

Afghan Society: Us Policy And Post 9/11 Instability

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Abstract

Afghanistan has been in perpetual instability since last four decades after the invasion of USSR and then NATO under the leadership of United States of America. United States after the demise of Taliban started reconstruction of building of Afghan nation and spent more than a trillion dollars for the said purpose, with few apparent achievements, yet she couldn't achieve the desired targets due to many factors, i.e. lack of understanding of Afghan society, culture, history, role of regional players, no proper head towards political settlement with the Taliban, continuous change in policies, strategies and command in American camps accompanied by losing control of different areas due to engagement in Iraq war. United States adopted different approaches in the reins of George. W. Bush, Barrack Hussain Obama, and now Donald Trump. The mountainous terrain of Afghanistan proved more difficult than Vietnam for America. She looked many things with her own approach of handling issues with lack of understanding of new dimensions of Afghan social fabric, treacherous nature of regional players and last but not the least, the loopholes in handling increasing militancy and reorganization of Taliban in Afghanistan.

Keywords: Afghanistan, USA, Taliban, Peace, HIA, 9/11

INTRODUCTION

In this paper the researcher has introduced and discussed the internal and external dimensions of Afghanistan along with literature reviewed. The paper will discuss the sources and factors of internal dimensions of fragmentation of Afghan society. It will also discuss the impact of post 9/11 attacks and consequent invasion of USA on Afghanistan. Instability will be discussed in

clear headings of Security, Political, Economic and Social factors.

AFGHAN SOCIETY AND INTERNAL FRAGMENTATION

Afghanistan has been suffering from internal instability and external aggressions for centuries. There are many reasons for this instability and insecurity. The most important of them are the external influences due to its

geographical location and fragmentation of Afghan society due to the presence of many ethnicities inside Afghanistan.

Until 1747, when Ahmad Shah Abdali; later called Ahmad Shah Durrani established his rule in Afghanistan, the country was mainly ruled by different groups in different areas. There was no central authority and the stronger group controlled greater part of the country. There were continuous internal conflicts for gaining supremacy over other groups. The major reason for their unity was the attack of a common enemy over them. They had to unite against the common enemy and defeat it. After defeating the enemy, the rival groups or families have to revert to their former rivalries.¹ The historians have noted that there were seasonal warfare among these people. Most of the battles were fought after harvesting season as they would become free to fight after completing their cultivation of crops. The fights were also fought before the onset of winter and the start of snowfall as it would stop the movement of troops from one place to another.² The Pashtun tribes have always dominated other ethnicities and have major portion in ruling parts of Afghanistan. Before the rule of Ahmad Shah Durrani, the society was more divided into factions but during his reign the Pashtuns got united and seized the opportunity to dominate the Afghan Society for upcoming centuries. Pashtuns were mainly consisted of Durrani and Ghilzai tribes. Along with Pashtuns, there were tribes of Tajiks, Turks, Persian,

etc having certain influence in their respective local areas.³

During the second half of eighteenth century, Durrani tried to expand his rule to the country sides and reached to the Indian Sub-Continent on the other side of Hindu Kush Mountain. Fighting among different groups still continued inside Afghanistan but mainstream Afghan politics were controlled and dominated by Durrani till the coup of Sardar Daud Khan in 1973 which ended the regime of King Zahir Shah who ruled Afghanistan since 1933.⁴

The case of internal fragmentation and weak state of Afghanistan can be observed from the fact that overall Afghan territory has never been ruled by one central authority rather different warlords, local Maliks, tribal chiefs and other influential families ruled their respective areas. Every area had a different administrative and governance system. Respective governments used different tools to collect taxes and revenues from their localities. Until 20th century the Afghan political arena never saw a united Afghanistan and no single ruler has proved that he has ruled over all Afghanistan. During Taliban era it was said that Taliban had much more influence in Afghanistan than any other ruler and is said to be the most powerful and influential government but they also failed to hold control over complete Afghanistan and had influence over ninety percent of Afghanistan and the remaining ten percent was ruled by different warlords, i.e. Ahmad

¹ Dr. Abdul Hakim Tabibi, *Afghanistan: A nation in love with Freedom*, (USA: Igram Press, 1985), p. 03.

