

SECURITY IN AND AROUND AFGHANISTAN SINCE THE NATO
WITHDRAWAL IN 2014

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ABSTRACT

SECURITY IN AND AROUND AFGHANISTAN AFTER NATO WITHDRAWAL

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This thesis aims to examine the effects of the NATO forces' withdrawal from Afghanistan on the security situation in and Afghanistan's immediate surroundings. The argument of this thesis is that; the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan has led to a significant deterioration in the security situation in the country, which has also become a security problem for Afghanistan's neighbors. Contrary to the views of some academics who argue that Afghanistan is a victim of its neighbors, this thesis argues that the security of Afghanistan, a peripheral country to the security dynamics of the neighboring regions, could be better understood by explaining the security vacuum created by the security prioritization of the neighboring regions in favor of other regional issues. This argument implies that non-regional great power meddling in Afghanistan's security has long been driven by the need to fill in this security vacuum in Afghanistan. The great power interest and capacity to enhance security in Afghanistan tend to diminish when the great powers develop interest in other regions and their specific security interests in Afghanistan are ensured at a tolerable level. The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter is followed by a chapter in which the historical background of Afghanistan is presented. The third part examines the impact of international actors on Afghanistan's security. The

fourth part deals with Afghanistan's security on national scale. The effects of regional countries are examined in fifth section. In the final section, results of the study are presented.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Security, Regional Security Complex, NATO, Taliban

ÖZ

NATO’NUN 2014’TE ÇEKİLMESİ SONRASINDA AFGANİSTAN VE ÇEVRESİNDE GÜVENLİK

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Bu tez, NATO güçlerinin, 2014 sonunda Afganistan’dan çekilmesinin Afganistan ve Afganistan’ın yakın çevresindeki güvenlik durumu üzerindeki etkilerini incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Bu tezin argümanı NATO güçlerinin Afganistan’dan çekilmesi sonrasında genel güvenlik durumunda kayda değer bir bozulma yaşandığı ve söz konusu durumun Afganistan’ın komşuları için de bir güvenlik sorunu haline geldiğidir. Afganistan’ın, komşularının kurbanı olduğunu iddia eden bazı akademisyenlerin görüşlerinin aksine bu tez, komşu bölgelerin güvenlik dinamikleri açısından çevresel bir ülke olan Afganistan’ın güvenliğinin, bölgesel meselelerin komşu bölgelerin lehine güvenlik öncelleştirmeleriyle yaratılan boşluğunun incelenmesiyle daha iyi anlaşılabilirliğini savunmaktadır. Bu argüman, Afganistan’ın güvenliğine yönelik bölgesel olmayan büyük güç müdahalesinin uzun zamandan beri Afganistan’daki bu güvenlik boşluğunu doldurma ihtiyacından kaynaklandığını iddia etmektedir. Afganistan’daki güvenliği artırma konusundaki büyük güç ilgisi ve kapasitesi, büyük güçlerin diğer bölgelere olan ilgilerinin artması ve Afganistan’daki

belirli güvenlik ihtiyalarının tahamm l edilebilir seviyede saėlanmasına paralel olarak azalmaktadır. Tez altı b l mden oluřmaktadır. İlk b l m , Afganistan'ın tarihsel arka planının ele alındıėı ikinci b l m takip etmektedir.     nc  b l mde Afganistan'ın g venliėi  zerinde uluslararası akt rlerin etkisi irdelenirken, d rd nc  b l mde ise konu ulusal baėlamda incelenmektedir. B lgesel akt rlerin Afganistan'ın g venliėine olan etkilerinin incelendiėi beřinci b l m  sonu ve deėerlendirmelerin sunulduėu altıncı ve son b l m takip etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afganistan, G venlik, B lgesel G venlik Yapısı, NATO, Taliban

To My Beloved Family....

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I would also like to thank my wife, who patiently supported me and took care of our two lovely children, Yiğit Alp and Aslı Zeynep, and shouldered the daily chores of our home alone.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIA	Afghan Interim Authority
AACP	Afghan Anti-Crime Police
ABP	Afghan Border Police
AHPC	Afghan High Peace Council
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANAF	Afghan National Air Force
ANCOP	Afghan National Civil Order Police
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
ANP	Afghan National Police
AUP	Afghan Uniform Police
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
EU	European Union
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
HIG	Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin
IEC	Independent Election Commission
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISKP	Islamic State-Khorasan Province
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoD	Ministry of Defense
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NA	Northern Alliance
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom

PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RSC	Regional Security Complex
SA	Saudi Arabia
SCR	Senior Civilian Representative
SIGAR	The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
TIKA	The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commission for Refugees
UNODC	UN Office of Drugs and Crime
UNSC	UN Security Council
US	United States
US DoD	United States Department of Defense
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

With the U.S. blaming Al Qaeda for the 9/11 attacks against the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, Afghanistan under Taliban rule, which had been hosting the organization, became the most important issue on the international agenda overnight. The chain of events that began when the Taliban administration did not extradite Al Qaeda rulers and continued to accommodate the organization on its territory resulted in a U.S. military intervention in late 2001.¹

Taliban, which was overwhelmingly defeated by the U.S. in a couple of months, was replaced by a transitional government. However, the U.S. operation, initially aimed at the removal of Taliban and the destruction of Al Qaeda, and the prevention of Afghanistan becoming a hiding and training place for terrorists, soon transformed into a comprehensive state-building project. This transformation has arisen as a result of the conditions pushing the U.S. administration rather than a conscious choice. After the Soviet occupation of 1979, Afghanistan plunged into a long civil war, during which almost all the infrastructure was destroyed and more importantly, the state institutions lost their functions.² The situation in Afghanistan has improved somewhat during the Taliban administration, but with the U.S. military operation, Afghanistan has become a fully failed state.

Faced with such a landscape, the priority of the U.S. was the creation of a self-sufficient security force and government in Afghanistan. However, Taliban, which had taken over the impact of the heavy defeat it experienced over time, became

¹ Nadia Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance* (Washington DC, Georgetown Press, 2017), pp. 220-221

² Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy - The Russians in Afghanistan 1979–89* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 200

effective again in the country, without leaving time for the Afghan security forces to mature. Taliban's evolving into an internal rebellion based on the Pashtun majority in the country has made the already bad security situation in Afghanistan inexorable, and U.S. efforts to move to democracy through elections and increasing troop level in the country to maintain security have failed. The initial U.S. unilateral intervention in Afghanistan created a legitimacy problem in terms of its military presence in the country. Although the U.S. military operation was carried out with a wide international reach, over time the U.S. began to feel the financial and political burden of Afghanistan quest on its shoulders. As a solution to this problem, the responsibility of the military operations in Afghanistan was transferred to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). But the U.S, also simultaneously carrying out its own military operations, remained the main driving force behind the process. The hope that the security conditions in the country will improve with the increasing number of troops parallel to NATO's entry into the Afghanistan scene soon fell short. The most successful and effective military alliance in the world has become part of the problem in Afghanistan, rather than the solution, due to a series of internal problems.³

The increasing casualties and the financial burden of being in Afghanistan, together with the intensified Taliban resistance, made the Coalition member states, especially the U.S., set a date for exiting Afghanistan. The date for the withdrawal of Western forces from Afghanistan was set as December 2014, which has brought new problems, and this time it has started to raise concerns that the security situation in post-NATO Afghanistan may come to the point where the Afghan Government would collapse just like the Najibullah Government collapsed two years after the Soviets left Afghanistan for good.⁴

³ David P Auerswald and Stephen M Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014) pp. 31-62

⁴ For a detailed account of the collapse of the Najibullah Government see Sultan Akimbekov, *The History of Afghanistan* (Astana – Almaty: The Institute of World Economy and Politics, 2016) Chapter 12 pp. 395-425

The impact of the U.S. military operation to overthrow the Taliban was not limited to Afghanistan and had some negative effects on other states in the region, including neighboring countries. The neighboring countries, which welcomed the disappearance of the Taliban threat in Afghanistan after the U.S. military operation, have become more and more aware of the security threat from Afghanistan in parallel with the Taliban revival. This impact was not only limited to the neighboring countries, but the deteriorating security conditions in Afghanistan was felt in a wider geography.

On the other hand, just as the deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan presented a threat to the neighboring and regional countries, they themselves became a security problem for Afghanistan since political and military rivalries of those countries were carried into the Afghanistan scene following the overthrow of the Taliban.

1.1. Scope and Objective

In this context, the aim of this thesis is to study the security situation in Afghanistan after the NATO withdrawal in late 2014, as well as to investigate the regional effects of the withdrawal. Although the thesis aims to examine the security situation in Afghanistan after 2014, in what ways the members of the regional security complex effected to which Afghanistan is considered to a part of, were also investigated. On the other hand, it is evaluated that the roots of the political, social, and economic and security situation of Afghanistan stem from the long history of the country and a large part of the thesis is devoted to the examination of the phenomenon.

It is considered that the external dimension of security will not be sufficient to explain the current security condition in Afghanistan, and the internal dimension of security will be examined through the investigation of the Afghan security forces and the actors affecting the security situation in the country. However, considering the aim and limitations of the thesis, the political structure and political developments will be mentioned in a limited manner and only the political developments shaping the security dimension will be discussed.

1.2. Literature Review

There is a huge body of literature on Afghanistan in Pashto, Dari, English, Russian, German and French. However, all of the sources used in this study are in English. There is a considerable amount of academic writings on Afghanistan, but one can easily observe that there are three periods in which they amassed; the Anglo-Afghan Wars, the Soviet occupation and the United States (U.S) military operation in 2001. One of the earliest books on Afghanistan is “The Kingdom of Kabul” (1814), written by Mountstuart Elphinstone, who was appointed as the first British Envoy to Kabul. Another important book on Afghanistan, especially regarding the Pashtun society, is “Swat Pathan” (1959), written by Fredrik Barth. Anthropologist Akbar Ahmed’s work, “Religion and Politics in Muslim Society” (1983), which examines the Wazirestan region’s two Pashtun tribes, can be considered as one of the most comprehensive studies on Pashtuns. Among contemporary studies “Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan” (1983), by Richard Tapper, searches the link between tribe and state in Afghanistan from 1700s to 1980. Above mentioned works have been very instrumental in understanding how the historical experiences had shaped today’s Afghanistan.

“The First Anglo-Afghan Wars: A Reader”⁵ by Antoinette Burton is a source book for those who want to examine the roots of “the Great Game” and the historical perspectives of British-Afghan relations. The main focus of the book is the “First Anglo-Afghan War” and its impact on the society, economy and politics of Afghanistan. The book consists of four main parts and contains first-hand accounts of the First Anglo-Afghan War. Burton’s book is not directly relevant with the subject of this thesis, but never the less served as a useful source to grasp the nature of the relations between an invading force, Britain, and an invaded county, Afghanistan.

⁵ Antoinette Burton, (ed.) *The First Anglo-Afghan Wars: A Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014)

Another important study regarding the security condition in Afghanistan and its regional effects is “A Rock Between Hard Places”⁶ by Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh. The authors argue, unlike many researchers, that the security situation in central Asia is not dependent on the security developments in Afghanistan but vice versa. Harpviken and Tadjbakhsh claim that Afghanistan is situated amid three different regional security complexes (RSCs). These are South Asia RSC, Central Asia RSC, and the Persian Gulf RSC and is affected by the internal dynamics of those three separate RSCs.

There are numerous books and articles on the U.S-led Western state-building efforts in Afghanistan, which begins right after the Taliban regime was toppled in late 2001. However, one of those studies comes forwards with its detailed analyses of the U.S. state-building efforts in Afghanistan. “American State-Building in Afghanistan and Its Regional Consequences”⁷ by Neamat Nojumi not only investigates the internal dynamics of the state-building efforts in Afghanistan, but also sheds light on the regional aspects of that effort. Nojumi argues that Afghanistan, should occupy more space in U.S. foreign policy regarding its reach to Central Asia. Nojumi claims that a politically stable and economically developed Afghanistan is key to overcome the Taliban insurgency.

