Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Afghanistan reappeared on the world centre stage following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. With the tragic event that cost the lives of many innocent people and enormous damage, began the war on terrorism and ushered in a new phase in the drawn out civil strife in Afghanistan. Sadly, it took much human suffering and a devastating human tragedy for the United States to re-engage in the region after a decade-long detachment since the pullout of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan and the end of Cold War. The country, which served as the last battlefield of the Cold War at the end of the twentieth century, became the scene of the first global war on terrorism at the turn of the twenty-first century. Today, Afghanistan has been placed on the global security agenda, as the failure to rebuild Afghanistan is seen as a threat for global security. Human security has been the key issue linking Afghanistan’s on going institutional building amidst a complex exploitative geopolitics existing within and outside the region.

During the last three decades, Afghanistan’s political scene has been dominated by violence fuelled by opposing ideologies and competing political interests. In these years it has endured five major regime changes, each accompanied by tremendous violence that paralysed any efforts towards political stability. In the 1970s Afghanistan was already one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. It is resource scarce, poverty stricken, mountainous, and land locked by often unfriendly neighbours; all factors that serve as negative indicators of political stability and economic growth. The long period of violence and political chaos has completely eroded the already scarce central governance infrastructure. When the world turned its attention on Afghanistan in 2001 it found that this was amongst the least developed countries of the world. The 2004 Human Development Report rated Afghanistan as the sixth least developed country in the world and the poorest outside sub-Saharan Africa, ranking just above Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso (UNDP 2004).

The current conditions in Afghanistan are pathetic. Statistics from 2004 indicate that Afghanistan had an under-five infant mortality rate of 25 percent. Furthermore, the maternal mortality rate was recorded as 1.6 percent. When
multiplied by the birth rate that equals approximately seven to eight percent of Afghan women dying in child birth. The average life expectancy is 44.5 years, the lowest in the world. Literacy rates are extremely low and are estimated to have dropped to as low as four percent in certain areas.

The long period of deconstruction prior to 2001 resulted in the deligitimisation of the state and its radical decentralisation. The country was politically and economically ruined, and all major state systems that facilitated central governance, such as roads, taxes and justice systems were destroyed or decentralised to the local level. Following the September 11, 2001 incident, the primary objective of US was to dismantle Al’-Qaeda and the Taliban. The secondary goal was to transform Afghanistan into a stable and secure country that would never again be a haven for global terrorist networks. Thus began the state building process accompanied by post conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan, the basic elements of which have been to provide security, rebuild the legitimacy of the central government and providing public goods to the people living in rural areas.

1.2 Historical Setting

Many civilizations have flourished in the land of Afghanistan which has long been a border land between empires and for at least 2500 years its fortunes have been determined by other people’s battles. Afghanistan has long served as a battlefield for imperial ambitions. In the view of British historian Arnold Toynbee, who classified countries between blind alleys and highways, Afghanistan and Syria were the countries which held prominent place on the highway countries. According to him, Syria has been the link between the civilizations of Europe, Africa, and Asia; and Afghanistan, as a bridge between the civilizations of India, East Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East (Tanner 2002: 2-3). Going back into the history, over twenty three centuries ago, Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) of the Hellenic empire built his Alexandria in the Caucasus at Bagram, two centuries later Bagram became the seat of the Kushan Empire that stretched from Central Asia to India. Bagram also served as the air force base for the Soviet occupation forces in the 1980s and is now the main military base of coalition forces in Afghanistan.

Despite the Afghanistan’s buffer zone location becoming an economic and geo-strategic boon for the country, it has proved to be a misfortune for Afghanistan. Due to its important geo-strategic location Afghanistan has been entangled
unwillingly into other peoples' politics. It served as a buffer state between the imperial powers of Russia and Britain during the nineteenth century; as a battleground for supremacy through the Cold War period between the Soviet Union and the USA, a focus for regional political rivalries and finally the conflict between the USA and Al’-Qaeda.

Historically, in the late first to mid-fifth centuries AD, a Buddhist civilization flourished, centred at Gandhara; Buddhist kings reigned in Bamiyan until the end of the tenth century. Islam arrived with the first Arab-Muslim, raid in Kandhar in 699-700 AD and spread thereafter, being consolidated in the Ghaznavid period (977-1186 AD), when the Turks began to gain power in Iran, Afghanistan and India (Johnson 2004: 13). During the rule of Mongolian chief Genghis Khan in the thirteenth century and the opening of the sea route between Europe and Asia in the fifteenth century sent the region into decline. The descendants of Genghis Khan ruled this region for a century and a half and allowed local rulers who pledged allegiance to him to remain in power (Gankovsky et al 1985: 280). During the sixteenth century, the “gunpowder empires” founded by various Turco-Mongol conquerors - Ottomans, Safavids, Shaybanid Uzbeks, Mughals – dominated this land mass. The latter three fought over the territory of today’s Afghanistan and divided it among themselves.

