Chapter 2

Conflict in Afghanistan: Genesis and Conflict

Other grasses, other trees, other animals, other birds and other manners and customs of clans and horde. We were amazed and truly there was a ground for amaze.114

Babur summarized the bedazzling beauty of Afghanistan in the following words. The ever running mountains soaked in bright sunlight, bedecked with rich flora and fauna and accessorized by long cascading rivers sketches the splendid land of Afghanistan.

Ahmad Shah Durrani wrote following lines reckoning the picturesque beauty:

Whatever countries I occupy in the world,
I would never forget your beautiful gardens,
When I remember the summits of your beautiful mountains,
I forget the greatness of Delhi throne.

The people of Afghanistan further add to the fascination of this land. Well known for their bravery, independence, love for freedom and their nation, they ‘cherish their customs but abhor rules’115. Literature is abound with depictions of courage and heroism of Afghans. A Pashto poet, Khushal Khan Khattak compliments their valor in following lines

Life's no life when honor's left;
Man's a man when honor's kept.
Nation's honor and nation's fame;
On life they have a prior claim.

Ahmad Shah Durrani, too expresses his love for his mother land in this prose

By blood, we are immersed in love of you.
The youth lose their heads for your sake.

Such is the indomitable spirit of Afghans that they are willing to lay their lives to save their land. And this made Mike Malloy comment that Afghanistan – where empires go to die. Located in a strategically significant set up at the eating place of four ecological and cultural


areas: The Middle East, Central Asia, The Indian Subcontinent and even the Far East; both imperial powers Britain, Russia and lately USA have vied to occupy the land and all they have suffered is their own ruination.

Amir Abdur Rahman referred his country as Yaghistan which has been translated as “Land of the Unruly”, “Land of the Free”, “Land of the Rebels” and “Land of Insolence”. And Louis Dupree says that this insolence is not frustrated insolence of urbanized, dehumanized western society but this is the insolence without arrogance, insolence of harsh freedoms, insolence of equality, insolence of bravery past and bravery anticipated.116

But the question then arises is that given the courage of Afghans, why the country has not been able to attain freedom from the long, strenuous conflicts which has brought its land to ruins, punctured the stability of political institutions, destroyed the social fabric, deprived women of their rightful rights, fared far worse in Human Development Index, and notoriously ranked as the most dangerous country in the world.117 Given all the horrifying and adverse conditions which Afghanistan finds itself, it has still managed to defeat the sole superpower USA.

MountStuart Elphinstone remarked in 1809 how an observer would describe Afghan politics.

He would be surprised at the fluctuation and the instability of civil institutions. He would find it difficult to comprehend how a nation could subsist in such a disorder.

But reclamation of land from foreign power is no relief or criterion to achieve peace in the country. The Afghans have long endured the pains of never ending war. To reiterate my primary question, why the country has been afflicted with long, continuous conflicts?

As the name of the book suggests Afghanistan: Political Frailty and External interference written by Dr. Nabi Misdq holds the instability of political institutions and frequent intervention by the foreign powers culpable for the conflictual state of Afghanistan. Amin Saikal in ‘Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival’ points to the underlying


polygamic practices which caused wrangling for power within the family, thus leading to instability. Victoria Schofield in Afghan Frontier too supports the polygamic factor in bringing the state down. Larry P. Goodson in Afghanistan’s Endless Wars: State Failure, Regional Politics and the Rise of Taliban, points to the ethnic cleavages as a source of conflict in Afghanistan and then goes on to paint a grim picture of the country with the death of millions of civilians and six millions other becoming refugees and also pointing to the collapse of economy. Barnett Rubin in Fragmentation of Afghanistan analyses the period from 1978 communist coup to the fall of Najibullah and he underlines the role played by foreign actors- US, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in deteriorating the state of Afghanistan

On the analysis of Afghanistan’s history, one can argue that it is the coalition of factors that caused “Segmentary State”- frequent foreign intervention, weak political institutions, polygamic practices amongst rulers, fickle mindedness of the rulers, top down implementation of modernising reforms, dependency on foreign funds and disunity at the upper echelon. All these factors combined to make Afghanistan, what I call a ‘Stateless State’. A State is made up of four components – territory, population, sovereignty and government. Squabbles for power has made the mockery of fragile government system, breach of sovereignty by USA and other surrounding neighbouring countries to promote its own ethnic group’s interests and the inability of the state to secure the well being of its own population and the disputed territorial boundary has made me call it a stateless entity. But it is still a state where the courageous population every time fights back to reclaim its territory and sovereignty to allow the Afghan population to live under their own rule.

The chapter analyses, by chronicling its history, whether the above mentioned factors are to be held accountable for making Afghanistan ‘A Stateless State’.

**Cross Road of Asia**

Louis Dupree mentions in his seminal book Afghanistan that until the period of Post World War II, archaeologists have largely neglected the prehistory of Afghanistan, partly because of the richness of historic funds and partly because of the relative lack of interest of European
and American scholars in Central Asia. Although, some significant work has been done.\textsuperscript{118}

Historians have identified references to Afghan landscape in \textit{Rig Veda}. Others (for example: Frazer-Tytler 1967) believe that mentions of Afghanistan has been found in \textit{Avesta}.\textsuperscript{119}Alexander, The Great set out for his adventurous conquests with the aim of achieving ‘One World’. He can be called by many names but never “peace loving”. He brought down the mighty Archemenid empire at Gautemala in 331 B.C. He traversed the inhospitable, snow clad, mountainous terrains of Afghanistan and fought wars with kings to establish his suzerainty before entering India in the early summer of 327 B.C. As obsessed with conquests, he continued with his warring tendencies for achieving “One World” before dying on June 13, 323 B.C. at the age of 33. Divisions surfaced in his kingdom and two Greek kingdoms arose in the East. Greeks under Seleucus were unable to hold Northern India and it was taken over by Mauryas under Chandragupta from Bihar in India. Victoria Schofield says that this was the first time an invasion from East countered one from the West. Chandragupta’s grandson Ashoka ruled for 100 years after Alexander, spreading Buddhism. The conquests and empires came and went.

In 870, Yaqub-i-Lais, formerly a coppersmith, succeeded in capturing Kabul. He founded dynasty of Safavids and introduced Islam to the eastern frontier of Sassanian empire. From then on, the rule of many Muslim rulers, Sabuktagin, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, Alauddin Jahnsoz, Mohammad Ghorii, Ayyaldiz of Turkish origin, Gengis Khan and the Mogul rule spanning almost two centuries, provided a huge fillip to the power of Islam. But it is worth mentioning here the nature of Afghan tribesmen. Babur wanted to conquer and it could not have been successful without earning the allegiance of Afghan tribesmen. So he said “Do not harm or hurt to the flocks or herds of these people, nor even to their cotton ends and broken needles”. Akbar committed the mistake of acquiring Kabul by suppressing the unruly tribesmen in the hills and plains but he has to face severe opposition from Yousafzais. The weak mogul rule paved way for the invaders of west, notably Nadir Shah.

Nadir Quli Beg, of Turkish origin wanted to restore the power of Persians. He extended his


\textsuperscript{119}Ibid P: 272.
empire across the Oxus river but was assassinated and Ahmad Shah Abdali of Saddozais, Afghan tribe took power.

The pre history of Afghanistan highlights the geographic significance of the country. Invaders have come, established their empires and gone back after being upset with the rebellion of freedom loving Afghans. Superpowers have used the country as a route to India.

An Art historian rightly summarises,

No land in ancient times was more thoroughly traversed in every direction. Doubtless no other was so well situated geographically to act as a link between east and west.120

Emergence of Modern Afghanistan

Now you are the Badshah Durr-i-Durran, King, the pearl of the age

Holy man Sabir Shah proclaimed Ahmad Shah, whose name was changed to Ahmad Shah Durrani of Sadozai clan as the king of Afghanistan, making him the first monarch of modern Afghanistan. In his 25 years of rule, he freed his people from Persian and Mogul rule and consolidated them into an independent political unit. His empire stretched from Oxus river in the North to the Arabian Sea in the South, the Ganges in the East to Khorasan in the West.

His rule was characterized by what Weber calls ‘patrimonialism’121. It was based “on the traditional authoritarian- tribal rule with the political and military ascendancy of the Abdali Pashtuns revolving around the unchallenged position of Ahmad Shah as the paramount leader”.122 There were no legal-constitutional bases and institutionalized security and administrative apparatus. It was governed by the fusion of Islamic ideas of ‘Divine Right’ and ‘Divine Rule’ with the hierarchical tribal codes of leadership followed by submissiveness of followers. The following governance criteria asserted the supremacy of ruler. Amin Saikal says that Ahmad Shah was able to establish autocratic yet popular imperial rule. Even Nabi

121Patrimonialism : According to Weber, when the following bureaucratic procedures are absent, it gives rise to patrimonial state. a. impersonal rules b. rational ordering of relations c. regular system of appointment d. technical training as a regular requirement e. fixed salaries
Misdaq acknowledges patrimonialism in Ahmad Shah’s rule but adds that it was consensual and reciprocal in relation. Ahmad Shah pursued two dimensional approach to keep his empire up and running. One, multi-ethnic tribal accommodationist approach to bind different ethnicities, sects, cultures, languages and territories together. And second, expansionist attitude to defend Islam and also to fill coffers of State. The dependency of finances on foreign sources later, costed heavily to the Durrani empire almost leading to its collapse. Durrani did not build ancient trade routes to materialise on the Afghanistan’s strategic location. They depended on western Iran and the subcontinent for paying taxes to the Afghan treasury. And after Ahmad Shah, when the conquered lands were lost, lack of sure income caused deterioration of political situation. Lack of assured income and dependency on foreign funds continued to haunt Afghanistan till date.

Though Ahmad Shah’s contribution to Afghanistan State goes unrecognised but it was he who was able to consolidate and build an empire which lasted for 50 years, paving way for the modern Afghanistan.

British historian Frazer Tytler comments-

Ahmad Shah Durrani has never been given a place among the great conquerors…his arrival on the scene when both the Persian and Indian empires were largely impotent was opportune, but it required genius to seize this fortune and to weld so intractable a people as the Afghans into the semblance of a nation.\textsuperscript{123}

3P’s: Polygamy, Power Struggle and Poor institutions

The period after Ahmad Shah was marked by three P’s, that is, of polygamy, power struggle and internal pressures which undid the gains made by him. Ahmad Shah belonging to Sadozai Tribe had many rivals wrangling for political power. The two dominant Durrani tribes – the Sadozai-Popalzai and the Muhammadzai-Barakzai fought amongst themselves to hold reins of power. And the rival tribe- Ghilzai posed a constant threat. Bloody feuds and intense rivalries followed. Ralph Grillo also calls such State as ‘Segmentary State’. Ahmad Shah’s rule was based on his strong charismatic personality, policy of accomodation and personal rule. The lack of vision and ‘patrimonialism’ promoted by him, to call it in Weber terms, adversely impacted the health of institutions leading to its weakening. So after Ahmad Shah’s

demise, the institutions “lacked the capacity to be institutionally self generating and self propelling”\textsuperscript{124}. Poor institutions could not tolerate the internal rivalries and power wranglings that it succumbed to its condition thus ending the Sadozai rule and creating a power vaccum.

The second factor is that of polygamy. Amin Saikal in his book Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival well describes the prevailing polygamic institution in the country.

A deeply entrenched tradition in the Islamic world, the practice was based on a ruling in the Quran that a man is allowed a maximum of four wives and an unspecified number of what may be termed ‘concubines’ from among the women who were left ‘unprotected’ and need ‘guardians’. The practice had become widespread in the historically patriarchal Afghanistan since the country’s conversion to Islam in the eighth century. Quranic injunction has been abused by men of power and influence. Rulers from Ahmad Shah and Amanullah’s father, Amir Habibullah, as well as nobles, had allowed themselves to take into morganatic marriage, in addition to four wives, any woman whom the Afghans call surati or suryati (bed-wife).\textsuperscript{125}

Ahmad Shah went to Sulaiman Mountains to die in peace and in agony\textsuperscript{126} and designated his second son Timur Shah as his successor. But he did not possess same leadership qualities as his father and the former even failed to designate his successor given all of his 22 sons were equally competent. Zaman Shah, fifth son of Timur Shah by his favorite wife, occupied the throne with the help of leading figure of Barakzai tribe, Payendah Khan. But the fissions in the politics exacerbated the conflict amongst the twenty three sons of Timur Shah and amongst twenty two sons of Payendah Khan\textsuperscript{127} and also between the two tribes to such an extent that the Sadozai empire succumbed to it. Dost Mohammad Khan’s younger son Sher Ali was designated as successor but he has to face challenges from his two older brothers, Mohammad Afzal and Mohammad Azam. Mohammad Afzal seized the throne in 1866 and ruled till 1867, and was then succeeded by his brother Azam for one year before Sher Ali regained the throne in 1868. Sher Ali, too, was not spared from the polygamic evil practice while choosing his successor.


