

**THE GEOPOLITICS OF PEACE PROCESS: A CASE
STUDY OF POST 9/11 AFGHANISTAN**

A Project Report Submitted To The Central University of Punjab

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In

Political Science

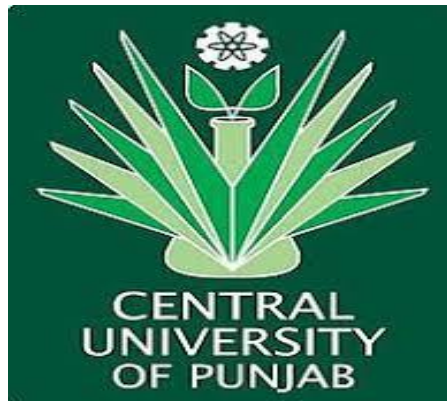
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DECLARATION

I declare that the project report entitled “The GEOPOLITICS OF PEACE PROCESS: A CASE STUDY OF POST 9/11 AFGHANISTAN” has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Nishtha Kaushiki, Assistant Professor, Department of South and Central Asian Studies, School of Global Relations, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. No part of this Project report has formed the basis for the award of any Degree or fellowship previously.

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ABSTRACT

THE GEOPOLITICS OF PEACE PROCESS: A CASE STUDY OF POST 9/11 AFGHANISTAN

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Peace talks are indefinable for decades. For one reason or another, Afghanistan has, since long, been a center of power politics between the two superpowers followed by a civil war. Later, it emerged as a battlefield for 'war on terror' and insurgency movements. After the Withdrawal of Russia in 1994, Taliban took over the government and run the administration of Afghanistan. Taliban Leader Mullah Omar known as the Khalifa of the State. Many Islamic Organizations of the world are supporting Taliban and Al-Qaeda also in Afghanistan. After, the 9/11 attacks in the United States, Washington responded militarily while launching attacks on Afghanistan with the support of Pakistan. The aim of USA is to fight against terrorism especially against Usama-bin-laden, and his organization Al-Qaeda, because of being the mastermind of 9/11 attacks. Afghanistan government was established through Boon Agreement in 2001. At the time of this accord, it was hoped that the rapid growth of the Taliban regime and the installation of a broad-based internationally backed administration would bring an end to large-scale conflict in Afghanistan. The accord has made reference to the idea of peaceful co-existence, and the political roadmap outline includes measures with the significant potential to further peace process. Afghan Peace talks started after the toppling down of the Taliban

government in December 2001. The aim of the peace process in Afghanistan has been the restoring of stability in the country and the establishment of a democratically elected government. The intervention of external players in Afghanistan is a big challenge to peace and stability in the region. Afghanistan is one of the unsuccessful states of the world that is known for foreign invasions or armies crossing its border to fulfil their personal and national Interest. In the 19th and 20th century Afghanistan remained a potential field and center of attention for the great game between Russia and the British Empire, for enhancing their influence in central and south Asia. Nonetheless, Afghanistan has been called as the graveyard of Empires. Apart from US, the interested parties in Afghanistan are also the regional powers like China, Russia, Pakistan, India and Iran. Therefore, in the process, the role of the US, China, Russia, India and Pakistan in the Afghan Peace Process have been discussed. There has never been a strong central or elected government in Afghanistan whose writ could be uniformly present in all parts of the country. So, neighbors exploit the situation to their own advantage and send their proxy wars to Afghanistan. Be it the rivalry between British-India and Soviet Union, United States and Soviet Union in the past, or Pakistan-India rivalry at present or a new great game. All regional powers are struggling to use Afghanistan as a battleground to settle their scores against each other. Pakistan and USA are the main External player's interfering in this country. Pakistan provided a space to Americans in their fight against the Al-Qaida and Taliban. The only way in the peace in Afghanistan, as realized by the interesting parties except India is how to bring Taliban on the negotiating table and sort out issues by reaching a consensus. However, Taliban have many Demands, and the major demand is to implement the Islamic Sharia Law in the State. Therefore, the last chapter deals with this.

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I am highly thankful to my Parents who encourage me for the study, and make every possible arrangement for me to continue my studies and allowing me to realize my dream. My Parents is my inspiration throughout my life. I am also thankful to my Brother and Sisters for being constant companion, and encouraging me throughout my studies.

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Hafiz Mohammad Ikram UL-Haq

(Signature)

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ABBREVIATIONS

Sr.No.	Full Form	Abbreviation
1.	North Atlantic Treaty Organization	NATO
2.	The East Turkestan Islamic Movement	ETIM
3.	Indian Maritime University	IMU
4.	United States of America	USA
5.	<u>Quadrilateral Coordination Group</u>	QCG
6.	<u>Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline</u>	TAPI
7.	International Security Assistance Force	ISAF
8.	Afghan National Security Forces	ANSF
9.	Center for Strategic and International Studies	CSIS
10.	Catholic Relief Services	CRS
11.	United States Institute of Peace	USIP
12.	Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies	IPCS
13.	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan	PDPA
14.	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	USSR
15.	Afghanistan New Beginning Programme	ANBP
16.	Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme	APRP
17.	Collation Forces	CFs
18.	Inter-Services Intelligence	ISI
19.	Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan	TTP
20.	United Nation Organization	UNO
21.	Common Wealth of Independent State	CIS
22.	Collective Security Treaty Organization	CSTO
23.	Shanghai Cooperation Organization	SCO
24.	Islamic State– Khorasan Province	ISKP

25.	Eurasian Economic Union	EAEU
26.	International North–South Transport Corridor	INSTC
27.	Islamic State	IS
28.	Afghan Strategic Partnership Plan	ASP
29.	Afghan National Army	ANA
30.	Afghan National Police	ANP
31.	Improvised Explosive Devices	IEDs
32.	Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement	APTTA
33.	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria	ISIS

Chapter 1

Introduction

Peace talks is indefinable for decades. For one reason or another, the Afghanistan has, since long, been a center of power between the two superpowers followed by a civil war. Later, it emerged as a battlefield for 'war on terror' and insurgency movements. Attempts to bring peace to the war-torn country have proved delusive.

Afghanistan is also known as "Graveyard of Empires" because the two major powers of the world have buried their armies in Afghanistan. During the three Anglo-Afghan wars (1839-43, 1878-1880 and 1919) British Empire buried when it tried to restrict the Russian influence in Afghanistan. Afghanistan also became graveyard of Soviet Union when it invaded Afghanistan in 1979 which changed into a war between the USSR (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic) troops and the Mujahedin's. The international agencies mentioned that these Mujahedin's were supported by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United States (Saikal & Maley, 1990). The scholars mentioned that the USSR could not be able to manage the war both politically and economically, and consequently was forced to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan in 1989. In spite of USSR's withdrawal from Afghanistan, Mohammad Najibullah established communist supported government in the country. In order to establish a liberal democratic system, Burhanuddin Rabbani replaced the Afghanistan as an Islamic State and declared himself as president of the country. The two groups of rebels also captured some areas, like Abdul Rashid Dostum occupied the north, and south was falling under the influence of Taliban which were linked to Al-Qaeda (Barfield, 2010).

However the situation was not under control in Afghanistan because Taliban Mujahedeen's continuously made attacks on the Burhanuddin Rabbani's government, which led to the breakout of civil war in Afghanistan from 1992-1996 among various Mujahedin groups, resulted in creating a support for the Taliban. Consequently, Taliban took control over Qandahar in September 1995, and Herat province was captured by them. Subsequently, Taliban emerged as a strong power in the country. As a consequence Rabbani and Masoud withdraw their troops from these areas and confined

their influence on the Panjshir Valley. Finally, Taliban took Kabul under its control on 27 September, 1996 and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The former leaders of Afghanistan either exiled or hanged by the Taliban government. The changing political landscape of the country made numerous changes under the Taliban administration as the former President of Afghanistan, Najibullah, was captured and hanged by the Taliban gunmen in Kabul. Ahmad Shah Massoud and Abdul Rashid Dostum, two former enemies, created the United Front (Northern Alliance) against the Taliban (Johnson, 2004).

Despite the United States support to Taliban during the Soviet War, Washington government was not able to handle the Taliban policies which resulted in split of relations between the two. Taliban established government in Kabul but the US did not recognize Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. The international organizations also did not recognize the Taliban government like UNO, WTO etc. On the other hand, they gave representation to Rabbani government. At the same time United Nations Organization imposed sanctions under the resolution 1267, which was adopted unanimously on 15 October 1999. This resolution on the part of UNSC established a sanctions regime to cover individuals and entities associated with Al-Qaeda. Under this Resolution, all the states are required not to provide funds or economic resources to the Taliban.

On 19 December 2000, UNSC resolution 1333 was adopted after recalling earlier resolutions on the situation in Afghanistan, including Resolution 1267 (1999). Under this resolution, the UNSC called for a ban of military assistance to Taliban, and closure of its camps. This resolution strengthened the sanction regime and imposed further sanctions. In order to rein them, sanctions were imposed by the United Nations on them which frustrated these terrorist groups.

In the year 2001, several simultaneous incidents took place in the Afghanistan, the two Arab suicide attackers assassinated Ahmad Shah Massoud inside Afghanistan and on the morning of 11 September 2001, four attacks were carried on the United States soil. In this attack near about 3,000 people were killed in these attacks. Within twenty four hours the United States held that these attacks were carried out by the members of the Al-Qaeda, who are based in, operating out of and allied with the Taliban's Islamic Emirate

of Afghanistan (Awasthy, 2012). The US president addressed the nation assured them that they will punish the culprits of the attack. On 20th September the US government makes diplomatic contacts with Taliban in which they demanded that Taliban should handover the Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Ladin to America and destroy the bases of Al-Qaeda in country. However, the Taliban government refused the US demands, consequently, the US forces, British Special Forces and the Afghan United Front or Northern Alliance launched Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. The US leadership mentioned that we invaded Afghanistan to capture Osama Bin Laden and other leaders of the group and dismantle the Al-Qaeda bases in the country as well as remove Taliban from the power and establish democratic government (Stephen & Snetkov, 2012). The coalition forces started action on Taliban government and Al-Qaeda group in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The US supported the Northern coalition forces to establish democratically elected government in Afghanistan under the leadership of Hamid Karzai to install peace and security in the region. Therefore after few years Osama Bin Laden was killed and the US president declared it and after one year announce official visit to Afghanistan. During the visit Afghan president and the US president signed several agreements which includes the long-term framework for the relationship between Afghanistan and the United States of America. At the same visit US president declared withdrawal plan of coalition forces from Afghanistan (Hajrulaswad, 2012). The coalition forces decided to handover the security responsibility to Afghan forces at the NATO summit which was held in Chicago on May 21, 2012. In the summit NATO officials also decided to shift its forces from combat to non-combat operations and providing training to ISAF forces and rest of foreign troops would withdraw from Afghanistan (Holland and Taylor, 2012).

The two countries signed the bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) on 30 September, 2014 by the Afghan National Security Advisor and the American Ambassador James Cunningham. It has been decided that how much number of troops will stay in Afghanistan beyond 2014. In the same year US president has announced that at the Bagram air base that about 9,800 US and 4,000 to 5,000 NATO troops will stay in Afghanistan beyond 2014 (Walsh and Ahmed, 2014).

It had been an important passage of trade and conquest between Europe, Persia, Central Asia, South and East Asia. Afghanistan had hardly been managed as an integrated unit under the influence of local population during much of the country's history. In reality in the past, it had been ruled as a part of the territory of one of its neighbors. Pakistan and USA are the main external players interfering in the country. USA army is in the Afghanistan. On the other hand Pakistan provided a space to America in its fight against the Al-Qaida and Taliban. One side is afghan government and other side a Taliban regime. Both are supported by differently against each other, Pakistan army and government is supporting Taliban and other governments like India USA are supporting non-Taliban government. Therefore in this backdrop the Geopolitical Interests of Major Power in Afghanistan are discussed in the third chapter.

Peace process in Afghanistan in a very complex situation. The external players play a game of politics against each other but it is only the innocent civilians in Afghanistan who are bearing the consequences of this game. As Taliban also occupies a significant influence in the country so, the involvement of Taliban for peace talks is necessary. Peace talks started in Afghanistan after 2015. Government of Afghanistan took initiative of a Peace process. However, the peace talks in June 2015 failed due to the death of Mullah Umar, in December 2015. Four members of QCG was formed during 'Heart of Asia' meeting to revive and facilitate the peace talks. In 2016, Afghanistan initiated a peace talk, amid growing Taliban attacks, with the help of QCG, and urged the insurgent group to join the negotiating table. With the completion of QCG's four 'preparatory meetings' from January 11-18 and February 06-23, the group had been able to chalk out a roadmap, stipulating the stages and steps of the peace process for direct peace talks between the representatives of the Government of Afghanistan and Taliban groups (Tiwari, 28-04-2016). This has been discussed in detail in the fourth chapter.

1.1. Afghanistan: Land and People

The Afghanistan is located in the South Asia.¹ It is bordered by Pakistan on the South and East (2670 km), Iran on the West (921 km), and Turkmenistan (804 km), Uzbekistan

¹ United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49region.htm#asia>

(144 km) and Tajikistan (1357 km) in the North, and China (91 km) in the far Northeast. It has a total land area of about 652,230 km. The population of Afghanistan is approximately 31 million.²

Map.1.1



Source: <http://www.asian-studies.org/eea/silkroad.htm>.