With the decline of Turco-Mongol dynasties in the eighteenth century, a group of Pashtun tribes – their military organisation strengthened by service to the Safavids – founded their own empire. That state drew its resources from conquests in the surrounding richer areas, especially India. Although, certain individuals espoused the idea of an Afghan State as early as the sixteenth century but the emergence of Afghanistan as a political entity is considered from the period when Ahmad Shah Abdali (1747-1773) established his rule in Kandhar in 1747 (Farhang 1994). Ahmad Shah changed his last name, Abdali, which was associated to this tribe Abdal, to the neutral name of “Durrani” as a measure of political unity. He made Kandhar his base, and the tribal chiefs pledged allegiance to him and awarded him the title of “Dur-i-Durrani”, pearl of pearls. Ahmad Shah subjugated much of Afghanistan by 1750, his domain stretched from the Indus to the Oxus, from Kashmir to Khurastan (Griffith 1981: 26-29). The Durrani Empire remained more a tribal confederation buoyed by conquest than a modern nation-state. It lacked both an urban economic base and a royal army, thus Ahmad Shah could never force his rule on the tribes. In the absence
of any permanent political system the empire proved unstable and collapsed within a few decades of its founder’s death (Gregoran 1969).

In the nineteenth century Afghanistan became the bone of contention between the Russia, heading southwards through Central Asia and the British India. Meanwhile Afghanistan encountered the Europe-centred state system. Afghan rulers tried to maintain their independence by copying military and other models from these empires. Due to the increasing interest of Russia in Afghanistan in search of warm water port through the Afghan route, the British tried to bring Afghanistan under their direct rule. This resulted in first Anglo-Afghan war (1839-1842), which ended in a shameful defeat with only one British subject, William Bryden able to survive. The second (1878-1880) brought Afghanistan under British suzerainty, as a buffer against Russia. It left Afghanistan maintaining its internal sovereignty, but ceding control of its external affairs to Britain. To strengthen this state and stabilize the north-west frontier of India, the British lavished weapons and cash on Amir Abdul Rahman Khan (1881-1901).

Abdul Rahman Khan used the British support to establish the basic state structure that endured until the fall of Najibullah in 1992. British money enabled him to create a well-equipped army, which he used ruthlessly to crush internal dissent and consolidate the state. However, the tribal areas retained a measure of independence and were never brought totally under control of central ruling authority. Due to this, even today, the tribal structure is prominent in the society and they are not able to accept the central ruling authority based in Kabul. Moreover, attempts to build a modern state did not extend to the creation of a national market or links to world markets, partly because of a fear that such developments would open up Afghanistan to outside interference, with subsequent loss of independence. Thus, the country which was once a part of the silk route remained economically isolated in the modern times.

This buffer state which had long blocked military clashes between British India and imperial Russia was forced to fight both powers as the twentieth century wore on. In the wake of the First World War, pressure mounted within Afghanistan for independence from the British, and Habibullah’s continuing cooperation with them resulted in his assassination in 1919. Habibullah’s son and the grandson of Abdul Rahman Khan, king Amanullah seized the throne declaring independence from the British, which led to the third Anglo-Afghan war in May 1919. The British lost
this war and on August 8, 1919, were forced to sign the Treaty of Rawalpindi that recognised Afghanistan’s independence (Gankovsky et al. 1985: 280). Apart from the third Anglo-Afghan war Afghanistan remained mostly unaffected by the two world wars but faced major security challenges during the uneasy peace between wars.

In the 1920s Amanullah tried hard to transform Afghanistan into a modern nation state, reversing previous isolationist economic policies and opening up the country to trade. Without steady foreign aid king Amanullah Khan’s intensive reform program to create a major pro-reform constituency failed miserably. His attempt to shift power away from village elders and the religious establishment led to revolts. The modernisation programme cost him his throne and plunged the country into civil war. Peace was somehow restored in 1929, but ushered in a period of tight government control and a strictly measured modernisation process.

Amanullah was succeeded by Bacha-yi-Saqao, a Tajik. However, after a brief reign of less than a year he was deposed by Nadir Shah - a Musahiban Pashtun. Thus began a dynasty which lasted until 1978. Musahiban rulers encapsulated rather than confronted social resistance, imposing an external administration laid over the existing society. The young, 19 year old Mohammad Zahir succeeded his father Nadir Shah after the latter’s assassination. For the first twenty years, Zahir Shah’s reign was controlled by his two uncles Mohammad Hashim and Shah Mohammad as successive prime ministers. The first ruled autocratically; the second ushered in what became known as ‘Liberal Parliament’, which sat from 1949 until 1952, when Zahir Shah’s cousin, Mohammad Daoud seized control as Prime Minister. After a decade of Daoud’s autocratic rule as Prime Minister, opposition grew stronger within and outside the state, which eventually forced him to resign in 1963. Eventually, King Zahir Shah asserted his own authority and tried to develop a constitutional monarchy under what became known as the New Democracy. Meanwhile, Cold War has brought Afghanistan back to the centre stage due to its geo-strategic location. Thus it regained its historical strategic significance.