One of the most comprehensive books on the security situation in and around Afghanistan after the NATO withdrawal is “Afghanistan and Its Neighbors After the NATO Withdrawal”⁸, by Amin Saikal. Saikal co-edited the book with Kirill Nourzhanov, another prominent scholar. The book is a collective work of prominent experts on Afghanistan and Central Asia. The main argument of the book is that the NATO troop reduction in Afghanistan brought up many questions and problems

⁶ Kristian Berg Harpviken, and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

⁷ Neamatollah Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan: Mass Mobilization, Civil War, and the Future of the Region* (New York: Palgrave, 2002)

⁸ Amin Saikal and Kirill Nourzhanov, *Afghanistan and Its Neighbors After the NATO Withdrawal* (New York: Lexington Books, 2016)

regarding security, not only of Afghanistan, but a broader region. The book focuses on the security dynamics of Afghanistan and the Central Asia region by making short and mid-term predictions.

Although the military operation to topple the Taliban was initiated by the U.S. in late 2001, in the following years it evolved into an international effort and finally “the fight against terrorism” was put under the NATO umbrella. The U.S. simultaneously conducted its own operations in Afghanistan, but majority of the multinational military forces were under the NATO command. NATO’s entering into the scene not only gave the “the fight against terrorism” a more international outlook but also created concerns among former Soviet Republics and Russia. NATO’s role in Afghanistan was discussed by numerous scholars in several books and articles but none seems to match the depth and quality of “Afghanistan and Central Asia NATO’s Role in Regional Security Since 9/11”⁹ by Oktay Tanrısever, who also happens to be the supervisor of this thesis. The book is a collection of academic papers submitted to the NATO Advanced Research Workshop, which was held in Ankara in April 2011. Although the workshop was organized long before the NATO withdrawal in late 2014, the book was published in 2013 and the majority of the papers within were updated. The book focuses on the Central Asian security complex and Afghanistan’s place within it. Also touching upon other aspects of security, such as energy security, human security and social dynamic of security. “Afghanistan and Central Asia NATO’s Role in Regional Security Since 9/11” paints a detail picture of Afghanistan and its immediate neighbors.

One of the main books from which the historical background of this study drawn was “Afghanistan: A Political and Cultural History” by Thomas Barfield.¹⁰ Barfield is a well-known researcher who conducted fieldwork in Afghanistan in the 1970s. In this book, Barfield not only gives a detailed historic background of Afghanistan, but also

⁹ Oktay F. Tanrısever, (ed.) *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security since 9/11* (Washington: IOS Press, 2013)

¹⁰ Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010)

examines the Afghan people and society. Barfield's book begins with an exploration of the geographic and human landscape of Afghanistan.

As mentioned above, Professor Saikal, the director of "The Middle East and Islamic Studies at Australian National University", is one of the leading experts on Afghanistan and has produced a considerable amount of publications on Afghanistan. "Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival"¹¹ by Professor Saikal is one of his most comprehensive studies on Afghanistan. In his book Saikal explains in detail the complex structure of Afghan politics since the early 18th century. The book opens with a chapter of the events which led to the founding of the modern Afghan state in 1747 and continues its narrative until recent times. According to Saikal, the most disruptive element in the Afghan politics was foreign interventions, which started with the British invasion and continued with the Soviet and U.S. invasions. Saikal claims that the events after the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and the internal turmoil following the end of the occupation were the major factors in the emergence of the Taliban.

NATO is the most powerful military alliance in terms of carrying out multilateral operations on global scale. NATO played an important part in Afghanistan following the U.S. military operation in late 2001, which had significant impact on the security developments in and around Afghanistan. In this sense, "NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone"¹² by David Auerswald and Stephen Saideman is a must read for those who want to know the Alliance's role in Afghan conflict. The authors mainly argue that NATO had been the best option for a multilateral military operation in Afghanistan, but also claim that it had limitations due to its decision-making structure. Auerswald and Saideman assert that not all member states committed themselves at the same level during NATO's involvement in Afghanistan, either due to their national restrictions on troops in the field or complex and most of

¹¹ Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012)

¹² David P Auerswald and Stephen M Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014)

the times unproductive decision-making process of contributing NATO member states.

As mentioned before, there is a huge literature on Afghanistan, especially there are scores of books and scholarly works covering the U.S. military operation and the following era. Thus, it is very easy for a researcher to be bogged down in volumes of books and articles trying to find specific information or simply a name regarding his or her research on Afghanistan. However, “Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan”¹³ by Ludwig W. Adamec is a scholarly quick reference book, which solves this problem. Adamec, in his book, covers nearly almost all periods of Afghan history in a satisfactory fashion. In this thesis, his book served as a time-saver source, which also gave lots of insights regarding the historical, political and military figures of the country. This piece, written by Adamec, has become an indispensable bedside book for scientists and policy makers working on Afghanistan, thanks to the detailed and comprehensive information it provides.

Since the main focus of this thesis is the security situation in and around Afghanistan in the period following the NATO withdrawal, it is inevitable to mention the role of the Taliban, which served and has still been serving as a destabilizing element on the security of Afghanistan and its immediate surroundings. Hasan Abbas, Professor of “International Security Studies Chair of the Department of Regional and Analytical Studies”, in his book “The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on The Pakistan—Afghanistan Frontier”¹⁴ in depth examines the role of the Taliban in Afghanistan, especially the period following the 2001 U.S. invasion. In his book, Abbas investigates the reason behind Taliban’s resurface in Afghanistan and Pakistan after 2001.

¹³ Ludwig W Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan* 3rd edition (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003)

¹⁴ Hassan Abbas, *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on The Pakistan—Afghanistan Frontier* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014)

One of the most comprehensive works on Afghanistan published in recent years is “Afghanistan: A History from 1260 to the Present” by Jonathan L. Lee.¹⁵ In this voluminous work, Lee examines the emergence of the modern Afghan state, tracing its roots back to the time of Ahmad Shah (Durrani). Lee, while in detail presenting the Afghan history, also gives political and cultural details of Afghanistan and Afghan people.

“Military Adaptation in Afghanistan”¹⁶ by Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga, and James Russell was published a year prior to the NATO withdrawal, in 2013. It still remains a valuable work, since it contains a collection of articles by prominent scholars outlining the various factors affecting military adaptation during the 14-year conflict. These articles comprise of accounts of adaptation by NATO members, ISAF and the Taliban, and a summary of the British forces in Afghanistan during the Anglo-Afghan wars. The main objective of this collective work is to examine NATO’s strategic, political and operational response to the rising insurgency from 2006 onwards, and to reveal the similarities and differences in the approaches adopted by NATO’s main actors.

There are also numerous reports released by official institutions like Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) or individual experts such as Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas who briefed the U.S. Congress with their comprehensive periodic reports. Also reports of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), various UN bodies (UNAMA, UNODC, etc.) were extensively used in this study, since they provide reliable and up to date information regarding the security situation in Afghanistan.

As mentioned above, there is a rich literature on Afghanistan. However, the literature in question mainly focuses on three periods. These periods are; Anglo-Afghan war, Soviet occupation and U.S. military operation in 2001. Within this framework, it is

¹⁵ Jonathan L. Lee, *Afghanistan: A History from 1260 to the Present* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018)

¹⁶ Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga and James A. Russell, (eds.) *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan* (Stanford, California: Stanford Security Studies, 2013)

seen that the interest in Afghanistan has decreased in the intervening periods and fewer academic works have been put forward. This situation creates the fact in the minds of the general reader that the Afghan history consists only of internal conflicts and wars and leads to the production of fewer works depicting to the social, cultural and economic life in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, one of the most important criticisms of the literature on Afghanistan is that most of the works produced by the subject are written by western academics and these works treat Afghanistan from a western-centered perspective. These works foresee a mirror image of the Western civilization for Afghanistan's future. In addition, this situation leads to cultural blindness in the literature and makes the suggestions put forward for the diagnosis and solution of the problems in Afghanistan distorted from the reality of the field.

An important part of the literature on Afghanistan is official reports published after 2001. Recently, however, there has been criticism that these reports are far from revealing the security situation in Afghanistan and that the quantitative data has been manipulated by the U.S. An important fact to support these criticisms is that in the quarterly reports published by SIGAR, the number of U.S. soldiers stationed in Afghanistan, the numerical data of Afghan forces and the numbers of casualties in the military field are not shared with the public for almost two years, since late 2017.

1.3. Argument

There is a very common historical perception among Afghan people and foreign observers that Afghanistan is a victim of its neighbors and also great powers have little influence to improve the bad security situation it has been suffering for centuries. Some scholars claim that Afghanistan is peripheral to the security dynamics of the regions around it, and Afghanistan occupies a narrower space in its neighbors' security perception than most people would expect. Contrary to the opinions of some academics who claim that Afghanistan is a target of its neighbors, this thesis argues that the security of Afghanistan could be better understood by explaining the security vacuum created by the security prioritization of the neighboring regions in favor of other regional issues. This argument implies that

non-regional great power meddling in Afghanistan's security has long been driven by the need to fill in this security vacuum in Afghanistan. The great power interest and capacity to enhance security in Afghanistan tend to diminish when the great powers develop interest in other regions and their specific security interests in Afghanistan are ensured at a tolerable level.

1.4. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Some scholars claim that Afghanistan is at intersection point of three RSCs namely; Central Asia, South Asia, and the Persian Gulf. Each of those complexes has deep security disputes. An important issue of the South Asia security complex, Pakistan-India engagement in Afghanistan, can only be understood in the context of the rivalry between them. On the other hand, Central Asia security complex is fragmented by competition for regional supremacy. Each of the Central Asian states is seeking support from Global Powers in return of their support to "fight against terrorism" in Afghanistan. When it comes to the Persian Gulf, Iran struggles with Saudi Arabia for economic and political influence, which has reflections in their Afghan policies. For this reason, security of Afghanistan should be examined as a part of a larger conflict structure related to each other transnational economic, social and political networks. Afghanistan is both a source of conflict, because of "a spillover effect", and a possible chance for cooperation between neighboring states. The surrounding states share a concern for the stability of Afghanistan, thus there is a chance of cooperation among them.