The official religion of Afghanistan is Islam, which is practiced by about 99 per cent of its citizens. Sunni Muslims makes up 80 per cent and Shia Muslims makes up 19 per cent of its population. Other religions like Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, etc. are in small proposition, about 1 per cent of the Afghan population (Cooperman & Grim, 2009). Also, Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic society. The major ethnic groups are Pashtun (42%); the Tajiks (27%); Hazaras (9%); Uzbeks (9 %); Aimaq (4%), Turkmen (3 %), Baluch (%) and other groups that make up 4 % (Lamer & Foster, 2011).

² The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

1.2. Review of Literature

Material available regarding the topic “Post-9/11 Geopolitics of Afghanistan Peace process: A case study of Post 9/11 Afghanistan” was limited within the accessible libraries, which made online resources such as internet articles, reports, and essential newspapers. Authors had discussed different aspects of peace process some have discussed the concerns for Afghanistan after the NATO withdrawal, while some have asserted the concerns for regional countries and some others have analyzed the role of major powers (Pakistan, USA, China, India, Russia) in Afghanistan. The review of literature is as under:

Rahmanullah, (2014), mentioned in his article “US-NATO Exit from Afghanistan: Challenges and Options beyond 2014” that the US has decided to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan in 2014 and security of the country will be handed over to Afghanistan forces. However, the US-led NATO forces are not transferring a peaceful Afghanistan to Afghans instead it is transferring a turbulent Afghanistan, where peace and calm is yet to be achieved. Rahmanullah further explains that the ability of the ANSF in order to protect the porous border and maintain internal peace will remain very significant beyond 2014. The author mentioned in the last section of the article that peace process in Afghanistan will be very complicated situation because the Taliban Mujahedeen’s were not interesting to talk with the Afghan and the US governments. The Karzai administration has many times offered peace talks to Taliban, but the Taliban rejected these talks by describing that the Afghan government is not independent and is operating under the US influence. The author further mentioned that the country will again move towards the civil war because the various ethnic groups, warlords and drug-traffickers will try to capture the power in the country.

Mishra, K. M. (2014). “**The New Great Game and Continuing Stalemate in Afghanistan**” The author in this article explained that there are several regional powers in the New Great Game in Afghanistan who are trying to assert their role more independently after the collapse of the Cold War politics. The end of the Cold War also resulted into the emergence of various non-state actors like radical religious groups with asymmetric war tactics. The author further asserted that the regional powers are trying to

defend and promote their geopolitical interests by forming secret alliances with these groups which, in turn, undermine the interests of other players in the region. For example, Pakistan, Iran and China are reported to have provided arms and aid to the Taliban to undermine the US role in Afghanistan. However, though the regional powers try to contain American influence in the region, they undercut each other's interests there too. The author further held that as the majority of the US-led NATO forces are withdrawing from Afghanistan, the struggle for influence could intensify among the regional powers which might result into another civil war in Afghanistan. The permanent solution to the Afghan problem lies in working out a regional framework of cooperation among regional powers.

Khan, N. M. & Rehman, S. (2013). "Afghanistan Drawdown and Regional Security"

In this article, they are of the opinion that If the drawdown happens without political reconciliation then the chances are that the Taliban will have a field day as there would be multiple power centers of warlords having the loyalties of their like-minded groups and tribes and a weak central government as a helpless watcher over the looming chaos. This is a scenario on which most observers agree. The author further explains that the withdrawal is being seen as a tacit surrender to inadmissible realities. Optimism is rare and based on conditions that the major players do not seem to be addressing. After three decades of war and instability, Afghanistan needs peace. But this is something that the Afghans themselves need to understand the most.

Aftab, Safiya. (2013), mentioned another aspect of NATO forces withdrawal from Afghanistan in his article "The 2014 ISAF pullout from Afghanistan: Impacts on Pakistan" that the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014 will be significant for the region in general, and for Pakistan in particular. The author has asserted that the continued instability of Afghanistan over the last few decades has had significant impacts on Pakistan's politics, economy, security profile and relations with the world community. As the U.S. forces withdraw and control is handed over to the ANSF, there are more chances that the cross-border attacks from Afghanistan would increase. At last, the author is of the opinion that the reconciliation process is the only positive scenario for Pakistan.

Ibrahim, Muhammad. (2014). In “Post-US Withdrawal from Afghanistan and Its Impact on Internal Security” examined that the 9/11 attacks on USA led to a lot of casualties. Against this backdrop, USA launched the military operation against the perpetrators of these attacks and expelled the Taliban government and pulled the Al-Qaeda out of the country. The author further explains that after passing some time the Taliban and other insurgent groups started heavy insurgency campaign against the USA and its allied partners. However, after the presence of more than a decade the USA was not able to bring the social, economic and political development in Afghanistan, although efforts have been made and still uncertainty is prevailing in Afghanistan. In the last part of the article, Ibrahim had focused on the various implications that may arise after the withdrawal of the international troops and holds that with the non-availability of sufficient funds serious socio-economic challenges are certain in Afghanistan. The already corrupt government, judiciary, and ANSF, will become more fragile.

Gupta, Arvind, et al. (2012). “**Post-2014 Afghanistan and India's Options.**” In this report, the authors are of the opinion that the situation in Afghanistan is unfolding rapidly. At the internal level, there is no clear strategy on how to take the process of democracy forward and at the international level there is a weak support for Afghanistan, despite various commitments had been made by the international community in order to support Afghanistan. The authors further held that at the Tokyo conference in July 2012, the international community had promised to give US \$16 billion for next four years. However, the Afghan President demanded US \$10 billion per year and the Afghan Central Bank had estimated that US \$6-7 billion per year as necessary for sustaining economic growth. The authors had further asserted that the decrease in international aid will had a serious impact on the security sector of Afghanistan and will lead to further destabilization in the country. Furthermore, the reconciliation process is not working out. There is also a lack of consensus among the regional countries regarding the post-withdrawal situation. The authors had further added that India must be ready to provide the necessary resources to sustain its engagement. It needs to improve its delivery mechanisms and cut-down on implementation delays.

Weinbaum, G. Marvin. (2006). “Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: An Ever Dangerous Neighborhood.” In this report, the author discusses about the dependence of Afghanistan on neighboring countries for both political and economic support from ancient times. The neighboring and near neighboring countries have regularly intervened in the politics and economy of the Afghanistan. The author holds that foreigners have armed the people of Afghanistan in to become more influential and dominate large portions of Afghanistan. The author had asserted that the role of Pakistan and Iran as an obstacle in Afghanistan’s recovery. Weinbaum further adds that interests of the US in Afghanistan would disappear once they achieve their major goal in the country. The report also provides a brief overview about the economic magnitude of the country.

Stepanova, Ekaterina. (2013). “Afghanistan after 2014: The Way Forward for Russia.” In this report, Stepanova talks about the Russia’s perception regarding the presence of the US troops Afghanistan. The author holds that Russia is dissatisfied with the presence of Western security forces and its departure from Afghanistan by 2014. Although the spill-over of violence and extremism does not pose a direct threat to Russia but it is concerned regarding the rise of terrorism and drug trafficking in Central Asia. The author considers Russia as less affected by the situation in Afghanistan. Apart from Russia, there are several players that are directly affected by the situation in Afghanistan like Pakistan, Iran, China, India and Central Asian Countries. Stepanova further adds that Russia will have to rely on the government of Afghanistan. Russia should have to support such type of political solution for Afghanistan that could increase the functionality and legitimacy of the Afghan state.

Mcdermott, N. Roger. (2013). “Central Asian Security Post-2014.” The author opined that Central Asia has played an important role ever since the launch of the Operation Enduring Freedom. The Central Asia provided bases to the US like the military base at Kharshi-Khanabad (K2) in Uzbekistan and the airbase at Manas in Kyrgyzstan. The author explains that as the drawdown programme is approaching, the leaders of the Central Asian countries are more worried about the possible negative implications of the withdrawal on their countries. The author holds that there are already extremist elements present in some of the Central Asian countries. Theses extremist groups are linked to the

Taliban and Al-Qaeda. So, the CAR's are considering that there may be further spillover of extremist activities within the region.

Fazil, D. Muhammad, (2014), in “China in Afghanistan: Contemporary Engagements and Challenges Ahead” describes that after the US intervention in Afghanistan, China has started to invest in Afghanistan in order to bring the socio-economic development on the right track. Stability of Afghanistan is the primary interest of China. The author adds that when stability prevails in Afghanistan, China could easily invest in Afghanistan and the Central Asia and explore their resources. Fazil, D. Muhammad asserted that as the withdrawal of the US is approaching, the concerns for China are also increasing. China considers that with the reemergence of Taliban, the insurgency in Afghanistan may also increase which will have a direct impact on its Xinjiang province. Furthermore, the Chinese projects in Afghanistan would remain vulnerable to local warlords and to Taliban.

1.3. Knowledge gape:

The available literature on Afghan peace talk is lacking the following points.

1. What is the role of major powers in Afghanistan peace process?
2. Why Afghan peace talks with the Taliban did not reach any agreement?

1.4. Objective of the study:

1. To analyze the post 9/11 geopolitical interests of the major powers in Afghanistan
2. To examine the peace process in Afghanistan through Negotiation with the Taliban.

1.5. Research Methodology:

The methodology used for this research is descriptive and analytical. Furthermore, this research assumes the obstacle to a negotiated settlement on account of spoiling behaviors, which can be either internal or external. The data used for the research is mainly collected from Primary and the secondary sources.

Primary resource: The Primary Sources includes the resources from various ministries, government official sites and foreign affair ministries from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, USA, Russia, China, and also the reports of various Embassies, Ministries, NATO, ISAF, ANSF etc. The Newspapers were widely studied during research on this topic.

Secondary Sources: The secondary sources of data is collected from the analysis of reports from various research institutes like Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

(IDSA), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), FRIDE, Congressional Research Service (CRS), Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), United States Institute of Peace (USIP), books, journals, magazines, articles, and periodicals etc.

Organization of the Project:

CHAPTER 1: Introduction.

CHAPTER 2: Peace process in Afghanistan (Historical and Theoretical perspective)

This Chapter discusses the historical overview of Afghanistan, the rise of conflict and theoretical prospective of Afghanistan peace process.

CHAPTER 3: Role of Geopolitical powers in the Afghanistan Peace process:

The third chapter deals with the role of major powers Like USA, India, Pakistan, Russia, and China in peace making process in Afghanistan. This chapter also discusses the investment of major countries in Afghanistan for its development and role of NATO in stabilizing the country.

CHAPTER 4: Post 9 /11 Negotiations with the Taliban

In this chapter the important perspective of peace process in Afghanistan is discussed. The Peace talks with Taliban, main mechanism used to negotiate with them and the demands of Taliban are also discussed in this Chapter.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

This chapter contains the summary and conclusion of the project work and an attempt has been made to present recommendations.

Chapter 2

Peace talks in Afghanistan (Historical and Theoretical perspective)

In this chapter the historical perspective of Afghan peace talks and meaning of Peace talks has been discussed. The Implication of theories in the peace talks of Afghanistan and peace building struggle in Afghanistan either Internal Government or External players.

2.1. Historical Perspective on the Afghan Peace talks:

Afghan Peace talks started after the failure of the Taliban government in December 2001. The peace talks on Afghanistan are only aimed to establish a new democratic Afghanistan where all the sections of Afghan society enjoy their representation thereby establishing a government with great legitimacy. During the cold war Soviet Union sent its military to stabilize People's Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (PDPA). In order to counter Soviets in this strategically vital country the USA build an organization in Afghanistan to fight against USSR.

In 1994 Taliban formed a government in Afghanistan which lasted till 2001. During this period Taliban has no division and Al-Qaida also joined the Taliban. Al-Qaida latter carried out attacks September 11, 2001 in USA. Within twenty four hours central intelligence agency and FBI find the culprits hiding in Afghanistan. USA government declared war on Afghanistan to demolish terrorism. However, with the passage of time collation forces were not completely successful in thwarting Taliban and terrorist activities led by Al-Qaeda. The growing strength and sway of Taliban in Afghanistan have led the international community to patronize various initiatives over the years aimed at discouraging the spread of insurgency. These efforts included programmers such as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR 2003-2006), United Nations supported Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) and its successor the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG 2005). The "Graveyard of Empires" is the unofficial title of Afghanistan, as the two major powers of the world have buried their

armies in Afghanistan. First, the British Empire during three Anglo-Afghan wars (1839-43, 1878-1880 and 1919), when it was trying to restrict the Russian influence in Afghanistan. Second, during the Soviet intervention of 1979, which changed into a war between the USSR (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic) troops and the Mujahedin's which were supported by the United States, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (Saikal & Maley, 1990). The USSR could not politically and economically manage the war and withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989. However, USSR kept the established communist regime under the President-ship of Mohammad Najibullah alive until the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991. In order to establish a liberal democratic system, Burhanuddin Rabbani supplanted the comrade administration as the President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan in 1992. The opposition militias led by Abdul Rashid Dostum were occupying the north of Afghanistan, and the south was falling under the influence of Taliban which were linked to Al-Qaeda (Barfield, 2010).

The Burhanuddin Rabbani's government was viewed by Taliban as corrupt, weak and anti-Pashtun and the civil war that broke out in Afghanistan from 1992-1996 among various Mujahedin groups resulted in creating a support-base for Taliban. In November 1994, Taliban took Qandahar under its control and in September 1995, Herat province was captured by them. (Johnson, 2004). Furthermore, in September 1996, Ahmad Shah Massoud and Abdul Rashid Dostum, two former enemies, created the United Front (Northern Alliance) against the Taliban.

