Of all the forms of literature the novel is seen to be most concerned with the contemporary context and contingent reality. The major concern of the novelist is always to understand the changing realities of life and transform them in an artistic form. Literature mirrors everyday life in various contexts. War and politics in Taliban is all about sharing and shaping of power. It has also been characterized by a total eclipse of values and a gradual emergence of authoritarianism. So, modern Canadian political novel is concerned with the grotesque and absurd situation created by desensitized and moronic politicians. A few novelists and journalists have reacted adequately to the political realities that emerged during Taliban war. Problems of identity, alienation, loneliness and rootlessness impart complexity to their treatment of politics.

The present study focuses on the issue of rootlessness and loss of identity as reflected through the writings of Milt Bearden, Toby Harnden and Deborah Ellis. The novels selected are only the representation of the realities of Taliban and nearby places.

Civil war has brought a variety of social ills in Afghanistan, such as poverty, interethnic strife, inequality of women, and widespread thievery, kidnapping, and banditry. Blood feuds handed down through generations are legendary, and revenge is regarded as a necessary redress of wrongs. The civil war has strengthened these tendencies. The ongoing civil war had continued to kill, wound, and displace hundreds of thousands of civilians as well as soldiers and army officers. Kabul has been largely without electricity since 1994. Water, phones, and sewage systems have been destroyed. Years of
war have separated and impoverished extended families that traditionally cared for widows and fatherless children. Now many are left to fend for themselves. Some provinces began experiencing famine in the 1990s and diseases of malnutrition are being reported for the first time in decades.

Religion has long played a paramount role in the daily life and social customs of Afghanistan. Even under the Mujahideen leaders, Afghanistan appeared to be on a course of Islamization, the sale of alcohol was banned, and women were pressured to cover their heads in public and adopt traditional Muslim dress. But far more stringent practices were imposed as the Taliban enforced its Islamic code in areas under its control. These measures included banning television sets and most other forms of entertainment. Men who failed to grow beards and leave them untrimmed were fined and jailed. Full beardedness is being perceived by extremists as the mark of a Muslim and little mercy was shown to convicted criminals. These and other policies were not widely popular, and the Taliban was subject to reproach at home and abroad for its inability to build a national administrative structure. But, in the absence of viable alternatives, most Afghans appeared to accept Taliban dictates for the more orderly society it brought.

The Taliban is an Islamic fundamentalist political movement in Afghanistan currently waging war an insurgency, or jihad within that country. From 1996 to 2001, it held power in Afghanistan and enforced a strict interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law, of which the international community and leading Muslims have been highly
critical. Until his death in 2013, Mullah Mohammed Omar was the supreme commander and spiritual leader of the Taliban. Mullah Akhtar Mansour was elected as his replacement in 2015, and following Mansour's killing in a May 2016 U.S. drone strike, Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada became the group's leader.

Toby Harnden and Milt Bearden are not full time literary authors. They have spent their life in Military force in England, America and moved to various war-affected areas. In The Black Tulip, Dead Men Risen and others fictional writings they have presented pains and agonies of the military life. Their life was always in the sack of death. Even they were not sure whether they will any time further in their life will be back to their family members. Toby Harnden has represented the Welsh Guards’ situation during the war period. He has also shown they not only the common man but also the military people become homeless and loss their identity throughout their life.

Deborah Ellis has represented Parvana – a real life character. Parvana’s father is a teacher. Mother is education. The father is modernist. But he is trapped by the military to suffer the family socially and economily. Whatever happens in their life is the loss never to regain.

The Taliban emerged in 1994 as one of the prominent factions in the Afghan Civil War, and largely consisted of students recently trained in madrassas in Pakistan. Under the leadership of Mohammed Omar, the movement spread throughout most of Afghanistan, sequestering power from the Mujahideen warlords,
whose corruption and despotism Afghans had tired of. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was established in 1996 and the Afghan capital transferred to Kandahar. It held control of most of the country until being overthrown by the American-led invasion of Afghanistan in December 2001 following the September 11 attacks. At its peak, formal diplomatic recognition of the Taliban's government was acknowledged by only three nations: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The group later regrouped as an insurgency movement to fight the American-backed Karzai administration and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

The Taliban have been condemned internationally for the harsh enforcement of their interpretation of Islamic Sharia law, which has resulted in the brutal treatment of many Afghans, especially women. During their rule from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban and their allies committed massacres against Afghan civilians, denied UN food supplies to 160,000 starving civilians and conducted a policy of scorched earth, burning vast areas of fertile land and destroying tens of thousands of homes. In its post-9/11 insurgency, the group has been accused of using terrorism as a specific tactic to further their ideological and political goals.