As mentioned above, Afghanistan is perceived as the peripheral element of three regional security complexes. RSC theory was introduced by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, which argues that "geographical proximity defines pattern of security interdependence."¹⁷ In this study, RSC theory is considered an appropriate tool examine the security in and around Afghanistan. Buzan and Wæver define a RSC as;

¹⁷ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) pp. 1-3

a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another.¹⁸

The RSC approach has been established by Barry Buzan in early 1980s and was later further developed with Ole Waever's contributions. An RSC, is a group of states, which need to have a certain degree of mutual relation in the field of security. The level of mutual relations should be sufficient enough to define states as "a linked set" and to separate them from other neighboring security regions. A fundamental assumption of RSC approach is that "geographic proximity is important for security." The neighboring states do not have an option of disengagement, whereas distant states do. In this approach RSC's are identified as mutually exclusive. A state cannot be a member of several different RSCs. However, superpowers, like the U.S. and Russia, may be members of RSCs other than their own, but this does not make them prime members of that RSC. Superpowers can always choose to withdraw from an RSC. According to Buzan and Waever's approach, membership to an RSC has three basic criteria; "geographic closeness", "relative continuity of relations" and "common security concerns".¹⁹

There are different types of RSCs and they are distinguished by a basic benchmark, which is the issue of polarity. Does an RSC have a great power (unipolar), or is it dominated by competition between two states (bipolar), or is there a rivalry between more than two dominant actors (multipolar)? Answer to these questions defines the type of an RSC. Buzan and Waever also suggest that are steps in the evolution of an RSC namely; "conflict formation" "security regime" and "security community".²⁰

¹⁸ Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p.44

¹⁹ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p.11

²⁰ Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 53-54

In conflict this formation step, hostility rests at the core of the relation and there is no reciprocal trust and no institutions can successfully limit the use of power. Middle East and South Asia RSCs are good examples to a conflict formation. In a regional security regime, there is mutual mistrust and fear of other actor's possibility to use force, but they are kept under control by functioning institutions. Buzan and Waever show Southeast Asia RSC as an example to this system. On the other hand, in a regional security community, states do not see each other as a threat, and use of force is highly unlikely. The EU and North America, according to Buzan and Waever, are a fine example to a regional security community.²¹

One of the arguments of Buzan and Waever is that the intensity of security interdependence is shaped by geographical closeness. From this stand point, they claim that majority of the states fear from their neighbors more than a distant power.²² When it comes to global powers, Buzan and Waever argue that internal dynamics of an RSC is strong enough to determine the position of an intervening external power in line with the current power relations and fault lines of that RSC.²³ In this context, Afghanistan lies at the intersection of three separate regional security complexes, and pull in countries in each of these, also attracting Global Power attention to the region. Looking Afghanistan through the regional security complex perspective Harpviken and Tadjbakhsh contemplate that;

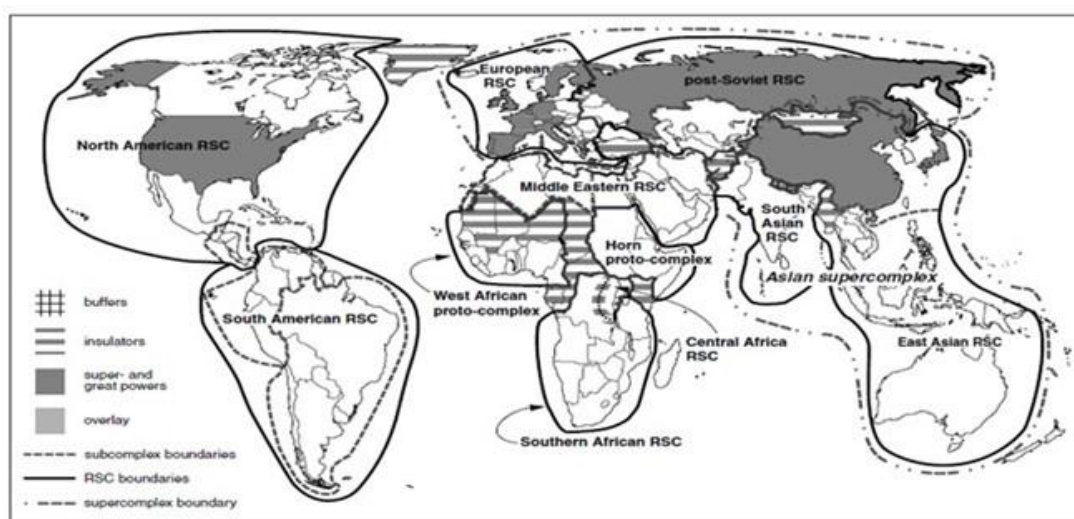
engagement in Afghanistan by each of its neighbors is not first and foremost a reflection of its bilateral relations with Afghanistan, but rather of concerns within its respective region.²⁴

²¹ Ibid., 55

²² Ibid., 41

²³ Ibid., 59

²⁴ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 3



Map 1: Regional Security Complexes in Post-Cold War Era²⁵

Afghanistan is at the crossroads of different regions such as South and Central Asia and the Middle East. Afghanistan has strong similarities with all those regions. Afghanistan, starting from the mid-1800s for served as a “buffer state” between the Russia and the Great Britain. In order to defend India, British from the south, sought to gain more territory, which was called “forward policy”.²⁶ On the other hand, the Russia sought to increase its control and influence over Central Asia. The competition between two major empires intensified all through the second part of the 19th century. The buffer-state status of Afghanistan started to appear 1870s with the “Treaty of Gandomak”, which ended the second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1879).²⁷ With the establishment of the “Wakhan Corridor”²⁸, a narrow piece of land which

²⁵ Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. xxvi

²⁶ Bijan Omrani, “The Durand line: History and Problems of The Afghan-Pakistan Border” *Asian Affairs*, 40:2, 2009 p. 182

²⁷ For further details on the agreement visit <http://www.khyber.org/history/treaties/gandamak.shtml> last accessed on July 16, 2019

²⁸ “Stranded on the Roof of the World” <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2013/02/wakhan-corridor/#close> last accessed on July 16, 2019

connects Afghanistan to the China, in 1895, buffer state status of Afghanistan was completed and it maintained this status throughout the 20th century.²⁹

Afghanistan, in Buzan and Waever scheme, is defined as an insulator between South Asia, the Middle East and the Central Asia RSCs. A buffer, according to Buzan and Waever, is a state which keeps rival powers apart in an RSC. Although Afghanistan draws in surrounding countries, into its chaotic internal dynamics are so strong that it also keeps the larger dynamics separate. In Buzan's and Weaver' point of view Afghanistan is an insulator, a distinct mini security complex that keeps surrounding regions apart. In such an understanding Afghanistan becomes an integral part of a larger security dynamic and a regional conflict formation.³⁰

In this thesis, however, Afghanistan is considered to be part of a wider RSC with intense interaction with the three RSCs, instead of claiming that Afghanistan is a buffer state or a mini-RSC located at the intersection of three different RSCs namely; Central Asia, South Asia, and the Persian Gulf RSCs. This wider RSC, including above mentioned RSCs along with Afghanistan can be called a mega continental RSC.

In this context, it is considered that the claim made by some academics that Afghanistan is a buffer state between the regional and global powers may be valid in the 19th century when the struggle between British and Russian Empires to dominate Central Asia continues, but today the claim is largely invalidated due to the increasing significance of Afghanistan's mega RSC, which is pointed out in this thesis.

The concept of "security" has become a central focus of international relations after massacres of World War I and World War II with a desire stop to such dreadful events from ever occurring again. In this regard, security is usually associated with survival of both people and states. According Booth security means, the lack of

²⁹ Frank A Clements, *Conflict in Afghanistan A Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003) p. 265

³⁰ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 142

threats which translates being safe from menace or feeling safe. According to Booth this definition has three basic elements; “the existence of a referent object (someone or something is threatened); impending or actual danger; and a desire to escape harmful possibilities”. Booth also asserts that “insecurity involves living in fear, with dangers arising from one or more types of threat.”³¹

Regarding “what security is” Paul D. Williams asserts that;

security is most commonly associated with the alleviation of threats to cherished values; especially those which, if left unchecked, threaten the survival of a particular referent object in the near future.....although security and survival are often related, they are not synonymous.³²

The concept, since from its introduction as an academic field of inquiry in early 20th century has been expanded to cover other areas such as energy, environment and health issues like pandemics. The Cold War period, which was marked by the Soviet Union and the U.S. arms race and intense political and political competition, also accelerated the security studies. In this period, Realist theory formed the basis of security studies and provided an effective theoretical framework for explaining the behaviors of states to ensure their security through military methods.³³

In this thesis security is used in the context of absence of military threat, also includes armed threats emanating from a terrorist organization or group, to a state, namely Afghanistan, both internally and externally. In this thesis, while the concept of security is handled as state-centric and a Realist perspective, the individuals who are thought to constitute the core element of a state are not ignored and the acts of violence originating from a state or terrorist groups towards individuals are also evaluated within the concept of security.

³¹ Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 100

³² Paul D. Williams, *Security Studies: An Introduction* (London and New York , Routledge 2008) p.7

³³ Malik, Shahin, “Framing a discipline” in Peter Hough, et al., *International Security Studies – Theory and Practice* (London and New York , Routledge 2015) p. 4 - 5

“Security” is also a difficult and relative concept to be measured quantitatively, especially in a country such as Afghanistan, where internal and regional armed conflicts have become a routine. However, perhaps one of the most reliable methods of quantifying security in a country is the identification of terrorist attacks, casualties and the number of injured people during a given period. In this context, most of the quantitative evaluations of the thesis have been carried out as a result of the assessment of the data published by official institutions and organizations. However, the main body of the thesis consists of an extensive literature on Afghanistan. Both the historical roots of Afghanistan and the current security developments are reflected in this thesis through this methodology. On the other hand, maps and tables were used in order to support the claims put forward by the thesis and care was taken to keep the maps and tables up-to-date with the latest data.

1.5. Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. The opening chapter has five sub-chapters namely; introduction, scope and objective, literature review, argument, theoretical framework and methodology and organization of thesis. In the second part, the historical background is discussed and this part consists of four sub-titles. The first part of the historical investigation includes the period from the first ages to the 19th century, the second part covers the 20th century and the Cold War period, the third part investigates the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan and the last part deals with the post-Soviet invasion and the period following that, when the Taliban was in power.

In the third chapter of the thesis, international factors affecting the security of Afghanistan are discussed. The chapter opens with the beginning of the US military operation, followed by the Bonn Agreement and other political developments, which are deemed to be the beginning of the political process in Afghanistan. NATO’s entry into Afghanistan is then examined as a separate subdivision, followed by NATO’s withdrawal. Sub-section number five, which examines post-NATO developments, includes the section dealing with the Strategic Partnership Agreement signed between the US and Afghanistan and the sections examining the Bilateral

Security Agreement. The third chapter concludes with the section on the reconstruction and state building process carried out by international actors.

The fourth chapter of the thesis deals with the national elements of Afghanistan's security. When it comes to security, the structure, effectiveness and self-sufficiency of a country's security force comes to mind first. The fourth chapter begins with a general review of the Afghanistan's security structure. The second important factor in the establishment of security is the Afghan administration, but instead of a detailed examination of the entire political structure of the country, institutions and structures that are thought to have a direct impact on security and democratic elections, which are considered as the most important elements of the state building in Afghanistan, are examined. This chapter also outlines the efforts of the Afghan Government to reconcile with the rebel groups and the Hikmetyar Group, which has begun to play a more positive role in Afghan politics. The fourth chapter of the thesis also aims to examine the factors that adversely affect the security of Afghanistan on national level. Al Qaeda and its related groups, the Taliban, the Haqqani Network and the drug production and trade in the country are also examined.

In the fifth chapter of the thesis, the effects of security developments in Afghanistan on neighboring and regional countries are discussed. The effects of these countries on Afghanistan are also examined. For this purpose, respectively; Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Iran, China, Russia, India and Turkey are inspected in their mutual security relations with Afghanistan. One of the main research notes of the thesis, whether the neighboring and regional countries have negative effects on the security of Afghanistan, is also examined in this section.