On 9 September 2001, Ahmad Shah Massoud was assassinated by two Arab suicide attackers inside Afghanistan and on the morning of 11 September 2001, four attacks were carried on the United States soil. About 3,000 people were killed during these attacks. The United States held that these attacks were carried out by the members of the Al-Qaeda, who are based in, operating out of and allied with the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Awasthy, 2012). On 20 September, 2001 the US President George W. Bush addressed the United States Congress and demanded that the Taliban should hand over Osama-bin-Laden and destroy the bases of Al-Qaeda located in Afghanistan but Taliban refused to do so. After the refusal of the Taliban, the U.S. government with the support of British Special Forces and the Afghan United Front or Northern Alliance

launched Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. The aim of the US intervention in Afghanistan was to capture or kill Osama-bin-Laden and other Al-Qaeda members, to dismantle the Al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan, and to remove the Taliban from power and establish a democratic government in Afghanistan (Stephen & Snetkov, 2012). The US-led forces started bombing on the Al-Qaeda and Taliban targets everywhere inside Afghanistan. These actions on the part of US-led troops forced the members of Taliban and Al-Qaeda to flee over the porous Durand Line into Pakistan.

The factional group has been existent in Pakistan in post 2011 era. They have a strong connection with the main leaders and each sub-network. the Quetta Shura again composed, Taliban, Haqqani Tribal Network and Hizb-e Islami Gulbuddin, all are agreeing on the Basic Principle i.e. opposition to the presence of foreign military forces, rejection of the governance structures, disposition to involve in armed conflict and an appeal to strict Islamic system (Shariya). The basic purpose of these organizations in Afghanistan is to implement the Shariya law in this war torn country. ¹ A “Terrorists Syndicate” is a term used for Afghan Taliban and the term was first used by “Robert Gates” with the aim to connect the Taliban leadership operating with Lashkar-e-Taiba extremist group. According to him ““It's dangerous to single out any one of these groups and say, 'If we can beat that group, that will solve the problem,' because they are in effect a syndicate of terrorist operators intended to destabilize this entire region ”² the main terrorists group are; AL Qaeda, Haqqani Tribal Network, Hizb-e Islami Gulbuddin, Lashkar e Taiba, Quetta Shura.

2.2. Meaning of peace talks

The term peace talks means Freedom from war and violence, when people live and work together happily without disagreements. The main aim of peace talk is to create the space for dialogue to resolve the conflict and maintain peace and stability in the region. The peace process is an initiative that shows the Inspiring stories of people those are

¹ Ibid., 5 (PILPG)

² “Gates Warns of Terror "Syndicate",” CBSNEWS, January 20, 2010, accessed January 23, 2018
<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/gates-warns-of-terror-syndicate/>

extraordinary and their influence to peace. The peace talks are not a political platform it emphasizes on practice graze and stories that create peace in any area.³

The term peace talks is broadly used as peace negotiation in many peace vocabularies. Negotiation theory has been applied in various research of peace talks. Negotiation is usually defined as face to face interaction in order to reach an agreement on a situation that is perceived as a root cause or reason of conflict or problem. Peace scholar (Berghof 2012) called it the “way of life” it is the way to achieve the aim an objective and fulfill their own interests in a conflict situation. Peace talks is not a direct process, it is a back and forth communication structure to reach an agreement between conflicting parties those who have shared or opposing Interest.(Berghof 2012)

There are three main theories that have been applied for peace process in Afghanistan: negotiation theory, path dependency theory and liberal peace theory:

2.3. Negotiation theory: According to Druckman negotiation theory is a cross ponding to three approaches to negotiation:

I: Negotiation as puzzle solving,

II: Negotiation as organizational management

III: Negotiation as bargaining game and negotiation as diplomatic politics.

According to William Zartman, there are five different approaches of negotiation theory these are the strategic, the structural, the processual, the behavioral and the integrative approaches.⁴

Hans J Morgenthau, one of the leading figures of international politics, is of the view that each actor (nation state) wants to acquire more and more power to influence the other actors in this zero sum game (Malhotra, 2009). This theory is best applying on the situation of Afghanistan. The country has remained the battleground since decades. The

³ <http://peacetalks.net/about/>

⁴ Zartman, William, “Negotiation Pedagogy: International Relations,” International Negotiations 15 (Washington: Martinus Nijhoff, 2010), 232-3

intervention of external actor's also led to the struggle for power between internal and external power, Taliban and other militant organizations remained at loggerheads with one another for gaining the authority. After the withdrawal of international forces, rivalry may start among these internal groups for gaining power and to install a puppet regime. Then one can easily say that the consequence of the withdrawal of the USA will be very complex for the internal security.

2.4. Liberal peace theory

The liberal peace theory was first introduced by the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant in his writing, "Perpetual Peace": A Philosophical Sketch written in 1795. Kant's liberal peace theory was based on the assumption that a world with only republic constitutions would be the necessary conditions for peace. According to Kant, if all nations or states are democratic republics, then the war would end, because there would not be aggressors and the majority of the people would never go to war, unless in the situation of self-defense (Kant, 1795). Kant's theory of liberal peace is employed to explain that democratic (republic) states are interdependent and share common economic, social and political values, therefore, republic nations do not choose the strategy of war in order to settle down their conflicts because their interdependences particularly the economic interdependence, make it rational for them not to go to war as they will lose opportunities of trade and development, hence, war will cost them sever economic and social damages. This view point of Kant stands in contrast to the realists' thought who argue that without other political factors that preclude the war strategy the only mutual interdependences cannot guarantee that republic nations will not go to war. The dissolution of the former Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall and most importantly, the end of the Cold War have all together paved the ways for the ideology of liberalism and the liberal vision of democracies to be further strengthened, as a result of these events, the West had embodied the concept of liberal peace or liberal democracy in their efforts to expand toward the East (Tziarras, 2012). The concept of liberal peace as the basis for democratic development and protection of human rights was also adopted by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on Human Right in 1993, the basis for this adaptation was also underlined in Kant's liberal peace theory that democratic nations or republic states are

less likely to engage in war with each other and that democracy fortifies peace and stability. The liberal peace theory has a central position in liberalism and is driven by the notions of democracy and interdependence, whereas “liberalism suggests that economic interdependence creates favorable conditions for international cooperation among governments and peoples; since their destiny is common, as it is defined from several mutual economic and political problems, states – as rational entities realize that international cooperation is necessary for the management of their common fate.” According to the liberalism, democracy functions as the basis for global peace and democratic states have limited freedom to engage in war or pursue geopolitical deceptions because they have to be accountable for the people who voted for them. However, as Kant himself says democracy which is a form of sovereignty is often confused with republicanism which is a form of government, according to Kant’s liberal peace theory, the presence of a republican constitution is a primary criterion for attaining perpetual peace (Plowman, 2008).

Peace in Immanuel Kant’s liberal model is “a purpose of the form of government of the two potential parties to a conflict, the sound insinuation is that liberal political belief must be diffused and made universal in order to achieve lasting peace among states.” According to this perception, autocratic and despotic governments will avoid war and oppressing their citizens as long as they share common liberal values and will also help to strengthen democratic peace theory. However, authoritarian states view liberal states as a threat “because of this ideology that values the diffusion of liberalism to other states, which would of course threaten the authoritarian leader’s own power. Tziarras, further says “One could easily notice that threatening and nationalistic tendencies are no stranger to democracies “while lack of tendency for reconsideration of territory in some democratic states could be the key for not being aggressive.

2.5. Path Dependency Theory:

The path dependency theory used as an analytical work. This concept emerged during the 1980s and used in the field of economics as a means of enquiry (Pierson, 2002: 251). Path dependency theory is used in different fields and also in international relations.

There is no single definition of this theory and everyone interprets this theory in his own field. In a broad way of defining this concept, it refers to the causal relevance of preceding stages in temporal sequences (Pierson, 2000).

Path dependency theory is defined differently by different scholars but the scholars' Sydow, Scroying and Koch (2006) say that path dependency is a dynamic theory which implies that it is a process with different phases. According to them the first phase is "initial point" in which choice are still unconstrained. In this stage adoption of particular institution policies and strategies takes place. This moment of location of the path dependency into motion has been seen by Collier (1991) as a critical juncture, which is characterized by the adoption of particular arrangements between two or more alternatives (Mahoney, 2000).

The second phase is intermediary phase. In this phase options are limited but choices are still possible among selected options. In this phase, a causal pattern evolves 'that tracks a particular type of behavior building on social mechanisms by which the pattern is likely to be reproduced over a certain period of time' (Sydow, Scryoug and Koch, 2006: 10). In the third stage, the increasing returns takes place which means that by repetitive reference to one option in other words, a path emerges in this phase that makes the whole process irreversible

The final phase is marked by a lock-in. While in phase two the process is essentially constrained, choices are still possible in contrast to phase three, in which alternatives are no longer at hand. It is important to note that in this stage reference to the initial choices is very costly and strategically not possible. It is however possible to break from the established path and create a new path. This is referred to as the un-locking phase which will provide a new initial point. While this process is not easy, it is possible if there are major events happening (idem: 30)

On the basis of path dependency theory an attempt has been made in this work to analyze the afghan peace talks on different phases of path dependency theory between the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban. Since 2001 there have been several efforts to bring Taliban to the negotiation table and reach a settlement in Afghanistan through

peace talks. The negotiation process starting from the 2001 Bonn Conference till 2005 will be the 'initial point' of the path dependency theory. In this phase an analysis has been made in this work on how the choices made and decisions taken in this phase negatively influenced the negotiation process. The process from 2006 till 2008 has been marked as the intermediary phase. This section looks at the possibility of reversing the choices made in the previous phase, and whether this happened or not. The third and last phase of path dependency theory is 'lock-in', which is applicable to the period from 2009 till 2014. The period from 2015 onwards can perhaps be marked as breaking loose from the path as was set out in 2001, also referred to as the creating of a new path or un-locking phase. By looking at dynamism such as the nature of the terrorist demands, whether the terrorists are on the winning or losing side, fragmentation within the group, the death of the leader, and involvement of third parties, an analysis has been made on, to what extent the post-2014 process will be able to break from the created path.

2.6. Peacebuilding in Afghanistan:

Afghanistan case does not fit for these theories of peace talks as Afghanistan have reached an agreement what constitutes national interest of each conflicting party. In Afghan peace one of the conflicting party has been absent from negotiation. The Afghan Government's calls for peace talks have not yet been heard by the Taliban. The government keeps calling for peace negotiation, which may be perceived as meaningless from the Taliban's side. The Taliban stated many times that the Kabul Government is a puppet regime that is not worth talking with (Walsh, 2012). The Taliban even stopped talking directly with the United States who is one of the main stakeholders in the latest phase of the Afghan conflict.

CHAPTER 3

ROLE OF GEOPOLITICAL POWERS IN AFGHANISTAN PEACE PROCESS

Afghanistan has strategically been very important for the major powers of the world throughout the history. Alexander the Great invaded it in 330 B.C and occupied the whole country within three years' time after a great struggle. Buddhism was the main religion in eighth century's Afghanistan. Islam came to Afghanistan when the Umayyad Dynasty of Arabs attacked the Persian Sassanid Empire. In the 10th century Afghanistan was under the control of Muslim rulers of Bukhara the Samanid. In the 11th century when the Ghaznavids came to power and the whole of Afghanistan was turned into a Muslim state. Afghanistan has been an area of a tug of war between super powers. USA did not directly involve in the war rather put the guns on the shoulders of Pakistan and Afghan Mujahedeen during the Cold War era. US provided military and economic assistance to Pakistan. Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI would distribute it in seven Mujahedeen fictions fighting against the USSR. So, the question arises why did Pakistan get involved in a war of others? It is very simple to say that on the eastern border Pakistan had fear with India so Pakistan had no other option but to stop the Soviet army. So Pakistan joined hands with the US in their proxy war against the communists in Afghanistan. Taliban in Afghanistan is the creation of USA to fight against USSR, US provided sophisticated weapons to Afghan Mujahedeen including stinger missiles which were used against the USSR. In this war Russia received heavy loss both in men and kinds. According to estimates almost 13,400 soldier were lost in the war. (Idrees, 2017)

After the withdrawal of USSR the Taliban regime took over the state as more than 90% area of Afghanistan was controlled by Taliban. Taliban joined hands with Al-Qaeda and run the Government under the Leadership of Mullah Umar Mujahidin, Known as the Khalifa of the state. After 9/11 Attack in USA, Washington attacked Afghanistan to fight against terrorism with the much needed help of Pakistan.

This chapter analyzes the role of major powers in two categories, on the hand Pakistan and USA, and on the other hand India, China, Russia and the role of these powers in

restoring peace in Afghanistan. USA fights an Ideological war in the name of terrorism in against Taliban which was the ruling party in the state.

Figure 3.1

	Government of Afghanistan	Taliban	Legal opposition	United States	Europe	Pakistan	India	Iran	Russia	China	Turkey	Saudi Arabia
NATO withdrawal		Strong support	Strong opposition	Weak support	Strong support	Weak support	Strong opposition	Strong support	Strong support	Strong support		Weak support
Combating terrorism	Weak support	Relative indifference	Strong support	Strong support	Strong support	Relative indifference	Strong support	Weak support	Strong support	Strong support	Strong support	Weak support
Nonalignment	Relative indifference	Relative indifference	Relative indifference	Relative indifference		Strong support	Strong support	Strong support	Weak support			
Noninterference	Strong support	Weak support	Strong support	Weak support	Weak support							
Security assistance	Strong support	Strong opposition	Strong support	Strong support	Weak support		Strong support	Strong opposition	Relative indifference	Relative indifference	Weak support	
United Nations peacekeeping operation	Weak support	Relative indifference		Weak support	Weak support	Weak support	Weak support	Relative indifference	Weak support	Weak support	Weak support	Weak support
Counternarcotics				Weak support	Strong support			Strong support	Strong support	Weak support		
Power sharing	Weak support	Strong support	Strong opposition	Relative indifference	Relative indifference	Strong support	Strong opposition	Relative indifference	Relative indifference	Relative indifference	Weak support	Strong support
Islam and sharia law	Relative indifference	Strong support	Strong opposition	Relative indifference	Strong opposition	Weak support	Relative indifference	Weak support	Relative indifference			Weak support
International economic assistance	Strong support		Strong support	Weak support	Weak support	Weak support	Weak support			Weak support		Weak support

Source: Shinn, J. & Dobbins, J. (2011). *Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

Figure 3.1 Shows the Role of Geopolitical Powers and their allies in the processing of peace building in Afghanistan and why the countries are supporting their ideas to stable the situation. Following are the countries which plays a major role towards stabilizing Afghanistan.