\textsuperscript{125}Ibid P: 23.


But the power struggle just did not end with intra-ruling family tensions and inter-tribal warfares. The ‘Great Game’ as termed by Rudyard Kipling, was still left to be played out. Tsarist Russia wanted to preserve its imperial empire and also to look out for satisfying further imperial ambitions. But Britain wanted to protect its newly acquired colonies. So this gave rise to serious Anglo-Russian rivalry. Russia supported Persians who wanted to stave off influence of Afghans from Herat and Persia. And the Sikhs who eliminated Afghan control in the Battle of Nowshera received assistance from British. Thus, a ground was settled for the battles to be fought between the imperial powers. Although the imperial powers Britain and Tsarist Russia had no intentions to colonise Afghanistan for the three reasons: a. Britain and Russia would have been at full military confrontations if any would have nurtured the thought of colonizing it. b. Afghanistan was not attractive enough in terms of lack of immediately exploitable economic and mineral resources. c. British have suffered humiliating defeat in the two Anglo-Afghan Wars and the aggressive nature of Afghans created unfavourable conditions.

So, the two imperial powers made it a buffer zone. And they took control of respective territories. Whereas the British attempted to retain South of Hindu Kush range, Russians controlled North. After Timur Shah’s rule, Zaman was not able to take control of its territories and different ethnicities and tribes broke into independent and semi autonomous areas. British carried out the campaign to confine the Afghans to their territories. Two Anglo-Afghan wars 1838-1842, 1878-1880 were also fought which led to humiliating defeat of British. But later Britain succeeded in fixing Afghanistan and the former took control of defence, fiscal and foreign policies and also demarcated Durrand Line separating Afghanistan and British India which was later to become a matter of controversy. Russia also did not sit quiet. They took control of Panjdeh in 1885 and forced evacuation of Shugnan and Roshan in the Pamirs in 1894.

All in all this period was marked by constant fluctuations. Absence of a strong, charismatic leader, poor institutions, the archaic polygamic practices which have weakened the Afghan social fabric and superpower rivalry set the battleground for external interventions and internal tensions and anarchy.
Bumpy Road to Modernization

If, however, Abdur Rehman had been born a hundred years earlier, this charismatic leader would have probably followed the patterns of previous Central Asian emperors and expanded as far as force and intrigue could carry his empire. But the Russians blocked him to the north and the north east, the British to the south and south east, and the British and the Russians guaranteed Persia protection from Afghan invasion, at least tacitly and unwritten. So Abdur Rahman funnelled his many talents into the creation of a nation state i.e. the process of internal imperialism.128

Amir Abdur Rahman, popularly known as ‘Iron Amir’ has been credited for building a modern nation state. Russians were occupying the North and British the South, so Amir focussed on creating a strong central power necessary for a nation state or a unitary state rather than expanding his territory. That’s why Louis Dupree terms it as “internal imperialism”. A far sighted leader, by building a modern army and intelligence network, he was able to keep a check and control over the revolts and rebellions against him. He also established national infrastructure such as army, roads, mines, intelligence and an administrative network. He was the first king who succeeded in breaking the hold on power by tribes, saints and mullahs.129 He also pursued a policy of forced migration where he shifted some 18,000 Ghilzais family from North West to Northern Afghanistan. The reason being firstly, the local tribes will be distanced from their lands and they will not be able to group against Amir. And secondly, he was also able to build a loyalist army as, though they were loyal to their tribes, but they were also identified and associated with a more general identity of being a Pashtun. Since Abdur Rahman is regarded as father of modern nation-state, his drive for modernisation included the transition from segmentary to unitary state, building of modern army, employing of Europeans for mining copper and iron with which he minted his currency, and exploitation of country’s mineral resources. He had two important consultative bodies, the Supreme Council similar to modern cabinet and the Loya Jirgah, his version of


Parliament. The bodies had representatives from all hues which kept their grievances at bay. Supreme Council members were religious leaders, heads of the government bureau and departments. And members of Loya Jirgah were the leaders of the tribes, ethnic groups, certain members of royal lineage and provincial religious leaders. He also gave patrimony and polygamic rivalries a break. Unlike his predecessors, he did not appoint his sons or other royal family members as governors. Members of the royal household were kept in Kabul, sometimes to oversee government departments and to advise the king. He also abolished Sar-Mardeh tax on non-Pashtuns. He made sure that all obeyed the same state laws. And he gave freedom to provincial governors to break down the territorial claims of local ethnic tribes. The above factors helped in subduing the revolt against his empire.

Rahman also evoked Islam to inculcate the feeling of nationalism. But this kind of nationalist feeling was not based on democratic and secular credentials but on a religion which when exploited as happened during Taliban rule can divide and mar the progress of the country. The foreign fiddling in Afghanistan’s affairs did not stop. Treaty of Gandomak of 1876 vested foreign affairs powers to British and they drew the Durrand line, which split most of the Pashtun areas, to demarcate their area of influence much to the dislike of Rahman.

After Rahman’s demise, there was a smooth transition of power unmatched in history of Afghanistan. Rahman had prepared Habibullah to occupy the throne and he carried forward the modernising legacy of his father. But the road to modernisation was impeded by the same two evils of polygamy and Anglo-Russian rivalry.

Habibullah’s term was marked by both external and internal developments. Reformist and nationalist waves swept regional Muslim states. A celebrated Muslim thinker and activist, Sayyed-Jamaluddin-al-Afghani gave a call for reformation and unity of Muslim world against British colonial domination and this gave rise to nationalist groups in the region. And second, significant external development was number of regional Muslim countries were experiencing, especially Persia, Ottoman Turkey and Egypt growing demands for external reforms and freedom from intervention and subjugation. These developments impacted
modernist and nationalist thinking in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{130}

Internally, the “Young Afghans” were, too, demanding a modern and reformist change. Young Afghans, akin to Young Turks, was a loose cluster of autonomous and ambitious individuals who believed in putting Afghanistan on the path of modernisation, reforms, independence, stability and achieving national cohesion. Habibullah, impressed by the modern and nationalist waves and under the influence of the progressive ideas of his close confidante Mohammad Tarzi, he continued the modernising legacy of his father.

He founded the country’s first military college (\textit{Harbiah}), first high school (\textit{Habibiah}), started bi monthly newspaper \textit{Seraj-ul-Akbar} and established country’s first printing press. He also employed many Western technicians and built a hydro electric power station to provide electricity to his palace. He developed roads to facilitate communication among different peoples of the country.

But his developmental measures were soon impeded with century old problem of polygamy and Anglo Russian rivalry. Although, Rahman chose Habibullah as his successor but this did not subdue polygamic rivalries against the latter. His brother Sardar Nasrullah Khan stood in opposition against him who was later pacified by sharing power with him and appointing him Commander-in-chief of Army and President of the State Council\textsuperscript{131}. Secondly, Habibullah’s own polygamic practice of four wives and almost thirty five concubines resulted in about fifty offsprings. And this caused pretty evident rivalries amongst different wives and sons with the ambition of putting their son on the higher echelons of royal household. Secondly, Afghanistan continued to be the playground for the Anglo-Russian rivalries.

G.P. Tate in The Kingdom of Afghanistan famously writes,

\textit{Between the Russians Dominions in Asia and the Indian Empire of Great Britain, Afghanistan is placed, like a nut, between the levers of crackers. The notoriously unwholesome quality of the kernel, however, will perhaps continue to preserve it from being shared by its powerful neighbors.}

\textit{British Viceroy of India, Curzon wanted to continue with the great forward policy by


\textsuperscript{131}State Council was an institution created by Amir Abdur Rahman for the purpose of legislative legitimacy.}
extracting more concessions from Habibullah and wresting control of Afghanistan’s foreign affairs. On Habibullah’s reluctance, Curzon created a Pashtun province NWFP (North West Frontier Province) to foment cross border tribal disturbances and simultaneously made preparations for the third Anglo-Afghan war. But sense prevailed, given the huge losses incurred during the previous two wars; British gave up the ambitions for waging war against Afghanistan. But the imperial policy of exploitation continued unhindered despite the upsurge of nationalist and anti-British wave sweeping the Afghan land. They opposed Amir’s domestic and foreign policy. And pressed him to undertake projects which would make them dependent on British, for example, connecting British Indian railways from border to Kabul, though Habibullah refused it. The reason for British’s continuing intervention was the rise of new challenge i.e. Germany, a late comer to imperialism. Germany wanted to take control of Afro-Asian colonies including Afghanistan and Persia. Tsarist Russia was also competing with British to have sway in Afghanistan. In 1907, British signed St. Petersberg agreement with Russians where the latter agreed that Afghanistan was outside her sphere of influence and agreed to confer directly with the British on matters relating to Russian-Afghan relations.

And second, that Britain was not to occupy or annex any part of Afghanistan, nor to interfere in any way in the internal affairs of the country. Habibullah found the treaty humiliating and refused to give the consent to the agreement but Britain and Russian anyway made it legal and binding. Influenced by the Pan Islamic wave of modernisation, Young Afghans, too, demanded progress at home. But they were frustrated by Habibullah’s slow pace of reforms and regarded imperialists as infidels of Islam. Amanullah and Mohammad Tarzi, in opposition to Habibullah’s neutral stance, entered the First World War on the Turkic German side. Collapse of Tsarist Russia and takeover of communism allowed British to ease its tensions over Afghanistan. In 1918, Afghanistan entered into talks with Britain demanding full autonomy but the latter handed over limited independence. Habibullah’s gradual pace of reforms in the context of nationalist and modernising upsurge costed him his life and he was assassinated on 20 February, 1919 while on his hunting trip in Jalalabad.

Mourning over the death of his father, Amanullah seriously took the advice of Mohammad Beg Tarzi. Tarzi said “Do not cry, now is the time for action”. Amanullah ascended the

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throne and set the pace for what Amin Saikal calls “radical modernisation”. Tarzi being a prominent nationalist and modernist had a great influence on Amanullah and he also married his daughter Soraya to him. Amanullah achieved a very significant milestone which made him a hero in Afghanistan i.e. national freedom. He waged jihad against Britain and declared Afghan War of Independence or the Third Anglo-Afghan War on 3 May, 1919 which lasted only for a month. Treaty of Rawalpindi was signed on 8 August, 1919. “Its wording was so ambiguous as to allow the Afghans to read in it British acknowledgment of their full independence and the British to find grounds in it to make ‘sphere of influence’ claims on the country.” So a new Anglo Afghan Treaty was signed on 22 November, 1921 at Kabul which recognized Afghanistan as an independent and sovereign state.

After gaining one milestone, Amanullah along with Tarzi set his eyes on reforming the traditional, Islamic ethno-tribal society. He instituted, for the first time in the history of Afghanistan, modern cabinet along with Council of Ministers. Until now most members of the royal family would hold their own darbars or courts and anybody can get their grievances addressed. And if they are not satisfied with one court they can approach another. So this was hailed as a significant reform in the political realm. Modern bureaucratic system along Weberian lines was adopted. Serious attempt was made to create an independent and comprehensive judiciary. The intention was to evolve a constitutional monarchical system of governance based on rule of law and system of checks and balances and under which the rules for the governed and governor are properly defined within the legal rational framework. Financial, fiscal and land reforms were also introduced. National budget appeared for the first time and arbitrary taxes were withdrawn. Educational and socio cultural reforms, too, followed. Secular curriculum was taught in addition to Islamic subjects. Amanullah’s sister and his wife pioneered the cause of women and asked for equal rights and opportunities in a male dominated society. They made attempts to remove veil from women and asked them to wear western clothes. In one of the most controversial reforms, women were granted the right to freedom of choice in marriage and equal inheritance rights with their brothers and sons. Infrastructural developments of hospitals, schools, roads, press and military were also taken up. Aman-e-Afghan newspaper replaced Seraj-ul-Akbar. First Afghan radio station was also

\[133\text{Ibid}\]
opened under his regime in 1925. In military, he wanted a small but professional and efficient entity which in the words of Amin Saikal proved to be a “colossal disaster”\(^{134}\).