The sixth chapter is the conclusion of the thesis. This section examines the data obtained from other chapters and examines the impact of NATO withdrawal on the security situation in and around Afghanistan.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Afghanistan is a landlocked Central Asian country, covering an area of 647,500 square kilometers. The country is placed on the old trade routes between Asia and the Middle East. Afghanistan borders to the east with Pakistan (2,430 km), to the north with Tajikistan (1,206 km), Uzbekistan (137 km), and Turkmenistan (744 km). Afghanistan has short a short border to China (76 km) to the northeast and to the west shares a border with Iran (936 km).³⁴ Mountains cover more than half of the country and Afghanistan's average altitude is around 1,900 meters.³⁵ Afghanistan's highest mountain is Nowshak Mountain, which is 7,485 meters.³⁶

The last census in Afghanistan was held in 1979, according to which country's population was 15.5 million. Afghanistan's population is estimated to be around 38,200,000 as of August 2019.³⁷ Afghanistan is a linguistically and ethnically diverse country. The 2004 Afghan Constitution recognizes 14 different ethnic groups, namely; Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Aimaks, Turkmens, Baluchis, Nuristanis, Pamiris, Arabs, Gujars, Brahuis, Qizilbashs, and Pashais.³⁸ Within those

³⁴ "The World Fact Book - Afghanistan" <http://www.ciaworldfactbook.us/asia/afghanistan.html> last accessed on June 10, 2019

³⁵ "Countries With The Highest Average Elevations" <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-with-the-highest-average-elevations.html> last accessed on September 1, 2019

³⁶ "Afghanistan Geography" <https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/afghanistan/afland.htm> last accessed on June 10, 2019

³⁷ "Afghanistan Population 2019" <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/afghanistan-population/> last accessed on June 10, 2019

³⁸ "The World Fact Book – Afghanistan" <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> accessed on June 10, 2019

ethnic groups; Pashtuns make 42 %, and Tajiks make 27 %, of the population. Other smaller ethnic groups such as; Hazaras make 9 %, Uzbeks make 9 %, Aimaks, make 4 %, Turkmens make 3 % and Baluchis make 2 % of the population. Among these ethnicities, Pashtuns have historically been the prevailing group in Afghanistan. The major Pashtun tribes are; Durrani, Momand, Afridi, Ghilzai, and Yusufzai.



Map 2: Afghanistan and Its Neighbors³⁹

The majority of the Pashtuns are located in the south regions of the Hindu Kush mountain range, whereas the Uzbeks and Turkmens populate the north and central regions. Tajiks inhabit north of the Hindu Kush mountain range, Hazaras are located at the center of the country, and Aimaks are located to their west. Afghanistan's capital Kabul is positioned at the crossroads of Pashtun, Hazara and Tajik regions.⁴⁰ As of 2019, nearly one third of Afghan people (25%) live in cities. The population density in Afghanistan is 58 per Km square.⁴¹

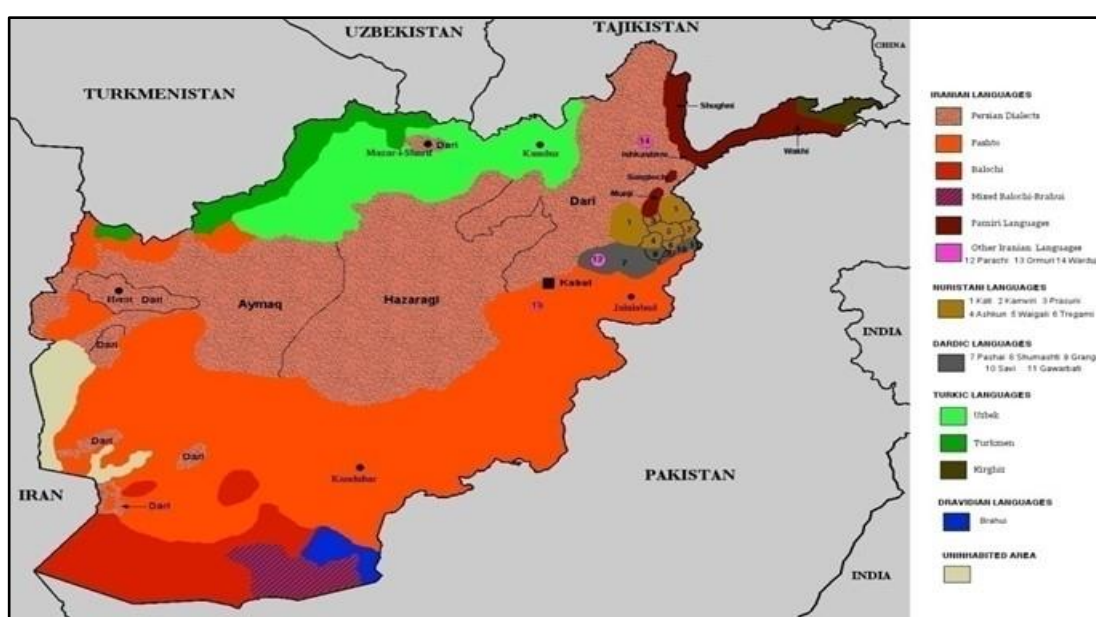
³⁹ "Afghanistan — Physiography" https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghanistan_physio-2009.jpg accessed on June 10, 2019

⁴⁰ Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010) pp. 14-15

⁴¹ "Afghanistan Population" <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/afghanistan-population/> last accessed on September 1, 2019

Due to its ethnic diversity, several different languages are spoken in Afghanistan. A recent estimate indicated that 77% of Afghans speak Dari, 48% Pashto, 14% Turkic languages (*Uzbek and Turkmen*) and 4%-7% other languages. (*The total is greater than 100 because many Afghans speak more than one language*)⁴²

Among those, historically Dari has been the language of the government. Pashto has also been a widely spoken language in Afghanistan for many centuries and today majority of Afghans can speak both Dari and Pashto.⁴³



Map 3: Ethnic and Linguistic Groups in Afghanistan⁴⁴

On the other hand, the diversity of languages cannot be seen in the field of religion. The majority of Afghans, 85 - 90%, are Sunni Muslims, and 10 - 15% are Shi'ites. Afghanistan is an extremely poor country and its economy is dependent on

⁴² "The World Fact Book – Afghanistan" <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> accessed on September 1, 2019

⁴³ Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010) p.19

⁴⁴ "Linguistic Map of Afghanistan" http://www.languagesgulper.com/eng/Linguistic_map_of_Afghanistan.html last accessed on July 15, 2019

agriculture. Nearly 20% of the land is suitable for farming and more than 40% can be used for pasture. Foreign economic aid has become the most important aspect of the Afghan economy since 2001.⁴⁵

2.1. Afghanistan from Early Ages to the End of 19th Century

In the majority of sources, the history of Afghanistan begins with the creation of the Durrani monarchy in 1747, however, until the 18th century nearly two-dozen empires occupied and ruled the lands what we call today Afghanistan. Afghanistan is located between Asia and the Middle East trade routes, which resulted in the frequent invasion of the country by foreign forces. However, none of the invading forces were able to assert a lasting control and had to withdraw.⁴⁶

Human settlement in Afghanistan dates back to thousands of years. Archaeological evidences indicate that early civilizations have occurred in the Hindu Kush region as early as 50.000 B.C., which means northern Afghanistan was among the earliest locations that humans domesticated plants and animals. An excavation in 1954 at the Kara Kamar cave (*Badakshan area*), a Stone Age site, revealed the remains of a human skull which was dated to be from 30000 years ago.⁴⁷ Historians also support the opinion that semi-nomadic life and farming existed in Afghanistan as early as 7,000 B.C. and harvesting settlements existed as far back as 5,000 B.C.⁴⁸

Although it is not known exactly when the first civilization emerged in Afghanistan, the majority of researches point out that the second and first millennia B.C., Central

⁴⁵ “The World Fact Book – Afghanistan” <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> last accessed on July 15, 2019

⁴⁶ B.D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) pp. 2-33

⁴⁷ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) pp. 16-17

⁴⁸ “Ancient Afghanistan From Prehistory to Medes (20.000-551 BC)” <https://www.cemml.colostate.edu/cultural/09476/afgh02-02enl.html> last accessed on July 1, 2019

Asian Aryan tribes began to migrate into the region now known as Afghanistan.⁴⁹ The first Middle Easterners to conquer large chunks of Afghan territory were the Assyrians. They ruled much of Iran, and they reached to Kandahar in southern Afghanistan in the 8th Century B.C.⁵⁰

Following the Assyrians, a western (*Iranian*) civilization, the *Medes*, around 700 B.C. migrated to Afghanistan and managed to conquer a significant number of settlements. The Medes created the first empire in the region and marked the beginning of a long list of empires that would struggle to conquer and control the land of the Afghans. Deioces, the first Aryan king of the Medes Empire marked beginning of the Medes dynasty, which continued more than 180 years.⁵¹

In 553 B.C., Cyrus the Great, rebelled against Astyages and defeated him in 550 B.C.⁵² Beginning with the rule of Cyrus the Great, the reign of the Persians continued for nearly 200 years until Alexander the Great in 331 B.C. defeated Darius III, the last king of the Persian Empire.⁵³ This marked the end of the Persian control in Afghanistan and the rise of the Macedonian rule. However, after the death of Alexander in 323 B.C., the empire he built started to crumble. His death marked the beginning of the Hellenistic period in Afghanistan. After him, Seleucus I. Nicator,

⁴⁹ Jeffrey A. Gritzner, *Modern World Nations - Afghanistan* 2nd edition, (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007) p.11

⁵⁰ Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010) p. 39

⁵¹ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 23

⁵² “Achaemenid Empire” https://www.crystalinks.com/Achaemenid_Empire.html last accessed on July 1, 2019

⁵³ Ibid.

seized control of the empire in the east and established a new dynasty in Babylon in 312 B.C.⁵⁴

However, in 305 B.C., Seleucus I. was forced to surrender most of the land south of the Hindi Kush after he was defeated by the Mauryan Empire of India. One of the most important consequences of the Mauryan victory was that during this period Buddhism was introduced to the region and became a prominent religion in southern Afghanistan.⁵⁵

In 135 B.C., five Central Asian tribes united under one Kushan tribe, and fought to seize the Afghan lands. During their conquests, these nomadic tribes established control over Sistan (*the region between Iran and Afghanistan*) and Kandahar in the south, which were previously controlled by the Parthians. The rule of the Kushan Empire would last nearly 400 years until it was divided into several smaller kingdoms in the third century A.D. The division of the Kushans weakened the empire and the Sassanians of Persia easily captured Afghanistan in 241 A.D. from the Kushan Empire.⁵⁶

The Sassanian control over Afghanistan continued for more than a century, but the new rulers of the country was unable to escape the fate its numerous predecessors had to face. Having failed to unite and fully conquer the region, the Sassanians were defeated by northern nomadic invaders. In 400 A.D., Central Asian tribes under the leadership of Hephthalites seized control.⁵⁷ The Hephthalites stormed into Bactria and into southern Afghanistan, destroying the remaining Kushan and Sassanian kingdoms in the region. The reign of the Hephthalites lasted for nearly 200 years, during which Afghanistan was ravaged and destroyed. The Hephthalites rule was

⁵⁴ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) pp. 39-41

⁵⁵ Ibid., 41-42

⁵⁶ Ibid., 46-47

⁵⁷ “The Sasanids and Hephthalites” <https://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan/Historical-beginnings-to-the-7th-century-ce#ref109911> last accessed on May 12, 2019

ended in 6th century A.D. by another Central Asian nomadic tribe. The Western Turks allied with *Sassanids* defeated the Hephthalites in 565 A.D. and gained control of the region.⁵⁸

In 642, the Arab armies crushed the Sassanian Empire at the Battle of Nahavand, which marked the beginning of the Arab conquests in the region. At Nahavand 30,000 Arab troops, under the command of Numān attacked a Sassanian army claimed to be around 150,000 men.⁵⁹ The Arab dominance in the region continued until 9th century, under the Abbasid rule. However, the Abbasid Empire began to disintegrate after the death of Harun al-Rashid in 809.⁶⁰

In 900, the Samanids conquered all the Saffarid territories and united Afghanistan. But around 960, a new wave of Turk and Mongol invaders started to exert pressure on Samanid controlled areas. In 990, the Ilkhan Turks captured Bukhara and only nine years later they ended the Samanid Empire. On the other hand, a Turk general, Alptigin who headed a Samanid garrison in Khorasan staged an unsuccessful coup d'état and then fled to the Ghazna fortress, which he ruled on behalf of the Samanids, beginning from 961, under the name Ghaznavids. After Alptigin, his son-in-law Subuktigin, expanded the control of Ghaznavids to whole of Khorasan and southern regions.⁶¹ But the real founder of the Ghaznavids was Subuktigin's son, Mahmud. After the death of Mahmud in 1030, the Ghaznavid Empire did not remain intact.⁶²