² Ibid.

³ Kamal Matinuddin, *Power Struggle in Hindokush (1978-91)*, (Lahore: Wajidalis, 1991) p. 18.

⁴ Ibid.

Shah Masoud, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Abdur Rasheed Dustom etc.

Topographic situation of Afghanistan has a considerable role in keeping Afghanistan decentralized and maintenance of autonomous regions by different tribes and warlords. The map of Afghanistan shows that it is divided by mountains and deserts at various places thus providing a natural division of the state into small units. In this backdrop it has proved hard to integrate them into one unit and be governed from a center.⁵ In the mid eighteenth-century Pashtun Durrani tribe was the one who was relatively successful to administer or control major areas of Afghanistan.⁶

Moreover, despite internal fragmentation, the foreign aggressors have always used the Afghan land to control and dominate the South Asian and European politics. Until the first Anglo-Afghan war (1838-40), Afghanistan was conceived as a highway for conquerors and was in the eyes of great powers. Alexander the Great of Greece had attacked the Afghan territories and had found Afghanistan the most difficult terrain ever faced by his army.⁷ Alexander the Great while marching towards attaining the conquest of the whole world, faced the toughest resistance in Afghanistan, where he stayed for more than three years and this fight

destroyed the internal structure and unity in his army. He succeeded in crossing Afghanistan, but the ancient society and the tribal coherence among Afghan tribes shook his war strategies and tactics.⁸ Apart from the geographical importance, the Afghan society at that time was rich in producing its own agricultural products, comprising of grains, grapes and deciduous fruits. The productivity of the land and its geographical location increased its importance in the eyes of Greeks who rushed into the land for search of pay which can be used as a trade route to India and China.⁹

Afghanistan was used as a Buffer zone between Czarist Russia and Great Britain which controlled Indo-Pak Sub-Continent. Czarist Russia tried to control Afghan politics and establish its sway over Afghans by providing them with aids and defense against Great Britain. British authorities were also trying to control Afghanistan for the safety of its borders. Great Britain and Afghanistan have fought three wars in 1838-1842, 1878-1880 and then in 1919. Afghanistan and Great Britain have agreed upon the neutrality of Afghanistan in World War 1. Until 1919, British government controlled Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, but due to neutral attitude in World War 1, Great Britain conferred independence on Afghanistan by allowing it to control its

⁵ Thomas Barfield, "Afghan Paradoxes" *Afghan Endgames: Strategy and Policy Choices for America's Longest War*, ed. Hy Rothstein and John Arquella (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), pp. 39-55.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Victor Davis Hanson, "A Familiar Western Experience in Ancient Afghanistan," *Afghan Endgames*, Edited by Hy Rothstein and John Arquella, (Georgetown University Press, Washington, DC, 2014), pp. 17-35.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

foreign relations. Thus the nation-state of Afghanistan was established during Amanullah Khan's regime in 1919.¹⁰

The new state then tried to establish its institutions on its own. Before Amanullah Khan, Amir Abdur Rahman tried to build his army but due to lack of resources and unity, he couldn't achieve the desired goal of a long standing army.¹¹ Amanullah Khan was helped out by Russia in uplifting the roots of the institutions throughout the first three quarters of twentieth century, and then attacked Afghanistan to safeguard its interests there. During the year of 1947, the USSR dominated United States in helping Afghanistan and increasing its influence over it.¹²

During Cold War era, USSR dominated Afghan political scenario. After its direct attack on Afghanistan, the internal instability increased more. United States helped Mujahidin to defeat USSR in 1980s. This conflict and proxy war driven the Afghan society towards more instability and vulnerability. The different warring factions against USSR reverted to the old customs of fighting against each other in the decade of 1990s.