But his radical reforms encountered serious hurdles which later took a toll on his regime and send him, packing his bags in exile. The primary problem was of lack of funds. Amanullah oscillated between Muslim countries of Turkey, Egypt and Persia, European powers Germany, Italy and France and even asked aid from Russia and a major superpower U.S.A but to no avail. Sandwiched between the two conflicting parties Russia in the North and Britain in South, Afghanistan was seeking greater cooperation and aid from a distant, neutral player America. But America gave a cold shoulder to a tiny country Afghanistan due to a.

ambivalence of communism in Soviet Russia b. it was assumed as Britain’s ‘sphere of influence’ c. Afghanistan was unimportant to USA d. British told America not to help Amanullah. Dejected Amanullah also approached Japan but latter under the influence of Britain, too, gave a cold treatment to the king. Afghanistan concluded treaties with Persia and Egypt but could not offer much help. Turkey extended help by supplying teachers, civilian and military advisors but the aid proved to be insufficient. Germany, Italy and France too limited their aid to supplying teachers, technical expertise, foreign goods and financial aid.

Left with no alternative, Afghanistan turned to Soviet Russia. They entered into Afghan-Soviet Treaty of 1921 but Soviet Russia reneged on its promises. Firstly, they did not provide the promised financial assistance and secondly, they did not respect the freedom of two small Muslim states Bukhara and Khiva. They provided aid to revolutionary groups ‘Young Bukharas’ and ‘Young Khiva’ and annexed their territory in Soviet Russia. They curbed the anti Soviet Islamic nationalist movement by attacking them in a bloody brutal manner.

Amanullah’s association with Soviet Russia at this point of time came under a scanner and he began to be perceived as a weak Muslim.

The second impediment to Amanullah’s and Tarzi’s reforms was its limited application. The reforms remained untouched outside Kabul, in rural areas of Afghanistan. Thirdly, the disagreement between Tarzi and Amanullah led to the withdrawal of support from the King.

Amanullah has to rely on his disloyal relatives who were beset with polygamic rivalries. Fourthly, the modernisation drive did not go down well with few sections of population - religious, ethno-tribal, administrators and military. Religious figures opposed secular elements, ethno-tribal shunned government intrusion into their traditional powers and attempts to reduce traditional entitlements including hereditary titles. The administrators in a newly Weberian based bureaucratic set up were not well equipped to curb malpractices. Reduced salaries of military men, corruption and their dislocation turned military into a discouraged lot. That is why, when few sections rose in revolt against the king, there was no sound military to suppress them down. The first rebellion named the Khost rebellion led by religious leaders against the equal rights and opportunities for women was started in March 1924. In fact, when Amanullah began the second phase of modernization, undeterred by the rebellions against him, he was advised by Ataturk of Turkey to concentrate on building a strong, centralised and efficient military. His callousness towards the state of military accompanied by impatience towards reforms led to the downfall of his empire. Habibullah, also known as Bachai Saqaw, a Tajik and a bandit with military experience, overthrew his rule. But his rule too faced a legitimacy crisis as Pashtuns since 1747 has held the reins of power and they resented usurpation of throne by a non-Afghan (non Pashtun), a lowly and illiterate Tajik bandit\textsuperscript{135}. Bachai Saqaw was executed and Nader Khan in 1929 was proclaimed the king of Afghanistan.

Louis Dupree aptly sums up Amanullah’s rule in the following lines:

Mahmud Tarzi lived partly in action, but mostly in thought. King Amanullah, aman of action, seized events and tried to twist them to his desires, regardless of whether time, place and people were ripe for such moves. If Tarzi, the thinker, and Amanullah, the activist, could have pooled their intellectual resources – backed by a loyal, Turkish-trained army-Afghanistan might today be farther along the road of modernization, instead of just beginning.

“I am for a certain progress and for cultural reforms in the western sense, but I want such reforms to be introduced with a slower pace than those introduced by Amanullah.\textsuperscript{136}” With this objective, Nader Khan brought down the rule of Bachai Saqaw. Bachai Saqaw’s treasury


\textsuperscript{136}Ibid P: 99.
dried up and there was not sufficient finance to fund the working of government. Foreign and domestic trade contracted and the agricultural and industrial productions were in a pitiable state. Saqaw started issuing paper and even leather currency which was of inferior quality. Gauging the weak state of affairs, Nader Khan, who was on a self imposed exile in France following the differences with Amanullah, returned back and ended the stint of Saqaw. The campaign which lasted for six months against his 9 months reign was assisted by Britain who supplied money and weapons and also helped in mobilising trans-border tribes. 12,000 strong tribal army held a *Jirgah* and proclaimed Nader Shah of the Mohammadzai branch of the Barakzai Durrans as the King of Afghanistan. His priorities were to rebuild Afghanistan and

To rule according to the *Shariat* of Muhammad and the fundamental rulers of the country (and to strive) for the protection of the glorious religion of Islam, the independence of Afghanistan and the rights of the nation, and for the defence, progress and prosperity of the country.¹³⁷

And to achieve his goals, he pursued the policy of “national gradualism” and “political neutrality”.¹³⁸

He maintained good relations with moderate and conservative elements of elite, most importantly tribal chiefs and Islamic establishment. Radical reforms introduced by Amanullah were scrapped and many pre existing social and cultural norms were brought back in order to pay allegiance to the conservative strata of society. *Purdah* system returned. He believed that programmes should be in consonance with Islam. In 1931, he endorsed a new constitution which was akin to Amanullah’s political institutionalisation and modernisation. The constitution included constitutional monarchy, system of checks and balances and individual rights and freedoms. It upheld the rights of citizens to enjoy legal immunity and civil liberties against forced imposition, oppression and tyranny, irrespective of their race, colour and creed.¹³⁹ But it remained only on paper and Nader has to bow to political absolutism and domination of Durrani Pashtuns. Reorganisation and reconstruction of armed forces was also undertaken. He also announced the policy for economic revival. The first bank was build in Afghanistan in 1931 with the state controlling 90 percent of total capital. With the capital

¹³⁷Ibid


collected, he pursued modest social and economic modernisation.

In foreign policy, Nader followed the policy of “political neutrality”. Nader maintained good reputation with both players of The Great Game- Britain and Soviet Russia. This can also be attributed to the troubles these countries were facing. Soviet Russia was grappling with the problems of nascent industrialization and collectivization. And the British colonies including India were making demands for freedom. At this juncture of upheaval, both the countries avoided burning its fingers in Afghanistan. Luck and political circumstances made Nader to achieve what Amanullah failed to achieve- good neighborly relations. Nader succeeded in keeping Soviet Russia and Britain at an equidistance. He also achieved much needed recognition from USA which boosted the regime’s morale. Treaty of Friendship was signed with Japan in 1930 and with Iraq and Saudi Arabia in 1932.

But Nader’s regime continued to be plagued with polygamic practice. Nadir, Shah Wali and Shah Mahmud were sons of Mohammad Yusuf’s first wife, a Sadozai and Mohammad Aziz and Mohammad Hashim were sons of second wife, a Mohammadzai. Though Nader gave top government positions to them but the rivalries continue to surface after his demise.

Zahir Shah, a western educated 19 year old son of Nader Shah was proclaimed King of Afghanistan. But he was just a figure head. The working of the administration was carried forward by his uncles. Louis Dupree aptly terms his rule as “Avuncular Period”. He further says that “King Mohammad Zahir Shah reigned but did not rule for twenty years.” Afghanistan at this stage experienced a “pocket growth”. His uncle Mohammad Hashim assumed Prime Ministership and he did not allow Zahir Shah to realise his full potential given that the latter belonged to the rival branch of Sadozais. Hashim continued the policy of gradualism and neutrality and concentrated on industrialisation. But the urban, younger lot was not satisfied with the slow pace of reforms. Therefore, in 1953 Zahir Shah, tired of kowtowing to his uncles, appointed Mohammad Daoud as Prime Minister. Daoud was a husband of Zahir’s sister and five years elder to Shah. Daoud proclaimed

Our whole lives, our whole existence, revolved round one single focal point- freedom. Should we ever get the feeling that our freedom is in the slightest danger, from whatever quarter, then we should prefer to live on a dry

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140Ibid P: 132.
bread, or even starve, rather than accept help that would restrict our freedom.141

Although he defined ‘freedom’ in terms of socio economic development. But he took his cause of freedom to the extreme and demanded autonomy for Pashtuns giving rise to the movement for Pashtunism. The situation spiralled out of control and Daoud have to give up his Prime Ministership. This was accompanied with the usual but serious problem of lack of funds to fund his modernization plans and polygamic disturbances. Daoud achieved unprecedented success in his socio-economic reforms. “In short period, Afghanistan moved from relative inaction to relative action.”142 Emphasis was laid on industrialisation. Import substitution was adopted. Electric power generation, chemical and building material industries were created; roads, schools, buildings, banks, warehouses, telephones and radio stations were built. He brought back the abolition of *purdah* and participation of women in work force increased. Enrolment of children in schools also went up. He sidelined power of tribal chiefs and *ulama*. And the role of reasonably educated bureaucracy was mainstreamed. But inadequate funds posed a problem and he turned to America for help. But America continued with its policy of ignorance and complacency. Soviet took advantage of the power vacuum which was created in South East Asian region with the end of colonialism in India. Afghanistan was also in close proximity to Soviet and the presence of ethno linguistic groups that USSR shared with the country. Soviets jumped at the opportunity and inundated Afghanistan with large volume of aid and also helped Kabul in its claim of Pashtun land. Soviets helped in the reformation of the military. From ill equipped, illiterate recruits in 1961 it was transformed into a 60,000 strong force having MiG-17 fighters, 24IL-28 bombers, 134 tanks and 154 artillery pieces. Military sphere was totally trained by Soviets. And this costed Afghanistan heavily. Soviet penetrated to such a large extent that in 1979 it was able to carry out invasion in Afghanistan.

Besides military, Soviets also helped in education, trade, providing low interest loans, free of charge personnel and infrastructural support. This caused dependency on Soviet aid and Daoud neglected to build up its domestic revenues. In the presence of large aid, Daoud

141Ibid P: 180.
142Ibid P: 287.
neglected to build up its domestic source of revenues. America also pooled its resources in Afghanistan to counter the influence of Soviets but could not gain much foothold.

The second major problem which impeded the smooth pace of Daoud’s reforms was his obsession with Pashtunism. Daoud’s country goals ranked in order of preference were: nationalism, neutrality, development. Prioritising nationalism over development led to his resignation in 1963. The stalemate over Pashtun problem angered Daoud which led to increase in border tensions. Daoud was also under the misperception that Soviets will come to their aid explicitly over the Pashtun problem. But this did not happen and Daoud’s policy backfired leading to economic crisis in Afghanistan. In 1961, border was closed on both sides and the diplomatic ties were broken. This led to economic blockade as most of the foreign trade of Afghans was conducted via Pakistan. This deeply impacted the state of economy. Daoud was caught in its own quagmire, so on 9 March 1963 he resigned gracefully.

**Nothing New in New Democracy**

Daoud signed a gentlemen’s agreement with Zahir Shah where the latter promised to accord full respect to Daoud’s retirement and the King, in return, will pursue political reforms of establishing constitutional monarchy and parliamentary form of government. Daoud wanted two political parties to run the government where the majority will form the government and the other will sit in opposition. Zahir Shah stood true to his promise of constitutional monarchy. And on 9 September 1964, he convened the ninth *Loya Jirgah* to approve the new constitution. Louis Dupree says 1964 *Loya Jirgah* became the first literate *Loya Jirgah*. Comprising of 452 delegates, it included representatives from different social, political and religious background. Also, it carried out the function of decision making body, thoroughly discussing each provision rather than confining to the earlier role of legitimizing body.

1964 constitution was largely based on principle of secularism. Articles 1 and 2 state that “Afghanistan is a constitutional monarchy; an independent, unitary and indivisible state” and that “Islam is the sacred religion of Afghanistan” and religious ritual shall be conducted according to Hanafi School. This was in contrast to the 1931 constitution which endorsed Hanafi Shari’a the state religion. Article 69 establishes supremacy of secular law over religious law and Article 102 establishes supremacy of secular over religious courts. 1964
constitution also allowed freedom of religion to non-Muslims. Conservative, religious elements did not oppose much to the provisions because of the harsh treatment suffered under Daoud’s regime and the constitutional drafting committee composed of liberal minded yet religiously trained members.

Mohammad Yousuf, Prime Minister in Zahir’s regime called it a ‘New Democracy’. But there was nothing new and in fact, nothing to be called ‘democracy’ in Afghanistan.

King enjoyed more powers and stood above the constitution. He was the commander of armed forces; had power to declare war, conclude peace or sign treaties; appoint Prime Minister, chief justice and judges of Supreme Court. Article 15 said that King is not accountable to anyone and is to be respected by all. New legislative body Shura (Parliament) was formed consisting of Wolesi Jirgah (House of the People) which was to be appointed by citizens and Meshrano Jirgah (House of the Elders) where third of its members were to be appointed by King, tired to be chosen from experience area and the rest from the popular vote. But King took up the mantle to appoint or dismiss Prime Minister, Ministers, and Cabinet and dissolve parliament.

