to shoot Russians?*”³⁸

It is clear that the US got deeply involved in the first phase of the Afghan war, although for their own motives, but the fact is that the war supply from the US to the Afghan guerrillas further escalated the Civil War once the Soviets had left Afghanistan. The Mujahedeen were strong enough to have a tough fight as they were having the foreign-made weaponry in their hands, which actually increased the intensity of the internal war.

5.5. The Soviet Union / Russian Federation

Where other regional and international powers got indirectly involved in the Afghan war, the Soviet Union is the source of all. Once the Soviet Union got its boots imprinted on the soil of Afghanistan, all others had the reason to support the Afghan Mujahedeen. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in late December 1979 and one of the bloodiest wars of the world

³⁶ Ibid., 58.

³⁷ Ibid., 63-64.

³⁸ Ibid., 66.



was born. The Soviet leaders initially visualized the Afghan war as a ‘small-scale intervention’ but the same stretched into a decade-long war and involving nearly one million Soviet soldiers and killing and injuring some tens of thousands of them. Noorte Haal, the newspaper of the Estonian Komsomol, has estimated that 50,000 were dead and 150,000 injured.³⁹ The war lasted for almost a decade and the Soviet Union withdrew its forces in February 1989, after much destruction and human loss on both sides. The impact of the Afghan war was so much that it eventually contributed to the disintegration of the Soviet Union on December 26, 1991. The Afghan war was a key factor in the breakdown of the empire, though not the only cause.⁴⁰

Table I: Who fought against whom in Afghanistan during the Intra-State Conflict?⁴¹

Years	Regime	Opposed by
1978-1992	Communist (PDPA)	Various Mujahedeen groups
1992-1996	Mujahedeen government	Mujahedeen opponents, then Taliban
1996-2001	Taliban government	Northern Alliance
2001-2014	Hamid Karzai (First Democratically elected government)	Taliban and other insurgent groups
2014-2019	Ashraf Ghani (Democratically elected government)	Taliban and other insurgent groups

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, ‘formulating a post-Soviet policy did not come easily to Russia.’ While it had curtailed its diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, it almost had lost its interests there now. The top priority of the Russian government was setting their house in order first. But the game did not end here, Russia did not have the official relations with the Taliban, they along with other countries backed the Northern Alliance in their fight against the Taliban.⁴² Although the Russian government has denied these charges, but the fact

³⁹ Noorte Haal, 1989.

⁴⁰ Rafael Reuveny and Aseem Prakash, “The Afghanistan war and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union”, *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 04, (1999): 693-708.

⁴¹ Australian Government, “Afghanistan: Political Parties and Insurgent Groups 1978-2001” (With authors additions from 2014 to 2019).

⁴² “Afghanistan's Northern Alliance”, BBC News, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1552994.stm



of the matter is that Ahmad Shah Masood had once himself said in an interview that ‘*he receives much of his equipment from the Russian mafia, not the Russian government,*’⁴³ which clearly indicates that Russia was involved whether directly or indirectly. Apart from Masood, Russians were also supplying arms to General Dostum, ‘*aiming to affect the military balance of power, in spite of the awareness that the Northern Alliance cannot be victorious.*’⁴⁴

6. Stages of The Conflict In Afghanistan

6.1. Stage I: The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan 1979-1989 (*Saur Revolution*)

The existing conflict in Afghanistan started with the Soviet invasion in December 1979. It laid the foundations for all forthcoming stages. The resistance started mainly built on Mujahedeen fighters, motivated by Islam, joined by other fellow Muslims from different Arab and African countries.⁴⁵ The first stage of war in Afghanistan was directly internationalized as the opposite main party was aided by the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. Billions of dollars were pumped in from the US and Saudi government through the Pakistani intelligence ISI. The primary purpose of Washington had little to do with the Afghan conflict, they had everything to do with their competition with the Soviet Union. It was to bog the Soviets down and deter them for further expansion.⁴⁶ The Afghanistan invasion involved the Cold War rivals in the Third World country, although indirectly. They played their politics on the land which never belonged to any of them and devastated the same for retaining their Cold War supremacy.