POST 9/11: INTERNAL SOURCES OF INSTABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Shayeq Qassem, "Pak-Afghan Relations: The Durand Line Issue," *Policy Perspectives*, Vol. 8, No. 1.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Doug Bandow, "The Nation-Building Experiment That Failed: Time For U.S. To

After the attacks on twin towers in New York; United States, the political scenario saw a paradigm shift and USA attacked Afghanistan in Oct 2001. After fighting the Taliban and other militant organizations in Afghanistan, USA decided to go for nation-building in Afghanistan. For this purpose, USA and NATO spent billions of dollars during the past 15 years, but couldn't achieved the desired target of bringing lasting peace and stability to Afghanistan.¹³

United States, soon after the defeat of Taliban diverted its focus from war strategy to Resolute Support Mission and came forward for uplifting and building the Afghan state and its institutions. US set up the transition government led by Hamid Karzai in 2002 and continued it until 2004 when the same set up was provided legitimacy through holding a Loya Jirga in Afghanistan. USA gave new constitution to Afghanistan which was ratified by the same Jirga in February 2004.

Economic Instability

President Hamid Karzai was given the task of erecting the institutions of Afghanistan and USA along with other international donors contributed very intensively in financial and technical terms in this regard. About 70% of annual budget was provided with the international funding of which the major chunk of money was provided by United States. In different international forums

Leave Afghanistan" last updated on March 01, 2017, accessed on May 12, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dougbandow/2017/03/01/the-nation-building-experiment-that-failed-time-for-u-s-to-leave-afghanistan/#1aaf9a9165b2>.

organized for assistance to Afghanistan, United States was the largest supporting and funding country. At the end of 2014, when US led NATO forces were withdrawing from Afghanistan, USA had invested more than \$113b in Afghanistan in different areas.

The Hamid Karzai regime, although was not based on popular support, yet survived the two terms successfully due to the massive support of the coalition forces. He was provided with every possible help either physical or donor ship and the help in negotiations with the Taliban and other militant forces in Afghanistan. Although the Americans were not fully happy with the performance of Hamid Karzai, yet his survival was crucial for them because the Taliban were getting strength in the central, northern and Western Afghanistan. Karzai was unable to respond to the strength of the resistance but Americans and coalition forces needed Karzai in office to stop Taliban from taking over the Kabul throne. There were serious allegations of corruption, support to favorable war lords, bad governance, kidnapping and institutional failures against the Karzai regime. Despite of these weaknesses Karzai stayed in power because

he was the necessity of Americans and their allies.¹⁴

Moreover, apart from support to government of Afghanistan, United States provided massive aid and humanitarian assistance to different NGOs for reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan.¹⁵ United States supported and in fact initiated the process of elections in Afghanistan for bringing democratic set up and let Afghans lead their nation by their selves and every Afghan be provided with his fundamental rights of vote, representation, participation etc. The first ever elections in the history of Afghanistan under the supervision and support of USA in 2009 and Mr. Hamid Karzai was re-elected as President of Afghanistan.¹⁶ The same practice was repeated in a peaceful rather more productive manner in 2014 after the completion of five years tenure of Hamid Karzai. This time Mr. Ashraf Ghani; the successful candidate and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah; the defeated candidate, were agreed upon a deal to make a coalition or unity government in September 2014; a few months before withdrawal of NATO forces,

¹⁴Rustam Shah Mohmand, "Afghanistan Imbroglio: An Appraisal- Politics of Afghanistan, Forces Within and Without," *Policy Perspectives*, Vol 8, No 1. pp. 14-15.