For the first time Judiciary was made an independent branch. Article 102 makes court to decide cases in the light of constitution and laws of State. But traditional courts continue to dominate.

Even the general public was not much impressed with the reforms. One in six turned out to vote in 1965 parliamentary elections. In 1969, people voted on identity lines of kinship and ethnicity. The reforms proved ineffective for the same reason Daoud’s reforms failed. One, public had no social and political awareness about the constitutional changes. Second, the groups were themselves not prepared to uphold legal rational authority of constitution. The reforms only benefitted the royal family and small section of urban, young populace who thrived on government.\(^\text{143}\) King was too busy in consolidating his own power. He provided only lip service to parliamentary democracy as promised to Daoud. The Shura passed political parties bill but Zahir did not sign to make it into a law. He also refused to sign

\(^{143}\)Ibid P: 150.
Municipal Councils Act and Provincial Council Bills which marred attempts at building institutional infrastructure. Political group demonstrations and Student agitations constantly struck Zahir’s regime which made him apprehensive of return of Daoud. Zahir further encouraged patronage thus surrounding himself with his loyalists. But when his own entourage nurtured ambitions of consolidating more power, he suppressed them too. For instance, Maiwandwal, Prime Minister in his regime formed a political organization ‘Progressive Democracy’. But Zahir got scared as his popularity increased and took measures to limit it.

Military build-up was made heavily dependent on USSR with supply of arms and ammunitions, expertise and technical training provided by Soviets. Economic indicators were bleak too. Afghanistan was hit by a severe drought in 1969 which lasted for three years. In 1971-72, famine occurred which took a heavy toll on the public. The aid which poured was cornered by the corrupt officials. Afghanistan continued to be dependent on foreign aid. They wanted to diversify their source of funds. Musa Shafiq, Prime Minister under Zahir’s regime in 1972, signed a rapprochement agreement with Iran on 12 March, 1973 giving concessions over the Helmand dispute. He also extended a friendship hand to Pakistan but could not gather much leeway.

Therefore, New Democracy did not help to garner new hopes and new aspirations of people. Daoud did not sit quietly and master minded a bloodless coup on 17 July, 1973 when Zahir Shah was on a visit to Italy.

**Return of Daoud: The U-Turn (1973-79)**

The period of Return was in stark contrast to the ideals which he nurtured during his Prime Ministership in 1953. Insecure of his power, Daoud became autocratic, reactionary, impatient and greedy for more power. His hunger for power is evident as he undertook the Ministership of all important posts. He became President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Defence Minister of Republic of Afghanistan. Daoud wanted to aggressively pursue his programmes of modernisation and the Seven year plan was budgeted around US$3,850 million and Soviet Union could provide US$570 million only. Daoud then carefully set on diversifying his sources of fund and extending friendship with more countries. He first reaffirmed his
friendship with USSR in 1975 by extending the Afghan-Soviet Treaty on Neutrality and Mutual Non-Aggression of 1931 by another 10 years. And then, stealthily cutting down the presence of communists from the Afghan authorities by either removing or sending them abroad in foreign missions.

Daoud in an unexpected turn of events softened its stand on Pashtunistan. He was seeking aid from Persian and Gulf countries that were friendly to Pakistan. Iran welcomed the move and in 1975 promised to give US$ 2 billion aid in ten years. But due to drop in Iran’s oil income and economic difficulties after 1975, Iran could not keep its words and could disburse only US$10 million. Daoud then turned to Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Soviet Union had scores to settle with Egypt. Anwar-al-Saadat of Egypt had broken quasi alliance to join USA and also made peace with Israel. This caused much resentment to Soviets.

Next, Daoud took a hasty step and promulgated a new constitution in 1977 where he upheld strong presidency and one party system. This was an additional move to consolidate and preserve power. He formed National Revolutionary Party (NRP) and convened Loya Jirgah which elected him President for 6 years. This left no space for communists and he further moved to clean up his government from Parchamis and Khalqis.

This along with the two other developments one, success of OPEC countries in gaining more profit for producer countries helped in perusal of pro western social, economic and political reforms in the country and second, General Zia-ul-Haq an Islamic oriented military regime took control of Pakistan.

All these developments fuelled apprehensions of Soviets. Pro Soviets Parcham and Khalqis reunited in their PDPA and carried out a bloody coup on 27 April, 1978 eliminating Daoud and his entire family.

The period of return of Daoud was punctured by the same evils which have continued to haunt Afghanistan from the time of Rahman. Soviet grew apprehensive that Afghanistan is moving out of its ‘sphere of influence’. Therefore, foreign meddling continued hampering the sovereignty, independence and development of the country. Daoud wanted to impatiently implement modernizing reforms without making public aware of the sanctity of such reforms.
Also, the lack of funds and the absence of source of domestic revenue kept Afghanistan dependent on the foreign aid. The attitude of Daoud also underwent a change. From his passion of radically implementing reforms, he now wanted to be more secure in his power and made panicky attempts to retain power. Toppling Zahir Shah’s regime to wrest power is evident of such a hurried attempt. And this also shows that polygamic rivalries continued unabated to become King of Afghanistan.

**The New Great Game: USA v/s USSR**


After toppling of Daoud’s regime in 1978, Pro-Soviet, Marxist-Leninist PDPA took over control of the country. But soon the same old problems emerged. The groups *Parchams* and *Khalqis*, who together fought against Daoud were now fighting amongst themselves to gain maximum power. Polygamic rivalries were replaced by factionalism. *Khalqis* got *Parchams* arrested and purged and many were executed on charges of counter revolutionary activities.

Afghanis also had no trust in philosophy of communism and viewed it as ‘Godless’ ideology.

The regime imposed age restrictions on marriage, curtailed polygamy, and abolished *Mahr* (dowry). They also brought in land reforms which looked good more on paper than in practice. Land was distributed to poorest families but their size was too short that none of the activities could be carried out. So the peasants returned their land to the owners. The ideology and policies of PDPA alienated people and led to nation-wide civil and armed resistance. Sensing more trouble in the future against communist regime, Soviets signed Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Taraki on 5 December, 1978. Clause 4 provided Soviets with a right to intervene militarily to protect the territory, security and independence of Afghanistan with the agreement of a legitimate government. Throughout 1979, *Khalqi* continued witnessing resistance from various quarters. Low level armed resistance was on rise in 24 out of 28 provinces of Afghanistan. Second, *Parchams* wanted to strike back and Amin and Taraki tried out to outdo each other in controlling power. On 8th September, 1979 Hafizullah Amin got Taraki killed. Third, opposition from Islamic group Mujahedeen, aided and supported by Pakistan increased. Half of the army had deserted and many servicemen
joined the resistance with their weapons and ammunitions. Sensing threat to the communist regime, Amin invited Soviet’s assistance. And Soviet’s readily obliged with 75,000 men equipped with aviation, tanks and artillery. Many scholars debate that Soviet’s act was not of an invasion but intervention. But the sole motive was to save communism as they replaced Amin with Babrak Karmal of Parcham faction. Other factors responsible for Soviet invasion were

1. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the region with the coming of power of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan.

2. Growing ties of Beijing with Islamabad and Washington.

3. US naval Build-up in the Persian Gulf.

4. And NATO’s decision to deploy Pershing 2 missiles in Western Europe.

US initially followed wait and watch policy by imposing economic sanctions, Olympic Games boycott, acrimony of US condemnations of Soviet Action. But later it jumped fully into the Afghan quagmire. Massive economic and military aid amounting to US$600 million was provided to Afghan Islamic Resistance groups, Mujahedeen and Pakistan who acted as a frontline state and aided in setting up the headquarters of Mujahedeen in their country. This also gave rise to “one of the most destructive resistance groups in Afghan resistance” – the extremist Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

The act of aid was in stark contrast to the characteristic of largest democracy in the world. Ranging from Rahman, Daoud, Nadir all sought help and recognition from Washington but the latter continued with its policy of ignorance. But when it came to defending the region from communism, U.S. came all out to provide massive support and aid amounting to defeat its enemy but not for developing Afghanistan.

It became difficult for U.S.S.R to sustain the war in the presence of modern equipments with Mujahedeen for fighting against Soviets, the international condemnation pouring in because

144 Ibid P: 194.

Map 2: Occupation of Warlords in Afghanistan

(By early 2003 Afghanistan's northern parts were engulfed in the same factional rivalries that plagued the area in the 1990s.)

of the huge civilian casualties in the war and the unbearable cost of US$15 million per day for maintaining the military presence. A regime change also occurred in Soviet with Gorbachev following the policy of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*. He did not want to continue with the “bleeding wound” and therefore signed the Geneva Accords to decide the withdrawal terms. The provisions included a. non-interference of Pakistan in Afghanistan b. Soviet Commitment to withdraw its troops by 15 September, 1989 c. safe repatriation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan d. guarantees of Accord by USA and USSR.

Although the Accord implicitly mentioned the continued interference of USSR; surprisingly, USA agreed to support the Accord as she feared the extremism which Mujahedeen and other Islamic groups might resort to hindering the peace and democracy in the region. After the Soviet pullout, Najibullah did not care to proceed with communist philosophy. He reduced control of state over media. PDPA’s name was changed to *Hezb-e-Watan* which followed the principles of Islam. In 1992, he proclaimed Soviet forces as ‘enemy of Afghanistan’. But soon ethnic tensions deteriorated and Najibullah’s government lost control over various parts of Afghanistan to different ethnicities. Massoud, Dostum and Ismail Khan controlled most of northern, western and central Afghanistan. South was controlled with major Pakistani based Sunni organizations. (Refer Map 2: Occupation of warlords in Afghanistan)

Najibullah met a cruel end when his dead body was hung on a pole. This culminated in a takeover of Taliban rule, therefore, establishing Islamic State of Afghanistan.

**Ruination of Afghanistan**

When Allah had made the rest of the world, he saw that there was lot of rubbish left over, bits and pieces and things that did not fit anywhere else. He collected them all together and threw them down to the earth. That was Afghanistan.¹⁴⁶

The description given by an old man to Ahmed Rashid, author of *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia* perfectly suit the situation in Afghanistan of post Soviet withdrawal. Until mid 1988, 1.24 million people were killed and about five million became refugees.¹⁴⁷ The country, for the first time in history, got embroiled in a civil war. The

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resistance groups which fought together against the common enemy Soviets and prevented
the percolation of communist ideology were now fighting amongst themselves for controlling
more of power. Mujahedeen themselves witnessed high ended factionalism. USA, Pakistan,
Saudi Arabia too continued with their unabashed interference not with the intention of
rebuilding Afghanistan but with their personal motives of containing Iran and resolving
Pakistan- Afghanistan border dispute. Afghanistan was genuinely reduced to rubble. In this
section, I will be discussing about the turmoil which beset Afghanistan post the Soviet
withdrawal. And since my PhD concerns the period of 1990-2012, so this will be discussed in
detail.

Before coming on the resistance movement, it is important to start by discussing the
difference between traditional ulema and Islamists. Islamists are trained in government
religious centres and they expect the job from the government upon completion of their
graduation. Whereas ulema, receive education from private seminaries or madrassas. Oliver
Roy describes ‘Islamists’ as those religiously motivated individuals and groups who ‘are
almost all products of the government education system, either of scientific schools or of the
state madrassas.

The Islamists used their own gathering which is different from Jirga in the sense that Shura is
open to those who have some kind of religious qualification and is not confined to locality or
tribe. They were also not dependent for money on local people or local resources but were
aided by parties or groups and countries that had personal interest in the conflict. Another
difference is that while ulema fought in the area where they were teachers in madrassas or
mullahs in mosques but Islamists were not confined to their area or locality. This difference is
important given that after 1994 various Islamists groups and traditional ulema (Taliban)
fought one another with weapons to acquire throne, destroying the social fabric of the
country.148 Islamists had organized their resistance against Daoud (1973-78), against the
communists (1974-79), against the Soviet invasion (1979-89), against one another for power

148Ibid P: 162.
Map 3: Ethnic Distribution in Afghanistan

**Brief History of Islamists**

The theology faculty was opened in Kabul University (1951) and it provided an opportunity to some Afghan graduates to travel to other universities and one such important university was Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Zahir Shah’s last Prime Minister Musa Shafiq, leaders of resistance groups Sebghatullah Mujaddedi, Burhanuddin Rabbani and Abdul Rasool Sayyaf were graduates of this university. Islamist movement in Afghanistan was started in 1958 by Professor Ghulam Muhammad Niazi, graduate of Al-Azhar. In this movement, the top place is reserved for Mawlawi who is the highest rank in *ulema*, then *ustaz* (teacher) followed by Islamist students. Some well known Islamists students were Gulbuddian Hekmatyar, Ahmad Shah Massoud, Nurullah Emad and Abdul Haq. The Islamist students were opposed to Western and regional hegemony and imperialism. They also disapproved Daoud’s obsession with Pashtunistan, opposed Pakistan division in 1972 which led to the creation of Bangladesh; Zionism because of Palestinian issue and the American involvement in Vietnam. Their goal was to achieve Islamic society and they believed that the earlier constitution, first one by Amanullah in 1923 and then by Nader Shah in 1933 and lastly by Zahir Shah in 1964 were not Islamic in nature. The previous rulers, Islamists believed had a free run in the administration without any accountability. And this was in total contrast of what the Islam approves i.e. a King, chosen from *ulema* should serve the *ummah* (community) and if the ruler turns tyrannical he should be removed. But this did not happen and therefore, they took the task of establishing an Islamic society.