3.1 Pakistan

Afghanistan’s strategic location and potential to destabilize regional security and prosperity, is the main driving force behind regional and extra-regional powers favoring the stable Afghanistan. Countering narco-terrorism, preventing the spread of Islamic extremism, avoiding tribal and ethnic conflict and expanding trade and commerce are also common interests of its neighbors. However, regarding the nature of state, its neighboring countries have varying interests regarding the nature of Afghan state.

The country whose future is most closely linked to that of Afghanistan is Pakistan. Pakistan’s interests in Afghanistan are mainly India-centric and it primarily wants to block

the India's influence in Afghanistan and promote its own influence. India is considered as an aggressive state by Pakistan and poses a threat to the latter's territorial integrity. Pakistan not only blames India for the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 but it is aware of India's demographic, geographic, and military capability. A former French diplomat, Frederic Grare holds that whatever India is doing in Afghanistan, Pakistan perceives all that against its interests, whether it is economic investment, or building infrastructure, or any other thing else. That is the reason Pakistan has been working towards blocking the India's rising strategic posture in this vital country (Grare, 2010).

The second interest of Pakistan in Afghanistan is maintaining strategic assets. It is Afghanistan that provides the space to train and raise the strategic assets of Pakistan. These assets consists of various militant groups and terrorist organizations like the Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012). These are the groups leading from the front for carrying out attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, and elsewhere in India. The use of jihadist groups is an well-known tenet of Pakistan's foreign policy and one of the means by which the ISI has implemented the government's national security strategy vis-à-vis India.

Pakistan also seeks to keep away Afghanistan's claims on a part of Pakistani territory, Pashtunistan. This dispute has been a major irritant in bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan because the legitimacy of the Durand Line has never been accepted by any Afghan regime. Pakistan thus desires that such regime should be in power that accept the legitimacy of the Durand Line (Narayanan, 2010).

Pakistan would also like to use Afghanistan as a bridge for increasing its commercial and transportation links with the Central Asian countries. Gaining access to Central Asian natural gas is also one of the major interests of Pakistan in Afghanistan. In January 2012, the former Advisor of Prime Minister of Pakistan for Ministry of Oil and Natural Gas has warned that unless Pakistan identifies new sources of natural gas quickly the whole energy system of the Pakistan could collapse (Dobbins J. S., 2011, p. 45). The various aims of Pakistan towards stabilizing the turbulent Afgh-Pak region include the following;

- Afghan and American support for counterterrorist and counterinsurgency operations against the Pakistani Taliban.

- A phased American and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan, but with continuing military and economic aid to Afghanistan thereafter.
- Limitations on, but not the complete elimination of, Indian influence and activities in Afghanistan, including effective checks on Indian capacity to support the anti-Pakistan insurgency in Baluchistan.
- Access to expanded trade with and investment in Afghanistan (Larson, 2017, pp. 5-12).

3.2 United States of America

The United States has multiple goals in Afghanistan, they are as;

- Preventing Afghanistan from becoming a sanctuary for and an ally of Al Qaeda, as it was under the Taliban.
- Creating a reasonably stable, autonomous, and friendly state of Afghanistan.
- Preventing Afghan violence from further destabilizing Pakistan.
- Preserving democratic and human rights for Afghans.
- Preserving the credibility of the NATO alliance.
- Reducing the illicit drug trade.

In December 2001, after the Taliban government was toppled and the new Afghan government under Hamid Karzai was formed, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was established by the United Nations Security Council to help the Karzai administration and provide basic security to the Afghan people. NATO took the lead of the ISAF operation in Afghanistan on 11 August 2003 (Stephen & Snetkov, 2012). After 2003, the various insurgent groups like Taliban, Al-Qaeda, Haqqani network and Hezb-i-Islami started an insurgency campaign against the troops of ISAF as well as ANSF. The insurgent groups used multiple tactics of warfare like guerilla raids, ambushes, and suicide attacks against the coalition forces. The ISAF continued to battle with the insurgent activities and meanwhile the fighting spilled over into Pakistan. In order to kill the insurgent leaders, the US military launched drone attacks on Pakistan side of the territory and this resulted into the beginning of insurgency in Waziristan in 2007 (Vira & Cordesman, 2011). Over the years, the ISAF and ANSF led many offensives against the insurgents, but the coalition forces were unsuccessful to fully defeat them. The death of Osama-bin-Laden, in May 2011, in Pakistan, resulted into the killing of many Afghan

prominent figures including Mohammad Daud Daud, Ahmad Wali Karzai, Jan Mohammad Khan, Burhanuddin Rabbani and others (Awasthy, 2012).

On May 2, 2011, Osama-bin-Laden was killed during a special operation named Operation Neptune Spear in Abbottabad, Pakistan (Rollins, 2011). The death of Osama-bin-Laden fulfilled one of the primary goals of the US war in Afghanistan but it resulted into the beginning of a new debate, whether to continue or end the war, among the NATO member countries. Against this backdrop, President Obama declared on June 22, 2011, that about 10,000 troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan before the end of 2011 and 23,000 more troops will leave the country by the mid-2012 (Awasthy, 2012).

The Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement was signed on May 2, 2012 by the Afghan President Hamid Karzai and U.S. President Barack Obama between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America. This agreement was signed during after Obama's unannounced trip to Afghanistan on the first anniversary of Osama bin Laden's death and it provides the long-term framework for the relationship between Afghanistan and the United States of America after the drawdown of U.S. forces in the Afghanistan war (Hajrulaswad, 2012). On May 21, 2012, during the NATO Summit in Chicago, the members of the NATO decided that the ISAF will hand over all the security responsibilities to the ANSF by the mid-2013 and the role of the ISAF will shift from combat to non-combat of advising, training and assisting the ANSF. It was also decided that by the end of 2014 most of the foreign troops will be withdrawn from Afghanistan (Holland and Taylor, 2012).

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most of the foreign troops will withdraw from Afghanistan (Holland and Taylor, 2012). A similar type of agreement (SOFA), was also signed with the NATO. The agreements did not mention the actual number of troops that will stay in Afghanistan beyond 2014. However, Obama has mentioned in May 2014, at the Bagram air base that about 9,800 US and 4,000 to 5,000 NATO troops will stay in Afghanistan beyond 2014 (Walsh and Ahmed, 2014). On 28 December, 2014, the US-led coalition forces formally end its combat mission in Afghanistan.

Trump Afghan policy

President Trump's overall decision on U.S. policy toward Afghanistan to stay in the country with a somewhat enlarged military capacity is to a large extent correct. However, his de-emphasis on Afghan governance and political issues is deeply misguided and could be a fatal flaw in the strategy. The security situation in Afghanistan is worrisome. Amid persistent problems within the Afghan security forces, momentum has been on the Taliban's side. The Haqqani network, Islamic State, and other actors have contributed to the deterioration of the security situation in the country. Most detrimentally, Afghanistan's political system remains dysfunctional. The regional environment has also palpably worsened amid endless frustrations with Pakistan as well as challenges vis-à-vis China, Russia, and Iran. The principal objective of U.S. policy in Afghanistan since the 9/11 attacks has been to ensure that the country does not become a haven for terrorist groups. Other core U.S. interests in Afghanistan relate to regional stability and international credibility (i.e., honoring its commitments in Afghanistan). The United States had principally three options regarding Afghanistan full military withdrawal, limited counterterrorism engagement, and staying in the country with slightly increased military deployments and intense political engagement. Trump administration chose staying in Afghanistan with a somewhat enlarged military capacity is the least bad option. However, that strategy needs to be resolutely coupled with explicit and sustained emphasis on better governance and political processes in Afghanistan and intense U.S. political engagement with Afghan governance issues. Thus, the Trump administration's announced approach to Afghanistan is not a strategy for victory. Staying on militarily brings the United States hope that eventually the Taliban may make enough mistakes to seriously undermine its power. However, that is unlikely unless Washington starts

explicitly insisting on better governance and political processes in the Afghan government (BROWN, 2017, pp. 5-20).

3.3 India

The most important goal of India in Afghanistan is to prevent the latter from being used as a base for Pakistani-supported terrorist groups to launch attacks in India or against Indian interests in Afghanistan, for example, against its diplomatic or infrastructure building missions. One such attack was carried out on the Indian consulate in the Herat province of Afghanistan on 23 May 2014 (Ahmad, 2014). In order to prevent such attacks and activities in future, India desires to have a stable, democratic, and multi-ethnic Afghan government which could bring whole of Afghanistan under its control and maintain peace, prevent Taliban to come to power, and check anti-India extremism.

India has been an important player in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of peace in Afghanistan, which continues to rife under an uncertain security scenario amidst the international drawdown. However, despite [India](#) being [one of the bilateral donors](#) to Afghanistan in the civilian sector, there seems to be no consensus in India, on what could impart greater strategic heft to its role there. Despite India's unwavering support for a stable and secure Afghanistan, the specifics of the strategic partnership between India and Afghanistan have often been found wanting. Given India's adversarial relationship with China and Pakistan, Kabul's recent strategies with Beijing and Islamabad have been closely watched in New Delhi. Ghani visited Pakistan, where he met with the military and civilian authorities to enhance cooperation in security domain with some emphasis on improvement of economic ties between the two countries. Moreover, with the new government's interest in rekindling talks with the Taliban, efforts were geared towards pushing China and Pakistan to do more by bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table. Track II talks in Doha, Dubai, Oslo, and Urumqi, the Murree talks were the first direct talks between a Taliban delegation and representatives of the Afghan government and High Peace Council, with China and the United States as observers and Pakistan as guarantor. However, after the announcement of Taliban leader Mullah Omar's death, the Taliban called off the second round of talks. As the number of [attacks in Afghanistan](#) increased, questions were raised on Pakistan's ability and willingness to rein in the violent extremism that was paralyzing Afghanistan's peace and security. Pakistan's claims of "some

influence” our Taliban culminated in a deteriorating state of Kabul-Islamabad dynamics (Mahajan, 2014, pp.121-138).

Meanwhile, [India has become of the major bilateral donors](#) to Afghanistan in the civilian sector. Since CEO Abdullah Abdullah’s visit in February 2015, followed by Ghani’s trip in April, ties between the two countries have moved ahead in a favorable manner. The priority that is accorded to the relationship can be observed through events like the high profile visits by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Afghanistan in December 2015 and June 2016. During his visits, Narendra Modi inaugurated two highly visible India-funded projects, namely the Afghan Parliament and Afghanistan-India friendship Dam. In May 2016, India and Afghanistan also signed a trilateral transit and trade corridor agreement, or the Chabhar port agreement, along with Iran. Additionally, an initial investment agreement has been reached for the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, which is supposed to be completed by December 2019. Recently, the Indian government has also pledged another \$25 million dollars in aid, to Afghanistan towards the implementation of micro-development projects (Akhter, 2009 pp, 127-140).

In the realm of development assistance, India’s dedicated involvement and understanding of the priorities of a recipient country like Afghanistan has been commendable. However, issues like cost overruns, inadequate allocations, and overall delays have to be mitigated to amplify the impact of India’s development assistance projects. This will serve to strengthen the favorable image that Afghans have of India, finally [culminating in a narrative](#) that supports India’s presence (Hanauer, 2015, pp. 40).

Afghanistan acts as a gate-way to resource rich Central Asia. The Central Asian republics have large amount of natural gas and oil reserves. So India has to depend on Afghanistan to get access of the oil and natural gas of CAR’s. (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012). It is expected to be completed in 2017 but in its completion the stability of Afghanistan is necessary. Afghanistan, itself also has abundance of oil and natural gas resources. The United States Geological Survey researchers have found that Afghanistan had a vast unexplored natural resources, crude oil ranging between 0.4 billion barrels to 3.6 billion barrels and

natural gas from 3.6 trillion cubic feet to 36.5 trillion cubic feet.¹ To use the natural resources of both the Afghanistan as well as Central Asian countries is in close interests of India. As a regional power, India likes to extend her influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia so as to encircle China. To counter China, Afghanistan acts as a litmus test for India (Kumar, 2014).

In the communication following the inaugural ceremony of Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam, Prime Minister Modi stated that “India will not forget or turn away.” This statement clearly implies the importance that India accords to the India-Afghanistan strategic partnership and emphasizes that it will stay the course. However, in the midst of uncertainties and the crowded theater that Afghanistan has become for a number of stakeholders potential hotspot for strategic competition. Therefore, India faces the challenge of figuring out what it wants in Afghanistan and what it is willing to do.