¹⁵ Doug Bandow, "The Nation-Building Experiment That Failed: Time For U.S. To Leave Afghanistan," last updated on March 01, 2017, accessed on May 12, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dougbandow/2017/03/01/the-nation-building-experiment->

[that-failed-time-for-u-s-to-leave-afghanistan/#1aaf9a9165b2](https://www.forbes.com/sites/dougbandow/2017/03/01/the-nation-building-experiment-that-failed-time-for-u-s-to-leave-afghanistan/#1aaf9a9165b2).

¹⁶ Jon Boone in Kabul and Mark Tran, "Hamid Karzai declared winner of Afghanistan's presidential election," last updated on November 02, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/02/hamid-karzai-afghanistan-winner-election>.

thus reverting the chances of a civil war or further destabilization of the country.¹⁷

Along with, institutional building, United States opted for the policy of reconciliation with the Afghan insurgents including Taliban. For the said purpose, Afghanistan High Peace Council was established in 2005 and then reformed in 2010 for making it more fruitful and result oriented. The process of reconciliation saw many ups and downs until now and some leaders or factions have been streamlined after their submission to peace. Although, the main resistance group; Taliban is yet to be persuaded for reconciliation yet during this era United States has used many measures and olive branches as tactics to control the insurgency and end the perpetual instability in Afghanistan.¹⁸

Security Situations

NATO forces had been stationed in Afghanistan since October 2001 but as President Barrack Obama assumed the charge in Oval Office in 2009, he announced his plan for withdrawal of forces from Iraq

and Afghanistan.¹⁹ At first he withdrew from Iraq and in 2011, sent more forces (about 30,000 troops) to Afghanistan as surge to already stationed troops there, with the aim to ensure complete withdrawal till the end of 2014.²⁰ During this era of three years, NATO and U.S. troops tried to train the Afghan National Security Forces, and Afghan National Army, so that they could be enabled to repel the insurgents' attacks and defend their country from other aggressors.²¹ At first it looked like Afghanistan has developed a professional army having the capability to replace NATO and ISAF and take the charge of country's security apparatus. Nevertheless, as the NATO started to leave Afghanistan, ANSF and ANA, started to defect and desert due to lack of resources accompanied by the increase in attacks from the different insurgent groups.²² Taliban were already operating in remote areas against the security forces but rise of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), in Afghanistan posed

¹⁷ May Jeong, "Afghan leaders sign power-sharing deal" last updated on September 21, 2014, accessed on June 18, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/21/afghanistan-power-sharing-deal-abdullah-ashraf-ghani-ahmadzai>.

¹⁸ Doug Bandow, "The Nation-Building Experiment That Failed: Time For U.S. To Leave Afghanistan," accessed on March 01, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dougbandow/2017/03/01/the-nation-building-experiment-that-failed-time-for-u-s-to-leave-afghanistan/#1aaf9a9165b2>.

¹⁹ Ewen MacAskill, "Obama takes final gamble with Afghanistan troops surge," *The*

Guardian, last updated on December 01, 2009, accessed on March 17, 2017, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/30/obama-troops-afghanistan>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Thinking Long on Afghanistan: Could it be neutralized?" *The Washington Quarterly*, winter 2013.

²² Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Blood and hope in Afghanistan: A June 2015 update," *Brookings*, last updated on May 06, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/05/26-isis-taliban-afghanistan-felbabbrown>.

another credible threat to the security of Afghanistan and the whole region.²³

As soon as NATO withdrawal, the insurgents got the opportunity of re-union and consequently anarchy and chaos blazoned in different cities of 34 provinces of Afghanistan. Even the further deteriorating situation compelled the First Vice President and former Army Chief, General Rasheed Dostam to lead operations against the insurgents.²⁴ Another report states that Afghanistan witnessed more than 10,000 insurgent and terrorist attacks in 2015 and only in two months between 16 August and 17 November, the United Nations has recorded 6,261 security incidents across the country, with a 9 percent increase compared with the same period in 2015 and an 18 percent increase against the same period in 2014.²⁵ The month of May 2015 was the worst one which witnessed 1026, terrorist activities due to the Taliban's successful spring offensive, while Helmand, Nangarhar and Faryab provinces witnessed most

terrorist and violence activities.²⁶ The report shows increased level of kidnappings, abductions by the insurgent groups and violence in different areas of Afghanistan.²⁷

