The Afghan wars present an illustrious example of contemporary conflicts, often described as ‘complex political emergencies’ (CPEs). These are the offshoot of diverse factors related to ethno-national, ethno-geographic, ethno-economic, ethno-religious and ethno-sectarian manifestations. In order to comprehend these conflicts in entirety, one needs to take regard to Afghanistan’s historico-cultural and linguistic dynamics, socio-economic structure, religio-tribal ideologies, and geo-strategic and geo-political stereotypes. The relative impact of each factor, however, changes with time and space presupposing the, little or large, impact of each factor on the five sets of conflicts which engulfed the country from time to time.

These conflicts were the product of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842), Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1881), the Third Anglo-Afghan War (May 6, 1919- 3 June 1919), Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan (1979) and the US Invasion of Afghanistan in the post-9/11 scenario. Importantly, the current Afghan conflict embodies horrendous consequences for the country’s survival on the one hand and regional and global security on the other. This is particularly so because of the involvement of the world’s superpower in the conflict and the unceasing Afghan resistance to US
ABSTRACT: Afghan Wars and their Impact on Rural Life: 19th-20th Century

presence for national and ideological identity within Islamic framework. More so, the conflict features the use of sophisticated military technology on both sides, which eventually led to the destruction of invaluable systems, structures and values governing human security and development. Tens and thousands died. Equal number was maimed, and subjected to exodus to neighbouring countries for survival. The impact has been profound enough on the women and children in particular. As a matter of fact, whole set of human faculty and thought exhibits immense stress and strain due to horrified bomb blasts, rocket attacks and air strikes on either side. The scars are too deep to be measured in simplistic terms; hence, too wide in space and magnitude. However, the relevant data is limited and of a generalistic nature as the investigator could not visit the countryside for fieldwork due to ongoing strife. In fact, the visa for the purpose was vainly sought twice from the Afghan Embassy in New Delhi. The reports of the world funding agencies and NGO’s are evenly limited in scope for the obvious reason. An exhaustive account of the Afghan wars and their impact on rural society would be possible only when things subside and the country is restored to normalcy. Till then, the present work may be treated as an ordinary endeavour on the subject under
Nevertheless, the present work seeks to examine a lesser discussed aspect of the Afghan rural life since the 19th century till date. The whole span of time, to reiterate, was overwhelmed with diverse wars and conflicts, which by and large, changed the whole facade of countryside. An isolated though but contented space of Afghanistan got plunged into fighting either because of the imperial designs, relentless Afghan resistance or the most unscientific strategy of the Taliban. In all cases, however, the human capital was causality especially in rural areas, which were usually away from the coverage of the electronic and print media because of country’s complex geo-physical frame and absence of modern means of communication and transportation. Little wonder to see the country transforming from a peaceful zone to a space characterising human wail and cry. From a localised tribal power structure, the country is shifting to a structure embodying exotic influences and intervention. In fact, latter course is speedily changing the entire “indigenous fabric” thereby marginalising the local potentates to an appreciable extent. In sequence, the local warring factions would be hustled into playing the chicken game in the foreseeable future. Every Afghan city, town
and village would witness the presence of alien elements with a worthwhile role in the otherwise Arcadian socio-economic and political setup.

The present project is based on six chapters:

Chapter-I:

**Afghanistan: A Geo-physical and Historical Perspective:**

It deals with Afghanistan’s historical, ethnic, religious, cultural and geographic setting, and explains the factors underlying the evolution of Afghanistan as a nation state. This is including the currents and cross-currents that brought the country on the verge of Soviet Occupation in 1979. Further, it seeks to examine the changing geo-economics and geo-politics as the complicating factors to the country’s current state of disarray.

Chapter-2:

**Theoretical Framework of Afghan Wars:**

It attempts to provide a theoretical view of different war theories propounded by the men like Arthur Koestler, Geoffrey Blainey, Carl Von Clausewitz, Van Creveld, etc. Complex though, these conflicts were governed by the internal and external dynamics with a defined purpose and orientation of the contending parties. It also shows as to how our common understanding of
the modern war and warfare is superficial at times. Naturally, the investigator has tried to comprehend the problem in a holistic framework and distinguish between the “Cosmopolitan” and “Particularist” ideologies about wars and conflicts at large.

Chapter-3:

History of the Afghan Wars: Tactics, and Strategy:

It is devoted with two objectives in mind: first, to present a condensed historical record of Afghan Wars, their tactics and strategy, and second, to show as to how high military-technology contributed to protracting wars and conflicts and widening their deep impact on Afghan society and its state system. It also underscores the factors responsible for the victory of the Afghan Mujahedin against the Soviet forces and their asymmetric mode of warfare. On the one hand, were the men indoctrinated with the spirit of Jihad, martyrdom, and extraordinary resilience to fight foreign rule, and, on the other, were the foreign men imbued with Leninist-Marxist ideology and modern military technology.

Chapter 4:

Impact of Afghan Wars:

It attempts to furnish an overview of country’s
unprecedented destruction that followed Afghan wars and conflicts during the last three decades. It accounts for their impact on the country’s human capital and infrastructures: roads, houses, hospitals, schools, buildings, markets, irrigation, telecommunication, agriculture, industries etc. The indigenous state systems related to the central banking, treasury, taxation, customs, police, and judiciary, were rendered dysfunctional and politically corrupt on account of the continued wars and conflicts especially the current one between the NATO and the Taliban.

Against the failing socio-economic system, the opium culture developed to an appreciable extent as an alternative to country’s poor economic base and quite limited sources of proper food, clothing, housing, employment and medical care. The given Chapter further argues that among all strata’s, women and children, were the most affected species of the wars and conflicts. The threat perception took away their confidence to resist challenges of life. They were brought down to the level of misery, supplication and helplessness. Many of them were rendered orphans and widows for want of their dying men in wars and conflicts. The investigator does not see the end of their miserable state of affairs in the immediate future as the interference of foreign powers, Pakistan, India,
China, Russia, and US, continues to grow in Afghanistan. For creating regional influence, they contest with one another for geo-political and geo-economic gains.

**Chapter-5:**

**US Imperialism and Afghanistan:**
It profiles the genesis of the US policy and its execution in Afghanistan. It examines the US agenda in deposing Taliban regime and fixing in place a regime suiting to the US, her ends and interests, in South and Central Asia. In fact, it demonstrates how US imperial designs actually destabilised the region with little or no prospects of future peace and development. The US strives to drive advantage of Afghan conflict to her benefit regardless of ethical values set by the international standards.

**Chapter-6:**

**Conclusion:**
This concluding Chapter offers a brief of the discussion enshrined in the preceding chapters. It enumerates the impact of the Afghan conflict on different segments of the Afghan society, its human capital and infrastructure. The impact is mostly unhealthy as is usual with every conflict situation: institutions and
systems crumbling, villages, cities and towns wearing a desolate look, population either perishing or migrating to the neighbourhood creating biggest ever migration problem in the world, women and children, in the absence of husbands and fathers, subjected to beggary and prostitution at times. Politically the country suffered a great setback as regards its national character either because of tribal infeuds, imperial designs or else the radicalisation of politics by the Taliban. In a way, the Taliban regime completed the process of national disintegration and fragmentation of society. The deepening of ethnic tension, rise of radical forces, and the growth of a narcotic economy, dominated Afghanistan especially during the last two decades. As a matter of fact, abominable state of Afghan affairs aggravated in the post-9/11 scenario with the presence of and deployment of more US and NATO forces, and the direct confrontation of the Pakistan army with the Taliban in Pakistan and Pak-Afghan borders.