3.4. China

China’s Interest in Afghanistan is both in the economic and security perspective. From the security perspective China has apprehensions that the unstable Afghanistan could have spillover effects to its Xinjiang province therefore Beijing don’t want Afghanistan to become safe haven for terrorist outfits. On the economic front China is making major investments in mining and communications. It is the biggest foreign direct investor in Afghanistan. China has avoided any direct interference in the security and domestic politics of Afghanistan, dreading this would make it focus for Islamist terrorism. Due to its huge economic investments and concern regarding the spread of Islamic militancy, China’s interest is for a stable and moderate Afghanistan. The militants of the Uighur separatist group, which is operating in the Xinjiang province of China are believed to be trained in Afghanistan. The stability of Afghanistan is necessary in order to curb these militants who are the major threat to China’s integrity and stability. The withdrawal of the US- led NATO forces is in close interests of China because it considers that US is trying to limit the Chinese influence in Afghanistan as well as in Central Asia. China is a resource

¹ Afghanistan has oil. (May 15, 2006). Geotimes. Retrieved from <http://www.geotimes.org/may06/resources.html>

hungry country and the growing demand of energy compels it to move towards Central Asia and Afghanistan (Castillejo, 2012).

The state-run Chinese companies are investing in exploring the Afghanistan's and Central Asia's natural resources. Pakistan has remained close partner of China and India as a rival. Beijing considers that the Taliban could be brought on the negotiating table with the help of Islamabad. China has kept itself away from the political involvement in the Afghanistan by demonstrating to cooperate with any Afghan regime (Huasheng, 2012). Russia considers that China is an important global and regional partner in many areas including the issues related to Afghanistan. In order to maximize its consultations and cooperation with India and China, Russia should have to further improve the bilateral ties with these countries. For this, the Moscow should have to use multilateral platforms, like SCO, RIC (RussiaIndia-China), to reach out to New Delhi and Beijing. These platforms would help in exchanging ideas and preparing for negotiations (Haas, 2014).

3.5. Iran

Afghanistan is a close country to Iran through linguistically, culturally, and religiously. Tehran welcomes the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. It has good relations with India but complicated relations with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. However, Iran and Russia have common interests on Afghanistan stability and combating drug trafficking (Wagner & Cafiero, 2014). Both Moscow and Tehran can use this influence to play a significant role in the post-American Afghanistan, provided they cooperate with their actions.

Apart from the geo-strategic reasons, Iran has historical and cultural reasons to be interested in Afghanistan. A version of Persian, Dari is the official language of Afghanistan. Moreover, a large proportion of Afghan population i.e. Hazara tribes are of Shia origin (Jahangir, 2012). Along with China, Iran wants to see that the foreign forces should leave and had concerns about the US permanent bases in Afghanistan. However, Iran does not desires that Taliban should come in power again and it will try to prevent the re-emergence of radical Sunni regime. Iran considers that a non-Pashtun government will take care of Iran's strategic interests (Weinbaum, 2006). Its other interests are to

control drug trafficking from Afghanistan; increase its access to markets in Afghanistan and Central Asia; and use Afghanistan as a route to transport energy to China.

3.6. Russia

After the Soviet invasion and its defeat in Afghanistan, today's Russia is trying to increase its authority in the regional and global affairs. Although, she was defeated as result of US-Pakistan collation in Afghanistan, but was able to retain its nuclear assets intact. Moscow has started showing her interest in resolving regional issues particularly Afghanistan's turmoil and wants to repost its control over CARs (Bhatty, 2008).

Although Russia supported the international intervention in Afghanistan but the tensions began flaring between US and Russia as the later became concerned with the installing of military bases in Central Asia—Russia's strategic backyard, by the former. In recent years its tensions with the west became much worse because of Ukraine crisis. Ukraine crisis began on 21 November, 2013, when President Viktor Yanukovych suspended preparations for the implementation of an association agreement with the European Union. This decision resulted in mass protests by its opponents, who demanded closer ties with the European Union, and the ousting of Yanukovych. Subsequently, unrest in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblast of Ukraine evolved into a war between the postrevolutionary Ukrainian government and pro-Russian insurgents. Ultimately, by 27 February, the Crimean parliament building was seized by Russian forces. Russian flags were raised over these buildings, and a self-declared pro-Russian government said that it would hold a referendum on independence from Ukraine. Following that, Russia annexed Crimea on 18 March, by an internationally unrecognized referendum, which was held on 16 March, 2014. NATO condemned Russia's actions as a violation of Ukraine's sovereignty, which resulted into the suspension of co-operation with Russia. Furthermore, economic sanctions were imposed on it by the United States, the European Union (EU) and many other countries and international organizations (Macaskill, et al, 2014). Not only this, it was also suspended from the G8 grouping which now has become G7.

The Ukraine crisis and the sanctions imposed on Russia by United States, European countries and Japan isolate the Russian Federation from the global market especially in

the energy export sector. This resulted in the financial crises within a short period of time. Russia in order to come out of such fragile circumstances, adopted a new strategic policy which is currently referred to as Russia's Pivot to Asia. The crisis in Ukraine is helping to facilitate Russia's pivot to Asia as a major foreign policy initiative. In this way, Russia will be able to significantly diversify the countries energy supplies, making it a very attractive course in light of the ever-increasing demand for energy resources in East Asia and South Asia.

In this context, the first step was that the Russia and India signed 20 bi-lateral agreements during the visit of Russian President, Vladimir Putin, to India on 11 December, 2014. But, the stability in Afghanistan is necessary in order to enhance Russia's trade with India as well as with other countries like Pakistan, China, because Afghanistan connects three important regions- South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. Besides this, Russia had also geostrategic and geopolitical interests in Afghanistan.

The Russia also desires to protect the CAR's from the rise of Islamic extremism, which is originating from Afghanistan. Another interest is to stop the flow of arms and drugs from Afghanistan. Besides this, Moscow also desires that there should be pro-Russian regime in Afghanistan that could check the US influence that is expanding not only in its backyard but in the South Asia as well. While Russia aims to prevent the re-emergence of Taliban and stop drug trade, it also desires to maintain influence in Central Asia through its relations with Afghanistan (Trenin, et al, 2014). As the Northern region of Afghanistan is directly linked to Central Asia, so attention of Russia is mostly on the Northern part of Afghanistan. That's why Russia supported Northern Alliance by supplying Soviet tanks, Helicopters and Kalashnikovs to fight against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Interest of Russia in Afghanistan

Russia supported the OEF by providing the logistic support to the US-led NATO forces and allowed them to use air corridors and railway routes for carrying supplies to and from Afghanistan. But the leaders of Russia are much concerned about the withdrawal of US-led NATO forces from Afghanistan, as it poses a number of threats to Russia's security. In April, 2012, Sergey Lavrov, the Foreign Minister of Russia, sharply criticized NATO's plan to withdraw from Afghanistan by 2014. He said that the foreign forces should remain

in Afghanistan until ANSF's would become capable of ensuring security. Similarly, on 1 August 2012, President Vladimir Putin criticized the planned withdrawal of most combat troops by 2014 and held that the NATO forces should stay in Afghanistan until they finish their job of ensuring stability (Bryanski, 2012).

However, Russia is against the United States involvement in the Central Asia. This is the reason why the United States closed its only Central Asian airbase in Manas in June 2014, Kyrgyzstan, formally handing back control to the government of Kyrgyzstan, which has been increasingly aligning itself with Russia. The base at Manas was set up in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks with Russia's consent and has transported 5.3 million military servicemen from 26 countries in and out of the Afghanistan conflict theatre (Dzyubenko, 2014). It became especially important as a transportation hub after 2005, when the United States was evicted from its other bases in the region, in Uzbekistan. It would also draw Central Asian states closer to Russia, so Russia may feel that it is a net beneficiary of such a situation. With the twin incentives of security and trade, Russia is likely to regain its dominant position over Central Asia for a while, or at least until it is challenged by China. The closure of its bases will lower down the influence of US in Central Asia. Also, the withdrawal of the NATO forces from Afghanistan poses a number of concerns for Russia. Its primary concern is maintaining security in the Central Asian region. Because there are already extremist groups in the Central Asian countries like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and this group is supported by the terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan like the Taliban, and Al-Qaeda. Now, as the foreign forces have already been withdrawn from Afghanistan and there is possibility of the reemergence of Taliban and Haqani network who could influence and inspire the Central Asian and Russian terrorists outfits. Central Asian insurgent groups in Afghanistan have already been involved in or planning for attacks in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Russia and China (Haas, 2014). These are the major concerns for Russia, as the spillover of the terrorist activities may bring instability in Russia.

3.7. NATO role in in Afghanistan

As the NATO- led ISAF troops exit from Afghanistan, the capacity, transparency, legitimacy, and cohesiveness of the Afghan government is crucial to Afghan stability. The

political stability will remain crucial for Afghanistan beyond 2014. However, the World Bank had warned that based on indicators such as political stability and rule of law, the Afghanistan's performance has been on a downward trend. The January 2013 report by SIGAR warns that the effective governance at the local level will continue to be a serious challenge in many areas beyond 2014. Corruption will continue to be a significant impediment to any effective rule of law. The Afghanistan ranks 174th out of 176 countries, adjacent to Somalia, on Transparency International corruption Perception Index, which labels countries at the bottom of the index as largely, failed states. With the establishment of the Afghan interim authority under the chairmanship of Hamid Karzai in December 2001, the issue of the state-building agenda was added to the above mentioned goals of the US, ISAF mission in Afghanistan. However, more than thirteen years after the launch of military Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), ISAF has had limited success in achieving its set forth goals. The withdrawal of ISAF from the Afghanistan will have drastic social impacts as there is possibility of political instability and sagging of economy. The crucial aspect of social life-opium production and drug trade, the women rights, women's participation, education and social security will remain major challenges. Afghanistan continues to be the world's largest producer of opium, constituting about 90% of the illegal global supply. Poppy production decreased over 40% from 2009 to 2010.

Figure 3.2 Troop contributing to ISAF



International Security Assistance Force: Troop Contributing Nations



	Albania	295		Germany	4590		Norway	500
	Armenia	40		Greece	75		Poland	2630
	Australia	1455		Hungary	360		Portugal	250
	Austria	3		Iceland	5		Romania	1750
	Azerbaijan	90		Ireland	6		Singapore	30
	Belgium	575		Italy	3400		Slovakia	300
	Bosnia & Herzegovina	10		Jordan	6		Slovenia	70
	Bulgaria	540		Republic of Korea	270		Spain	1555
	Canada	2830		Latvia	170		Sweden	530
	Croatia	295		Lithuania	245		The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	240
	Czech Republic	500		Luxembourg	9		Turkey	1740
	Denmark	730		Malaysia	40		Ukraine	15
	Estonia	160		Mongolia	195		United Arab Emirates	15
	Finland	80		Montenegro	30		United Kingdom	9500
	France	3750		Netherlands	380		United States	78430
	Georgia	925		New Zealand	205		Total	119,819

Source: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmcaff/514/51407.htm>

The attack on the World Trade Center led United Nations Security Council to pass a resolution.² On October 7th the USA with the British support began bombing the Taliban and also increased its support of the Northern Alliance. The western fight was air based while Afghan opponents of the Taliban led combat on the ground.

The Taliban government in Kabul broke down in December 2001 and withdrew across the Pakistani border where it regrouped into insurgency assailing the western troops. Meanwhile, the UN Security Council passed resolution that would call for establishing a transitional administration as well as asking for peacekeeping forces. An interim administration headed by Hamid Karzai, was installed and international peacekeeping

² Resolution 1368 available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2001/SC7143.doc.htm>

force known as International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) led by the NATO was created in Kabul. NATO took over the leadership of the ISAF in August 2003.³

International Security Assistant Forces in Afghanistan

In December 2001, after the Taliban government was toppled and the new Afghan government under Hamid Karzai was formed. The possible insecurity after ISAF withdrawal and inability of ANSF to provide security to afghan nationals will impact migration decisions of the people of the country. The inability of the ANSF to deal effectively with the insurgents and the rise of insurgency after the international troop's withdrawal will exacerbate greater migration and displacement trends in the years to come.⁴ The ISAF and ANSF led many offensives against the insurgents, but the coalition forces were unsuccessful to fully defeat them. The death of Osama-bin-Laden, in May 2011, in Pakistan, resulted into the killing of several Afghan reputed figures including Mohammad Daud Daud, Ahmad Wali Karzai, Jan Mohammad Khan, Burhanuddin Rabbani and others (Awasthy, 2012).

The Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement was signed on May 2, 2012 by the Afghan President Hamid Karzai and the United States. Conflict is creating major challenges for health services. Millions of people have been affected by prolonged conflict in Afghanistan by mining, cross firing, terrorist attacks, ISAF counter attacks and trauma. These affected people have increased from 3.3 million in 2013 to 5.4 million people in 2014. Seriously injured people required continuous monitoring and supervision. But the Afghan health sector is unable to provide health facilities. With the Taliban re-emergence, there will be more chances of attacks and counter attacks etc. According to The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), there has been 60% increase in the numbers of people treated for weapon wounds, and trauma. It also highlights that Afghanistan's public health system is poor, but it has been made worse by the closure of hundreds of clinics and hospitals due to conflict, lack of personnel, and the shutdown of international-run facilities during the military drawdown. It is also a matter of concern that

³ Available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/history.html>

⁴ Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are made up of two main forces, the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP). These groups are mentored and trained by the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF).

the decrease in the foreign aid will result into non-availability of health facilities to the Afghan people. (Holland and Taylor, 2012).

Map.3.1



Source ISAF 22 October 2009

In 2005 first parliamentary election took place after 30 years and was recognized as the most democratic election ever in Afghanistan. The final increase of US troops in Afghanistan came in December 2009 when the total number of soldiers climbed up to 100,000. The US has also given a date of the withdrawal of troops to the end of 2014 and starting in 2011. By the end of 2014 the Afghan Security forces were supposed to become competent and take over the responsibility in Afghanistan. This plan is being thwarted by insurgents who infiltrate recruitment centers of the national Afghan army and set the suicide bomb attacks. Also, a high desertion means a necessity to fill the free spaces by new recruits. Together with the transfer of responsibility to the Afghan Security Forces, a sharp increase in casualties occurred in ANSF.