The country's capital saw increased level of attacks on different important places, including Kabul city, different embassies and consulates, police training academy and Kabul airport. The attack on protests of minorities increased during 2016 and Shiites and Hazara Community saw more casualties due to these attacks.²⁸

The number of Internally Displaced Persons has increased by 15 per cent as compared with 2015. In 2016 and as of Nov 30, the United Nations had recorded their number as 515,865 since January 2016 in 31 of the 34 provinces, with more than 240,000 displaced since mid-August.²⁹

The Afghan parliament convened different government officials including National Security Advisor Hanif Athmar to explain the deteriorating security situations in the

²³Javaid Ahmad, "Islamic State's New Afghan Front," *The Diplomat*, last updated on April 29, 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/islamic-states-new-afghan-front/>.

²⁴ "Gen. Dostum urged to lead operation against ISIS loyalists in Nangarhar," *Khaama Press*, last updated on September 13, 2015 accessed on August 19, 2017.

²⁵ "UNAMA Chief States Security Situation Has Deteriorated," *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, last updated on December 20, 2016, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=16969.

²⁶ "Afghanistan Witnesses 10,000 Security, Terrorist Incidents in 2015: Report," *Outlook Afghanistan*, last updated on January 14, 2016, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=14168#sthash.S8Ymw6GD.dpuf

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "UNAMA Chief States Security Situation Has Deteriorated," *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, last updated on December 20, 2016, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=16969.

²⁹ Ibid.

country.³⁰ In November 2016, Afghan parliament passed vote of no confidence against six central ministers and removed them from their posts due to their bad performance and allegations of corruption. Reports stated that the Afghan Security forces left their stations to Taliban and fled the battlefield which gave Taliban free hand to overrun the Governor house of Kunduz, provincial Jail, freeing hundreds of their friends and controlling Police headquarters.³¹ Many districts in Faryab, Helmand, Herat, Farah, Nangarhaar and Sar-e-Pul provinces are under the control of armed groups including Taliban and ISIS.³² The United Nations has admitted this fact that Taliban are

now more active in many areas of Afghanistan than ever.³³

ISIS FACTOR

The increasing influence of ISIS in remote areas, especially Farah province and near the capital Kabul in the on-going year is adding fuel to the already chaotic society of Afghanistan.³⁴ The international experts termed the situations of Afghanistan one year after the NATO withdrawal as extremely unstable and are of the opinion that the rise of Da'esh (ISIS) is more dangerous than the presence of Taliban.³⁵ It has also been noted that more than 1,600 militants have sworn their allegiance to Dae'sh in four provinces near and around Jalalabad.³⁶ In 2016, ISIS

³⁰ Kathy Whitehead, "Emotions Run High as MPs Demand Answers over Kunduz Crisis," *Tolo News*, last updated on September 30, 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/21633-emotions-run-high-as-mps-demand-answers-over-kunduz-crisis>.

³¹ "US air strike hits Taliban in captured Afghan city: NATO," *Dawn.com*, last updated on September 29, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1209707>.

³² Jessica Lewis McFate, Rob Denaburg, Caitlin Forrest, "Afghanistan Threat Assessment: The Taliban and ISIS" *Institute for the Study of War*, last updated on December 10, 2015, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Afghanistan%20Threat%20Assessment_The%20Taliban%20and%20ISIS_3.pdf.

³³ "Obama U-turn will leave troops in Afghanistan," *ft.com*, last updated on October 15, 2015,

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/89397942-733b-11e5-a129-3fcc4f641d98.html#axzz3xD7fw1hw>.