The first phase of Afghan war totally devastated the Afghan society, almost one and a half million people died during this phase, apart from the destruction of 60 percent of infrastructure of the country.⁴⁷ With the restrictions and the coercion increased by the Communist government, the refugee flow from Afghanistan increased, which ‘reached to five

(03.05.2019).

⁴³ James Risen, “Russians are Back in Afghanistan, Aiding Rebels”, The New York Times, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/27/world/russians-are-back-in-afghanistan-aiding-rebels.html> (03.05.2019).

⁴⁴ Maass, “The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement”.

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, “Backgrounder on Afghanistan: History of the War”, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/asia/afghan-bck1023.htm> (06.05.2019).

⁴⁶ George Friedman, “The 30-Year War in Afghanistan”, *Geopolitical Weekly (Stratfor)*, 2010, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/30-year-war-afghanistan> (06.05.2019).

⁴⁷ Neamatollah Nojumi, *the Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan: Mass Mobilization, Civil War, and the Future of the Region* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 97.



million out of a population of about sixteen million.’ The heart of the first phase was religion, as Islamic organisations and fighters fought the war with religious zeal, they collectively came to be known as Mujahedeen, based in Pakistan and Iran.⁴⁸

6.2. Stage II: From the Geneva Accords to the Mujahedeen’s Civil War

The Geneva Accords were culminated in 1988 to end the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, accordingly the Soviet Union withdrew its forces by February 1989. The first phase of the conflict came to an end, but the war didn’t. Although the Soviets left, but the Communist government with their blessings continued till April 1992. Mujahedeen continued their struggle against the Najibullah-led Communist government. The fall of Najibullah gave birth to the new phase, the high intensity Civil War, where the struggle was going on for fulfilling the power vacuum created by the exit of President Najibullah. The militias of Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum and Tajik leader Ahmed Shah Masood and the Hazara faction of *Hizb-I Wahdat* joined hands and attacked Kabul followed by the agreement on a coalition government, which outrightly excluded Gulbuddin Hekmatyar – ‘the protégé of Pakistan.’ Rabbani became the President under the new coalition and Hekmatyar continued to bombard Kabul. In January 1994, Dostum left Alliance and joined Hekmatyar to oust Rabbani and Masood, ‘*launching full-scale Civil War in Kabul*,’ killing thousands of people and reducing the one-third of the city to rubble.⁴⁹

Figure I: Levels / Stages of Conflict Intensities⁵⁰

intensity Level	terminology	level of violence	intensity class
1	dispute	non-violent conflicts	low intensity
2	non-violent crisis		
3	violent crisis	violent conflicts	medium intensity
4	limited war		high intensity
5	war		

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch, “Backgrounder on Afghanistan: History of the War”.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Methodology of the Heidelberg Conflict Research, <https://hiik.de/hiik/methodology/?lang=en> (09.11.2019).



6.3. Stage III: Emergence of the Taliban and their Conquest of Afghanistan

As mentioned earlier, the dramatic entry of the Taliban changed the direction of the Afghan Civil War, with a new phase, where a strong force emerged with the ability to crush most of the existing Afghan militias/Mujahedeen. The movement started in 1994 and within two years they were able to conquer the capital city of Afghanistan and eventually formed the government. The new phase of Civil War had started in the Afghan history as soon as the Taliban managed to dislodge the Masood-backed Rabbani government in September 1996. They also renamed the country as Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, but the war did not end.