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "Battle of Nahavand" <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Nahavand> last accessed on May 12, 2019

⁶⁰ "Harun Al-Rashid" <https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/history/middle-eastern-history-biographies/harun-al-rashid> last accessed on May 12, 2019

⁶¹ Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010) p. 57

⁶² For further information regarding the Islamic Dynasties which ruled Afghanistan see Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties: A chronological and genealogical manual* (Edinburgh University Press, 1996) Chapter 16

Another Muslim Turk dynasty, Seljuks took control of western Afghanistan when they defeated the Ghaznavid Empire at the battle of Dandanaqan in 1040.⁶³

In 1219, Afghanistan was invaded by the Mongols headed by Cenghis Khan.⁶⁴ It is often argued by historians that Afghanistan's decentralized tribal rule and its feudal code of values owe a great deal to the Mongol invasion. It was also argued that the ongoing progress of urban civilization in Afghanistan was set back hundreds of years due to the Mongol invasion. In Afghanistan, Genghis Khan was well-known for the immense destruction he inflicted on the country. It is claimed that his purposefully destruction of the irrigation systems in Afghanistan left the region an unfertile desert for the centuries to come. After Genghis Khan died in 1227, the empire he built was divided into four smaller kingdoms. The remains of Balkh, Kabul, and Ghazna were taken by the Jagatai Khanate and Herat and the west of Afghanistan went to Ilkhan rule.⁶⁵

In 1357, a descendant of Genghis Khan, Timur, (*also known as Tamerlane*) became the new leader of Mongols.⁶⁶ After Timur's death in 1405, a fight began among his heirs over the throne and rival clans claimed right to rule the kingdom. After a bloody period, Timur's youngest son, Shah Rokh, emerged as the new ruler of the kingdom.⁶⁷ Shah Rokh ruled his kingdom from the capital, Herat. After a relatively peaceful period, the hostility for the throne soon began again following his death in 1447. The turmoil within the empire ended only when Sultan Hosayn Bayqara assumed power in 1468. Sultan Bayqara's reign continued nearly 40 years until

⁶³ "Battle of Dandānqān" <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Dandanqan> last accessed on May 12, 2019

⁶⁴ "Mongol Empire- Initial conquests" <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mongol-empire> last accessed on June 8, 2019

⁶⁵ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) pp. 54-60

⁶⁶ "Timur" <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Timur> last accessed on June 8, 2019

⁶⁷ Ibid.

1506.⁶⁸ After the Timur Empire lost control, the region came under the control an Uzbek dynasty, the Shaibani, captured Heart.⁶⁹

Afghanistan was divided into a number of parts through 16th to 18th centuries. In the early 16th century, Zahiruddin Mohammad, who claimed to be a descendant of Cenghis Khan and Timur became a dominant power in Afghanistan.⁷⁰ He later renamed himself Babur Shah, (*the tiger*), founded the Mogul Empire and made Kabul the capital in 1504. In an attempt to expanding his lands, he seized Kandahar in 1522 and Delhi in 1526.⁷¹ Throughout 16th century there were two rivaling empires in Afghanistan, the Moguls ruled from Kabul, the Safavids ruled from Herat. Increasing its power in the middle of the 17th century the Safavids challenged the Mogul Empire, and overtook the area.⁷²

In 1709, Ghaznavid Khan Nasher, assumed the leadership of the local Pashtun tribes and revolted against the Safavids which resulted in the transfer of power in Afghanistan to local elements.⁷³ By 1720, the local Afghan tribes became too much powerful and posed a real threat to the Safavids. In 1722, after several months of fighting, these united Afghan tribes managed to occupy Isfahan, the capital of

⁶⁸ “Hosayn Bayqara” <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hosayn-bayqara> last accessed on June 8, 2019

⁶⁹ “Uzbekistan - Independent Khanates” <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/centralasia/uzbek-history-06.htm> last accessed on June 8, 2019

⁷⁰ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 62

⁷¹ “Babur Shah” <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Babur> last accessed on June 8, 2019

⁷² “Mughal-Safavid Rivalry, ca. 1500-1747” <http://countrystudies.us/afghanistan/10.htm> last accessed on June 8, 2019

⁷³ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) pp. 63-64

Safavids.⁷⁴ However, the Afghans were unable to control the Safavid lands for a long time and in 1729 Nadir Shah of Persia defeated Afghans in Damghan and recaptured Isfahan. Following the occupation of southwestern Afghanistan in 1738, Nadir Shah conquered the remaining provinces seizing Kandahar and Kabul.⁷⁵

Following Nadir Shah's assassination in 1747, Ahmed Shah was chosen as the new ruler of the country by Loya Jirga.⁷⁶ The Durrani Empire became the prime force in Afghanistan until the British invasion in the 19th century. During the Durrani period, Afghanistan's contemporary governmental structure was established; however, country's borders remained undefined until the arrival of the British.⁷⁷

In 1749, he seized Sindh, the Punjab region, the west of the Indus River, and further expanded his kingdom.⁷⁸ Ahmad Durrani had a remarkable role in the establishment of Afghanistan. For this he was regarded highly by other tribal leaders and referred as "Father of Afghanistan". In 1757, Ahmad Durrani's son Timur, was named as his successor, and unwillingly accepted by other Afghan tribal leaders since he was considered as an inept leader. Timur's era lasted for more than twenty years, from 1772 until 1793 and most of this time was spent fighting civil disputes and trying to pacify other rebellions. Timur died in 1793 and his fifth son Zaman Shah succeeded him, but Timur's other sons claimed leadership in various parts of the Empire. Zaman Shah Durrani held the position of "Governor of Kabul" during Timur's last

⁷⁴ Robert D. Crews, *Afghan Modern: The History of a Global Nation* (Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2015) p.45

⁷⁵ Ibid., 49

⁷⁶ Ludwig W. Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan* 3rd edition, (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003), p. 236 For a brief explanation how Loya Jirga functions visit "Loya Jirga - An Afghan Tradition Explained" <https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-loya-jirga-explainer/25174483.html> last accessed on June 8, 2019

⁷⁷ Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012) p.21

⁷⁸ Jonathan L. Lee, *Afghanistan: A History from 1260 to the Present* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018) pp. 116-137

days, which helped him to become the new ruler of Afghanistan, despite he was fifth in line to the throne. He became shah at the young age of 23 and his reign continued until 1801.⁷⁹

After Zaman Shah Durrani, his older brother, Mahmud Shah Durrani became the new ruler of Afghanistan. But in 1803 he was overthrown by Shuja Shah Durrani who ruled Afghanistan for the following six years. Shuja Shah Durrani, towards the end of his rule, signed an agreement with the British to stop the French and Persian attacks against Afghanistan. But Britain had other plans and was aiming to control Afghanistan's foreign relations in order to keep it as a "buffer state" against France and Russia and keep India safe from outside powers.⁸⁰

To meet these ends, the British demanded as part of the treaty, that Shuja Shah Durrani must not allow any other foreign powers to pass through Afghanistan, indirectly implying that the most significant menaces towards the British India were France and Russia. The treaty would be the first of many treaties signed with Britain, but after a short period Shuja Shah Durrani's predecessor Mahmud Shah Durrani returned to overthrow him and seized Kandahar and Kabul in 1809. The ultimate defeat of Shuja Shah Durrani took place at the Battle at Nimla in 1809 and Mahmud Shah became once more the ruler of Afghanistan, which lasted for nine years until 1818. The British, after 30 years, during the First Anglo-Afghan War, reinstated Shuja Shah Durrani, calculating that they would better cooperate with him than Mahmud Shah. Shuja Shah Durrani, during his second term, remained in power from 1839 to 1842, and served as a puppet monarch for the British.⁸¹

In 1814, the British requested a new agreement from Mahmud Shah Durrani, in which it was specified that Afghan Shah would not cooperate or sign any agreements with other countries that were enemies of British interests. Having close relations

⁷⁹ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) pp. 71-72

⁸⁰ Ibid., 74

⁸¹ Ibid., 74

with the British did not save the Afghan Shah from regional rivalries. In 1818, Iranians tried to capture Herat. In an attempt to save Herat from an Iranian invasion Mahmud Shah Durrani sent his ally Fateh Khan to repel the invaders. Fateh Khan was successful in keeping the Iranians away from Herat, but fearing that another Pashtun leader getting too strong, Mahmud Shah Durrani and his son killed Fateh Khan in Kabul. This started a Barakzai uprising, which resulted in his fled to Herat.⁸²

Afghanistan being in turmoil, another son of Timur Shah, Sultan Ali Shah, seized the throne in 1818, and renamed himself Ali Shah Durrani. However, he could only rule one year and in 1819 the Durrani Dynasty lost control of all previously held territories and was overthrown. In the midst of the weakened empire, in 1826 Dost Mohammad assumed the title of “Amir” in Kabul and founded the Barakzai (*Barakzai – sons of Barak*) dynasty in Afghanistan.⁸³

The competition of Britain and Russia to exercise control on Central Asia began in early 18th century. The over-heated enmity in the early 19th century resulted in the British invasion of Afghanistan. The main objective of Britain was to control Afghanistan through keeping the country weak and divided. When Dost Mohammad removed Shuja Shah from power, he in a sense also removed the British puppet leader from the throne, who signed a treaty, which enabled British control over Afghanistan. The British attempted to develop good relations with Dost Mohammad to continue British control over Afghanistan. On the other hand, Dost Mohammad was determined to keep Afghanistan independent from foreign occupation and refused to allow Britain to realize its demands. He opposed the agreement signed by Shuja Shah, which did not allow other countries to use Afghan territory for transit purposes.⁸⁴

⁸² Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010) p. 80

⁸³ “Barakzai dynasty” <https://www.revolvy.com/page/Barakzai-dynasty> last accessed on June 8, 2019

⁸⁴ Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012) pp. 27-32

The reaction of Britain to Dost Mohammed's decision was rather harsh. The British declared war on Dost Mohammed in October 1838.⁸⁵ The First Anglo-Afghan War started in February 1839. The British troops advanced across the Bolan Pass in Pakistan, nearly 75 km from the Afghan border. In late April, British troops arrived in Kandahar, however, the Afghan forces had already left the city. The Governor of India, Lord Auckland, achieved his initial goal and restored Shuja Shah to the throne. Dost Mohammad and his followers sought refuge in the mountains for nearly a year, however, weary from fighting a far superior force, Dost Mohammad surrendered in early November, 1840.⁸⁶

Over the following months, the British forces confronted numerous revolts and finally decided to retreat. The British came to the realization of severity of their situation in Afghanistan and in early 1842 and decided to pull the British forces out of Afghanistan. However, the retreat was not an easy task, since the British troops struggled to go through the snow covered passes and were ambushed by Ghilzai tribes. Along the passes between Kabul and Gandamak, almost 16,500 British soldiers and civilians who accompany them were attacked and killed.⁸⁷

The First Anglo-Afghan War, which ended in 1842, resulted in total annihilation of the British forces. The British army lost nearly 20,000 men and the cost of the war reached up to £20 million. Towards the end of the first British invasion of Afghanistan, Shuja Shah was killed in 1842. Following the assassination, chaos reigned in Kabul for several months. Finally, Mohammad Khan was able to control the city and kept it, until his father Dost Mohammad was released by the British. In April 1843, Dost Mohammad assumed his throne back and continued to be an important figure in Afghanistan until his death in 1863. Dost Mohammad died on

⁸⁵ Robert D. Crews, *Afghan Modern: The History of a Global Nation* (Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2015) p. 61