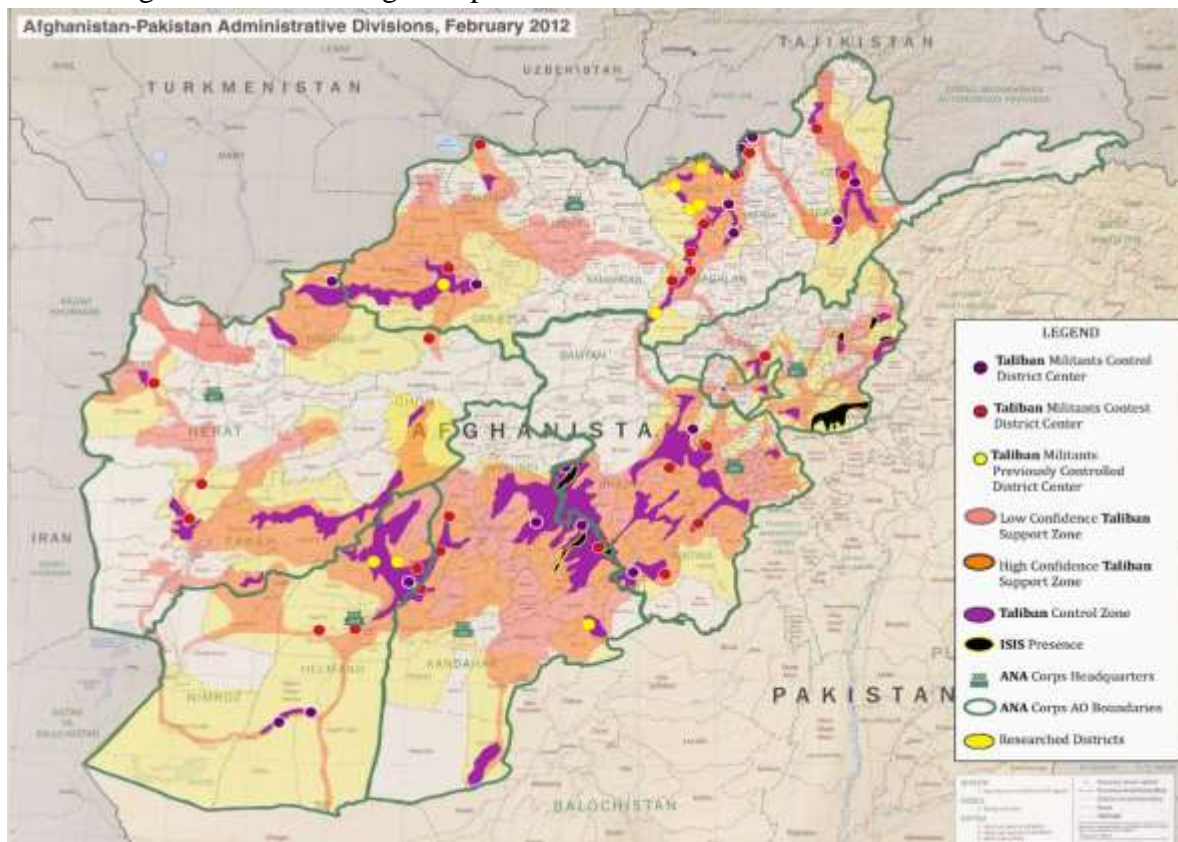
³⁴ "Daesh established training camps in Farah province," *The Nation*, last updated on January 15, 2015, <http://nation.com.pk/international/15-Jan-2015/daesh-established-training-camps-in-farah-province>.

³⁵ Andrey Serenko, "Afghanistan Situation 'Extremely Unstable' One Year After NATO's Departure," *SPUTNIK*, last updated on December 09, 2015, <http://sputniknews.com/world/20151209/1031478560/afghanistan-situation-daesh.html#ixzz3xDCg7jGG>.