Both the Soviet Union and the United States poured aid into the Afghan State. This aid enabled the rulers to build an army, schools, roads and bureaucracy without directly confronting resistance from rural power holders. Due to a political dispute over Pakhtunistan issue, with the newly created state of Pakistan, an ally of the West; forced the Afghan government to turn to Soviet Union for military assistance – a move that had a major impact on the country’s future. The Soviet Union became
major donor sponsoring in particular the recruitment and equipping of a one hundred thousand – man army. From 1955 to 1978 the Soviet Union provided Afghanistan with $1.27 billion in economic aid and roughly $1.25 billion in military aid¹, while the United States furnished $533 million in economic aid (Bradsher 1983: 24- 25).

The period of economic assistance to Afghanistan from the USSR and the US coincided with the democratic changes from 1964-1973, during which a new urban based political elite emerged as the core of political opposition to the government. The new elite included both a pro-Soviet communist bloc and a revolutionary Islamist movement. At the same time aid enabled the state to expand its organisations and influence but no attempt was made for the economic or social transformation of the countryside. Still, the Afghan society was changed nonetheless by the introduction of new social actors: the “intelligentsia” trained for state service, including military service, in the foreign aid-supported state schools and in foreign countries (Rubin 1995a). The state was successful in insulating itself from the tribal forces that posed a challenge to the past dynasties; it increasingly depended on this new stratum, members of which increasingly adopted radical political ideologies from communism to Islamism.

On July 17, 1973, when king Zahir Shah was in Rome, former Prime Minister Daoud staged a coup, proclaimed Afghanistan a republic and himself as its President. The king abdicated the throne and remained in Rome with his family. People reacted calmly, regarding Daoud’s takeover simply as a “changing of the guard” without any significant alteration in the system of governance. The coup signalled a change in the struggle for power, for Daoud seized control not as head of a tribal army but as leader of a group of Soviet-trained military officers. During his brief rule the country benefited from increased revenues from the Gulf States. It also began to receive aid from Iran, as Daoud sought to increase Afghanistan’s independence by playing of donors against each other. Supported by external funding Daoud’s government was least interested to look after the welfare of the people of Afghanistan as it was not accountable to them but to the foreign donors.

Rather than try to penetrate the countryside and govern it, the Afghan state continued to pursue a strategy of encapsulating traditional local institutions. The political elite did not rule the people of Afghanistan by representing them and

¹ Figures for military aid include 1979.
managing conflicts. Nor did they form a network of national organisation for a political struggle against colonialism. The Anglo-Afghan wars, fought by tribal coalitions, left no organisational legacy. Rather, than developing a common national political system, the political elite acted as an ethnically stratified hierarchy of intermediaries between the foreign powers providing the resources and the groups receiving the largess of patronage.

1.3 From “Great Game” to “Lesser Game”

The dominance of the new elites in Afghanistan in the galleries of power brought miseries to the already poverty stricken nation. The fall of the old regime to a pro-Moscow communist coup in 1978 was the beginning of the long period of violence that turned Afghanistan into a hotspot of the Cold War. The anti-state insurgency against the communist coup of April 1978 soon turned into a wider conflict. It led to the Soviet military intervention (1979-1989) and increased Western support of Islamic-led anti regime resistance forces, the mujahideen. The dominant factor in Afghanistan’s recent history is continuous war since 1978 (Goodson 2001: 54). This cycle of violence can be categorised in four unique stages: first, the Soviet invasion and the mujahideen resistance (1979-1989); second, the destructive civil war among the mujahideen (1989-1994); third the marriage of convenience between the Taliban and Salafi jihadist group Al’-Qaeda subsequently leading to the September 11 attack (1994-2001); and finally, the Taliban acting as a terrorist – militant group against the Afghan government and the Coalition forces (2002 onward).

During the 1980s the United States and the Soviet Union were the two most influential actors on Afghanistan’s political scene. The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan became Moscow’s longest foreign war of the century. Assistance to the Islamic-led Afghan resistance turned into the largest US covert operation since World War II. Both the superpowers had their interest of being in this region. None of them was concerned about the whims and aspirations of the masses of Afghanistan. The Soviet Union had distinct regional and ideological interests while United States had its own military and political objectives. Declining economy of the Soviet Union and the continued intensification of the war forced Moscow into compromises and finally retreat while Washington gradually elaborated the scope of its strategic mission from bleeding the Soviets to forcing them out of Afghanistan and finally pushing for a
military victory of the mujahideen over the Moscow-backed Communist regime in Afghanistan (Cordoviz and Harrison 1995: 67-70, 266-270, 384-387).