But history repeats if one doesn’t learn lessons from it. And as the Islamists took charge of the country, factionalism just could not sustain their rule, paving for the Taliban takeover.

**Ethnicity in sudden Demand!**

(Refer Map 3: Ethnic Distribution in Afghanistan) Afghans are known for preserving their honor and when the Soviets attacked them they promptly rose to defeat the invading forces. But there were fissures within them. The reasons for disunity amongst Islamists were firstly, the failure to wage an effective opposition or war against Daoud which led to split in the party. *Parcham* and *Khalqis* together fought against Zaher Shah to establish Republican government but once power was with Daoud, he eliminated *Parcham* from his government so
as to consolidate maximum personal power and did not pursue Islamists. Pakistan trained them; provided aid, arms and ammunitions through ISI (Inter- Services Intelligence) as the former wanted to divert the attention of Daoud from Pashtunistan issue. But when the Islamists carried out attack against his government they could not match his resources and skills and therefore suffered a defeat. The defeat caused split and Jami’at Islami headed by Rabbani split with Hekmatyar and the latter formed his own Hezb-i-Islami, Islamic Party. Jami’at Islami was dominated by ethnic Tajiks concentrated in Kabul and North-eastern and Western Afghanistan. The party adhered to modern and progressive principles of Islamist ideology but lacked representation from other important non-Pashtun minorities of Uzbeks, Turkmen and Hazaras. Whereas Hekmatyar’s Hezb-i-Islami consisted of ethnic Ghilzai Pashtuns concentrated mainly in south and south eastern Afghanistan. Another group led by Mawlawi Yonus Khalis( an Islamist outside Al-Azhar graduate circle) also broke forming second Hezb-i-Islami. Hikmatyar’s party came to known as Hezb Hekmatyar and Khalis’s was known as Hezb Khalis.

The second reason to perpetuate disunity was Pakistan. Pakistan did not want Islamists to unite as it would then have been detrimental to its interests. So she added 3 moderate parties of the two Sufi orders – National Liberation Front (NLF) Jabh-i-Nejat Meli of Sebghaghatullah Mujadedi, National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA) Mahaz-i-Meli Islami of Sayed Ahmad Gailani, and an ulema party Movement of Islamic Revolution Harakat-i-Inquilab-i-Islami headed by Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi. Another Islamist Abdul Rasool Sayyaf formed Itihad-i-Islami Afghanistan, the Islamic Unity of Afghanistan (IUA) when he was released from prison by Babrak Karmal. This party had the backing of Saudi Arabia and its aim was to spread anti Iranian Wahabbi Islam against Iran’s promotion of Shi’ah Islam. These seven resistance parties were recognized by Pakistan and introduced to Americans, Arabs and free world. And soon, thereafter, large volume of aid started pouring in.

Iran also did not keep quiet and after 1989 encouraged eight small Shi’ah parties in competition to these seven resistance parties. One amongst such was Sazman-e-Nasr (Organisation of Victory) led by Abdal Ali Mazari to upheld the cause of Shiite resistance groups based in Iran. In 1990, Mazari became the leader of Hezb-e-Wahdat which became a major player in Afghanistan politics.
Soviet in response to the active opposition promoted its own militia forces. Jowzjani the Uzbeks headed by Abdul Rashid Dostum, the Kayan Isma’ilia Shi’ah in central Afghanistan by Mansur Naderi, Andarabi militia in Hindu Kush by Jummah Khan, Achekzai militia in south west by General Asmat Muslim and Tajik commander Ahmad Shah Massoud had his own militia.149 Ahmad Shah Massoud became the second Tajik leader to occupy dominant position after Bachai Saqaw. The job of these groups was to guard the roads and keep it open. Soviet also took help of tribal militias maleshah qawmi, WAD150, Sarandoy151 and youth forces.

Therefore, divisions within Islamists; Soviets using ethnicity as a tool to promote tribal militias; Iran building its own Shi’ah parties and assistance from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to protect its own Sunni population created deep divisions in the social fabric of Afghanistan and thus leading to civil war during the Rabbani regime.

The Tale of Throne

As the Soviets left, Afghanistan was now at the mercy of various resistance groups scrambling for power. Massoud and Abdul Rashid Dostum were ready to usurp power after fall of Najibullah’s government. Mazari’s Hezb-e-Wahdat occupied 30 percent of the capital. And Hekmatyar’s forces remained in South to launch attack on other resistance groups to seize power.

But they were aware that no single ethnic group can sustain power for long, therefore, Afghanistan needs a broad based coalition government. Peshawar Agreement was signed on 24 April, 1992 to discuss the power sharing arrangement in the presence of Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Interim government was to be set up in two stages. In one stage, a two month long transitional government headed by leader of small Pashtun Mujahedeen group, Sebghatullah Mujadedi, was to be formed. And in second stage, a longer term interim

149 Ibid P: 162.

150 WAD: Force during Soviet war in Afghanistan that had trained men and women all over the country for intelligence purposes and whose number were estimated at about half a million. Source: Ibid P:163

151 Sarandoy also known as ‘Defenders of Revolution’ were a police force of the Soviet backed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in 1980’s during the Soviet war in Afghanistan. Source: Wikipedia.
transitional government to be headed by Rabbani and supported by Massoud forces for four months to be set up. Mujadedi reluctantly stepped down and Rabbani defied the agreement after coming to power. Street to street fighting took place between Jamiat and Hezb Hekmatyar. Rabbani later convened Shura-i-Hal-wa’qud as per the Peshawar agreement to decide the next government and they endorsed continuation of Rabbani government for another 18 months. The sanctity of Shura-i-Hal-wa’qud was severely questioned as it constituted of Jamiat’s (Rabbani’s party) members, Massoud’s loyalists and several smaller loyal groups. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar did not take this easy and in August 1992 he launched barrage of rockets against Kabul, killing 1800 civilians and rampaging large parts of the city. Dostum, an opportunist Uzbek warlord promised to build ‘democratic secular republic’ in northern Afghanistan if the warlords did not change their line.152

As Rabbani and Massoud were trying to broaden the government base; Hekmatyar, Mojadedi and Dostum got together to form anti government alliance Council of Coordination Shura-i-Hamahangi. On 1 January, 1994 they launched an attack on Kabul killing 25,000 civilians and destroying half of the city. Peace negotiations by various Mujahedeen leaders, Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and United Nations did not produce any results.

On the other hand, Jami’at party was itself afflicted with disunity and distrust. Mossoud was given the control of military administration and for this he created Supervisory Council. In the milieu of growing unrest, Supervisory Council was gaining predominance and they started demanding greater share of power in the administration. This caused deep divisions amongst the two wings.

Pakistan’s Invasion

Pakistan wanted to expand its influence in neighbouring, oil rich Muslim states via Afghanistan. But Hekmatyar’s defeat in wrestling power from Rabbani spilled water on plans of Pakistan. ISI, therefore, came up with an alternative force Taliban, an ultra orthodox Sunni Islamic militia of young Pashtun students from madrasas or religious schools in Pakistan,

who had come from both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. A chain of madrasas had been created by Pakistan, with US consent and Saudi funding in the mid 1980s ‘as a religious-political belt along the Afghan-Pakistani border in order to support the combat spirit of Mujahedeen’. They adhered to strict Islamic ideology of Saudi’s Wahabbism and Deobandi school and devoted themselves to Islamic Jihad. Jihad included the readiness to self sacrifice oneself in order to liberate and defend Muslim land from infidels and Muslim surrogates and unite Muslims within a single umma (community) under Islamic government. Their leader was Mullah Mohammad Omar, an illiterate and poor Ghilzai Pashtun and an ex-Mujahedeen fighter in Hezb-e-Islami of Yunus Khalis. Therefore, Taliban constituted the poor, uneducated and unprivileged masses and were closer to ordinary people.

Pakistan trained Taliban and US, Britain and Saudi Arabia provided them with arms, fighters, logistic support and money. In November 1994, Taliban took control of Kandahar and continued proceeding to Kabul. By February 1995, their numbers grew from 800 to 25,000. By September 1995, they captured Herat and took control of 27 out of country’s 32 provinces. Rabbani, Massoud and Hekmatyar could not stand the might of Taliban. So Rabbani in his last attempt to retain Kabul forged alliance with Hekmatyar and this move of Rabbani backfired as the internals blamed him for the devastating state they are in. On 10 September, 1996 Taliban captured Jalalabad and on 26 September, 1996 Taliban marched towards Kabul and thus seized it. Mazar-e-Sharif, the last stronghold in northern Afghanistan of the anti-Taliban alliance under the control of Dostum was attacked in August 1998.

**War at the Doorstep: Fighting Religious Extremism**

Before Soviet Union’s invasion, the clashes were confined to the political level. But after the Soviets called their day, street to street fighting became rampant. Clashes between the Mujahedeen and between Taliban and Mujahedeen took a huge toll on civilians. Now, the rivalries were not only confined to seizure of political power but also included the struggle for ‘Survival of the Fittest’ at societal level. Ethnic conflicts were on rise. Withdrawal of Soviet Union gave rise to assertion of ethnicity. Myriad parties promoted by different ethnicities and countries namely Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Russia scrambled for power. This led to

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153Ibid P: 220.
civil war in Afghanistan, causing anarchy and chaos. To end war and bring peace, Taliban, therefore, pitched in. Winston Churchill once remarked Taliban ‘a host of wandering *Talib-ul-ilms* who correspond with the theological students in Turkey (who) live free at the expense of people.’ An old man in an interview to Ahmed Rashid, author of *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game* said “the Taliban had promised peace, instead they have given us nothing but war.”

But the questions which will be answered in this section is

a. What factors led to the rise of Taliban?
b. What is the ideology of Taliban?
c. What was their economic policy?
d. The factors which contributed to their international notoriety?
e. And what is Ahmed Rashid’s ‘New Great Game’?

**Reasons for their emergence**

Taliban rose with the aim to restore law and order and to hand over power to a government which was made up of ‘good Muslims’ only. Afghans initially liked them for the reason that they did not want power for themselves. But Taliban took a U-turn after they occupied 90 percent of the country. Their decision making became highly centralized, secretive, dictatorial and inaccessible. After 1996 ‘their desire to become the sole rulers of Afghanistan without participation of other groups’ was not hidden. They refused to evolve a mechanism to include representations from non Pashtun ethnic groups.

The reasons for their emergence were firstly, support by foreign powers, predominantly Pakistan to install a friendly ruler as the Pakistanis wanted to expand their influence in the oil rich countries. But failure to do so made Pakistan encourage an alternative in the form of Taliban. Secondly, the Mujahedeen who occupied power with the objective to purge the government from communist infidels and to bring Islam back in governance were now busy in flourishing their own personal ambitions of maximising their power. Rabbani did not honor

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the Peshawar agreement of stepping down after four months and the *Shura* Council which was organized had his own loyalists. On one hand, where the economic situation was stagnant on the other, Mujahedeens were draining the resources of the country by being highly corrupt, fragmented and inefficient. Olivier Roy has called it ‘the failure of political Islam’. Ahmad Rashid points out at the dichotomy between state and religion on one hand and the clan or tribe on the other which Islamists failed to resolve.

Muslim societies in the twentieth century have been divided into two contradictory structures. The clan, tribe and ethnic group on one hand and the state and religion on the other. It is the small group versus the larger faith or the tribe versus the *ummah*, which has been the main focus of loyalty and commitment rather than the state.  

Thirdly, Afghanistan since two decades has suffered massive disorder and lawlessness in the State. People were now wrecked by hopelessness. Since the aim of Taliban was to end war and bring peace, Afghans were impressed by them. Fourthly, the modern and progressive resistance group of scholars, intellectuals, businessmen and technocrats had left the country for abroad. Taliban considered them as Western pawns or Soviet styled educationists.