With his loss of Kabul, Masood began to obtain the military assistance from Iran and Russia. The opposing parties also reconstituted the Northern Alliance for their fight against the Taliban. Throughout 1997 and 1998, the Taliban with their increasing ambitions made repeated attempts for extending their control to other parts of the country, particularly to the north of Afghanistan, 'where Dostum had carved out what amounted to a mini-state comprising five provinces which he administered from his headquarters in Shiberghan, West of the important city of Mazar-i Sharif.'⁵¹ On May 19, 1997 as many as 5,000 commanders of Dostum were arrested by the Taliban after his deputy Gen. Abdul Malik Pahlawan struck an agreement with the Taliban. But the Malik-Taliban agreement could not hold for so long, and the alliance disintegrated quickly. When Taliban entered Mazar-i Sharif, they attempted to disarm the local Hazaras, this led to the death of the hundreds of the Taliban soldiers in the city streets, and some 3,000 Taliban were imprisoned by Gen Malik and 'allegedly also by Hizb-i Wahdat, and summarily executed.'⁵² The Taliban was finally able to take the control of Mazar-i Sharif in August 1998 wherein they massacred at least 2,000 people, most of them were civilians of Hazara. With this bloodiest act, both Dostum and Gen Malik had to leave Afghanistan for exile in Turkey and Iran, respectively.⁵³ Shortly after these episodes, United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan was constituted, and the fight against the Taliban continued, so continued the sufferings of the people of Afghanistan. The Taliban continuously fought for

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.



extending their territorial control, so fought against the fringe militias, but the most effective were the forces of Ahmad Shah Masood. Hizb-i Wahdat and Harkat-i Islami had briefly taken control of Yakaolang town in late December 2000, but they lost the same to the Taliban on January 8, 2001. After retaking the town, the Taliban had massacred at least 178 civilians in revenge. From January to June the town changed hands several times and was finally burnt by the Taliban and many other villages against their failure of retaining the same.⁵⁴

During this phase of the Civil War in Afghanistan, international community got involved many times for different reasons, were the United States demanded the handing over of the Bin Laden, the United Nations and most of the nations condemned the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban. Bin Laden was wanted by the US for his alleged role in the bombings of the US Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam, the demand rejected by the Taliban government. The US launched air strikes on the training camps of Bi Laden near the Pakistani border. In October 1999, the UN imposed sanctions on the Taliban for not turning over Bin Laden. Further on December 9, 2000, the UN expanded the sanctions to arms embargo, travel ban on the Taliban officials and closing of the Taliban offices abroad.⁵⁵

This phase of the war in Afghanistan ended with the US military intervention in Afghanistan after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. Ahmad Shah Masood was assassinated on September 9, 2001 by the suicide bombers. A new phase of war began in the Afghan history, an internationalized intra-state conflict.⁵⁶

6.4. Stage IV: 9/11 and the US Intervention in (2001-2014)

The orientation of the modern politics drastically changed with the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US soil. Afghanistan became the primary target of the ‘War on Terror’ campaign by the US and its allies to combat terrorism and to put the culprits to justice. Whole world stood with the US in the time of grief. On the very next day of the attacks, President George W. Bush had a meeting with the National Security Council (NSC), where he had stressed that the US was at

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.



war with a new and a different kind of enemy,⁵⁷ a non-state actor, with state backing. The actor was Al-Qaida, who was responsible for these attacks, alleged by the US. Afghanistan was identified as a 'failed' state, which was identified as safe havens for them.⁵⁸

The US authorities had demanded that the Taliban should turn Bin Laden to them, the demand struck down by the Taliban government, as they did not find any merit in the US demand. Taliban did not comply with the US demands, they ignored the non-negotiable demands from the Bush administration and the current phase of the bloodiest war in the Afghan history began with the US intervention in Afghanistan for eliminating the acts and safe havens of terrorism. On October 2, 2001, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members formally invoked the Article 5 of the NATO Charter,⁵⁹ putting their military coalition on a war footing. This was for the first time that the related article was invoked. The article states that an attack on any NATO associate will be treated as an attack on all.⁶⁰ The formal military attack began on October 7, 2001 when the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) began with air strikes.⁶¹ The attack trembled the Taliban government and this was the beginning of the new era, an internationalized conflict.

The US-led intervention further deepened the already existing intra-state conflict in Afghanistan, the conflict took a new turn, and members of the Northern Alliance immediately joined the Western coalition and became the inalienable part of the transitional government, which was actually meant to challenge the Taliban forces. The Northern Alliance was formally dissolved in 2001 as its members and parties joined the Karzai government.⁶² The conflict within the Afghan society further deepened and the ethnic enmity and rivalry reached to an

⁵⁷ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, "9/11 Commission Report", p. 330, [https://9-11commission.gov/report/\(10.05.2019\)](https://9-11commission.gov/report/(10.05.2019)).