During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, US supported the Islamic militants and transnational extremists in the region. Dominated by religious orthodoxy, they received the bulk of US and other foreign assistance channelled through Pakistani intelligence agency ISI. This marginalized mainstream Afghan forces which had moderate religious and nationalistic orientation but lacked strong leadership. In the view of US intelligence Islamists were the most devoted anti-Soviet fighters and deserved to be supported. The United States even supported in the creation of an international network of militant Islamist to counter the Soviet supported mujahideen in Afghanistan, without giving any prior thought about its fallouts. The policy completely ignored the long-term impact of the militants’ political influence in the post-war period. On the other hand, the Soviet policy of “divide and conquer” created and armed local and ethnic militias in support of Moscow’s client regime in Kabul, a move that militarized Afghan society by popularizing the “defense of the revolution” and creating ethnic and tribal militias.

In 1989, after a decade of war, the Soviet Union withdrew all of its troops, “condemning Afghanistan to a civil war that tore apart the nation’s last remnants of religious, ethnic and political unity” (Evans 2002: 238-260). By the end of Cold War, a culture of international neglect followed and contributed to the condition of post-war Afghanistan. The mujahideens instead of uniting themselves and striving towards reconstruction of the country got engaged in armed conflict among themselves competing for economic and social influence. This ultimately resulted in increasing the plight of the populace. After the withdrawal of Soviet forces and by the end of Cold War, Afghanistan had lost the attention of the international community. In the words of one UN official, the Afghan conflict became a “forgotten war” and the Afghans became “a forgotten people” (Ermacora 1990). US diplomacy in support of UN effort to end foreign intervention and find a peaceful solution to the Afghan civil war did not proved to be of much use as it lacked consistency and perseverance. Washington’s false hopes that the Taliban would be a better option than the warring mujahideens and it would be able to end the civil war militarily soon collapsed as the neo-fundamentalist militia proved to be the worst human rights abusers, record drug producers, and hosts to Al’-Qaeda (Jalali 2007: 22-53).
Ambassador Robert D. Blackwill correctly pointed out in 2005, “the United States in effect sub-contracted its Afghan policy in the past to Pakistan’s intelligence service, which in turn fostered the growth of Islamic zealotry across the border in Afghanistan and with it, the rise of the Taliban” (Maley 2006: 27). Washington’s 1998 pin pointed cruise missile strikes against Osama bin Laden’s reputed terror training camps in Afghanistan, in retaliation of the bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam, only raised bin Laden’s global standing among anti-West militant groups. Further, the weak response helped to create the perception that US retaliation against future terrorist attacks would inflict minimal pain. Thus, they could plan about the devastating 9/11 attacks. The 9/11 attacks can also be interpreted as a result of the jihadi mentality which was supported by the US during the 1980s to counter the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The cost of Washington’s victory in the Afghan power game was the advancement of the jihadi mentality, which motivated a worldwide terrorist network centred in Afghanistan. In the wake of 9/11 US had to pay heavily as the terrorist with the jihadi bent of mind had targeted their mentor – the Americans.

As a battleground for the two superpowers, Afghanistan sustained devastation caused by the military actions of the invaders and the support of the superpower that responded to the invasion. After the superpower contest was over, the belligerents walked away from the “great game” wreckage, providing passage for the competing neighbours to finish the destruction in a “lesser game”. Overall, Afghans were the big losers. They suffered enormously during the war and failed to win the peace. With the withdrawal of the superpowers the civil war erupted in Afghanistan. The multilateral competition involved internal armed factions with extensive foreign links, neighbouring states pursuing competing strategic interests, and extra regional players having their ideological, security, or economic stakes in the chaos. In the absence of a central authority, the neighbouring countries moved in to pursue their competing strategic interests by engaging and supporting rival Afghan factions who were locked in violent power struggle since the Soviet withdrawal. This fuelled the internal strife and hampered the emergence of a broad based legitimate government. The turmoil was both the cause and consequence of state failure in Afghanistan.