³⁶ "Da'esh Militants Get to Seizure of Afghanistan – Media," *SPUTNIK*, last updated on December 06, 2015, <http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20151206/1031306065/Daesh-Militants-Seizure-Afghanistan.html#ixzz3xDXAIKVU>.

made grounds in Nuristan province and also conducted four suicide attacks, i.e. attack on 11 October in Kabul, on the holiday of Ashura, 21 November in Kabul against a Shia mosque, on 31 October against the guesthouse of community leaders in the Pachir Wagam district of Nangarhar province

and a suicide attack on 16 November against the vehicle of the presidential protection security forces in Kabul, which resulted in the death of eight civilians and injured 13.”³⁷The following map shows different areas dominated by Taliban and ISIS.



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CONDITIONS OF AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY

³⁷ “UNAMA Chief States Security Situation Has Deteriorated,” *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, last updated on December 20, 2016, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=16969.

The defection and desertion in Afghan National Army increased due to lack of back up support and increasing insurgency in different areas.³⁹ According to a NATO

³⁸ This map has been taken from *Congressional Research Service Report*, of December 22, 2015.

³⁹Faridullah Hussaikhail, “ANA Soldier Joins Taliban In Baghlan,” *Tolo News*, last updated on January 07, 2016, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/23172-ana-soldier-joins-taliban-in-baghlan>.

official, Afghan National Army has 101 infantry units, out of which only one is termed as capable of fighting, 38 out of them are facing “massive problems”, and ten battalions each of them comprising of 600 soldiers are termed as not operational.⁴⁰ The casualties in Afghan Army raised by 42% as compared to 2014. On average, ANA loses 22 soldiers on daily basis due to increased level of terrorists and insurgent’s attacks.⁴¹ Although, the NATO countries are committed to support Afghan Security forces till the end of 2017, and are trying to extend it to 2020, but it failed to stop the vigorous defection and desertion in Afghan National Army.⁴²

POLITICAL SITUATIONS

Since the invasion of NATO and ISAF forces on Afghanistan, different insurgent groups started their resistance that compelled the Hamid Karzai administration and US to settle the issues with the insurgents on table. Since then the government of Afghanistan started its endeavors for reconciliation with the Taliban and other insurgent groups in early 2005. They met on many occasions but the news of death of Mullah Umar brought a sort of deadlock in the process. It is intended to analyze the whole process, role of the

regional states and the effects of death of Mullah Umar on the process. Ashraf Ghani government during its tenure has been seen as crumbling and creeping due to the strengthening of militancy and his political opponents

DELAYED PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Furthermore, Afghanistan was unable to hold parliamentary elections as it were scheduled to be held in 2015, under the bilateral agreement between the rival candidates, Dr. Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. Now as 2016 is also moving to its end, yet the future of general elections is unclear. Although it was proclaimed by the government authorities that the elections will take place in April 2017 but due to the security situations and unpreparedness of the government the elections were delayed until October 2018. The internal rifts between the two leaders has hampered many decisions regarding elections as well as inclusion of full-fledged defense minister to the cabinet.⁴³ The parliament completed its tenure in June 2015, but interestingly it gave one year

⁴⁰ Ahmad Masood, “NATO report slams Afghan army as mission incapable,” *Reuters.com*, last updated on January 10, 2016, <https://www.rt.com/news/328408-afghan-army-mission-incapable/>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² “NATO and Afghanistan,” *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, last updated on December 08, 2015,

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm.

⁴³ Chris Sands and Fazel Minallah Qazizai, “Rifts leave Afghan unity government weak in face of Taliban and ISIL,” *The National*, last updated on April 18, 2015, <http://www.thenational.ae/world/central-asia/rifts-leave-afghan-unity-government-weak-in-face-of-taliban-and-isil>.

extension to itself unconstitutionally.⁴⁴ The government is of the view that ongoing insurgency, instability and lack of fund hampers the holding of new elections.⁴⁵ The parliamentary elections held in the last year were very bloody and caused loss of many civilians and security officials. The presidential elections are scheduled for April 2019, yet the situations show that neither Afghan government nor United States is in position to hold the elections for now.