**Ideology of Taliban**

Taliban gained international notoriety for its religious extremism. And such kind of religious coercion which Taliban pursued had no parallels in the Afghanistan history. Rashid writes “Before the Taliban, Islamic extremism has never flourished in Afghanistan”. Although Islam has bound the multi ethnic and diverse Afghan society together but it had no signs of conservative and orthodox ideas. 80% of Afghans belong to Suni Hanafi sect which is the most liberal of the four Sunni schools of thought. It was tolerant and did not coerce religious edicts on people. Sufism also had a great influence on Islam in Afghanistan. The Sufis build their faith on prayer, contemplation, dances, music, and sessions of physical shaking or whirling in a permanent quest of truth. These rituals create an inner spiritual space within man that the outside cannot penetrate. Arab traveller Ibn Batuta described Sufism “The fundamental aim of Sufi life was to pierce the veils of human sense which shut man off from the divine and so to obtain communion and absorption into God.”  

156 Ibid P: 87.

157 Ibid P: 84.
economy and they have traditionally controlled money market in urban centres and when Afghan kings went to war they often borrowed money from them. This example exhibits the traditional Afghan’s coexistence and comity.

The ideology of Taliban comes close to the heels of the conservative school of Sunni Hanafi sect of Deobandis. The Deobandis arose in British India to reform and unite Muslim society and to fight against colonial rulers. Taliban also set their aim as an Islamic reform movement but they took their objective to an extreme level. Deobandis restricted the role of women in public life and Taliban taking this to extreme, imposed severe restrictions on women which ultimately led to their almost complete disappearance from public life. Deobandis also opposed hierarchy and that is why Taliban mistrusts tribal structure and clan and has eliminated them from leadership roles. The Deobandis also reject Shia and massacres of Hazaras and Uzbeks carried out by Taliban is a telling reminder of the biased and manipulated Islamic ideology pursued by them and therefore, this vitiates their aim of reforming the Islamic society.158

Rashid writes that

Taliban have clearly debased the Deobandi tradition of learning and reform, with their rigidity, accepting no concept of doubt except as sin and considering debate as little more than heresy...Taliban are vehemently opposed to modernism and have no desire to adopt modern ideas of progress or economic development...there is no Taliban Islamic manifesto...their exposure to the radical Islamic debate around the world is minimal, their sense of their own history is even less...allows no room for debate even with fellow Muslims.

Political and Military Structure

Top most decision making body which was based in Kandahar was the Supreme Shura. The members predominantly included Mullah Omar’s friends and colleagues, mainly Durrani Pashtuns but military commanders, tribal elders and Ulema also took part in it. Taliban political set up was narrowly based as it excluded Ghilzai Pashtuns or non Pashtun ethnicities.

There are two other Shuras who report to Kandahar Shura. One is Kabul Shura, the cabinet of acting ministers in Kabul which deals with day to day problems of the government, the city and the Kabul military front but important decisions are conveyed to the Kandahar Shura where decisions are actually taken. And the Kandahar Shura deals with even minor decisions

158Ibid
like allowing journalists to travel or on new aid projects. And the approval of decisions by the apex decision making body caused long delays in implementation of plans. In non-Pashtun areas like Kabul, Herat and Mazar have governors which are non-Pashtuns but they are not recruited from the local area but are outsiders. The other representatives in the area mayor, police chiefs and other senior administrators are Kandahari Pashtuns. Taliban keep on shifting these representatives in order to avoid gaining undue influence. However, political powers of Taliban have been reduced given the lack of funds, economic underdevelopment and failure in rehabilitating refugees returning from Pakistan and Iran.

The Military Shura works secretly where the role of the officials is not clearly defined. Mullah Omar is the head of armed forces. There is no formal process of recruitment. Individual commanders from specific Pashtun areas recruit men, pay them and look after their needs in the field and Military Shura assists them with money, fuel, food, transport, weapons and ammunitions. Majority of Taliban fighters are not paid salaries and it is up to the commander to pay his men when they go on leave. Professional and trained soldiers from communist army are given salaries. Members from the Military Shura also assist in Kabul Shura. On one hand this leads to flexibility as they act both as generals and administrators and with this they keep in touch with fighters. But on the other hand it leads to chaos and delay in taking decisions. If a minister has gone to the front then early decision cannot be taken in the administration. Taliban also removed senior bureaucrats who were Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras and brought Pashtuns irrespective of their qualification or no qualification.

Taliban is against political parties. So they took no decision in setting up the constitution, division of political powers and to form a representative government. Taliban minister said ‘Eventually when we have peace people can select their own government but first the opposition has to be disarmed’.159

But after 1996, even the apex body Kandahar Shura was not consulted and the power was concentrated in the hands of Mullah Omar. Omar was declared as the Amir-ul-Momineen i.e. Commander of the Faithful.

159Ibid P: 102.
From Movement to Government

The word Taliban is the plural of the word *Talib* which means an Islamic student who seeks knowledge from the *mullah*, the knowledge giver. Taliban, originally, aimed at restoring peace, disarming population, enforcing *Sharia* law and defending the integrity and Islamic character of Afghanistan.

Before Taliban emerged, the country was divided into warlord fiefdoms. Tajik government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani controlled Kabul, surrounding areas and north-east of the country; three provinces in the west around Herat were controlled by Ismael Khan. In the east on the Pakistan border three Pashtun provinces were under independent control of a council or *Shura* (Council) of Mujahedeen commanders based in Jalalabad. Area around south and east of Kabul was under Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Uzbek warlord General Rashid Dostum held six provinces in north. In central Afghanistan, Hazaras controlled Bamiyan province; and Southern Afghanistan and Kandahar were controlled by petty Mujahedeen warlords and bandits.

Kandahar fell to Taliban in November 1994. Herat was important as a route for Pashtun transport and drug mafias to Iran and Central Asia and in September 1995, Ismael Khan abandoned Herat, thus surrendering to Taliban. Taliban had control over entire west of the country, sharing border with Iran and for the first time ruling an area which was not entirely Pashtun. On 26 June, 1996 Taliban launched a massive rocket attack against Hikmetyar in which 61 people were killed and over 100 injured. On 26 September, 1996 the student’s movement has swept Kabul. Mullah Omar was proclaimed as ‘Commander of the Faithful’ and declared Afghanistan as ‘Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’. So the student’s movement was now turned into de-facto government of Afghanistan recognised only by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Taliban now wanted to take control over Mazar-e-Sharif, the last stronghold in northern Afghanistan of anti-Taliban alliance. Taliban wanted to crush warlords and keep the country united. Taliban bribed General Malik Pahlawan, second in command in Dostum’s army to seize control of Mazar. Taliban refused to comply with their promise to Malik of sharing power and started disarming Uzbek and Hazara groups. On 28 May, 1997 Hazaras revolted against the disarming which led to the massacring of 600 Talibans. Masud took advantage of the weak position of Taliban and launched a counter
attack to wrest control of southern region, killing hundred more Talibans. On 13 June, 1997 General Malik, Masud and Khalili got together to fight against Taliban. They declared Mazar as their capital and reappointed Burhanuddin Rabbani as president. But the anti Taliban alliance comprising Uzbeks, Tajiks and Hazaras could not work given their own internal differences. In July 1998, Talibans surrounded the Mazar and wreaked revenge of the losses of Taliban forces. Brutal massacre in the form of ferocious genocide was followed. After first full day of indiscriminate killing, Taliban then targeted Hazaras and aimed to cleanse the north from Shias. On 13 September, 1998 Taliban took control of Bamiyan and annihilated the age old civilization which Afghanistan was proud of.

Veiled Gender and Culture

‘Taliban law is not Islamic law’\textsuperscript{160} claimed the protestor opposing the severe restrictions imposed on the movement, freedom and participation of women in public arena. Taliban gained international notoriety with its conservative stance on women which made women completely invisible. Before Taliban, twenty years of continuous wars have rampaged the society, economy and political affairs of the country. Ahmad Rashid states Afghanistan had the lowest rated indices for the human condition in the world. The infant mortality rate is 163 deaths per 1,000 births (18 percent) the highest in the world which compares to an average of 70/1000 in other developing countries. A quarter of all children die before they reach their fifth birthday, compared to one tenth that number in developing countries…1700 mothers out of 100,000 die before giving birth. Life expectancy for men and women is just 43-44 years old. Only 29 percent had access to health and 12 percent has access to safe water. Children die of simple, preventable diseases like measles and diarrhoea…Illiteracy was the major problem before Taliban appeared, affecting 90 per cent of girls and 60 percent of boys.\textsuperscript{161}

But after the coming of Taliban the situation only worsened. They closed 63 schools affecting 103,000 girls, 148,000 boys and 11,200 teachers of whom 7,800 were women. Kabul University was also shut and 10,000 students were send back in which 4000 were women. UNICEF reported in December 1998 that 9 in 10 girls and 2 in 3 boys have not been enrolled in school.

Females were prohibited for working outside, except the medical sector. Various reports estimated that and where from 40,000-150,000 women, including teachers plus doctors,

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid P: 107.
nurses, administrators and other civil servants were affected by the prohibition on women’s education.\textsuperscript{162} This also impacted the boy’s education as the predominant numbers of women were teachers. Women were told to move outside their homes only when necessary with their faces covered and accompanied by a male member. They also imposed ‘chaderi’. As the young Taliban militia were responsible to enforce the code of conduct, they insulted and beat women with metre and a half long whip made of metal and leather. Restrictions on women affected the aid delivery services also. UN by October 1996 was forced to suspend 8 income generating projects for women in Kabul, because women were no longer permitted to work there. In May 1997, religious police beat up five female staff of US NGO Care International and demanded that the aid projects must receive clearance from not only relevant ministries but also from Minister of Interior, Public Health, Police and the Department of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. Muslim female Humanitarian workers were now to be accompanied by male relative. In July 1997, Taliban insisted that all 35 UN and NGO agencies move out of their offices to one pre-selected compound at the destroyed Polytechnic building. UN and the NGOs left Kabul and European Union suspended programmes.

The twenty years war also affected the physical and mental health of women. The scarcity of food and malnourishment of children were common. Women were suffering from hysteria, trauma and depression.

Herati women were banned from visiting shrines of Sufi saints. Taliban shut down all girls’ school in Herat. They segregated few functioning hospitals, shut down bath houses and banned women from bazaar. Beauty, hair, make-up salons and bath houses, the only place where hot water for women were available, were shut down in Kabul. Tailors could not measure the size of women for clothes but to keep measurements of regular customers in mind. Fashion magazine were banned.

All forms of entertainment movies, TV, videos, music and dancing, which is nevertheless in short supply in poor country like Afghanistan, were banned. For any form of entertainment they were advised to go to parks and see flowers. Music was banned because ‘it creates a

strain in the mind and hampers study of Islam’.\textsuperscript{163} Hanging of paintings and portraits were not allowed.

‘The constitution is the Sharia so we don’t need a constitution. People love Islam and that is why they all support the Taliban and appreciate what we are doing’ said Attorney General Maulvi Jalilullah Maulvizada. They based their code of conduct on the Sharia law. Other reasons for implementation of strict restrictions were firstly, Afghanistan has endured long war due to which it has been handicapped in provision of security and the corruption malaise has inflicted the authorities. So they believed that since public place is not secure they won’t be able to prevent women from crimes of rape, molestation which are rampant. Secondly, Taliban leaders were all from the poorest, most conservative and least literate southern Pashtun provinces of Afghanistan. In Mullah Omar’s village, women were covered from top to toe by veils and girls did not go to schools because there was none. Thirdly, their own internal dynamic and nature of recruiting base shaped their thinking. The recruits comprised of- the orphans, the rootless, the lumpen proletariat from the war and refugee camps- were brought up in a male dominated society. They believed that control over women were a symbol of manhood. Women were considered as an instrument to regulate social behaviour and being the powerful symbol of Afghan culture.\textsuperscript{164} Fourthly, Taliban regard educated and empowered women as challenge to patrilineal Pashtun society. Taliban convinced Afghans that once the law and order will be restored, freedom according to the Sharia will be granted. Nabi Misdaq in his book Afghanistan: Political Frailty and External interference, aired Taliban’s views that many countries criticize them for bringing Afghanistan, in the words of European commissioner for Humanitarian Aid Emma Bonino, back to the ‘dark ages’\textsuperscript{165}. But no one has come forward to help rebuild schools, pay for the training of teachers and to try bring back Afghan teachers and lecturers from abroad. But Taliban’s claim does not hold any legitimacy given that imposition of strict restrictions have

\textsuperscript{163}AP, ‘Taliban restricts music’, 18 December 1996.


forced aid agencies to leave Afghanistan and women teachers back to their household chores.