Pakistani leadership has always been extremely fearful of Afghan nationalism. Whenever the leadership has been strong in Afghanistan it has raised the Pashtun issue. The Afghans have never accepted the 1893 demarcation of a boundary between
Afghanistan and British India – the “Durand Line” – which had divided the Pashtuns territorially. With the partition of India in 1947, they demanded that Pashtuns of British India should have had the opportunity to be reunited with their Afghan co-ethnics. This resulted in Afghanistan even voting against the admission of the new state of Pakistan to the United Nations. “Pashtunistan dispute” had always been a critical issue between the Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, and even led to the severing of diplomatic relations between 1961 and 1963. Since then Pakistan has excessively favoured those Islamic parties that had close relationships with Pakistani intelligence. Pakistan’s policymakers have always tried to sideline Afghan nationalist forces that held independent views or were potential supporters of the irredentist Afghan demand for the creation of an independent Afghan–linked “Pashtunistan” in Pakistan’s Pashtun areas.

Pakistan used every opportunity to shape developments in Afghanistan in accordance with its political ambitions. It helped to keep the Afghan mujahideen factions divided so that they could be easily controlled – a move that fuelled intra mujahideen power struggles and civil strife after the collapse of the communist regime in 1992 (Cordovez and Harrison 1995: 60-63). Islamabad first supported Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in his bid to seize power in Kabul during the early 1990s. Pakistan supported Islamic radicals such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hizb-I Islami, since such figures seemed less likely to revive a territorial dispute based on tribal and ethnic identifications. Pakistan’s long-term strategy from the time of the Soviet invasion has been to identify and promote pliable Afghan clients of Islamic rather than nationalist disposition. The principal agency involved was the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate of the Pakistan armed forces, or ISI, and the principal Afghan clients were first Hekmatyar and then, once his inadequacies had been exposed, the Taliban (Hussain 2005). Pakistan was widely reported to have provided the Taliban radical militia with political, military, and financial support (Rashid 2001a: 157-182). The ease with which the Taliban continue to operate out of Pakistan suggests that Pakistan’s long-term strategy remains in place, and this is a matter of very serious concern for the Karzai government.

Iran also has interests in Afghanistan. A Shiite-majority state, Iran has long had a sense of protective responsibility towards Afghanistan’s Shiite minority. Iran viewed the Taliban as an anti-Shiite and anti-Iranian fundamentalist Sunni movement supported by Saudi Arabia and other hostile forces. The Taliban’s close ties with
Pakistani anti-Shiite groups, its links with Saudi Wahhabis, and its alleged backing by US anti-Iranian policy sparked Iran’s distrust and fear. The Taliban’s sectarian and ethnic parochialism, clubbed with its tendency to marginalise Iran-backed non-Pashtun factions and its ouster of Rabbani government, added to the distrust. Iran saw the victory of the Taliban as part of a plot by Sunnis and the United States to isolate Iran. (Magnus and Naby 1998: 190).

Tehran improved the logistical infrastructure of anti-Taliban forces after the Taliban seized control of Kabul in 1996, driving the Rabbani regime to the north. Iran continued to strengthen the Rabbani-led anti-Taliban alliance through Central Asia. (Jalali 2007: 27-28). War between Iran and the Taliban nearly broke out in August 1998 when Pakistan extremist who formed part of the Taliban force that murdered thousands of civilians in Mazar-e-Sharif also murdered staff of the Iranian consulate (Maley 2006: 25). Although UN mediation in October 1998 eased the tension along the Iran-Afghan border but Tehran stepped up military support to the anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan, which continued till the fall of the Taliban. This resulted in the increase in weapons in Afghanistan making the situation from bad to worse in this region already devastated by war and internal strife.

Afghanistan being entangled in the wider question of the future shape of greater Central Asia, and developments to its north has implications for its stability. A new geopolitical landscape came into existence after the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991. The new rulers of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan deployed a range of stratagems to legitimise their exercise of power, and sought to build links with other regional states and more remote powers. During the Taliban period, Afghanistan was inadvertently drawn into this cauldron as energy companies such as the US corporation UNOCOL and the Argentinean company Bridas competed for the opportunity to construct gas pipelines from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to markets in South Asia (Maley 1998b: 231-232).

Meanwhile, India, Russia as well as the central Asian republics all gave support to the anti-Taliban forces, with each country having its own interests. India’s support was prompted by its long-running struggle with Pakistan. For Russia and central Asian republics, it was fear of the destabilising effect of the Taliban’s presence near their borders, their interests in the oil and gas industry. Russia still desired to maintain something of its influence in this part of the world. Due to various objectives
sufficient money and arms poured into Afghanistan to ensure that no one group could end the war by military means.