The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence and military are widely alleged by the international community to have provided support to the Taliban during their founding and time in power, and of continuing to support the Taliban during the insurgency. Pakistan states that it dropped all support for the group
after the September 11 attacks. Al-Qaeda also supported the Taliban with fighters from Arab countries and Central Asia. Saudi Arabia provided financial support. Hundreds of thousands of people were forced to flee to United Front-controlled territory, Pakistan, and Iran.

When Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq became President of Pakistan he feared that the Soviets were planning to invade Balochistan, Pakistan so he sent Akhtar Abdur Rahman to Saudi Arabia to garner support for the Afghan resistance against Soviet occupation forces. In the meantime, the United States and Saudi Arabia joined the struggle against the Soviet Union by providing all the funds. Zia-ul-Haq aligned himself with Pakistan's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam and later picked General Akhtar Abdur Rahman to lead the insurgency against the Soviet Union inside Afghanistan. About 90,000 Afghans, including Mohammed Omar, were trained by Pakistan's ISI during the 1980s.

According to Toby Harden, after the fall of the Soviet-backed regime of Mohammad Najibullah in 1992, several Afghan political parties agreed on a peace and power-sharing agreement, the Peshawar Accord. The accord created the Islamic State of Afghanistan and appointed an interim government for a transitional period.

The sovereignty of Afghanistan was vested formally in the Islamic State of Afghanistan, an entity created in April 1992, after the fall of the Soviet-backed Najibullah government. With the exception of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami, all of the parties were ostensibly unified under this government in April 1992. Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami, for its part, refused to recognize the government for
most of the period discussed in this report and launched attacks against government forces and Kabul generally. Shells and rockets fell everywhere.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar received operational, financial and military support from Pakistan. Afghanistan expert Amin Saikal concludes in Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival that Pakistan was keen to gear up for a breakthrough in Central Asia. Islamabad could not possibly expect the new Islamic government leaders... to subordinate their own nationalist objectives in order to help Pakistan realize its regional ambitions. Had it not been for the ISI's logistic support and supply of a large number of rockets, Hekmatyar's forces would not have been able to target and destroy half of Kabul.

The United Nations organisations (UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, and ILO) and international NGOs (amongst others, Human Rights Watch, the Aga Khan Foundation and the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit) provide reliable reports and statistics. However, their experiences are limited to their own specific projects. Also their environment is sterile, as they have to protect themselves against possible hostilities from the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. They are not allowed to mix with ordinary Afghans, although some of them are brave enough to do so as they find it frustrating not being able to be reflective and learn the truth about the reality in Afghanistan.

He is grateful to these organizations for helping him. As a researcher and writer, he studied the information provided by them,
but he learned a great deal more about the experiences of women and men by staying and travelling with Afghan friends in Kabul, Jalalabad and Mazar-e Sharif.

Years of wars and violent conflicts left Afghanistan with massive loss of life, displacement and physical and environmental destruction. With the fall of the Taliban in 2001, many Afghans expected to attain peace and development. However, after four years of American led invasion, in the words of the United Nations Development Programme, reconstruction and development is urgently needed otherwise this fragile nation could easily slip back into chaos and abject poverty. Very little has been invested in reconstruction.

No investment has been made to make the Afghan national airline a viable airline to travel with. The workers of the UN and international NGOs are not allowed to travel on the Ariana Airline, because it is not safe. Instead a number of western private airline companies provide services for foreign workers under the name of ‘provision of services for humanitarian, relief and development projects and organisations’. In the eyes of many Afghans the invasion forces are not reconstructing, they are making a huge amount of profit out of Afghanistan’s destruction.

In Kabul and a few other urban centres, big houses and businesses are being built. Many believe that these lands and properties belong to those Afghans who escaped their country during the years of war and violent conflicts and have not returned yet. The warlords who killed, raped and terrorized the population for years, are now working with some foreign contractors, confiscating these
properties and building big houses and businesses for themselves. As a result a number of schools and hospitals have collapsed, killing children, teachers, sick people and workers.