⁵⁸ Sonali Huria, "Failed States and Foreign Military Intervention: The Afghanistan Imbroglio", *IPCS Special Report*, no. 67 (2009).

⁵⁹ The North Atlantic Treaty, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm (25.04.2019).

⁶⁰ David Wildman and Phyllis Bennis, "The War in Afghanistan Goes Global", *Critical Asian Studies* 42, no. 3 (2010): 469-480.

⁶¹ Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy", CRS Report for US Congress", (2004), 9.

⁶² Australian Government, "Afghanistan: Political Parties and Insurgent Groups 1978-2001", Migration Review Tribunal-Refugee Review Tribunal, 2013, [https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1154721/1226_1369733568_ppig1.pdf_\(29.04.2019\)](https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1154721/1226_1369733568_ppig1.pdf_(29.04.2019)).



unparalleled level, were the Taliban became the prime target and almost all others united against them. Dostum who was exiled to Turkey returned and became the part of the democratic government. Hekmatyar also signed a peace deal with the Afghan government, he was pardoned for his crimes against the Afghans. In return, his forces agreed to cut ties with the extremist forces and shunned the violent path. Rabbani was chosen as a chief of High Peace Council, the primary job of which was to facilitate the negotiations with the Taliban and other insurgent groups. He held this position until his assassination on September 20, 2011.

6.5. Stage V: Major Withdrawal of the US/NATO Forces and the Emergence of Resolute Support Mission (RSM, January 01, 2015-till date)

Osama bin Laden had been the major irritant between the Taliban and the US from the very beginning. Subsequently, the hunt for Osama increased after the September 11 terrorist attacks. When the negotiations for his extradition failed, then the US directly intervened in Afghanistan and started hunting for him with their own forces on the ground. The hunt for him continued for almost a decade (2001-2011). The search came to an end with his death by the US Navy SEAL team raid, in his compound on May 2, 2011, in Abbottabad Pakistan.⁶³ It was a major victory for the US in their decade long battle against the Al-Qaida. The US did not limit its search to Afghanistan, but searched him in Pakistan too, where he was finally nabbed. He had been hiding in a compound in Abbottabad for about six years, in isolation, with three wives, and over a dozen children. This compound was only forty miles away from the Pakistan capital, Islamabad. The US SEAL team was on the ground for forty minutes and executed the operation successfully.⁶⁴

Announcing the death of bin Laden, the President of the US, Barrack Obama said, “...on nights like this one, we can say to those families who lost loved ones to Al-Qaida’s terror: justice has been done”.⁶⁵ With the death of Bin Laden, President Obama indicated that the US

⁶³ Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Hard Choices*, (London: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 164.

⁶⁴ Carlotta Gall, *the Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan 2001-2014*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 242-243.

⁶⁵ Tom Cohen, “Obama tells families of 9/11 victims that ‘justice has been done’”, *CNN*, 2 May 2011.



forces would withdraw by 2014 from Afghanistan.⁶⁶ This was, in fact, a big success for the US which paved the way for the major US withdrawal from Afghanistan, as the main target was eliminated. The US was there in Afghanistan to break the bones of the Al-Qaida network, which was achieved to a large extent with the killing of bin Laden.

“Afghanistan Exit and Accountability Act”, unveiled by Representative McGovern and Rep. Jones, the bi-partisan team, introduced H. R. 1735, it required on President Obama for presenting a timetable for the US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. President was to lay a time frame before the American Congress and in addition a clear date to end the war.

After the death of Bin Laden, this was the first practical step towards ending the war in Afghanistan. Osama was eliminated on May 2, 2011, and this bill was introduced on May 5, 2011. This bill clearly put forward the idea of transition from the US to the Government of Afghanistan. Although, NATO in the Lisbon Summit Declaration in 2010 had hinted towards the transition with the end of 2014. With December 2014, they were to transfer responsibility to the Afghan forces across the whole of Afghanistan.⁶⁷ But there was no rationale for these withdrawal plans as their main target Bin Laden was still alive and there was no reason to end the war like this. Bin Laden’s death provided a reason for the US and allied forces for their partial withdrawal from Afghanistan. Before this successful operation, there was no reason for the US to end the war.