1.4 The Political Fallout of 9/11

The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, brought Afghanistan back on the world stage. In the view of Michael Griffin the Taliban regimes repressive policies and their narrow interpretation of Islam caused discontent in West, and their harbouring of Osama bin Laden had gradually hardened the attitude of the United States and its allies (Griffin 2003). Their relations with the West reached a new low in February 2001 with the destruction of the famous Bamiyan Buddhas. The statues, standing 38 metres and 55 metres high respectively, dated from the third or very early fourth century AD and were carved into two niches in a mountain. The destructive action of Taliban was an open challenge to the world community which depicted that the radical leadership in Afghanistan cared little about the international opinion, yet US did not take any decisive action. According to Congressional Research Service report, Clinton administration official stated that “they did not take major action to oust the Taliban from power, either through direct US military action or by providing military aid to Taliban opponents, because domestic US support for those steps was then lacking and because Taliban’s opponents were considered too weak and not consistent with US values” (Katzam 2006: 5). Anthony Davis has rightly described the US policy as a display of “staggering negligence or myopia.” (Davis 2002: 7). It was only when the twin towers of the World Trade Centre collapsed into rubble that their attention and of the world was again focused on Afghanistan. The subsequent dismantling of the Taliban regime in the aftermath resulted in the emergence of a new power set up in Afghanistan heavily dominated by the US.

The socio-economic conditions of Afghanistan have drastically declined over the last two decades. With the advent of Taliban even the sole assistance of the UN and the allied agencies, pouring into Afghanistan came abruptly to a halt (Gohari, 2002). These agencies seemed to be helpless as extensive restrictions were imposed on them. Meanwhile the Taliban went about violating one civilising principle after another. Finally the tragic incident of 9/11 shook the world, which was a direct attack on the US as well as on humanity. This was masterminded by Osama bin Laden’s Al’ Qaeda group in close association with the Taliban. As a consequence US took
massive retaliatory steps and a military campaign under their leadership authorised by the Security Council began air strikes on October 7, 2001. This marked the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom- War on Terrorism. This forced the Taliban to flee Kabul on November 13, 2001.

With the overthrow of Taliban a security vacuum was created and there was an immediate need for new political arrangements. Seeking the opportunity regional warlords such as – Ismail Khan in the west, Abdul Rashid Dostum in the north, Gul Agha Sherzai in the south and Karim Khalili in the centre – have tried to fill the security gap. But, it was widely recognised and accepted, that a process was required through which new state structures could be designed and a new political leadership constituted and legitimated. Fortunately, this was accompanied by the state building process. The United Nations, along with various other organisations and countries was on hand to help with this process.

1.5 The Rebuilding Process

Lakhdar Brahimi was appointed as the special representative of the UN secretary general, to assist in reconstituting the political system in Afghanistan. With the support of the German government, Brahimi convened a meeting in Bonn from 27 November to 5 December. In the UN brokered conference, the key representatives of the various Afghan interest groups met in the Petersburg Hotel, perched on a Rhineland Hill near Bonn. Also present were the officials of the United Nations, representatives of a number of governments, and expert consultants.

There were four Afghan delegations. The main delegations were those of the Northern alliance officially known as the United National and Islamic Front and commonly called as United Front with 11 delegates and led by the Interior Minister Yunus Qanooni, and the Bonn-Rome Frankfurt Group, made up of representatives of the former King Mohammed Zahir Shah. The former monarch’s close confidant, Professor Abdul Sattar Sirat, led them. Peshawar delegation of 5 members was led by Hamid Gailani and backed by Pakistan. The fourth delegation was the Iran- backed Cyprus Group of Shia Afghan exiles led by Humayun Jareer, son in law of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar of the extremist Hizb-I-Islami. As if to underline the momentous change taking place in Afghanistan, two delegations, the Northern Alliance and the Zahir Shah group boasted the presence of woman each (Naravane 2001: 125). Some participants, such as Massoud’s former aide Yunus Qanooni, acted as bridge builders
between different interests. These factors contributed to the development of a creative and imaginative map for political reconstruction.

On December 5, 2001, negotiations concluded with the adoption of an “Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions,” consisting of a principal and three annexes, which was endorsed the following day by the UN security Council in Resolution 1383. This stipulated for setting up of an Afghanistan Interim Authority (AIA), to be followed within six months by the convening of an Emergency Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) to decide upon an Afghanistan Transitional Authority (ATA), including a broad based transitional administration. A constitutional loya jirga was then to be held within 18 months of the establishment of the ATA, in order to adopt a new constitution. Finally elections were due to be held no later than mid-2004. In support of the transition, a number of commissions were to be established: a Judicial Commission, a Constitutional Commission, a Civil Service Commission, and a Human Rights Commission. The formation of a multinational International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was agreed ‘to assist in the maintenance of security for Kabul and its surrounding areas’. With the rebuilding of a new government and society as conceived by its planners, it was hoped that as a result of better education, democracy, political stability, tolerance, emancipation of women, protection of the rights of minorities and better opportunities of employment, would usher in bringing normalcy, political wisdom, rule of law and peace in the war-torn country.