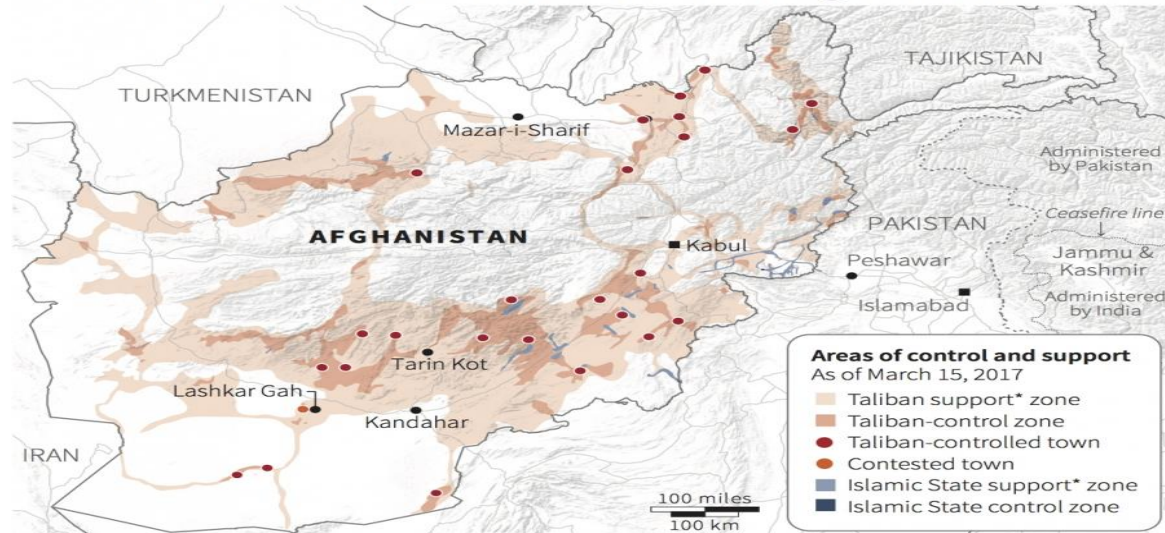
3.8. Current Situation of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan

NATO and other ISAF, ANSF and US troops were headed by USA in Afghanistan. The leader has said that he needs a few thousand more troops to fight against Taliban and stabilize Afghanistan. After 2014 some NATO forces withdraw from Afghanistan. There are still some ISAF and NATO forces to train the Afghan Military. Trump has made new policy for Afghanistan and send more US troops to Afghanistan. Currently more than

8,400 US troops and 13,300 NATO depending. US operation Against Taliban was officially ended in 2014 but there are some US troops in Afghanistan to Provide Training and support to Afghan Army. During the past two years Afghanistan Forces has suffered several casualties.

Map.3.2

Taliban and Islamic State control in Afghanistan



* Includes low-confidence support zone based on historical, terrain, and demographic analysis.
Sources: Institute for the Study of War; Reuters

Staff, 24/03/2017

REUTERS

Source Institute for the study of War, Reuters

In a BBC interview NATO’s general Nicholson in Afghanistan defined the current security situation as a “settlement” but added the “equilibrium favor of the government” the outdoor actors particularly Russia, Pakistan and Iran also influencing the Taliban.⁵ It is also apprehended that in the post-NATO withdrawal Afghanistan, Russia may provide weapons to Taliban against USA. After Donald trump came in power he announced to send some more troops Afghanistan. Russia recently requested a Taliban delegation to talks in Moscow and agreed to help the Taliban against so-called deadliest Islamic state.

⁵ Available at BBC News <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38924389>

Chapter 4

Post 9 /11 Negotiations with the Taliban

The process of peace talks in Afghanistan cannot be successful without negotiations with Taliban. For peace process, negotiation with the Taliban is very essential. There are some divisions within the Taliban. After the death of Mullah Umar, Taliban got divided between moderate and hardliner factions. This chapter discusses negotiation with Taliban, organization, formal structure, networking, expansion of Taliban. After this it gives an account of external influence on Taliban and Taliban attitude toward negotiation, and its demands. Mujahedeen in Afghanistan are divided into several groups and what is the relation between Taliban and other groups.

4.1. Negotiation with the Taliban:

There is no doubt that successful peace talks would be the best possible outcome of the Afghan conflict for everyone involved. History is not, however, filled with best possible outcomes. Far too often, the parties involved in peace talks continue to pursue their own interests in any way they can and peace talks become little more than a cover for prolonged struggle or become a weapon in the hands of the most skilled side. The Afghans have now lived through over 30 years of war and crisis and they need peace badly. There are limits to how long the US and its allies will stay, the Pakistani and Afghan governments both present challenges to a successful transition, and there are some indications that the Taliban and some other insurgent groups are “tired,” have suffered serious losses, and are willing to compromise. No one is going to get all of what they want out of this war, and some form of viable peace may be possible. (Cordesman, 01/17/2012).

Most western estimates of the fighting strength of the Taliban by late 2009 were hovering around the 20,000–30,000 range. The Taliban fighter could not be easily identified, because there are several characteristics like full-time fighters, part-timers, political cadres, and facilitators. It is very difficult to task to estimate the total strength of the Taliban rebels. Some thousands operate across the border with Pakistan, particularly in Khost, Nangarhar, and Kunar. A few thousand “honorary Taliban” also operate in conjunction with the movement; these usually are local strongmen who joined the movement despite lacking sufficient clerical credentials and taking with them their retinue

of followers.¹ Particularly in areas where their following is limited, the Taliban are ready to rely on this type of recruit, who otherwise would be shunned as unreliable in the traditional Taliban strongholds in the south. The Taliban also have probably a few thousand political cadres who carry their message to the remote corners of the country, convincing individuals and communities to join their cause, maintaining vertical communication, and providing a degree of political structure to the movement in roles such as judges, “political commissars,” tax collectors, and so on. Tens of thousands of part-time fighters, mostly organized in local militias, also compose part of the Taliban. At any given moment, only a small portion of these militias is mobilized for fighting. Finally, in most of Afghanistan the Taliban can count on facilitators such as spies, informers, and providers of food supplies, and accommodation. Excluding the facilitators, whose number is particularly difficult to estimate, the Taliban may well count on 60,000–70,000 individuals working for them. The Taliban themselves claim at least 100,000, but there is also rotation within the ranks, with people taking shifts in the fighting.²

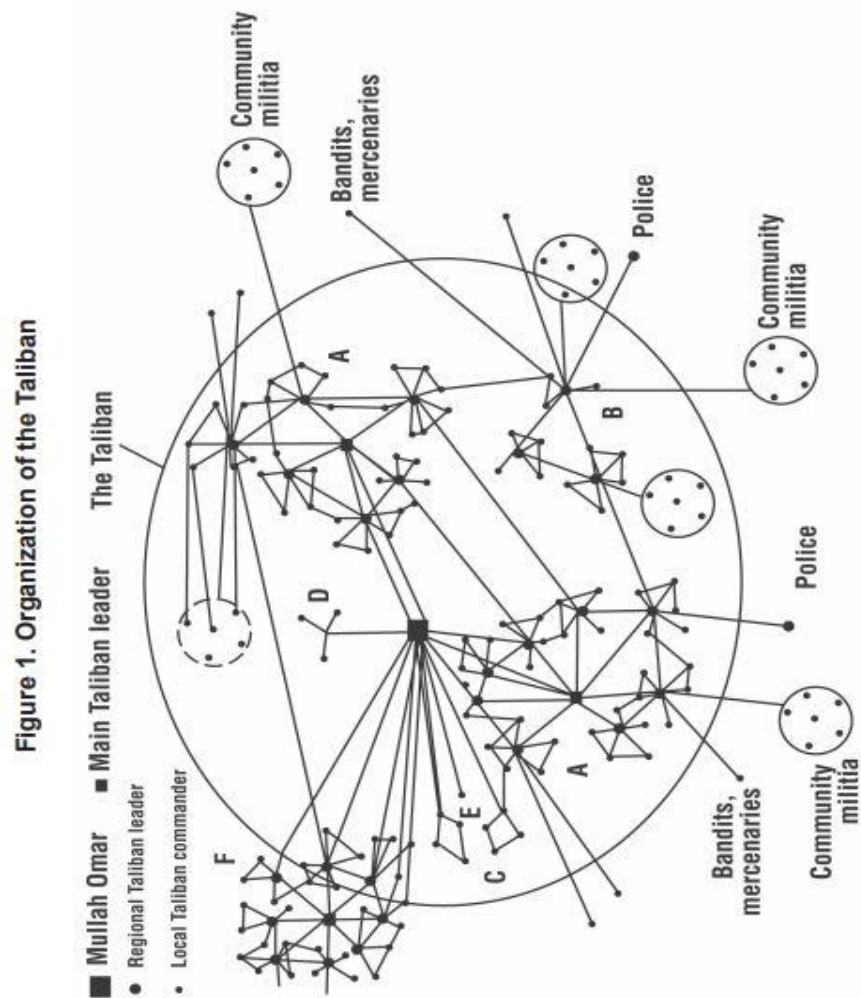
4.2. Networking of Taliban:

According to different scholars the Taliban is a decentralized organization and the peace talks with the one group of Taliban is not applicable to other groups. They are working through their personal networks from around charming leaders. The Afghanistan Taliban is led area wise by the local leaders and commanders at small areas. This will make difficult for the US and other countries to arrange the peace talks with Taliban easily. The small and district leaders of Taliban make a large network who would pay compliance to some greater figure, for example a province-level leader.

¹ Giustozzi Antonio (2005) *Negotiating with the Taliban Issues and Prospects*, A Century Foundation Report, published in Washington DC

² For a discussion of Taliban numbers in 2006, see Antonio Giustozzi, Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Various estimates have been circulated in the press, coming from various intelligence sources.

Figure4.1



Source: Shinn, J. & Dobbins, J. (2011). *Afghan Peace Talks: A Primer*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation

Figure 4.1 shows the way of networking of Taliban and their management. The size of the networks varies widely, and not necessarily all of them follow the same three- or four-layer structure illustrated (as represented in A). Some, for example, might include only two layers (B). Because it is all about personal relations, sometimes the commander of a relatively small Taliban network might have direct relations with somebody at the top (this is reflected in C, D, and E). It is also likely that the top leaders actually might try to cultivate relations with commanders at the lower levels, in order to get some direct reporting about the situation on the ground, avoiding complete dependence on the higher levels of the networking structure for forming a picture of the situation. At the very top, all these networks are kept together by links of personal loyalty to the Amir al Momineen, Mullah

Omar. The Taliban maintain relations with groups and organizations that are external to the movement. These include small groups of bandits and mercenaries, co-opted to do “day jobs” or encouraged to disrupt the security of areas still under government control. Also included are community militias, some of which have over time strengthened their relationship with the Taliban and now can be considered to be integrated into the movement; some communities have lost their original leadership and might be merging fully into the Taliban. Even some police units in southern and western Afghanistan have reached deals with the Taliban and in some cases defected to them. Finally, independent organizations have formed alliances with the Taliban, often very close ones (F). Other organizations allied to the Taliban that might have been incorporated into the movement include for example the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

4.3. Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan and the Rise of Taliban

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, during 1979 to 1989, was an effort on the part of Soviet Union in order to strengthen its control within Soviet Central Asia, which included Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and partly Afghanistan. This intervention was regarded as an aggressive attempt by many countries, including United States, through which the Soviet’s try to gain strategic outreach in the region. During the 1970’s, the Soviets feared that the population of Muslims had increased enormously in the Soviet Central Asia, which was once considered as the minority community. The increase in the Muslim population resulted into the development of a nationalist ideology, which has been considered opposite to communism. In order to protect its southern part, the present Central Asia from the spillover effects from the emerging Afghanistan’s nationalist movement, the Soviet Union decided to control it (Galeotti, 2001).

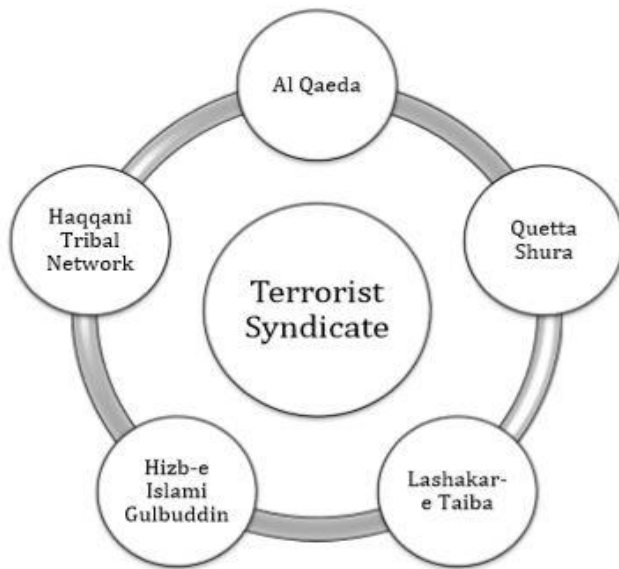
Noor Taraki tried to realign the PDPA and entered into a pact with Babrak Karmal. The two factions of the PDPA launched a campaign in order to change the rural Muslim population of Afghanistan into the supporters of the communism, but this was not accepted by the majority of the Muslim population because the communism was seen as an ideology that is against to Islam (Bradsher, 1999). This resulted into the moving of the mujahedin fighters towards the major cities of Afghanistan, such as Kabul, by mid-1979. At that time, the Soviet Union deployed its troops along the border of Afghanistan, but held-off an invasion in the hope that Taraki could suppress the insurgency.