Many Afghans are concerned about the future of their economy based on a combination of foreign and warlord’s capital. The international NGOs are responsible for provision of services. But like everywhere else in the world, they are only able to provide a degree of health, education and other services at local levels. According to the UNDP Report, 39% of the population in urban areas and 69% in rural areas do not have access to clean water. One in eight children dies because of contaminated water.

Three million school children (grades 1-12) and four million high school students have enrolled and 70,000 teachers have returned to work. However, the majority of schools which were damaged in the war years have not been rebuilt and are not safe. There are shortages of teachers, books, tables, chairs, paper and pencils, let alone other equipment. Many children go to school at 8.00am and return home by 10.00am. University courses are closing down because of lack of teachers and equipment.

Without literacy, education and skills, many have difficulty obtaining work. In Kabul and a few other urban areas, a small minority of people with limited skills and education work for international NGOs, UN organizations, foreign embassies and the ISAF. These organizations pay a higher wage than Afghanistan’s state and private institutions.
Deborah Ellis says through Parvana that poverty and years of war, violent conflicts and displacement means that three generations live under the same roof. Many feel a great need to support each other and to be with each other after so many years of separation and displacement. However, overcrowded houses and apartments mean that young people in particular suffer from lack of space and privacy. No-one dares to be out in the streets after sunset. Drugs, violence and the kidnapping of children and young women are widespread. Moreover, there is a danger of being shot by security forces or run over by their fast cars patrolling the streets.

Three million refugees have returned from Iran and Pakistan. They live in tents in Kabul and other urban areas. They face unemployment and a lack of education and healthcare facilities. She came across a young man who was begging in the streets. He recognized Afghan friends who run an NGO in Peshawar. When he was in Peshawar he went to the school provided by this Afghan NGO. Back in Kabul he is a beggar. He felt that he was better off in Peshawar as a refugee.

Around 1.5 million people come to Kabul from other parts of Afghanistan every year looking for work. Kabul’s population was 500,000 just after the fall of the Taliban, today it is 5 million. The majority of these people are landless and homeless. Those who can afford it, mainly men, emigrate to Iran and Pakistan to work and earn money for their families. Many families move from cold areas to warm areas, as they do not have any way of keeping themselves
protected from the cold weather in winter. The extreme poor cannot emigrate and live in absolute poverty.

For the majority of people the only available option to consistently secure food is to become involved in the poppy economy. Many are locked into debt. They sell or mortgage their land; they sell their household belongings; even their daughters and their sons in order to cultivate opium to pay for their debt plus interest. In other cases, families send their young boys to work in the fields of traders in the form of bonded labour. Many young girls are married off to richer, older men in return for money which can be used to repay debts. Despite unprecedented high prices for opium, they only ever succeed in partially paying off their debt and systematically fail to regain their land. So they sell their belongings again to pay off the rest of their debt. They are highly dependent on the opium poppy as a means of survival.

People use opium to fight the unbearable amount of sickness and pain, caused by years of poor nutrition, sleeping in cold conditions and, for women, constant cycles of pregnancy. Pregnant addicts give birth to either still born babies or babies which themselves become addicted when they breast feed. Opium consumption is relatively low among families with higher standards of living and is higher among the poorer households. They give opium to their children to curb their hunger, to keep them quiet and calm, and in times of sickness. Older children cannot go to school without a dose of opium. Accidental death from overdose is common among children. Also, opium addiction is often the source of husband-wife conflicts. When men are
addicted they cannot provide adequately for their families, and when women are addicted they face disapproval from their husbands. Both cases lead to violence against the women. In many cases male opium addicts who become impotent force their wives to become addicts, with the aim of reducing the chances of infidelity. According to my interviewees, these experiences are not specific to Badakhshan. For the majority of the population the opium economy is the only available option for survival. Poverty and the absence of healthcare have led to widespread opium addiction.

A major justification for the war was that it would improve the position of women. Four years after the US led invasion of Afghanistan, there is very little evidence to demonstrate improvements for women and girls. As was mentioned above, girls can go to school, but school buildings are unsafe and there are severe shortages of teachers, facilities and equipment. The new constitution guarantees women equal rights. However, continuing religious and cultural conservatism and a dangerous security environment are real obstacles to women’s participation in the economy, politics and society.