Afghanistan has come a long way after emerging from the clutches of Taliban. Important political milestones mandated by the Bonn Agreement-two Loya Jirgas, a new Constitution, the presidential election and the first parliamentary elections- have been achieved. The economy has recovered substantially which excludes the drug economy. Approximately three million internally as well as externally- displaced Afghans have returned to their country. More than four million children, a third of them girls, are in school, and immunization campaigns have achieved considerable success.

Despite all political and economic progress achieved since the Bonn agreement, insecurity persists in all the circles- economic as well as socio political. The complex challenge of rebuilding Afghanistan is even more difficult by the continuing insecurity, weak rule of law, and rise in drug production. The worsening security in many parts of the country and the gradual revival of Taliban threatens to
derail reconstruction, undermine state building efforts and adversely affect other aspects of political normalization. According to the INCB report of 2005 the burgeoning revival and spread of opium production has fuelled insecurity and funded anti-government interest. Drugs, insecurity, "capture" of large parts of the land by regional powerbrokers, and the weak capacity of the state administration, all contribute to a self reinforcing "vicious circle" that would keep Afghanistan insecure, politically fragmented, weakly governed, dominated by informal economy and remain a hostage to the drug industry.

For rebuilding Afghanistan, with robust support from the international community, it has to break free from this vicious circle and move toward a "virtuous circle" thereby improving security, state capacity building measures, revenue mobilisation, formal private sector development, and sensible, coordinated actions against drug production and trade. This requires simultaneous progress on several key fronts; actions in any one area alone will not be effective given the strong interests of some to maintain the status quo. On the other hand, limited resources and capacity dictate that the Government focuses on core reforms that will enhance governance.

Post-conflict environments are like wet cement; there is an initial period for change, and then in few years, political and economic forces start to harden. Unfortunately, in Afghanistan the allied forces have not been able to make full use of that period (Thier 2007: 13). Now, realising the policy flaws of the earlier years and simply increasing assistance will not solve the problem. However, this appears to be the policy which the US has been pursuing. Even America's top intelligence official Mike McConnell has admitted that after six years of US-led military support and billions of dollars in aid, security in Afghanistan is "deteriorating" and President Hamid Karzai controls less than a third of the country, while the Taliban controls 10 percent and the remainder is under the tribal control. Although this may not be completely true but the security situation is continuously deteriorating. According to the former NATO Commander-General James Jones, "urgent changes" are now required to "prevent Afghanistan becoming a failed state."(Walsh and Taylor 2008). Thus, now it is the time that the US re-evaluates its policies in Afghanistan and makes whatever use it can of the post conflict situation, before the things again moves out of control.
1.6 Rationale and Scope of Study

The rebuilding process in Afghanistan is far from complete. The United States’ ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’ has completed more than eight years and yet the human development indicators for Afghanistan paint a bleak picture! This is despite the fact that Afghanistan is receiving aids and grants from all major global players and donor agencies. In addition to United States, various international organisations including the European Union and the World Bank have poured aids towards the reconstruction process in Afghanistan. India too has contributed a sum of more than $1.3 billion towards the rehabilitation and reconstruction work in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is an important region from the Indian perspective. India’s presence in Afghanistan will go a long way in preventing the creation of a continuous Islamic belt of extremism, which bears its allegiance to Pakistan. It is also important for India to forestall the encirclement of south Asian region by China and the United States. It is equally important for India to curb the spill over of narco-terrorism that now plagues its northern borders. Ushering in peace and stability in the region of Afghanistan will go a long way in promoting peace in the entire south Asian region. Undoubtedly, this would in turn help the Afghan government, the international NGOs and the local community in steering Afghanistan’s reconstruction process towards the right direction. Afghanistan today stands between the threat of re-emergence of Taliban and extremism on the one hand and the on-going democratisation process on the other.

The democratisation process in Afghanistan is yet to yield the desired results. Security concerns continue to be a major issue haunting the region. A wide gap exists between the government’s administrative policies and the local community involvement. The international funding towards the reconstruction process has been a major issue of speculation. It is believed that a substantial proportion of the international aid for Afghanistan is being siphoned back to the respective countries of the donor agencies. Only a miniscule of the aid is left behind for the reconstruction process.

Even today poppy production in Afghanistan is continuously rising. It is estimated that in 2006 the total export value of Afghanistan’s opium was $3.1 billion accounting approximately 32 percent of the country’s total gross domestic product.
Studies have revealed that at times farmers in Afghanistan grow poppy more because of death threats from warlords and the Taliban rather than for financial gains.

With several global players working towards the reconstruction process in Afghanistan, the present research will study the major challenges to Afghanistan from the Afghan viewpoint in bringing about peace and stability in the region. A detailed scrutiny of the developmental activities such as construction of bridges, roads, hydroelectric projects, hospitals, schools and other infrastructure development programmes needs to be undertaken. It would be important to assess the right directions of the processes involved in rebuilding. The present study conceptualizes the process of completion of the reconstruction of Afghanistan highlighting the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats involved.