In 2012, the NATO members met once again; this time in Chicago, where the members reaffirmed their commitment for a sovereign, secure and democratic Afghanistan. They also reaffirmed the approach concluded in the Lisbon summit, to conclude the ISAFs’ mission with the end of 2014. In addition to these, they decided that Afghanistan would not be left alone: “*we reaffirm that our partnership will continue beyond the end of the transition period*”. The members also affirmed their support to Afghanistan in its struggle towards self-reliance in security, economic and social development, and governance. It was aimed that Afghanistan

⁶⁶ John F. Shroder, *Natural Resources in Afghanistan: Geographic and Geologic Perspectives on Centuries of Conflict* (USA: Elsevier, 2014), 10.

⁶⁷ NATO Lisbon Summit Declaration, 20 November 2010, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm (18.06.2019).



would be prevented from becoming the safe haven for terrorists which threatened the country as well as the region.⁶⁸

To execute the plan accordingly, the NATO members again met to discuss and draw the future plan while ending the war in Afghanistan, this time in Wales, on September 5, 2014. ISAFs' mission which was to be concluded in December 2014, was discussed as it would influence the nature and scope of the NATO's engagement in Afghanistan. They affirmed that the NATO allies and other partner nations will continuously train, advice and assist the Afghan National Security Forces after the withdrawal through the non-combatant Resolute Support Mission.⁶⁹

The outcome of all these summits was the end of the war with the major US withdrawal from Afghanistan. As the ISAF's mission ended on December 31, 2014, the NATO's Resolute Support Mission began on January 1, 2015. The NATO's role changed from Combatant to non-Combatant, to aid, advice and assist the Afghan National Security Forces.⁷⁰

As the major withdrawal has already taken place which gave rise to RSM, the intensity of the conflict started arising once again. The limited role of foreign forces increased the miseries of the common people of Afghanistan. As the role of foreign forces changed in 2015 the civilian casualties started increasing. In 2015 alone, 3,545 deaths were reported along with 7,475 injured,⁷¹ this abrupt increase is directly seen as the fallout of the major US withdrawal, as the casualties saw a four percent increase in the casualties from the previous year, women and the child were the worst sufferers.⁷²

⁶⁸ NATO Chicago Summit Declaration on Afghanistan, 21 May 2012, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87595.htm (18.06.2019).

⁶⁹ NATO Wales Summit Declaration, 5 September 2014, www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm (19.06.2019).

⁷⁰ NATO, Resolute Support: Afghanistan, <https://rs.nato.int/rs-commands/combined-security-transition-command-afghanistan.aspx> (19.06.2019).

⁷¹ Civilian Casualties hit new High in 2015: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 2016, <https://unama.unmissions.org/civilian-casualties-hit-new-high-2015> (20.06.2019).

⁷² Ibid.



Table II: Troop Contributing Countries to the NATO led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan (as of November 2019)⁷³

NATO		Resolute Support Mission		Troop Contributing Nations		NATO OTAN		
	Albania	135		Germany	1,300		Poland	354
	Armenia	121		Greece	11		Portugal	214
	Australia	300		Hungary	93		Romania	797
	Austria	16		Italy	895		Slovakia	33
	Azerbaijan	120		Latvia	40		Slovenia	8
	Belgium	83		Lithuania	50		Spain	66
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	68		Luxembourg	2		Sweden	25
	Bulgaria	159		Mongolia	233		Turkey	579
	Croatia	110		Montenegro	27		Ukraine	21
	Czech Republic	334		Netherlands	160		United Kingdom	1,100
	Denmark	155		New Zealand	13		United States	8,475
	Estonia	42		North Macedonia	47			
	Finland	67		Norway	54			
	Georgia	871						
							Total	17,178

See links to media backgrounder on "[NATO-Afghanistan relations \(October 2019\)](#)" and to media backgrounder on the [ANA Trust Fund](#).

November 2019

Note: this contribution from individual nations should be taken as indicative as the same changes regularly, in accordance with the deployment procedures of the individual troop contributing nations.