REPATRIATION OF AFGHAN REFUGEES

Complete repatriation and rehabilitation of Afghan refugees mainly from Pakistan and Iran is still a nightmare for the Afghan Government. Afghanistan and Pakistan have enjoyed cordial relations for decades. Whenever Afghanistan faced any problem, Pakistan opened its doors and borders to welcome their Afghan brothers. Afghan Refugees have been living in Pakistan for last four decades. During this era, they have been provided with every possible help and support, i.e. employment, businesses, shelter and even citizenships by the government and people of Pakistan. Several international and local organizations also played vital role in providing them the basic life necessities. The stay of refugees have thrown a considerable impact on socio-political, economic and

strategic aspects of Pakistani society. Various factions of the society term them as an asset to improve Pak-Afghan relations while others term them as liability and burden for Pakistan.

In between the influx of refugees increased after the US attack on Afghanistan in the wake of War on Terror. This not only increased the burden on Pakistan but also brought new challenges and opportunities ranging from militants and terrorists coming to Pakistan to the addition of new and cheap human capital to the Pakistani industry.

Nevertheless, due to the escalation of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, Afghan refugees in Pakistan have been several times targeted and alleged for involvement in attacks in Pakistan, despite the fact that there has been no evidence of single organized crime plotted by Afghan refugees.

As soon as NATO announced its withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan decided to peacefully repatriate the Afghans to their homeland. This decision was prompted by various attacks on schools and universities. About 2 million of refugees were repatriated in the past three years. The remaining were given timelines to go back and then the deadlines further expanded to avoid any misfortune for Afghans.

⁴⁴Mujib Mashal, "Afghan Parliament's Term Is Extended after Squabbles Delay Elections," *The New York Times*, last updated on June 19, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/20/world/asia/afghan-parliaments-term-is-extended-after-squabbles-delay-elections.html>.

⁴⁵ Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," *Congressional Research Service Report*, posted on December 22, 2015, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>.

In 2015, out of 1.6 million Afghans registered with UNHCR inside Pakistan, Only 58,212 Afghan refugees are repatriated from Pakistan,⁴⁶ while until November 30, 2016, about 372,282 Afghans repatriated to Afghanistan from Pakistan and 2,220 individuals returned from Iran under UNHCR's umbrella, but due to unfavorable season and unpreparedness of Afghan authorities the repatriation process has been stopped now till February 2017.⁴⁷ Afghan migrants are currently second largest in the world after Syrian refugees.⁴⁸

According to official statistics of Afghanistan the first half of the last year saw 6,0000 migrants repatriated to the home country, but contrary to this, in the second half, about 1,50000 Afghans sought asylum in other countries, which shows that the plight of the people rose in the second half due to increasing instability.⁴⁹

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is clear from the above discussion that Afghanistan apart from its internal divisions since last two centuries, has seen a continuous wave of instability since 9/11 and the consequent invasion of NATO on Afghanistan. Afghan society has been targeted in social, security, economic and

political fronts due to unclear and blurred policies of United States and its allies in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the developments in Afghan Peace Process and bringing of Taliban to the negotiating table is a ray of hope for ending the prolonged and perpetual instability in Afghanistan.

⁴⁶ "58,212 Afghan refugees repatriated from Pakistan in 2015: UNHCR," *Afghanistan Times*, last updated on January 11, 2016, <http://afghanistantimes.af/58212-afghan-refugees-repatriated-from-pakistan-in-2015-unhcr/>.

⁴⁷ "UNAMA Chief States Security Situation Has Deteriorated," *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, December 20, 2016,

http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=16969.

⁴⁸ "Afghan Migrants Second Largest in World: Balkhi," *Outlook Afghanistan*, last updated on December 15, 2015.

http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=13894#sthash.9rBMKN3O.dpuf

⁴⁹ Ibid.