⁸⁶ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 77

⁸⁷ Martin McCauley, *Afghanistan and Central Asia: A Modern History* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2002) p. 6

May 26, 1863 and his son Sher Ali Khan assumed the throne. During the war with Iran, the British revived its former strategy to use Afghanistan as a buffer state. For this purpose, the British were willing to support Sher Ali financially and with weapons, but reluctant to send troops to provide the much-needed military support.⁸⁸

In May 1873, the Russians, much disturbed by the British influence in Afghanistan, attacked the Khiva Khanate, located in Uzbekistan. After controlling Khiva Khanate, the Russians made plans to move into Afghanistan. While the Russians were making plans to enter Afghanistan, no match to the superior Russian forces, the Afghan ruler called on British to provide support.⁸⁹ However, the British had signed a treaty with the Russians a year ago, which stated that the Russians would respect Afghanistan's boundaries. Hands tied with the agreement signed with the Russians, the British did not provide any support to Afghanistan.⁹⁰

Encouraged by the British reluctance to help Sher Ali, in 1878 without the official request of Afghans Russia sent an envoy to Kabul. Sher Ali tried to refuse the representative, but the Russians offered military support against the British. Sher Ali reluctantly agreed to allow the existence of a Russian representative in Kabul. Soon after, the British found out about the Russian envoy and demanded that the Sher Ali accept a British representative as well. Sher Ali refused the offer, but the British insisted and dispatched the British envoy towards Kabul, without getting the approval of Sher Ali.⁹¹

The British envoy and the accompanying troops were stopped at the Khyber Pass and ordered not to proceed further. When the British were refused at the Khyber Pass and

⁸⁸ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) pp.78-79

⁸⁹ Ibid., 79

⁹⁰ "ANGLO-RUSSIAN AGREEMENT OF 1873" <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/anglo-russian-agreement-of-1873> last accessed on July 13, 2019

⁹¹ Angelo Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: A Modern History - Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition* (London, Newyork: I.B. Tauris, 2002) p.7

forced to turn back, the Second Anglo-Afghan War officially started. The Second Anglo-Afghan Civil War, which lasted for two years, began when the British forces entered into Afghanistan in August 1878. Unable to gain support from Russia, Sher Ali fled to Mazar-e Sharif in the north of Afghanistan and died on February 21, 1879 and Ali's son Yaqub Khan succeeded him. However, the British had already invaded a great part of the country when he sat on the throne.⁹² After becoming the new ruler of Afghanistan, Yaqub Khan signed the Treaty of Gandamak in May 26, 1879.⁹³

The treaty also required that a British representative would be stationed in Kabul and British would control the Khyber Pass. It was also stated in the agreement that Afghanistan would hand over several frontier areas to the British authority.⁹⁴

In September 1879, the British representative was killed by Afghan rebellions in Kabul. The British removed Yaqub Khan and placed Abdur Rahman Khan to the throne. The British kept Afghanistan's foreign policy under control. The British pulled out their forces from Afghanistan in 1881, but demanded from Abdur Rahman Khan to obey the Treaty of Gandamak. During Abdur Rahman Khan's 20 years in power (1880 - 1901), the Britain and Russia established Afghanistan contemporary official boundaries.⁹⁵

The Afghan-Indian border was established in 1893. The agreement was signed between Sir Mortimer Durand, and Abdur Rahman Khan.⁹⁶ Actually, the border

⁹² Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 80

⁹³ Ludwig W. Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan* 3rd edition, (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003) p. 127

⁹⁴ "Treaty of Gandamak" <http://www.khyber.org/history/treaties/gandamak.shtml> last accessed on July 13, 2019

⁹⁵ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 81

⁹⁶ Ludwig W. Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan* 3rd edition, (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003) pp. 86-88

negotiations, took several years to settle, because of the difficulties in the delineation and the unpleasant feelings it created among Afghans. Abdur Rahman Khan considered the Durand Line as a barrier for Afghanistan to reach to a seaport. With the agreement, by which the Durand Line was created, Afghanistan would remain a landlocked country.⁹⁷ Also, the Durand Line had separated the eastern Pashtuns near Pakistan from Afghanistan, and created the problem what would be referred to as the “Pashtun issue”. The Durand Line was arbitrarily set without any deliberation for tribal settlements.⁹⁸

After Abdur Rahman’s death, Habibollah Khan ascended to the throne through a peaceful way. However, Habibollah Khan’s regime was much more different than Abdur Rahman’s reign. He followed a severe neutrality policy. As a part of his neutrality policy, Habibollah Khan announced that Afghanistan would remain neutral in World War I. The announced neutrality of Habibollah enabled him to focus on the internal affairs to modernize Afghanistan. Habibollah Khan was assassinated in 1919 by family members, who were against the British control in Afghanistan. Due to financial difficulties, during his reign Habibollah Khan was unable to achieve what he desired to do. However, he was able to initiate social and economic reforms that would be further implemented by his successor, Amanullah Khan.⁹⁹

Amanullah Khan was firm in his position on Afghanistan’s autonomy from foreign intervention and control. Starting from the Second Anglo-Afghan War, the boundaries Afghanistan had been set up by foreign forces. These forces wanted to use Afghanistan as a buffer state. The British tailored Treaty of Gandamak and the Durand Line enforced British control and dominance in Afghanistan. Also, the Russians became very influential in Afghanistan by imposing the land settlements of the Amu-Darya in 1888 and Parmir in 1895. These borders had been established by

⁹⁷ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 82

⁹⁸ Satender Kumar Lambah, “The Durand Line” *Policy Paper* No:4 Aspen Institute India 2011 p.19

⁹⁹ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) pp. 83-84

foreign governments in the name of Afghanistan, but with no respect for the tribal boundaries and the religious groups. Amanullah Khan, with the intention to take control of his country's foreign policy, started the Third Anglo-Afghan War in May 1919.¹⁰⁰

Amanullah Khan's idea was that modernization reforms in Afghanistan could only be achieved by managing full Afghan independence. He sought to get Afghanistan's independence by a surprise attack against the British in May 1919. The British retaliated the Afghan attack with an aerial assault. The superiority of the British air power forced Afghanistan to sign the Treaty of Rawalpindi. The British recognized Afghan independence and with the treat and agreed that the British forces would not pass the Khyber Pass line. By the time the Treaty of Rawalpindi was completed in 1921, Afghanistan had already established relations with most of the major countries including Russia, without coordinating with the British.¹⁰¹

For Afghanistan, the Third Anglo-Afghan War was possible by the military support from the new revolutionary government in Russia. The most important outcome of the Third Anglo-Afghan war was Afghanistan's regaining the right to control its own foreign policy. Following the Third Anglo-Afghan war, the Soviet Union attempted to counterbalance British influence in Afghanistan. On the other hand, the Afghan response to Soviet proposals was a planned strategy of balancing, (*bi-tarafi*) a type of nonalignment which dominated country's foreign affairs until mid-1970s.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ "Third Anglo-Afghan War – 1919" <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/anglo-afghan-3.htm> last accessed on July 16, 2019

¹⁰¹ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) pp. 88-89

¹⁰² Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 5

2.2. 20th Century and the Cold War Period

Amanullah Khan successfully initiated numerous reforms and attempted to transform Afghanistan through social, economic, and political reforms. But despite all his good intentions, some of these reforms were fiercely opposed by the public.¹⁰³ In January 1929, due to opposition and resistance Amanullah was forced to resign and a Tajik tribal leader, Habibullah Kalakani, seized Kabul. However, his rule lasted only for 10 months, and Nadir Shah, Amanullah Khan's oldest son, after several months of seeking tribal support, was able to cross the Durand Line into Afghanistan. With a large force behind him, he defeated Habibullah Kalakani and seized Kabul in early October, 1929. Soon after, Nadir Shah was announced as the new leader of Afghanistan.¹⁰⁴

The dynasty established by Nadir Shah, Musahiban, had lead Afghanistan for 40 years of relative peace and state building.¹⁰⁵ Following his ascension to the throne, in an attempt reconsolidate the country, Nadir Shah abolished Amanullah Khan's reform programs. Despite his efforts to reestablish a national army, in 1930, the religious and tribal leaders in Afghanistan who grew stronger started a rebellion against Nadir Shah with the support of the Shinwari Pashtuns.¹⁰⁶ Nadir Shah managed to suppress many of the rebellions but the growing distaste against Nadir Shah resulted in his assassination by a Kabul student, in November 1933. After his assassination, his son Zahir, succeeded him. Becoming Shah at the age of 19, Zahir

¹⁰³ Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012) pp. 42-43

¹⁰⁴ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) pp. 91-92

¹⁰⁵ Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011) p. 76

¹⁰⁶ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 93

Shah spent most of his time under the guidance of his advisers in the royal family, including his uncles and his cousin Mohammad Daoud Khan.¹⁰⁷

Afghanistan was acknowledged by the international community when it joined the League of Nations on September 17, 1934.¹⁰⁸ With the purpose of strengthening the army, the economy, and the infrastructure, Afghanistan established a new government. During this period Afghanistan also made attempts to establish good relations with its neighbors. The Treaty of Saadabad was signed on July 8, 1937, in an effort to maintain regional security.¹⁰⁹ In essence, the treaty was a non-aggression pact which increased Afghanistan's relations with Iran, Iraq, and Turkey and lasted for five years.¹¹⁰

After the World War II, in 1947, the Durand Line issue once again became serious problem for the Afghan government. The Durand Line became a subject of debate between Afghanistan and Pakistan governments and the Pashtun tribes were caught in the middle of this dispute. In July 1947, at plebiscite the majority of Pashtuns (nearly 290,000 voted for union with Pakistan and a mere 2,000 voted for union with India) of the North-West Frontier Province voted to be a part of Pakistan.¹¹¹ Afghanistan had no choice to accept the decision, but the issue remained unresolved until 1949, when a Pakistani bombed a Pashtun village.¹¹² Considering these new

¹⁰⁷ Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012) pp. 106-108

¹⁰⁸ "League of Nations Treaty Series" https://treaties.un.org/Pages/Content.aspx?path=DB/LoNOnline/pageIntro_en.xml last accessed on July 18, 2019

¹⁰⁹ "Atatürk Döneminde Türk Dış Politikası" <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/ataturk-doneminde-turk-dis-politikasi.tr.mfa> last accessed on July 18, 2019

¹¹⁰ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 94

¹¹¹ Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012) p. 122

¹¹² Jonathan L. Lee, *Afghanistan: A History from 1260 to the Present* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018) pp. 553

incidents, Afghanistan held a Loya Jirga in 1949 and repudiated all agreements and treaties regarding the Durand Line.¹¹³

This decision caused a great reaction on Pakistani side and the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan strained. Pakistan stopped to transport petroleum in 1950, which caused Afghan government to search for other routes of petroleum supply. The Afghan government signed a treaty with the Soviets in July 1950, which included trade of commodities.¹¹⁴ Zahir Shah's cousin, Mohammad Daoud Khan became prime minister in September 1953. After becoming prime minister, Daoud Khan sought to increase relations with the Soviet Union and continued to distance Afghanistan from Pakistan.¹¹⁵ In 1956 Soviets signed another agreement with Afghanistan, according to which Soviets sold sophisticated military equipment to Afghanistan.¹¹⁶

However the Soviet support was not enough and the Afghan economy further declined due to the lack of income from trade revenue and foreign exchange. Consequently, Zahir Shah demanded Daoud's resignation. With no other option left Daoud resigned in 1963.¹¹⁷

The replacement of Prime Minister Daoud opened a new chapter in diplomatic and commercial relations with Pakistan. Issues with Pakistan started to be solved. Following Daoud's resignation, Zahir Shah assigned a council to draft a new