The casualties saw almost the same increase in 2016. 3,498 civilians lost their lives and 7,920 were wounded. The increase in casualties was witnessed because of the intense fighting between the Afghan forces and the armed groups.⁷⁴ In 2017 the situation couldn't improve, the casualties continued at the record high. 10,453 casualties were reported by UNAMA in Afghanistan in 2017, among them 3,438 died and 7,015 were injured.⁷⁵ In 2018, the war became even more deadly. The intra-state conflict started taking deep roots again in the Afghan society. Taking a sharp increase from the previous years, the casualties reached a new level.

⁷³ NATO: Resolute Support Mission: Key Facts and Figures,

https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_11/20191106_2019-11-RSM-Placemat.pdf (11.11.2019).

⁷⁴ Aljazeera Afghan civilian casualties at record high in 2016: UN, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/afghan-civilian-casualties-2016-170206062807210.html> (20.06.2019).

⁷⁵ Afghanistan: 10,000 civilian casualties in 2017: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 2018, <https://unama.unmissions.org/afghanistan-10000-civilian-casualties-2017-un-report-suicide-attacks-and-ieds-caused-high-number> (20.06.2019).



UNAMA reported 10,993 casualties in 2018, with 3,408 deaths and 7,189 injured,⁷⁶ the conflict took a deep-rooted turn in the Afghan history.

Conclusion

The present scenario of the Afghan crisis is no less than the past, conflict is still at its peak with a grimmer picture. Civilian deaths are on the rise and the casualties from the Afghan forces are too at alarming level. The conflict in Afghanistan has gone through all the stages mentioned in figure I. It has completely transformed from dispute to war. It is now high intensity violent conflict. Since the US has majorly withdrawn by December 2014, the onus of security and the responsibility lies on the shoulders of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), with NATO led Resolute Support Mission aiding, advising, and training them. The Afghan forces aren't professional and well equipped yet, this gives the Taliban leverage over the Afghan forces. The dominance and control of the Taliban have increased both territorially and population wise. Although the foreign forces are still there but their role is only limited to aid and advise the Afghan forces. This has given the Taliban the chance to regroup and show their presence as well as importance.

The increasing Taliban activities are giving sleepless nights and the tough times to the foreign forces as well as the Afghan forces. This has compelled the US for the peace negotiations. The US is tirelessly working on the peaceful solution of the Afghan crisis now. Direct communication channels with the Taliban have been opened and the talks are going on. The most important thing about these talks is that the Afghan government is nowhere in the picture. Taliban are consistently refusing the talks with them, as they don't recognize them as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, and the US seems less bothered about it. This has consequently delegitimized the democratically elected government of Afghanistan and legitimized the Afghan Taliban. Afghan military action over the Taliban militants is

⁷⁶ Civilian deaths from Afghan conflict in 2018 at highest recorded level-UN report: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 2019, [https://unama.unmissions.org/civilian-deaths-afghan-conflict-2018-highest-recorded-level-%E2%80%93-un-repor t\(20.06.2019\)](https://unama.unmissions.org/civilian-deaths-afghan-conflict-2018-highest-recorded-level-%E2%80%93-un-repor%20(20.06.2019).).



overlapping with the peace talks, and both are continuing their actions. Future of Afghanistan is still at large, unpredictable, but violent.