Babrak Karmal was removed from his position by the Taraki regime, and was replaced by Hafizullah Amin. Interestingly, Amin executed Taraki and took control of Afghanistan in October 1979. The control on the Afghan territory by the mujahedin fighters was increasing at that time, which resulted into direct Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. On 27 December, 1979, the Soviet Union sent troops into Afghanistan in order to prevent Islamic militias from capturing power. The Soviets replaced Hafizullah Amin with Babrak Karmal, who was part of the PDPA's takeover in 1978 but he was exiled by Noor Mohammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin (Maley, 2009).

Against this turbulent and politically instable Afghan background, the Soviet Union militarily intervened in 1979. Very immediately, it assumed the complete military and political control of Afghanistan. However, with 120,000 troops, it failed to calm down the outlying areas of the Afghanistan. Russia tried its best to subdue the Afghan Civil War in order to establish and maintain a friendly and socialist government (Katzman, 2011). This invasion was met by nearly worldwide condemnation. Undoubtedly, Russia had expected that a rapid military takeover would make Afghanistan a good place implementing the Brezhnev Doctrine. On the other hand, the United States and its European allies took it as major geostrategic challenge and ultimately guided by the doctrine of containment. The US and its allies devised numerous measures to compel Moscow to withdraw (Rasanayagam, 2010).

The Taliban was not considered as a legitimate government of the Afghanistan by the United States and the United Nations. Bill Richardson, then U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, in April 1998 visited Afghanistan, but the handover of Osamabin-Laden was rejected by the Taliban. The Clinton Administration pressured the Taliban by imposing various US and UN sanctions after the August 7, 1998 Al Qaeda bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (Katzman, 2011). On August 20, 1998, the United States fired cruise missiles at alleged Al Qaeda training camps in eastern Afghanistan, but bin Laden was not hit.

Figure 4.2. Terrorist Syndicate in Afghanistan



4.4. Taliban Demands

There are two major demands of Taliban; to Implement the Islamic Shariya in the State and the withdrawal of NATO and other International forces

To Implement the Islamic Shariya in the State

Taliban and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan are not taking part in any peace process initiative taken by the other country. The first and door for other demands is to Implement Islamic Shariya in the state then the peace talks will move to other negotiating table.

Withdrawal of NATO and other International forces

There are more speculations that in the post-NATO withdrawal period there would be greater instability in Afghanistan. The regional countries are much more concerned regarding the situation that may emerge in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of coalition troops. The post-2014 poses a number of threats to the regional countries like rise in terrorist activities, increase in drug production and trafficking, flow of Afghan refugees, nuclear proliferation and long standing national, ethnic and sectarian conflicts. However, the aims and actions of Afghanistan's neighbors are not generally as productive as they may be. Every country is looking for its own interests in Afghanistan. But besides these covert agendas, all countries of the region press for a stable Afghan state because the latter's future is likely to have an impact on the region at large. The future of Afghanistan is completely dependent upon the optimistic approaches from its neighboring as well as

near neighboring countries. In order to do so it requires identifying the interests of the different regional actors in Afghanistan and the incentives that could encourage them to support an Afghan peace deal, as well as an understanding of how failure in Afghanistan may affect regional stability. By analyzing the Afghan crisis through multi-dimensional prism, it became crystal clear that several reasons have become responsible for the withdrawal of the foreign forces from Afghanistan. The United States and its coalition partner's intervention in Afghanistan have ruled out the sovereign status of a nation and an out breaker of international law. The corollary of this caused nuisance both to affected and unaffected masses. The occupation by the USA has flared the flames of violence, destruction, and Islamic radicalism with a rapid speed and became responsible for mass genocide.³ As a natural tendency this attack has created anti-US sentiments in the region and the outside world.

The USA's annual expenditure on the Afghan war was US\$ 48 billion on the one hand whereas on the other the whole GDP of Afghanistan is US\$ 34 billion per year (Ibrahim, 2014). The USA and other European countries have been undergoing economic slump. So, under such economic crisis it was difficult for the ISAF to continue the war. Against this background, the US and other allied countries took decision regarding the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. Indeed the US involvement in the long-drawn Afghan war is also seen as one of the key factors for its relative decline.

In the debate of Afghanistan peace process, the international scholars mentioned that the US forces presence in Afghanistan can escalate the conflict in the country. The Obama government had make mistake to send more troops to Afghanistan because up to now it did not achieve positive results. In spite of maintaining peace, the situation had worsened more when the attacks were increased by insurgents in some sensitive areas.

The foreign forces presence in Afghanistan caused a sense of instability and fear among the common masses. Majority of Afghans wanted that USA forces should leave the Afghan soil because the US troops did not assisted Afghan people nor fulfill desired task to pull Al-Qaeda out from Afghanistan to some extent but its affiliates still persists such as Taliban and other militant outfits (Rollins, 2011).

³ Reasons to Leave Afghanistan Now. Retrieved from [http://www.texansforpeace.org/HealthcareNotWarfare/12%20Reasons%20to%20leave%20Afghanistan .pdf](http://www.texansforpeace.org/HealthcareNotWarfare/12%20Reasons%20to%20leave%20Afghanistan.pdf)

In some incidents the ANSF were involved in the killing of NATO and US forces. One such high-profile event took place at a Kabul training facility on August 5, 2014, when an ANA soldier killed U.S. army major General Harold Greene (Burns, et al, 2014). All these incidents in Afghanistan make ambiguous political situation in Afghanistan. The NATO and US forces claimed that they are not safe in Afghanistan because their allied ANSF forces are involved in their killing and encounters launched by Taliban. Consequently, this situation forced them to leave Afghanistan as soon as possible.

Another foremost precondition that they are imposing is some kind of recognition of the Taliban as a legitimate interlocutor (hence dropping the “terrorist” label). In practice, it is unlikely that they would be satisfied with only those preconditions. Some constitutional rearrangement and some form of power-sharing also would rank high among their demands, as well as the integration of their armed force within the national armed forces. However the Taliban leaders lost their faith on Karzai’s government because they want respect in the government and some official post in the country which the Karzai’s government could not provide them. Taliban also are very worried about the attitude of the Afghan security forces, mostly staffed with bitter enemies of the Taliban. In the absence of a thorough purge and reform of the existing security forces, the Taliban would not want to disarm, but would insist on maintaining their armed forces as mobilized, either openly or in some disguised form. They also want financial support that would help them to encourage the political settlement.

4.5. Peace talks with the Taliban:

The 2014 Presidential election resulted into the victory of Ashraf Ghani but the runner-up candidate, Abdullah Abdullah claimed very serious charges of electoral fraud. He threatened the incumbent candidate Ashraf Ghani for making the parallel government. But with the intervention of US State of Secretary John Kerry, this electoral and government formation crisis was sorted out. The power sharing agreement was signed between the two candidates, in which Ashraf Ghani was made the President and Abdullah Abdullah as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), whose powers are equal to the Prime Minister. But now the political fallout in Kabul has begun to be seen as Ashraf Ghani has adopted an approach of “Fly Solo” because he is not consulting Abdullah Abdullah at all, regarding the formulation of foreign policy. It was clearly visible in his visit to Pakistan as

Ghani deviated from the established protocol by heading straight to the General Headquarters (GHQ) of Pakistan army for talks with the Chief of Army Staff, General Raheel Sharief, rather than first visiting the political leadership. If it continues in future then there will be political mayhem between the two presidential candidates, which will further give rise to political instability (Ebrahimi, 2015).

Also the dialogue process has become very complex as Taliban did not want to hold talks with Afghan government. On the other hand Afghan government would not support peace talks between Taliban and US officials. A senior journalist and analyst Rahimullah Yusufzai is of the opinion that Taliban leaders are not interested to hold peace talks with Afghan government. Most of the Taliban leaders do not like to have peace dialogue with the Afghan government. As Taliban are under the Pakistan's influence and Pakistan for its geopolitical and geostrategic interests, cannot ask them to hold conference to arrange peace talks with Taliban mujahedeen's (Rahmanullah, 2013).

These groups are supported and based in western Pakistan receiving financial and technical resources from various mechanisms. It is absent of being a singular entity but is split into various factions, thus making negotiations even more complicated. The Quetta Shura is the highest body of the Taliban leadership that acts as the leadership council. Furthermore, the renunciation of violence of one faction does not necessarily mean that the others would also correspond.⁴ As a result of persisting insurgency the complexity of negotiations became much more complicated and conclusively a reason why the Afghan government alongside with the alliance was not capable to establish an effective peace process.

The NATO-led ISAF forces had withdrawn, except leaving a small portion of their forces in order to advise, train and equip the ANSF beyond 2014. The Afghanistan government claim that the US forces and NATO forces did not transfer all Afghan land to Afghan troops but only those areas which were mostly dominated by the Taliban and other Mujahedeen groups and peace is not yet restored in these areas. In the post-withdrawal period, the major challenge before the ANSF is to maintain the security of the country. But, the ANSF are believed to be undertrained, under-financed, under-motivated and corrupt. There is hardly any reason by which the ANSF will maintain their ground and

⁴ Ibid, 406

defeat the insurgency. The withdrawal is creating concerns regarding the re-emergence of Taliban. The goal of the Taliban- to throw out the foreign forces and establish an Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan has not changed. The Taliban and the Haqqani Network have strengthened their combat capability as well as their influence among the Pashtuns, especially in the east and southern parts of the country.

The economy of Afghanistan is totally dependent on foreign aid, but if aid is not phased out and managed through predictable and orderly means then serious economic challenges will unfold in Afghanistan in the post-2014. On account of massive inflow of financial aid, Afghanistan's political economy has been shaped for the last decade. The steady flow of aid will be crucial aspect for the ANSF in order to maintain their ground after the withdrawal. The sharp reduction in foreign aid and assistance would place added strain on the ANSF, as the security forces of the Afghanistan are already facing high attrition rate. This strain would lead to a decline in security and adversely affect the economy and confidence in the government. The political stability will remain crucial for Afghanistan beyond 2014. However, based on indicators such as political stability and rule of law, the Afghanistan's performance has been on a downward trend. The withdrawal will have drastic social impacts as there is possibility of political instability and sagging of economy. The crucial aspect of social life-opium production and drug trade, the women rights, women's participation, education and social security will remain major challenges.

Besides Afghanistan, the post-2014 poses a number of threats to the regional countries like rise in terrorist activities, increase in drug production and trafficking, rise in the flow of Afghan refugees, nuclear proliferation and long standing national, ethnic and sectarian conflicts to the regional countries.

With the withdrawal of the international troops, Afghanistan's future is completely dependent upon positive and constructive approaches from its neighboring and near neighboring countries and, since 2001, humanitarian aid, as well as political, economic and reconstruction support has been received by Afghanistan from all its neighbors. However every country is looking for its own interests ignoring the national interests of Afghanistan. Pakistan wants strategic depth, Iran wants the complete withdrawal of US forces from the region, China is focused on the mineral wealth of the country, Russia is

there to provide its infrastructure services if funds are made available to her and India needs a safe passage to Central Asian states for its trade. In order to fulfill their interests, the regional countries may again bring Afghanistan to a focal point of the New Great Game. In the New Great Game there are various major players like the US, China, Russia, Pakistan, India, and Iran.

4.6. Strengthening of Afghan National Security Forces:

As the majority of the international forces had withdrawn from Afghanistan, the responsibilities of maintaining security have shifted to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). It is a general perception that the ANSF are undertrained and underfinanced. Keeping this in mind, the first and the foremost job of the Afghan government and the international community is to make the ANSF a strong force by providing them with modern training and weapons.

4.7. Main mechanism established to initiate peace talks:

- 2002: National Security Council – involved in distinct diplomacy with insurgents
- 2005: National Independent Peace and Settlement Commission
- 2010: Counseling Peace Jirga, composed of sixteen hundred delegates.
- 2010: Afghan High Peace Assembly and the Afghan Peace and Reintegration
- 2011: Afghan boycott the scheduled boon Conference
- 2012: Office was open by Taliban in Dubai for peace talks.
- 2013: June, NATO handed over all military commands and security operations to Afghan Army Takes.
- 2014: NATO officially hand over all command to Afghan forces.

4.8. Peace Talks and Negotiations

December 2001 Bonn Agreement the Taliban were excluded

July 2002. Attempted assassination of Karzai in Kandahar– signs that the Taliban might be regrouping in the south (The Guardian, 2003).

October 2003 Talks had been held with moderates from the former Taliban leadership.

2004 Taliban insurgency increased – Zalmay Khalilzad, US Ambassador to Afghanistan, stressed that 'non-criminal' elements of the Taliban would not be detained if they abandon violence (Financial Times, 2005).

2005 German officials meet with the Taliban representatives in Zurich to end insurgency and break ties with Al Qaeda and in return grant political recognition, which the Taliban side demanded.

2006 Taliban control increased in Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul and Uruzgan provinces. British signed the Musa Qala Accord with the Taliban, both to withdraw forces from the Musa Qala district and to transfer security of the district to local elders. Less than a year Taliban dissolved the accord.

2006 Karzai invited both Mullah Omar and Hekmatyar for talks. Mullah Omar rejected and Hekmatyar refused talks unless foreign forces leave (Afghan Embassy Canada).

October 2008 Karzai seeks help from Saudi royal family to bring the Taliban to peace negotiations. Mullah Omar did not approach the government and accused the Afghan security forces of being thieves and criminals (New York Times, 2008).