The regional and local warlords, who were the key allies of America against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, are not women’s rights advocates and the invasion forces are not interested in the warlords’ treatment of women. In most of Afghanistan, the rule of the warlords’ guns is more of a reality than the rule of law. Women suffer under conditions of violence, fear and intimidation, and they remain at risk from sexual violence. With the exception of Kabul city centre women
do not go out of the house or travel without Burqa and without being accompanied by a male member of their family. According to Human Rights Watch reports, in many parts of the country parents do not send their daughters to school because it is not safe enough for them to walk to school. The practice of exchanging girls and young women to settle feuds or to repay debts continues, as do high rates of early and forced marriage.

The western media have reported the Afghan people’s access to satellite TV, Bollywood films, mobile phones and the internet as a positive development. Taking into consideration the level of poverty and lack of electricity, very few Afghans have access to the television stations across the country. For those who can afford this luxury the choice is to watch American style cop violence movies or Bollywood movies which advocate the subjugation of women to men and their families. Many Afghan women’s rights activists are worried about the messages of Bollywood romance films, which are all about the woman’s submission to the husband and his family’s tradition. Love affairs between a rich man and a poor girl will start with romance, music and dance and end up in traditional marriage, the wife obeying the husband and his family or else facing domestic violence.

The relative availability of cheap mobile phones for a minority of young men and women in Kabul and a few other urban centres may mean that boys and girls can text each other and meet each other in internet cafes. However, many religious, conservative families do not consider internet cafes an appropriate place for their daughters, as pornography is freely available online. There are many young girls in
jail who have been put there by their male relatives. Feze, one of the victim says that she was put in jail by her father, uncles and cousins for being a ‘bad girl’. Although she passed the virginity test which is done in jail to all ‘bad girls’, she was kept there for months. In jail, she was approached by the jail keeper. When she was finally released, she was approached by the local policeman. When a young woman is accused of being a bad girl by her own father, the word goes around town that she is available to men. Out of jail she is under constant threat of being murdered by her family as the issue of a woman’s honour is linked to the family’s honour and can frequently escalate to killings and violence.

The majority of people are hostile to the presence of foreigners. A woman, whose blind husband was dragged from their home as an al-Qaeda suspect, was cursing the Americans as ‘Kafar’, the infidels who raid her home, disrespected her religion and culture and created misery and fear for her and the neighbours.

Many believe that the Americans are building military installations and camps and stealing Afghanistan’s resources all over the country. Actually they are building massive walls around large areas where Afghans are not allowed to enter. They pay in dollars, so even those people who hate them work for them, as they have to feed their families.

American soldiers kick, swear and beat people up in the streets and terrorize them when traffic jams are created. In fact the traffic
jams are created by the large vehicles of the UN, NGOs, and the ISAF which are filling Kabul city centre and other city streets all day long.

There has recently been an increase in open fighting between the foreign troops and the insurgents. The US has concentrated on maintaining Karzai in control of Kabul. The warlords have grips on large chunks of the country and on the population. Some of the old warlords are now registered and paid as part of the security contingent. Of course, this may be considered as a good move because these groups may have changed their positions and reformed.

However, many Afghans that I interviewed do not believe this, as these groups, on the one hand, are working with the government and on the other hand working with anti-government groups in other parts of Afghanistan. They are all armed with their own privatised security forces and resist state authority. The process of their disarmament has not been successful.

They are also connected with the opium economy and impose forced labour on communities, making the people work on their land. They control large areas which are outside the law of the state and are used for drug trafficking. They are engaged in corruption, confiscating lands and properties belonging to those who left the country during the war years and have not yet returned.

There are over 60 registered political parties approved by the Ministry of Justice. Most of them remain allied to the warlords and their military factions and are in conflict with local government officials.
The UN, the NGOs and Human Rights Watch, while working on gender issues have reported that they have faced hostility and their work has been undermined by the conflict between local government institutions and political parties.

Afghanistan has massive natural resources (natural gas, petroleum, coal, copper, chromite, talc, barites, sulphur, lead, zinc, iron ore, salt, precious and semiprecious stones). Afghanistan also has skilled labour, ranging from professionals to those with industrial and agricultural skills. These qualified people have lived in diasporic communities over the last 25 years, the majority in Iran and Pakistan and a minority in the West and Australia. But 4 years after the fall of the Taliban, the Afghan economy is still not functioning and is unable or unwilling to absorb this skilled labour. [10]