¹¹³ Satender Kumar Lambah, "The Durand Line" *Policy Paper* No:4 Aspen Institute India 2011 p.22

¹¹⁴ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 95

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 96

¹¹⁶ Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010) p. 209

¹¹⁷ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 99

constitution for Afghanistan. Zahir Shah summoned a Loya Jirga, which included members of the Judiciary, the Parliament, and the Senate with the intention to elect new representatives. New representatives were elected and some representatives were directly appointed by Zahir Shah. The constitutional assembly convened in September 1964 with 452 representatives. The new Constitution was signed by all 452 members on September 20, 1964. It was ratified by Zahir Shah 10 days later. According to the new Constitution, “the Wolasi Jirga” (*House of Representatives*) the lower house of parliament, was established which composed of 216 members. Zahir Shah also elected Mohammad Hashim Maiwandwal as prime minister.¹¹⁸

However, the new environment of freedom and the reforms introduced by the new Constitution resulted in the expansion of left-wing parties. One of such parties was the Communist People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The Party was established in January 1965 and had strong ties to the Soviet Union. The PDPA, shortly after it was established, became more successful than expected and four PDPA members were elected. The PDPA divided into several subgroups in 1967, the most important two were the Khalq and the Parcham groups led by Nur Muhammad Taraki and Babrak Karmal respectively.¹¹⁹ On July 18, 1973, Daoud, staged a bloodless coup d’état and ended Zahir Shah’s era.¹²⁰

2.3. The Soviet Invasion

During his five-year presidency, Daoud’s relationship with the groups which supported him during 1973 coup declined. In 1977 he organized a Loya Jirga to adopt a new constitution which would give him control over politics and economy.¹²¹ His relationship with the communist groups also declined. He resorted to purges of

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 99-100

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 100-101

¹²⁰ Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012) p. 136

¹²¹ Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan* 2nd edition (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010) p. 135

communists of all sides and banned PDPA. Also, Daoud refused to accept economic and military support from the Soviets and sought to build alliances with other countries. However, Daoud understood very well that any alternative ally must have the economic and political power to give a hand to Afghanistan, if Afghanistan was to distance itself from the Soviet Union. For this purpose, Daoud turned to several countries for help, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, to get financial support. He resorted to India for military support and to Iran for aid in economic development.¹²² But the communists acted before Daoud could root them out. In April 1978 the PDPA staged a successful coup. The Soviets, although reluctantly, supported the new regime politically and financially.¹²³

The coup put an end to the republican rule initiated by Ahmad Shah Durrani more than 200 years earlier. Under the communist regime, Taraki became president of the “Revolutionary Council”. He also became the prime minister. Daoud, along with his family members was killed in his presidential palace.¹²⁴ Shortly before the coup there were nearly 200 Soviet military advisors in Afghanistan. However after the coup, Soviets sent hundreds of new military personnel to Afghanistan and the number of the Soviet soldiers reached to 2,500 in a couple of months.¹²⁵

In December 1978, the Khalq faction signed a partnership treaty with the Soviet Union to allow the deployment of Soviet military force with request of the Afghan government. The agreement signed by the communist government, served Afghanistan to the Soviets on a golden plate. These policy implementation efforts

¹²² Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 102

¹²³ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 6

¹²⁴ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 103

¹²⁵ Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011) p. 121

eventually initiated the Soviet invasion.¹²⁶ In October, a tribe from the Kunar region, the Nuristani tribe, rebelled against the government and this first uprising inspired other revolts. The Afghans rebels attacked Herat and cruelly slaughtered Soviet soldiers. Only after a month of fighting, the rebellion was pacified. During the clashes between the rebels and Afghan forces more than hundred Soviets soldiers along with their families were killed. In the next several months, the tribal revolts intensified and spread throughout Afghanistan.¹²⁷

By the first months of 1979, nearly 85% of the provinces in Afghanistan had revolted against the government. In the last months of 1979, the situation in Afghanistan got worse and revolt against the government escalated, leading a Soviet invasion. In December, the Soviets stationed forces around Kabul Airport and Bagram Air Base. Following that, the Soviets entered Afghanistan with several ground divisions and headed to the frontier provinces. On December 24, the Soviets landed several hundred soldiers to Kabul Airport, a force enough to attack the city.¹²⁸

On December 27, the Soviet troops took control of Presidential Palace and executed then President Hafizullah Amin. In the same day Babrak Karmal announced through Radio Kabul that Hafizullah Amin was overthrown and that he became the president of Afghanistan. By the end of 1979 there were 50,000 Soviet soldiers deployed in Afghanistan. Over the next month the number of the Soviet troops increased steadily.¹²⁹ The U.S. and its allies interpreted the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as an offensive maneuver, and a preparation to entry to the Arabian Sea. All of a

¹²⁶ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 107

¹²⁷ Ibid., 107-108

¹²⁸ Ibid., 110

¹²⁹ Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman *A Brief History of Afghanistan* 2nd edition, (New York: Infobase Publishing 2010) pp. 159-160

sudden, with the Soviet invasion, Afghanistan had become the main battle ground of the Cold War.¹³⁰

As part of a reaction to the communist regime and Soviet occupation, numerous rebel groups were established in an effort to overthrow Soviet backed regime. The Mujahedeen resistance in Afghanistan consisted of several different Islamic groups of diverse origins, but determined to fight against the Soviet invasion. Throughout the Soviet occupation, Afghan Mujahedeen were financed, armed, and trained by the U.S. beginning with Jimmy Carter's presidency and continued during Ronald Reagan's term. After several years of guerilla fighting, the Mujahedeen forces increased their attacks against the Soviets and between 1985 and 1987. During that period more than 1.800 assaults were launched against the invading force.¹³¹

2.4. Post-Soviet Era and the Taliban Rule

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the leadership of the Soviet Union. He was known for his anti-Afghan war opinions and looked for a way to withdraw from Afghan quagmire gracefully. Also, the casualty toll for the Soviets was unbearable and there was a severe loss of economic resources. In addition, there was a thin public support for the Afghan war. The only solution for the Soviets was to blame Babrak Karmal for his failures in establishing a communist rule in Afghanistan. In May 1986, unable to resist the Soviet pressures, Babrak Karmal was forced to quit his position within the PDPA. In November 1986, former chief of the Afghan Secret Police Mohammad Najibullah, was announced as the new leader of DRA, which marked the end of Karmal era. Under supervision of Soviet advisers Mohammad Najibullah initiated the policy of "national reconciliation". However, it was too late for any Afghan government to manage the control of the country and crush the rebellion. So, the only viable option for the Soviets was to take the decision to

¹³⁰ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhs, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 6

¹³¹ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) pp. 112-113

withdraw from Afghanistan as soon as possible and Gorbachev made the bold move. The retreat of the Soviets started in 1988 and ended in early 1989.¹³²

By the time the invasion entered its seventh year, with the Soviet army's high casualties the Soviet people started to voice the need to end the conflict in Afghanistan. However, the Soviet government refused to withdraw from Afghanistan until 1988. By the time the last Soviet forces left the country, more than 620,000 soldiers had served in Afghanistan over the nine-year occupation. The number of Soviet troops occupying Afghanistan at its highest level was more than 100,000. During the Afghan war nearly 470,000 Soviet soldiers were wounded or became sick, and according to some reports nearly 50,000 of them had been killed in Afghanistan.¹³³

President Najibullah managed to keep his government going for another three years after the Soviet withdrawal. The Soviet supply of military equipment and the weapons and ammunitions left behind by the Soviet 40th Army kept the Najibullah government going.¹³⁴ Despite Najibullah had a huge arsenal at his disposal, his government was weak without the Soviet support. In 1992 Najibullah had a formidable air power (200 aircrafts) and a quite capable land force (930 tanks and 1,350 armored vehicles).¹³⁵

However, he was finally defeated in 1992. Uzbek leader Abdul Rashid Dostum's switching sides and joining the resistance played an important part in Najibullah's

¹³² Ibid., 114-115

¹³³ Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy - The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-89* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) pp. 329-330

¹³⁴ Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012) p. 207

¹³⁵ Sultan Akimbekov, *The History of Afghanistan* (Astana – Almaty: The Institute of World Economy and Politics, 2016) p. 775

defeat.¹³⁶ Abdul Rashid Dostum and Ahmad Shah Masoud on April 18, 1992 captured Kabul and Islamic State of Afghanistan was declared. Sibghtullah Mojaddedi was chosen as the new leader of the state. However, he served for only two months before transferring presidency to President Burhanuddin Rabbani who served for four years.¹³⁷

The defeat of the Soviets and overthrow of the communist regime did not result in peace. The controversy among different factions of the mujahedeen resulted in armed clashes. This lawlessness and chaos in the country gave way to the Taliban movement. By 1996, the Taliban captured Kabul and named the country as “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan”. By 1998, the Taliban was effectively controlling 90 % of the country.¹³⁸

Pakistan supported the Taliban militarily and financially, thereby played a crucial role in Taliban’s success which resulted in its takeover of Kabul in autumn 1996. The international community turned its back on the Taliban regime, however, Saudi Arabia, along with Pakistan, and United Arab Emirates (UAE) recognized it. Taliban’s support to Al Qaeda did not prevent Pakistan from supporting the Taliban, hoping that the Taliban would in the end gain control and establish a friendly government to Pakistan.¹³⁹ The arrival of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan in 1996 drastically altered the fate of the Taliban movement. When the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996, Osama bin Laden wanted to make an alliance with the Taliban and in

¹³⁶ Ibid., 209

¹³⁷ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 116

¹³⁸ Ibid., 120-123

¹³⁹ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) pp. 7-8

return Al Qaeda organization, would be free to build camps and move unrestricted in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁰

With the logistic support of the Taliban, Al Qaeda grew in size and capabilities and engaged in several terrorist attacks around the world. These attacks include; the bombing of U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam in 1998, and the bombings in Kenya and Nairobi, also in 1998, in which 224 people were killed and more than 5,000 people were injured.¹⁴¹ After these terrorist attacks, Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda were charged in U.S. However the Taliban gave shelter to him and refused to hand him over to the U.S., arguing that there was no solid evidence supporting the U.S. claims.¹⁴²

The Northern Alliance (NA), an anti-Taliban group established by former Mujahedeen groups, led by Ahmad Shah Masoud, was the only military force in Afghanistan to prevent the Taliban from controlling the whole country. On September 9, 2001, two Tunisian Al Qaeda suicide bombers disguised as journalists blew themselves up while they were interviewing Ahmad Shah Masoud, killing him while he was being taken to a hospital.¹⁴³ Only two days after this attack, on September 11, a group of Al Qaeda militants crashed civilian airliners into the Pentagon in Washington and the World Trade Center in New York.¹⁴⁴ The U.S.