1.7 Objectives of the Study

The present study has the following objectives:

- To highlight the challenges before the Afghan government and the international community in rebuilding the country.
- To assess the democratic and administrative progress achieved since the Bonn Agreement.
- Analyse the role and contribution of the global and regional players to the rebuilding process.
- To make a critical evaluation of the rebuilding strategy of the international community and point out its shortcomings.

1.8 Research Methodology

The methodology of the present study depends on the primary sources of information, the secondary sources of information, the research survey and the statistical measures utilised for the analysis.

The present research relies heavily on primary sources of information. In particular the Afghanistan government's reports, and the reports of the international organisations such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB) which are involved in the rebuilding of Afghanistan have been taken in account for research.
The secondary sources of information includes a survey of books and literature available both in published and unpublished form focusing on the pre and post-9/11 situation of Afghanistan. In addition to this, help has been sought of newspaper reports, magazines. Journals such as International Peacekeeping, Peace, International Affairs, Current History, Foreign Affairs, Orbis, Third World Quarterly, Development and Change, Central Asian Survey, Journal of Democracy, Asian Survey, Contemporary South Asia, Critical Asian Studies, Public Administration and Development etc. have been studied in minute detail.

Statistical tools of research have been computed and analysed in order to reach logical conclusions. These pertain to classification and tabulation of data. The graphical and diagrammatic representation of data has been depicted for easy understanding of various trends. Simple statistical averages have been computed for assessing the overall picture of the several indicators in the reconstruction process. The correlation coefficient and other tests of significance have also been computed for comparisons and studying the relationships among the variables.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

Chapter I: Introduction

The first chapter introduces the significance and objectives of the study and presents the political upheavals, which the country had faced after the Soviet withdrawal. The database and methodology of the proposed research has been discussed along with the tentative chapterisation of the study.

Chapter II: Theoretical Perspective of Rebuilding a Collapsed State

The post conflict reconstruction process has been discussed in the background of the theoretical concepts involved in political development along with the review of literature. It probes into the problems and prospects of states emerging from the conflict and heading towards the rebuilding process. The factors leading to the states' failure and the manner in which their deterioration can be prevented have also been examined. It further probes the international response of dealing with failed states and rebuilding the state after conflict.

Chapter III: Afghan Crises in Post-Soviet Period

This chapter highlights the historical emergence of Taliban. The factors which first led to consolidation and later the decline of Taliban have been analysed in detail. The chapter analyses Afghanistan as a region of concentration by the Al’-Qaeda. The
interest and role of regional and global players in Afghanistan as existed during the Taliban period have also been examined. The post-9/11 developments leading to the Bonn Accord have been analysed.

Chapter IV: Rebuilding State Institutions of Governance

The Bonn Accord is discussed at length in this chapter reflecting the causes and consequences of the accord. This chapter discusses the causes of the renewed interest in the region among the regional and global players. It looks into the Constitutional development of Afghanistan as a consequence of the Bonn Accord. The convening of the two Loya Jirga's ultimately leading to the parliamentary and presidential elections is also examined. The peace process is analysed through achievements and setbacks of the election processes. Further the causes and consequences of democratic and administrative reforms at the regional level have been analysed.

Chapter V: Traditional Security Sector Reforms – Army, Police & Judiciary

Security sector developments have been probed in this chapter. The study specifically assesses the German-led multilateral effort to create, train and sustain an Afghan National Police (ANP) force and the United States led efforts to establish a new Afghan National Army (ANA). Further, efforts made by Italy in the establishment of the Judicial Commission have been examined. It analyses the problems faced by the international agencies in reforming the security sector in Afghanistan, looking into the necessity of reforming the Interior Ministry of Afghanistan. The chapter further outlines several lessons derived from efforts to build sustainable local ownership in the management of Afghanistan’s various institutions.

Chapter VI: Reconstruction of the Afghan Economy

This chapter provides a description and analysis of the Afghan economy and its recent performance, based on available secondary sources of quantitative data and qualitative information. The social, economic and political factors necessary for rebuilding since the later half of 2001 have been reviewed. Afghanistan’s strong growth performance including the supportive government actions as well as their ‘socially exclusive’ growth oriented policies has been elaborated. The structure of the Afghan economy, particularly the illicit opium production and its linkages with conflict and insecurity has been highlighted.
Chapter VII: Conclusion

The conclusion presents a summary of the study and its main findings critically assessing the problems and challenges involved in rebuilding Afghanistan. The hypotheses have been tested. Inferences have been drawn which will be policy relevant in speeding up the reconstruction process in Afghanistan.