Davoud, an American educated engineer explained: “I have offered my services; the American client state administration does not want us to participate in the reconstruction. The Americans co-operated with the warlords to defeat the Taliban and still they are co-operating with them, they have mutual interests in sharing the country’s resources”. And Shahla, an educated businesswoman from Britain, said: “I have come to help with the reconstruction of my country. But there is no place for me here. There is no reconstruction; there is just a terrible rush to make quick money. I don’t know how long I will be able to remain here”.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees who lived in Pakistan and Iran have returned. They are skilled workers but have not been absorbed
into the Afghan economy. Therefore, they have no choice other than to go back to Iran and Pakistan and work illegally, because they are no longer categorised as refugees. According to research by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, in only one area of the border with Pakistan (Torkham), 160,000 people per day go from Pakistan to Afghanistan and 190,000 people per day go from Afghanistan to Pakistan. They bring hundreds of thousands of US dollars per month to Afghanistan and for them this is just survival.

The warlords are engaged in the opium economy and the majority of the population is engaged in survival activities. International organisations and western governments keep changing their position between a military anti-drugs campaign and a long-term approach combining law enforcement issues with alternative economic opportunities. Either way, no real attempt has been made to develop Afghanistan’s economy.

The International Community

It has been argued that the presence of international security forces is positive. This is because international organisations and NGOs feel safe working to create jobs and security for the population, especially for women and girls.

In the eyes of many Afghan women’s rights activists that I interviewed, the lack of any meaningful reconstruction and the presence of military invaders have created resentment and hostility. The UN organisations and NGOs have no power or resources for development. They are not in Afghanistan just out of good will. In
order to attract more funds and continue their businesses they have to exaggerate the degree of success of their programmes.

Najia explained: “Women’s rights, human rights and democracy issues are cosmetically imposed from above. There are so many international organisations, some are trying their best, but they are miles away from understanding our cultural issues. Also when people are hungry and sick these issues are meaningless for them”.

Some felt that even their language and culture was under threat. Considering the level of illiteracy, they found the spread of English language terminology by NGOs, UN organisations, television programmes and the internet oppressive. Terms such as gender, development, participatory rural appraisal, democracy, planning etc are rapidly used by illiterate or partially educated men and women who are involved in UN and NGO projects. Many do not understand the real meaning of these terms and do not have any chance to learn the Dari or Pashto equivalents. Many are questioning whether these organisations, with all their good intentions, are contributing to the improvement of people’s lives in Afghanistan or unwittingly cooperating in neo-colonial reconstruction. They also feel that their culture is under threat as many projects on gender, human rights and democracy are based on individuality and fail their cultural needs.

Fatima believed that, “Women’s rights and human rights issues have become tools and slogans for those in power to use for their own agenda. I work with ordinary women and men and try to explain to them that Islam has given rights to women. This is the only way to
fight for women’s rights in Afghanistan, to show to women and men the positive side of Islam and Islamic culture, not from outside and not by insulting people’s culture and religion”.

The Western invasion of Afghanistan was and still is about strengthening US political and economic hegemony and control of the energy resources of the region. Afghan women and men do not have the power to combat them on their own. But they have the power to think and to implement what is best for them and how to construct and develop their country. They need the people around the world to stop the neo-conservatives’ imperial programmes which continue a vicious circle of war and terrorism.

The war in Afghanistan continues destroying lives, due to the direct consequences of violence and the war-induced breakdown of public health, security, and infrastructure. Civilians have been killed by crossfire, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), assassinations, bombings, and night raids into houses of suspected insurgents. Even in the absence of fighting, unexploded ordnance from previous wars and United States cluster bombs continue to kill.

Hospitals in Afghanistan are treating large numbers of war wounded, including amputees and burn victims. The war has also inflicted invisible wounds. In 2009, the Afghan Ministry of Public Health reported that fully two-thirds of Afghans suffer from mental health problems.
Prior wars and civil conflict in the country have made Afghan society extremely vulnerable to the indirect effects of the current war. Those war effects include elevated rates of disease due to lack of clean drinking water, malnutrition, and reduced access to health care. Nearly every factor associated with premature death — poverty, malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of access to health care, environmental degradation — is exacerbated by the current war.

While Afghanistan has benefited from investments in health care that may ameliorate some of the effects of war, the results are mixed, with improvement in some areas, such as infant mortality, balanced by continuing or growing needs in other elements of public health.

About 92,000 people have been killed in the Afghanistan war since 2001. More than 26,000 of those killed have been civilians. Nearly 100,000 people have been injured since 2001.