Nabi Misdaq has also painted a different picture of Taliban. According to the Swedish Committee (an NGO) has stated that some 1500 schools, most of them coeducational at primary level, are open in different parts of the country under Taliban control. Girls up to the age of 12 were given religious instruction and after 12 they were not allowed to go to schools. Taliban justified their actions by blaming the insecurity and non availability of transport and educational facilities. Taliban were credited for restoring honor to women and putting an end to rapes, abductions and proliferation of brothels which were considered anti Islamic and anti-Afghan practices. Taliban also set up courts based on Shari’ah law where swift justice, though brutal, was applicable to all whether well connected or not. Taliban also helped in controlling the secessions which was being promoted by neighbouring countries during the war. They emphasized on strong central authority and rejected regional autonomy. They defeated most of the warlords and collected millions of arms dispersed throughout the country, an accomplishment which no one has achieved.166

Next to Oil, it’s the pipeline which matters!!

Afghanistan is known as the land of routes. And this parlance was not only relevant in the ancient times when people fought to travel on the Afghanistan route to launch their invasion. But it still holds great significance when pipelines instead of people are now fighting to move on that route.

If there is one country that has changed its foreign policy stance repetitively with respect to Afghanistan is United States of America. We have read in this chapter how USA has ignored Afghanistan’s development assistance despite repeated invitations by the Amirs. But when the threat of communism was staring in Central Asia USA provided aid of round about $3billion to shield from Soviet’s invasion. Through CIA, they fuelled resources of resistance group Mujahedeen in 1980s till early 1990s. But when Mujahedeen failed to establish a government which could suit regional and super powers interests, Taliban was next on their agenda for promotion.

USA continued backing Taliban for the following reasons.

a. To end the booming opium trade as it can undermine Pakistan, the neighboring Central Asian states and have an impact beyond Europe and Russia. In 1999, five million became drug addicts in Pakistan compared to zero in 1979. Heroin addiction caused problems of law and order, unemployment and allowed ethnic and sectarian extremist groups to arm themselves.

b. To counter the expanding influence of Russia and Iran in the region as they were emerging the regional powers given the oil rich countries they are. So USA wanted to build pipelines in other oil rich regions namely Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan through Afghanistan for reducing dependence on Russia and Iran. And this would also lead to decline in their foreign exchange revenue.

c. Restoring law and order in Kandahar and other corners of the South.

d. Getting rid of terrorist camps.

e. Paving the way for the return of Zahir Shah

f. Providing US ally, Pakistan a link to make immense profits from new trade routes in Central Asian republics.

After the disintegration of Soviet Russia, most of the republics formed were rich in oil reserves. Kazakhstan has the largest oil reserves and she along with Azerbaijan are called ‘legends in the industry’. Turkmenistan has the third largest oil reserves in the world. And neighboring country Uzbekistan has comparable amount of gas reserves. Tapping at the large oil reserves, UNOCAL, American company and its partner, the Saudi Arabia owned Delta Oil company signed an agreement with Turkmenistan to build an oil pipeline. But the pipeline soon ran into rough weathers and was finally withdrawn. It became contentious given the flawed policy pursued by Taliban. Firstly, Taliban could not extend complete control over Afghanistan and instead of attaining peace after the long drawn out war it followed the undemocratic practice of ethnic cleansing. Secondly, Taliban did not bring an end to the opium trade in fact they benefitted from it. A farmer in Afghanistan proclaimed “we are

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grateful to Taliban. They brought us security so that we can grow our poppy in peace. I need the poppy crop to support my 14 family members.” Between 1992-1995, Afghanistan had produced 2,250 metric tonnes of opium every year. In 1995, UNDCP estimated that Pakistan-Afghanistan drugs exports were earning some 50 billion rupees a year. By 1998, heroin exports had doubled in value to US$3 billion.

Thirdly, Taliban liaison with Saudi billionaire Osama Bin Laden proved to be detrimental to the interests of America. The radicals gained confidence that if they can defeat one superpower Soviet Union, they can also bring down USA and the Muslims can reign again as in the seventh and eighth centuries. In August 1998, Laden attacked US embassies in Africa. Taliban after the attack became increasingly vocal about the Americans, the UN, the Saudis and Muslim regimes around the world. ISI which introduced Bin Laden to Taliban refused to cooperate with Americans in catching hold of Laden and this added much to their ire. Fourthly, the worsening of political and economic situation in Pakistan send fears that it might lead to takeover by Taliban. And lastly, the brutal treatment of women in Afghanistan has led to worldwide notoriety with many women organizations protesting against the American company to withdraw plan in support of Afghani women.

US change in foreign policy with respect to Afghanistan was noted when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Islamabad in November 1997 and called Taliban ‘despicable’ for its gender policies.168

Disturbances in executing the pipeline in Afghanistan was also of concern to Taliban as the pipeline was a medium to earn recognition from superpower and therefore, from UN.

**Didn’t Karzai and USA read Afghanistan History?**

The international criticism was mounting on Taliban not only for its perusal of orthodox policies but also for keeping Osama Bin Laden in hiding. Bin Laden carried out attacks in the US embassies of Kenya and Tanzania on August 1998. He was also accused of attacking American and UN forces in Somalia, such as shooting down of a Blackhawk helicopter and desecration of troops on 1994, failed attack on American destroyer in Aden Port in 1992, the

Ramsi Yousef attack on World Trade Centre in New York in 1993, Yousef’s and ‘blind Sheikh’ Abdur Rahman’s attack on a New York tunnel and bridge the same year and the attack on USS Cole in Aden in October 2000 which killed 17 sailors. And then came September 11, 2001 attacks on World Trade Centre which shocked the superpower and made the world sit and watch U.S. dominance collapsing like a pack of cards. Osama Bin Laden orchestrated the attack and this incident not only changed the way terror policy was handled till now but also the history of Afghanistan. Fourth time in 160 years of Afghanistan, the country was to be occupied and this time by United States. While the British invaded in nineteenth century to replace the existing regimes, Soviet Russia in twentieth century to preserve the communist regime and this time the invasion was to bring ‘democracy’ and to wage ‘War on Terror’. Taliban refused to hand over Laden to United States citing their Pashtun code of honor which prohibits the handing over of guests to his enemy. USA, instead of fighting a conventional war as he was aware of the defeats suffered at the hands of freedom and honor loving Afghans, fought unconventionally. They colluded CIA with anti-Taliban forces in the north and north-east and Special Operations Force troops consisting of Afghan fighters were also formed. Northern alliance member said “Northern Alliance welcomes you.” They were provided with money, weapons and supplies to carry out aerial attacks.

War on Taliban was started on 7 October, 2001 and after two months of bombing, US was now occupying the country. US was completely sure of not to hand over the power to Northern Alliance because of its inherent splits and factions. On 5 December, 2001 International Conference on Afghanistan in Bonn, Germany was organized to chart out the next course of action. The group included representatives of the United Front fighting in Afghanistan, the Rome faction composed of exiled Zahir Shah royalists, and the Peshawar Mujahedeen faction based in Pakistan. The Taliban were excluded from the talks. Despite this disadvantage, the conference selected a Popalzai Pashtun from Qandahar. He was Hamid Karzai. He was not a war commander or a charismatic political personality. He worked for Sebghatullah Mujaddedi and his National Front, smallest of the seven Peshawar based parties during Soviet occupation. He was also one of the deputies in the foreign ministry to Rabbani


170 Ibid P: 245.
and Massoud in the mid 1990s. He did his post graduate course in Political Science at Himachal Pradesh University in Shimla, India.

But the question which did the rounds was that despite United Front consisting of non Pashtuns who have defeated Taliban Pashtuns still chose to go ahead with the Pashtun leader? The reason was the three decades of war fatigue faced by Afghans and political circles. Given that Pashtuns have ruled the country, they wanted a leader that did not lead to further factions and divisions in the society. Secondly, Karzai had domestic and international legitimacy so his ascension to power was smooth. Hamid Karzai, a Durrani Pashtun, therefore, brought Durrani’s reign back.

Entering Afghanistan almost alone on a motorcycle, he received organised support from his own people and later American Special Operations advisers. He received a satellite phone call from Bonn informing him of his selection of the head of the new provisional government. This was highly unlike the past where the rulers have scrambled for power to attain the highest position.

Emergency Loya Jirga was convened in 2002 to consent the Karzai’s provisional government for two years until the new constitution is made and elections are held. Constitutional Loya Jirga, held in December 2003, had 500 representatives, quarter were women and had representatives from various Afghan political factions and ethnic groups except Taliban. The major issue raised was should Afghanistan become a federal polity or a centralized one. The federalists wanted a decentralised and federal polity given the myriad ethnicities residing in the country and second, the thirty years long continuous war has made Afghans take their own decisions.

Whereas federal opponents opposed federalization of the country as it would lead dissolution and secession. Even Afghan modernists wanted a presidential system as it would be comparatively easier to bring a much required change. A centralized system won’t be able to bring change outside Kabul in rural areas where the development was urgently required.

Afghanistan, therefore, settled for a semi presidential system. Presidential elections were held on October 2004, first time in the history of Afghanistan a national leader was seeking an electoral approval, followed by Parliamentary elections in 2005. Karzai, like with the past
rulers, did not want political parties to participate in elections and instead opted for individual candidacy. To weaken opposition against him, Karzai reasoned that political parties are considered communists and secondly, having no political parties will not create rift in the already divided society on the basis of ethnicity, language and territory. But his reason was soon to be proved flawed. In the First Past the Post system, sometimes even 100 candidates ran for a single seat, thus weakening the legitimacy to be attained by a single candidate and the candidates were declared victorious even when they have got 5-10% of votes.

Thomas Barfield wrote:

This reduced the legitimacy of Parliament, since the chances of winning a seat better resembled a lottery than a political contest.¹⁷¹

The parliamentary system failed to win hearts of Afghan and soon slipped without even making a slightest dent. And the legitimacy of the government was to be further depended upon the actions taken by the government to bring a change. Afghans once said that ‘you people pray before eating the meal but we pray after we have taken our food’. So words will not matter to Afghans unless a fitting change has not come through. Weak institutions combined by a short sighted leader hampered the chance of State building which Afghans got after three decades of war. Karzai did not seem to have read the history of Afghanistan.

Thomas Barfield wrote

What a fragile state could not easily survive was a badly designed government in the hands of a poor leader. With the best of intentions, the international community helped Afghanistan get both because it misconceived the political realities there and promoted a leader whose flaws were magnified rather than mitigated by the centralized government it had created. Since Afghans judged the legitimacy of a state by its actions rather than the process that created it, these errors had significant consequences.

If the mistakes committed by the politically naïve rulers were not enough, UNAMA and United States too pushed for a highly centralized system of government. The Karzai government was made responsible for everything including selecting provincial governors to paying local school teachers.

The radical measure of imposing the Western model of development in a fragile and most importantly, diverse society proved to be a misfit.

The myriad problems inflicted the Karzai regime which will coerce any Afghan observer like me to ask the question, haven’t Karzai and US read the history of Afghanistan? Afghanistan being tired of war and with the hope of a much needed peace got a golden chance to rewrite the history of Afghanistan but unfortunately, the mistakes were repeated at the cost of Afghan people.

The major challenges which the Karzai regime facing are:

a. **Corruption**

Karzai admits,

There is corruption in the whole system, whether it’s the ministries the NGOs, the donor’s implementation of projects, in all spheres of the Afghan recovery.\(^\text{172}\)

Afghanistan ranks 174 out of 176 countries according to the Transparency International 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index.\(^\text{173}\) The major corruption scandal which rocked Afghanistan was the 2010-2013 Kabul Bank financial scandal involving Mahmood Karzai and others close to Hamid Karzai. They were accused of spending the bank’s US$1 billion for their own personal lavish life style living and for lending money under the table to family and friends. As of October 2012, the government has recovered $180 million of the $980million fraudulent loans.\(^\text{174}\)

The scandal heavily dented the image of Karzai and also the trust of Afghans who were looking for rebuilding of the country.

Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army are considered as a source of fear rather than security. Incompetence and corruption have also plagued the police services. Low level corruption is also rampant. The authorities even have to bribe each other to get the administrative work done. Karzai, to mute opposition, against the corrupt official would shift...


\(^{174}\) Ibid
them but would not punish them. But this generated lot of ill will against his government.