Bibliography

- Afghanistan: 10,000 civilian casualties in 2017: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 2018. <https://unama.unmissions.org/afghanistan-10000-civilian-casualties-2017-un-report-suicide-attacks-and-ieds-caused-high-number> (20.07.2019).
- Aljazeera Afghan civilian casualties at record high in 2016: UN, 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/afghan-civilian-casualties-2016-170206062807210.html> (20.07.2019).
- Australian Government, "Afghanistan: Political Parties and Insurgent Groups 1978-2001," Migration Review Tribunal-Refugee Review Tribunal, 2013. https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1154721/1226_1369733568_ppig1.pdf (29.04. 2019).
- Baumann, Jonas and Govinda Clayton. "Mediation in Violent Conflict". *Center for Security Studies*, no. 211 (2017). <https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-security-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse211-EN.pdf> (02.12.2019).
- Brisson, Katherine. "International Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia from the 1990s through the 2000's". *Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects*, 1004 (2017): 22. https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/1004 (13.03. 2019).
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *The Grand Chessboard, American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*. United States: Basic Books, 1997.
- Butt, Khalid Manzoor and Azhar Javed Siddqi. "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations from 1978 to 2001: An Analysis". *South Asian Studies* 31, no. 2, (2016): 723-744.
- Civilian deaths from Afghan conflict in 2018 at highest recorded level-UN report: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 2019. <https://unama.unmissions.org/civilian-deaths-afghan-conflict-2018-highest-recorded-level-%E2%80%93-un-report> (20.07.2019).
- Clinton, Hillary Rodham. *Hard Choices*. London: Simon and Schuster, 2014.
- Coll, Steve. *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10 2001*. London: Penguin Books, 2005.
- Compartim, Programa. *Conflict Mapping: Theory and Methodology, Practical Application in Juvenile Justice*. Department of Justicia, 2014.
- Dixit, Aabha. "The Afghan Civil War: Emergence of the Taliban as Power Broker". *South Asian Survey* 2, no. 1, (1995): 111-118.
- Durant, Will. "Civil War in Afghanistan". www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/publications/se/6507/650706.html (27.04.2019).



- Friedman, George. "The 30-Year War in Afghanistan". *Geopolitical Weekly (Stratfor)*, 2010. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/30-year-war-afghanistan> (06.05. 2019).
- Gall, Carlotta. *The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan 2001-2014*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014.
- Hilali, A. Z. *US Pakistan Relationship: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*. Great Britain: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005.
- Huria, Sonali. "Failed States and Foreign Military Intervention: The Afghanistan Imbroglio," *IPCS Special Report*, no. 67 (2009).
- Katzman, Kenneth. "Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy". CRS Report for US Congress, 2004.
- Khalilzad, Zalmay. "Afghanistan in 1994: Civil War and Disintegration". *Asian Survey* 35, no. 2, (1995): 147-152.
- Khalilzad, Zalmay. "Afghanistan in 1995: Civil War and a Mini-Great Game". *Asian Survey* 36, no. 2, (1996): 190-195.
- Maass, Citha D. "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement". *Central Asian Survey* 18, no. 1 (1999): 65-78.
- Matinuddin, Kamal. *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997*. New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2000.
- National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, "9/11 Commission Report," p. 330. <https://9-11commission.gov/report/> (10.05.2019).
- NATO Chicago Summit Declaration on Afghanistan, 2012. www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87595.htm (18.07.2019).
- NATO Lisbon Summit Declaration, 2010. www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm (18.07.2019).
- NATO Wales Summit Declaration, 2014. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm (19.06.2019).
- Nojumi, Neamatollah. *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan: Mass Mobilization, Civil War, and the Future of the Region*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- Paliwal, Avinash. "New Alignments, Old Battlefield: Revisiting India's Role in Afghanistan". *Carnegie India*, 2017. <https://carnegieindia.org/2017/06/15/new-alignments-old-battlefield-revisiting-india-s-role-in-afghanistan-pub-71272> (02.05. 2019).
- Reuveny, Rafael and Aseem Prakash. "The Afghanistan war and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union". *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 04, (1999): 693-708.
- Shroder, John F. *Natural Resources in Afghanistan: Geographic and Geologic Perspectives on Centuries of Conflict*. USA: Elsevier, 2014.



Tarzi, Shah M. "Afghanistan in 1992: A Hobbesian State of Nature". *Asian Survey* 33, no. 2, (1993): 165-174.

Wildman, David and Phyllis Bennis. "The War in Afghanistan Goes Global". *Critical Asian Studies* 42, no. 3 (2010): 469-480.

Yegorov, Oleg. "Why did the USSR enter Afghanistan". *Russia Beyond*, 2019. <https://www.rbth.com/history/329948-why-did-ussr-enter-afghanistan-war> (09.07.2019).

Yilmaz, Muzaffer Ercan. "Intra-State Conflicts in the Post-Cold War Era". *International Journal on World Peace* 24, no. 4, (2007): 11-33.