November 2008 Karzai claimed to grant the security of the Taliban chief Mohammad Omar if he consents to enter into talks (The Washington Post, 2012).

2009 Obama sent 17,000 additional troops to wane the Taliban and force the group to accept a peaceful settlement. Clinton supports talks with the moderate Taliban (CNN, 2012)

October 2010 Secret high-level talks over a negotiated settlement of war begun according to Washington Post. "They are very, very serious about finding a way out," one source familiar to the talks said of the Taliban (The Washington Post, 2010).

May 2011 Germany mediates talks between the United States, the State Department representatives, CIA, with the Taliban negotiators. Despite their statement not to negotiate with the West (Der Spiege, 2011).⁵

2012 Afghanistan and Pakistan meet in Turkey. Pakistan to take over peace talks high. Peace Council drafts the "Peace Process Roadmap to 2015" (The Telegraph, 2012).⁶

⁵ (Der Spiegel) http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/talking_to-the-enemy-how-german-diplomats-opened-channel-to-taliban-a-808068.html

⁶(TheTelegraph)<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/9735539/Taliban-could-govern-parts-of-Afghanistan-under-new-peace-deal.html>

2013 Meeting in Paris between representatives of the Taliban, High Peace Council, Hezb-e Islami, parliament members, civil society and political groups. Taliban rejected the Afghan constitution and the 2014 elections (AL Jazeera, 2013).

May 2013 The Taliban assassinated a member of the High Peace Council.⁷

October 2014 Ashraf Ghani urges the Taliban to join in reconciliation talks.⁸

April, 2015 Abdullah "The Afghan government will start peace talks with the Taliban in the near future" (PROQUES, 2015).

2015 Major Afghan Taliban meet in Doha. Both sides agree to continue the talks at the latter stage.

2016 Afghan Government signed a peace agreement with the Taliban.

2017 Donald Trump says he is seeding more troops to fight a resurgent Taliban

4.8. A Reconciliation with the Taliban.

In order to achieve peace and prevent a future civil war, such as resulted after the USSR's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, reconciliation between the Afghan government and the Taliban is essential. The reconciliation process should remain within the terms of the Afghan Constitution. It should not be based on power sharing. This would only cause the division of Afghanistan into ethnic strongholds and may lead to the partition of Afghanistan. Reconciliation should be based on negotiations. Deepening Peace and Friendship between Afghanistan and Pakistan: Both Afghanistan and Pakistan need to restore confidence in each other in order to prevent the growth of extremism. Both countries should recognize the international border between them as the permanent border. Commitments made during various conferences and meetings should be fulfilled: A multitude of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral meetings have been held both in Afghanistan and other countries of the world in order to achieve consensus regarding how to handle the security, political and economic transition in the post-2014 period. Several commitments have been made during these meetings. Now there is an urgent need to employ those commitments practically on the ground level.

⁷The long war jour. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/05/taliban_assassinate_5.php

⁸ (Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty) <http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-china-taliban-pakistanTajikistan-turkmenistan-kyrgyzstan-Iran/26667593.html>

4.9. A Negotiated Settlement as the End of War

A negotiated settlement to the war in Afghanistan appears to be a challenging task. One may say that the chances would have been superior despite the conditions declared by the Taliban, to have had enforced negotiations in a more systematic and clear-minded style during the presence of the ISAF forces since it would have enabled the Afghan government to position itself in a much stronger status than that of today. Will the Taliban, understanding the incapacity of the Afghan National Army (ANA) to confront them, still aim at committing to negotiations or will they utilize the process of peace talks and negotiations as merely an instrument of acquiring time, organizing their future plans and gradually expanding their power over the region. Thus it appears that the expediency of negotiations faded with the statement of the extraction of forces. However one may also counter-argue that even though the ISAF forces will leave Afghanistan the situation will not deteriorate despite the subsistence of the Afghan open door policy towards the Taliban leadership. Though, if negotiations occur it will be in the interest of the two negotiating parties, however if it does not, then there is also another reality to the weakening nature of the Taliban regime (Waldman, december 2010) and the persistent support of the international community to inhibit terrorist organization take control of the country. Furthermore, states that see their benefits in Afghanistan will attempt to secure their investments through assisting the country. (Zartman, 2010)

As for the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Police personnel, they are being trained and educated to increase their capacities and skills. It has been argued that a successful settlement to the war in Afghanistan is closely related to Pakistan's Intelligence ISI as being the greatest supporter of the Taliban.⁹ Pakistan considering that the bilateral agreement between Afghanistan and the United States will endure the latter's presence in the country will reevaluate its support to the Taliban and thus a possibility evolves that deliberates a shift in Pakistan's approach to peace talks and a peaceful conflict settlement. Nevertheless, it is notably important that any negotiation that will occur has to ensure the maintenance of the Afghan interest and if it does not then peace negotiations

⁹ Smith, Scott. "New Prospects for a Peace Process in Afghanistan?." IPI Global Observatory, November 24, 2014. Accessed March 1, 2018. <http://theglobalobservatory.org/2014/11/prospects-peace-processafghanistan-taliban/>

will not succeed. Moreover, Taliban is also converting to a threat to the national security of Pakistan, considering recent bomb attacks to civilian objects.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

“And if they are incline to peace, then incline to it and trust in Allah; surely He is the Hearing, the Knowing.” (The Holy Quran 861)

Peace process in Afghanistan will achieve their goal, if all the major powers show their common interest for making peace in Afghanistan. The overarching Western objective in Afghanistan should be to prevent that country from becoming not just a haven for transnational terrorists, but a terrorist ally as well. That was the situation prior to 9/11 and it would be so again if the Taliban returned to power with Al-Qaeda backing. NATO can prevent this indefinitely as long as it is willing to commit significant military and economic resources to a counter-insurgency effort. It cannot eliminate the threat; however, as long as the Afghan insurgents enjoy sanctuary in and support from Pakistan it is difficult to defeat the terrorists. Alternatively, this objective can be achieved if the Taliban could be persuaded to cut its ties to Al-Qaeda and end its insurgency in exchange for some role in Afghan governance short of total control.

Getting the Afghan parties together is a necessary but insufficient condition for a meaningful peace process. Afghanistan is a weak country surrounded by stronger neighbors. Historically, it has been at peace when its neighbors perceive a common interest in keeping it so, and at war, usually civil war, when one or more of those neighbors see some advantage therein. Over the past 30 years the United States, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iran and India have all successfully supported insurgencies designed to overthrow the regime in Kabul. At present it is Pakistan (and to a much lesser degree Iran) that is affording shelter and support to such an insurgency. Afghanistan will not be at peace until all these governments see a common interest in it. Any peace process will thus have to include them in same fashion if it is to succeed (Giustozzi, 2005).

The priority interests of all the potential parties to an Afghan peace process overlap to a considerable degree. For instance, everyone wants a withdrawal of Western armed forces, including, most notably, the public in all Western countries. All Afghans want foreigners to stop

interfering in their affairs. All other governments want assurances that Afghan territory will not be used to their disadvantage, either by third parties or the Afghans themselves, and thus want to ensure that terrorists hostile to them cannot use Afghanistan as a sanctuary. Where interests diverge is less on outcomes than on issues of timing. Western governments, under pressure from their voters, want to withdraw NATO forces from Afghanistan or at least from combat there sooner rather than later, a preference shared by the Taliban leadership. Most other potential participants, including the Kabul government, are not in such a rush. Indeed, continuation of the current conflict, with the United States tied down and neither side able to prevail, is acceptable to most regional governments, and for Iran is probably optimal (Semple, 2012).

Negotiation among the Afghans will focus on the nature of any power sharing arrangement, on possible modifications to the existing constitution, on social norms and on the role of sharia law. Given the excessively centralized nature of the current Afghan government, it is not impossible that negotiations might actually lead to some improvement, via devolution, in sub-national governance, although this would require both the Taliban leadership and the Kabul regime to alter their historical preference for a unitary, Kabul-centric system (Idrees, 2017).

Other actors are likely to suffer even greater conflict. While neither the Afghan government nor the insurgency is a well-integrated polity with a clear and reasonably unified sense of its own interests and goals. Pakistani society may be even more divided. The government in Pakistan often seems even less coherent than the one in Kabul, and the Pakistani political leadership and military establishment, both autonomous actors, have quite divergent priorities regarding domestic and foreign militancy and an Afghan settlement. Historically, the Pakistani military has enabled militant groups and employed terrorism as instruments of policy. The country's civilian leaders seem convinced that this distinction between good and bad militants cannot be sustained now that the latter threaten the viability of their democracy. In contrast, the Pakistani military does not yet seem ready to cut its longstanding ties with terrorist groups. One of the main obstacles to any negotiated settlement will be getting the respective parties in Islamabad (and elsewhere) to decide what they really want and what they are willing to trade for it (Dobbins, 2011).

Peace process would achieve success only if Taliban joins negotiation process and the International Community accept their demands. More than three decades of incessant fighting

has led to a situation of “peace process” in Afghanistan, which is reflected in the ongoing inter-ethnic distrust and ongoing power struggle between the Pashtun and Northern Alliance groups. Serious challenges to governance have plagued the COIN effort and the credibility of the Afghan Government. Lack of access to basic amenities such as roads, electricity, and drinking water are key concerns of the rural population. The ‘governance deficit’ is further exacerbated by rampant corruption, a system of patronage, and the absence of public institutions capable of mediating in local, national, and regional conflicts. The failure to establish rule of law has undermined confidence in the Afghan government. The international development effort in Afghanistan is, moreover, under-resourced and even the limited resources are being squandered.

While calls for negotiations evoke optimism, they also generate strong cautionary voices, on two conditions. First, though negotiation may almost be appropriate in principle, such talks need to be carried out under conditions where insurgents have real incentives to consider accommodation and compromise, i.e., the conflict must be ‘ripe’ Second, the need for insurgents to come to the table is provided by adequate military pressure, i.e., from a position of strength. A call for negotiations is therefore said to be incompatible with parallel calls for military withdrawal. The question is, are these conditions applicable to the current Afghan situation? (Dobbins, 2011).

Ripeness for negotiation generally flows from military stalemate – a situation in which neither side is moving towards victory and both sides are suffering from a ‘hurting stalemate’. In Afghanistan, because the insurgency is still gaining strength, some analysts argue that Afghanistan has not yet reached that ‘hurting stalemate’. Taliban is skilled at luring foreign forces into tactical military victories – a scenario that has been termed ‘winning the battle while losing the war’. However, in spite of the rising fortunes of the Taliban in the South, they cannot credibly regard themselves as being on the ascendancy in the rest of the country, beyond the Pashtun belt in the South and Southeast. It is likely that they would seek a larger role in the country through negotiations and enlisting the support of excluded tribes and anti-government forces (JAMES SHINN, 2011).

For an effective, comprehensive peace process to emerge, it is pertinent to close the gap between different categorizations (extreme versus moderate Taliban) and different approaches between the Afghan Government (inclusion) and the international community– co-option (British), or political outreach (United Nations). A well-coordinated inclusive ‘Afghan-led’ strategy based on

uncompromising principles and an effective reintegration programme is essential to build legitimacy and trust around such a process. Afghanistan needs an UN-supported, broad-based political dialogue, one that reaches out to all alienated and marginalized sections of Afghan society. It is crucial not to view peace process efforts as tactics to assist a faltering military effort, but to reorient the military effort to support a durable political peace process. This would mean engaging the Afghan Government, the international community, and the key regional actors, to encourage the broadening of such efforts into a comprehensive peace process. Establishing trust between ethnic and tribal communities and building confidence in public institutions are imperative (Brahim, 1991).

There must be room for some 'out-of-the-box' thinking in engaging excluded and alienated communities towards developing a more inclusive political order, rather than merely confining understanding efforts to bringing dissidents into the mainstream. Reconciliation efforts will have to reach out to the larger civil society groups through initiatives such as people-to-people understanding at the local (shura, jirgahs), national (institution-building), and regional level (Jirgahs, border commissions), and re-education programs to promote a 'constituency and culture of peace'. For such an endeavor to succeed, a greater coordinated effort by the international community needs to be directed at facilitating an Afghan-lead process of engaging excluded constituencies in building durable 'peace' in the conflict-ridden country (Koeszegi, 2010).

War had never been a solution to Afghan problem; instead it only prolongs the conflict. Furthermore, Afghan people had never accepted the foreign rule. Keeping this in mind, there should be no more military intervention in Afghanistan by the major powers of world like US, Russia, China, or any other.

The process of peace talks with the Taliban is a major challenge of peace negotiation. They want Islamic constitution (sharia) in the state. The main agenda of Taliban is to make government on Calafat base and strictly follower of Quran and Sunnah. After the withdrawal of Soviet Union in 1994 the Taliban had ruled in Afghanistan under the leadership of Mullah Umar, in this period they joined hands with Al-Qaida. After 9/11 in USA, the NATO forces launched attacks on Afghanistan against Terrorism. Taliban forces have been fighting with the NATO forces. In post-2014 period several calls for peace talks to Taliban has been made but they cannot agree on

Afghan government with secular mood. It is because of these reasons that efforts for peace talks for maintaining peace in the country has failed so far. After the death of Mullah Umar, Taliban has been divided into many divisions like Haqqani Tribal Network, Hizb-e Islami Gulbuddin etc. On 27 February, 2018 Afghan president Ashraf Ghani said that if the Taliban comes to the negotiating table and recognizes Ghani's government, the Afghan leader would in turn offer the rebellious group a role as a legitimate political party and release Taliban prisoners.

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