CRS report 2013 mentions that

Government processing of official documents (e.g., passports, drivers’ licenses), in which processing services routinely require bribes in exchange for action. Other forms of corruption include Afghan security officials’ selling U.S./internationally provided vehicles, fuel, and equipment to supplement their salaries. In other cases, local police or border officials may siphon off customs revenues or demand extra payments to help guard the U.S. or other militaries’ equipment shipments. Other examples include security commanders placing “ghost employees” on official payrolls in order to pocket their salaries. Corruption is fed, in part, by the fact that government workers receive very low salaries (about $200 per month, as compared to the pay of typical contractors in Afghanistan that might pay as much as $6,500 per month).175

b. Patrimonialism

If the 1990’s era was free of cronyism in the form of dynastic politics, Karzai brought back the culture of ‘it’s all in the family.’ He supported his allies and relatives with government jobs, money and aid, fuelling their coffers and they in turn, unabashedly, build and flaunted large houses amidst the dire social and economic condition of society.

Thomas Barfield accused Karzai of not being interested in institution building. Rather than focussing on tapping the country’s resources for his personal well being.

Despite the large sums that the international community was investing in “institution building,” Karzai’s model of government was patrimonial, in which the government administration and its assets were an extension of the ruler. In such a system, personal relationships determined everything from who would amass personal wealth to who would be thrown in jail. Karzai did not use the assets of the state to centralize power so much as he used them to create a patronage network of personal clients bound to him.176

Karzai in response to the accusation of promoting patrons said “You have to carry the past in a way that will not hurt what you are building for the future - have a reasonable sense of inclusivity in order to protect the progress you want to achieve tomorrow. And we have done it.”177 Karzai might have “done” for building the future but his policy of cronyism has surely undone the hopes and aspirations of millions of Afghans who pinned great trust on him for


heralding them towards a democratic governance structure.

c. **Taliban resurgence- Mission unaccomplished**

Low violence and huge voter turnout of 70%[^178] marked the first direct elections of President in 2005. It was termed as the “mission accomplished”. Though, occupation of Afghanistan did send Taliban’s bags packing back to mountains but this added to the complacency in foreign troops. They did not concentrate on eliminating Taliban.

Thomas Barfield have mockingly commented

> It was as if a patient stopped taking an antibiotic when the immediate symptoms had ended, disregarding his physician’s warning that a full course was required to eliminate the infection.

What could have been achieved in 2004 became difficult to eliminate in 2009. Upped by the success of Presidential elections, Washington reduced the budgeted aid request by 38% (from $4.3 billion in fiscal 2005 to $3.1 billion in fiscal 2006) and also announced in 2005 to reduce the troops by 3000 in the coming year, although it will be replaced by NATO forces.[^179] They also did not bring to book Pakistan not to aid Taliban. And the mistake was committed.

Taliban’s capacity rose. Afghanistan marred by lack of basic minimum necessities of safe drinking water, sanitation, housing, security, transportation and proper food, resorted to Taliban. Taliban also changed their ideology from being an orthodox and conservative imposer of Shari’ah law to being a nationalist with an aim of freeing Afghanistan once again from western infidels. In this, they received the support from Southern Afghanistan which remained mostly untouched by the developmental efforts. And with this Taliban were able to spread its tentacles in this part of Afghanistan.

Security started deteriorating more on the borders of Pakistan where the suicide bombers appeared for the first time.[^180] On 29 May, 2006 a riot erupted due to the fatal traffic accident.


Map 4: Opium Production in Afghanistan

involving US troops and locals in Kabul. Although the riot was brought under control but it showed the unpopularity of Karzai regime and distrustfulness towards the foreign occupiers. Later in the summer, the British and Canadian troops deployed in Helmand and Qandahar encountered an unexpected fiercest attack by Taliban. Though the troops defeated it but could not eliminate them. Trouble also surfaced in eastern Afghanistan which experienced cross border attacks from Pakistan’s autonomous tribal territories, where al Qaeda and Taliban forces were becoming dominant.181

Suicide Bombings increased manifold. Between 2005 and 2006, suicide bombings increased by more than 400 percent (from 27 to 139), the use of improvised explosive devises more than doubled (from 783 to 1,677), and armed attacks nearly tripled (from 1,558 to 4,542).182 Non Pashtuns did not join the war of Taliban against Western infidels.

d. **Opium Production**
(Refer Map 4: Opium Production in Afghanistan) Karzai’s authority was unheard outside the Kabul and in rural areas. Basic conditions remained alienated from Afghans. Foreign assistance was also insufficient. The agriculture was in bad shape. The only option to earn their living was opium. And since this was supported by Taliban, Afghans had sympathy for their objective.

Production wise, World Drug Report 2013 ranks Afghanistan as the lead producer and cultivator of opium globally (74 per cent of global illicit opium production in 2012).183 Poppy cultivation increased nationwide by 18 percent between 2011 and 2012, with a similar increase in Helmand Province, the biggest opium-producing region, despite an aggressive campaign to eradicate the crop and promote alternative jobs.184 Opium trade has provided $155 million of tax to Taliban in the areas they control. A farmer rakes up $120 per hectare

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181Ibid
182Ibid
and in a good year up to $10,000 per hectare on raw opium.\textsuperscript{185} Drug trade works with complicity of warlords, Taliban and security officers have increased the drug addicts in the region and also spread the menace of HIV/AIDS. This is burgeoning problem which the world is really taking interest to curb it. The eradication measures taken to eliminate poppy has led to killing of 102 Afghan police officers, soldiers and civilians by farmers and Taliban and injuring of another 127 people.

Karzai in his interview has admitted growing production of poppy but has also emphasized that poppy constitutes 30\% of our economy and to eradicate it, there is a need of holistic measures of improving social and economic condition of Afghans rather than telling them just not to do it.

Karzai said

We have very good agriculture. But you can't tell me, 'Well, grow pomegranates, grow grapes, grow cucumbers or watermelons, and I'm not going to buy it from you.' If the international community wants to help us get rid of narcotics, they must help us all around, buying our products.\textsuperscript{186}

e. Dependence on Foreign Assistance

This challenge has become utmost important given the drawdown of American troops in 2014 and the donor fatigue shared by many donor countries. Though Karzai has frequently asked America to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan in order to earn reward from his political allies and not to project himself as a puppet of Western regime, but he knows that his police force is ill-equipped to deal with civilians problems and contain the rising insurgency in the region.

Even historically, revenue has remained a problem. Afghanistan has been dependent on foreign aid to fuel its administration and its economy. Zahir, Daoud and Nader to name a few have lined up to US and other neighboring countries for funds. It was because of funding that Soviets were able to increase their presence predominantly in the run up to their invasion in the Afghan land. The rulers have failed in pursuing a fiscal policy to strengthen the financial


\textsuperscript{186}Ibid
base which has made the survival dependent on others which make donors run Afghanistan as a proxy country.

Afghanistan is in a rebuilding phase and it needs investment for agriculture, troop build up and infrastructure. Though many countries have poured to finance the demand but it has largely ended as a phantom aid. Firstly, total international aid pledged from 2002-13 stood at $62 billion and the international aid spend from 2002-2009 is 43% of the pledged amount, that is, $26.7 billion. The occupying country United States pledged $38 billion from 2002-2013 but could disburse $10.9 billion aid in Afghanistan. Secondly, with less aid and on this, ineffective means of implementing aid assistance have exacerbated the economic situation. The foreign donors are in charge of delivering services which keep the locals away from jobs. So the aid meant for Afghans basically get channelled back to their donor countries in the form of salaries of foreign workers. The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief estimated that in 2008, of the $15 billion in reconstruction assistance given to Afghanistan since 2001, “a staggering 40 percent has returned to donor countries in corporate profits and consultant salaries.”

Thirdly, corruption, undoubtedly, remained a significant factor for pocketing the left over aid.

f. Economic and social condition

Insufficient foreign aid has affected the social and economic developmental efforts. Infrastructure, schools, hospitals, roads, police services, food and nutrition continue to remain in pitiable state for most of Afghans. Business community face serious problems of lack of electricity, legal redressal mechanisms, insufficient access to land and capital, high levels of corruption and taxes and poorly trained force. Although women visibility has comparatively increased in Parliament and work force but they continue living a life of fear and hopelessness. Since 2007, some 145 schools are closed in Kandahar and in southern Afghanistan affecting more 70,000 students including girls and boys. Nationally also, Taliban

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have threatened and torched schools leaving 2,00,000 children out of schools.\textsuperscript{189}

The developmental gap between rural and urban areas has increased. In Kabul, modern buildings have come up alongside private TV channels, shopping malls and Chinese Thai and Italian restaurants. Many young, urban Afghans have embraced international fashion, music, and movies from Europe and Asia.

But outside Kabul in rural areas, basic facilities are still not available. 36 million people continue to live below poverty line.\textsuperscript{190} Social Security is still a distant dream for them.

\textbf{Is everything bleak in Afghanistan under Karzai?}

After 12 years of war and foreign occupation in Afghanistan, is it a lost decade with no improvements being made in the condition of Afghans? The answer is NO.

Kamrany says

It is clear that Afghanistan is making a comeback; all they needed was some support along the way.\textsuperscript{191}

12 years have made significant improvements with more to be achieved.

a. \textbf{Security:} Afghan National Forces position has been improved. Security forces including Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police stands at around 3,00,000 from several thousands in 2001.\textsuperscript{192} They have been professionally trained and educated and are also send abroad in India, Turkey, the United Arab Emirate, Europe and United States where they get further training. Women have also been included at all levels and they are training other women.

b. \textbf{Education:} In 2002, 8,00,000 students were enrolled in primary schools now there are


8.2 million of whom 40% are girls. Higher education at international level has also emerged.193

c. **Infrastructure build-up:** International aid financed the collapsed structure. Bridges, highways, local roads and irrigation system have been constructed. Central bank has come up and new Afghan currency has allowed international and domestic banks to work. The World Bank has estimated Afghan GDP growth from under $2.5 billion in 2001 to over $17 billion in 2011.194

d. **Media:** This was entirely banned by Taliban but 6 mobile phone carriers, 75 television channels, over 175 radio stations and hundreds of print publications have come up.195

A reporter from The Guardian, Nushin Arbabzadah, on her visit to Afghanistan highlighted significant changes that have unknowingly crept in the lifestyle of Afghans.

Use of mobile phones has become common and some own two or even three. This is in contrast to 1980s where few owned landline and mobile phones were just non-existent. On her drive from Kabul to Panjsher “the shops and stalls were bursting with goods, from foodstuffs to drinks to mobile top-up cards to soaps, shampoo bottles and DVDs”. She had to stay long hours in traffic and had difficulty in finding parking space for the simple reason of the large numbers of cars on roads. Resurfaced roads and highways, refurbished schools and new health clinics were commonly found. Returned refugees have opened their businesses, joined NGOs as translators or working as guards in international offices. The picture which Nushin has painted of Afghanistan, gives a ray of hope for Afghanistan and to international community as well.

193Ibid

194Ibid

Conclusion

Afghanistan’s source of problem is not one, nor two, not even three. It’s a coalition of multitude problems. The most important problem in the words of Nabi Misdaq is the problem of political fragility and also institutional fragility. None of the ruler has been able to build a strong institutional structure. Political fragility in Afghanistan can be owed to one, polygamic rivalries. Second, the rulers have not showed any unity in their ideology on which to base Afghanistan. If Amanullah wanted to bring radical modernisation, then Nader Khan wanted to take along conservative clerics. If Daoud wanted a communist ideology then Taliban established an Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Afghanistan has remained fragile and fickle. Third, when rulers wanted to bring in reforms they did not do their home work properly. Without laying any groundwork or explaining their commitment and ideology to Afghans, they just went about implementing radical reforms in a conservative society. Fourth, Islam was a common thread that united Afghanistan. But during Taliban, it was misused and manipulated which further exacerbated the situation of country. Fifth, to have modernisation, funds are required. Lack of aid and assistance made Afghanistan knock at every door which made them dependent and subservient to demands of donor countries. Sixth, since Afghanistan is popularly known as land of routes and its routes have been exploited by invaders to occupy and expand their empire, so the neighbouring countries took advantage to have an influence in Afghanistan particularly Russia and carried on with their foreign interference. Pakistan wanted the same to save its land inhabited by Pashtuns. Saudi Arabia wanted to spread its own ideology of Wahabism. USA wanted to contain communism. Sixth, is the ethnicity. Although, ethnicity has not been a major problem before 1990’s barring few incidents but it became a source of conflict during the Taliban era. Even during Karzai regime, ethnicity did not come to the fore as non-Pashtuns were happy to abide by the terms of a Pashtun ruler. With this myriad problem, solution cannot be an alienated one, it has to be holistic and inclusive.

Barnett Rubin’s words perfectly summarises the situation in Afghanistan.

If the situation in Afghanistan is ugly today, it is not because the people of Afghanistan are ugly. Afghanistan is not only the mirror of Afghans: it is the mirror of the world.