¹⁴⁰ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 2007) p. 126

¹⁴¹ “1998 US Embassies in Africa Bombings Fast Facts” <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/06/world/africa/africa-embassy-bombings-fast-facts/index.html> last accessed June 10, 2019

¹⁴² “Security Council Demands That Taliban Turn Over Usama Bin Laden To Appropriate Authorities” <https://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19991015.sc6739.doc.html> last accessed June 10, 2019

¹⁴³ Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011) p. 584

¹⁴⁴ “2001: US rocked by day of terror” http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/11/newsid_2514000/2514627.stm last accessed September 1, 2019

claimed that Al Qaeda was behind the attacks and demanded from Taliban to surrender Osama bin Laden and root out the terrorist organization. However, the Taliban refused to fulfill the U.S. demands.¹⁴⁵

It was not clear whether the Taliban refused the U.S. demands because it really wanted to protect Osama bin Laden who helped the Afghan insurgency against the Soviet invasion or it had to because Afghans would lose confidence in the Taliban handed over Osama bin Laden to the U.S. However, one thing is clear that the strict honor code called “Pashtunwali” played an important role in Taliban’s refusal to surrender Osama bin Laden, who was considered an ideological ally and a guest in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁶

Determined to eradicate the presence of the terrorist organization in Afghanistan, the U.S., with the international backing, initiated a military campaign, Operation Enduring Freedom, against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. By the time the U.S. started the military campaign in Afghanistan, several different anti-Taliban forces in the country had joined the Northern Alliance, such as the Tajik dominated Jamat-i Islami, the Hazara dominated Hezb-i Wahdat and the Uzbek dominated Jombush-i Milli.¹⁴⁷ The eradication of the Taliban regime in December 2001 opened a new chapter in Afghanistan’s history. After the U.S. military operations, Afghanistan emerged as a part of the international community. In 2002, Afghanistan signed the “Kabul Declaration on Good Neighborly Relations” with its neighbors.¹⁴⁸ After the

¹⁴⁵ “We won't hand over bin Laden, say defiant Taliban” <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/1341340/We-wont-hand-over-bin-Laden-say-defiant-Taliban.html> last accessed June 10, 2019

¹⁴⁶ Weston, J. Kael, “The Mirror Test - America at War in Iraq and Afghanistan” (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), p. 263

¹⁴⁷ Kristian Berg Harpviken, and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 8

¹⁴⁸ “A Peaceful Afghanistan Key to Regional Connectivity in South and Central Asia” <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/a-peaceful-afghanistan-key-to-regional-connectivity-in-south-and-central-asia/> last accessed on June 15, 2019

Taliban was removed from power, plans were outlined to establish a new democratic government in Afghanistan, and Hamid Karzai was named as the chairman of the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA). In 2002, at a Loya Jirga, Karzai was elected as the interim president until the new elections.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ “Loya jirga elects Hamid Karzai” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/jun/13/afghanistan> last accessed on June 15, 2019

CHAPTER 3

INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS OF AFGHAN SECURITY

3.1. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)

Three days after the 9/11 ominous attacks, on 14th of September, the U.S. Congress gave authorization to the President to use required force against the planners and executors of the 9/11 attacks. The Congress resolution “Authorization for Use of Military Force” stated that;

The President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons.¹⁵⁰

Following the Congress resolution, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) members were dispatched to Afghanistan, to establish contact with the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance (NA), which was a prominent force controlling the northern Afghanistan.¹⁵¹ The military operation, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), started on October 7, with U.S. and British five-day long air bombardment of Taliban and Al Qaeda targets.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ “Joint Resolution to authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against those responsible for the recent attacks launched against the United States” <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-107publ40/html/PLAW-107publ40.htm> last accessed on June 15, 2019

¹⁵¹ Gale Mattox, and Stephen Grenier, (eds.) *Coalition Challenges in Afghanistan: The Politics of Alliance* (California: Stanford University Press, 2015) p. 49

¹⁵² “Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts” <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/28/world/operation-enduring-freedom-fast-facts/index.html> last accessed on June 15, 2019

The U.S. Special Operations Units entered Afghanistan on October 12, and joined the NA forces. The original operation plan was to train local anti-Taliban forces for a short period of time, before starting an attack against the Taliban. However, several major NA leaders, including Abdul Rashid Dostum, insisted that the offensive should start immediately. Accepting the demands of the NA leadership, the U.S. launched an attack on Mazar-e Sharif on November 9, 2001.¹⁵³

A tough resistance was expected, however, hard hit by the U.S. air bombardment, nearly 2,000 Taliban fighters surrendered the city on 10th of November. By the end of November 2001, the NA supported by the superior U.S. military power, managed to control nearly all major Afghan cities.¹⁵⁴

Between 2002 and 2005 the U.S. military supported by the UK forces launched several military operations against the Taliban. The initial operations concentrated in south and east of Afghanistan. Some of the main combat operations include; Operation Anaconda was conducted in March 2002 and this operation was followed by Operation Mountain Lion, held in April 2002, Operation Condor, held in May 2002, Operation Snipe, conducted in May 2002, Operation Valiant Strike, conducted in March 2003, Operation Mountain Viper, conducted in August 2003, Operation Avalanche, held in December 2003 and Operation Mountain Storm was held in March 2004.¹⁵⁵

The Taliban was thought to be defeated by late 2005, and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) under North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took the responsibility for security in all over Afghanistan during 2005-2006. However, the level of violence increased drastically in 2006. Between 2006 and 2008, NATO's

¹⁵³ Gale Mattox and Stephen Grenier, (eds.) *Coalition Challenges in Afghanistan: The Politics of Alliance* (California: Stanford University Press, 2015) p. 50

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ "Operation Enduring Freedom – Operations" <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/enduring-freedom-ops-camp.htm> last accessed on June 15, 2019

military operations freed important regions of Afghanistan. But after a short period the Taliban managed to return those regions.¹⁵⁶

3.2. Bonn Agreement and Political Process

As the military operations were going on, the United Nations (UN) organized a conference in Bonn, Germany in late 2001 to initiate reconstruction of Afghanistan. Majority of the anti-Taliban groups attended the conference, which later evolved into the “Bonn Process”. The process aimed to implement a series of state building measures including; separation of powers, (*legislature, executive and judiciary*), formation of an interim administration, preparing a constitution and making preparation for the elections.¹⁵⁷

The NA representatives, totaling 28, and the Cyprus, Rome and Peshawar Shuras (anti-Talban Afghan political groups in exile) gathered on 27th of November in Bonn and initiated the Bonn Process. The meeting continued until 5th of December. The delegates settled on a document titled “Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions”, which laid foundations of the AIA.¹⁵⁸

According to the document, the AIA would comprise of an “Interim Administration” headed by a “Chairman”, a “Special Independent Commission” responsible for assembling of the “Emergency Loya Jirga” and a “Supreme Court of Afghanistan”. The document stipulated that the “Emergency Loya Jirga” would assemble in six months following the formation of the AIA and would decide on an Afghan “Transitional Authority”, which would govern the country until a new government

¹⁵⁶ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy” *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 21

¹⁵⁷ Noah Coburn and Anna Larson, *Derailing Democracy in Afghanistan: Elections in an Unstable Political Landscape* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014) pp. 44-48

¹⁵⁸ Süleyman Gökçe, “A Critical Perspective on State Failure, Its Consequences, and Reconstruction of the State Afghanistan: A Case Study” (Ankara, Middle East Technical University, 2006) pp. 49-50

can be elected. The elections, according to the document, were to be held within two years following the convening of “Emergency Loya Jirga.”¹⁵⁹

The agreement also specified that the AIA would cease to exist when a “Transitional Authority” is set up by “Emergency Loya Jirga”, a “Constitutional Loya Jirga” would convene within 18 months after the creation of the “Transitional Authority” to approve a new Afghan constitution. With the Bonn Agreement Hamid Karzai was selected as the chairman of the AIA.¹⁶⁰ The agreement was approved by the UNSC Resolution of 1383 on 6th of December, 2001.¹⁶¹

The U.S. and Coalition member states, in only two months, had achieved the initial goal of the operation which was to remove the Taliban from government and destroy Al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. However, President George W. Bush significantly altered the initial plan, when during Hamid Karzai’s U.S. visit on January 28, 2002 he announced that the U.S. would train Afghan security forces and continue to support the new Afghan government until it becomes self-sufficient.¹⁶²

3.3. NATO and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

ISAF was established in compliance with the Bonn Agreement and UNSC Resolution 1386. ISAF ended its mission in December 2014. ISAF was initially set

¹⁵⁹ “Agreement on provisional arrangements in Afghanistan pending the re-establishment of permanent government institutions” <https://peacemaker.un.org/afghanistan-bonnagreement2001> last visited on September 2, 2019

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ “UN Security Council Resolution 1383 (2001)” [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1383\(2001\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1383(2001))

¹⁶² “Karzai and Bush cement relationship in Washington” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/jan/29/afghanistan.duncancampbell> last accessed on September 1, 2019

up for a six-month period to help the AIA to sustain security in and around the capitol in order to offer a secure environment to AIA and UN personnel.¹⁶³

In early July 2003 first NATO troops arrived in Kabul.¹⁶⁴ On August 11 of the same year, NATO took over ISAF command.¹⁶⁵ In September 2003, Germany proposed to contribute between 250 to 400 soldiers, which would enable ISAF to expand its influence to Kunduz, Kandahar, Mazar-e Sharif and Herat.¹⁶⁶ Also the with the UNSC Resolution 1510 on October 13, 2003 ISAF expanded mission to;

Support the Afghan Transitional Authority and its successors in the maintenance of security in areas of Afghanistan outside of Kabul and its environs, so that the Afghan Authorities as well as the personnel of the United Nations and other international civilian personnel engaged, in particular, in reconstruction and humanitarian efforts, can operate in a secure environment.¹⁶⁷

ISAF's responsibilities further expanded in 2004 with taking control of northern and western Afghanistan. On July 31, 2006, security mission in Afghanistan's southern regions was handed over to NATO/ISAF. With this handover of responsibility and Britain, Canada and Holland-led "Regional Command South" was established for Helmand, Kandahar, and Uruzgan regions. NATO/ISAF Command's taking

¹⁶³ "UN Security Council Resolution 1386 (2001) [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1386\(2001\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1386(2001)) last accessed on June 20, 2019

¹⁶⁴ "NATO set for Afghanistan" <https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2003/08-august/e0806a.htm> last visited on September 2, 2019

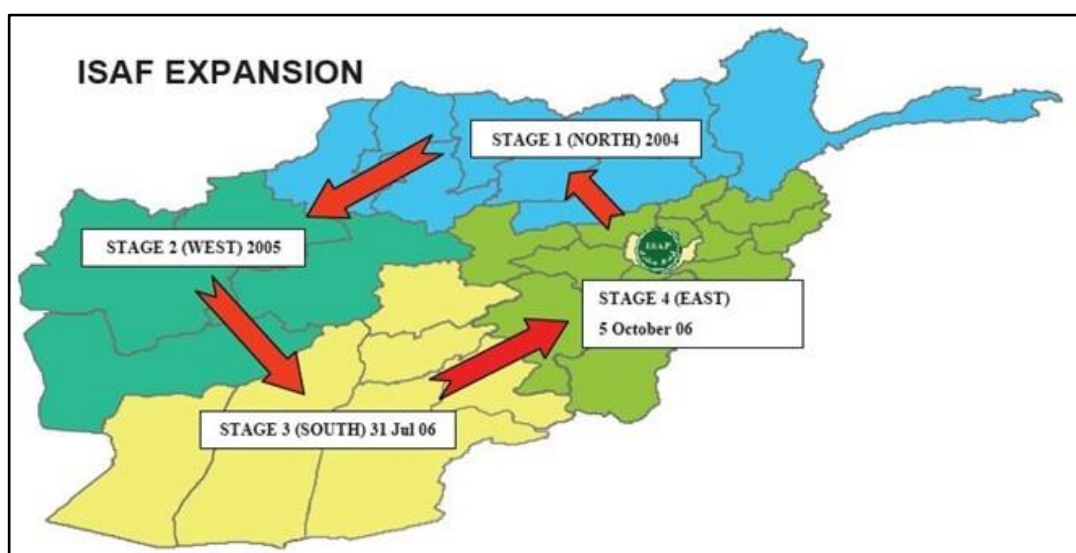
¹⁶⁵ "International Security Assistance Force – Chronology" <https://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/chronology/index.html> last accessed on June 20, 2019

¹⁶⁶ "Germany proposes Afghan security plan" <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/central/09/29/afghanistan.security/> last accessed on June 20, 2019

¹⁶⁷ "UN Security Council Resolution 1510" https://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/mandate/unsr/resolution_1510.pdf last accessed on June 20, 2019

responsibility of remaining 14 provinces of eastern Afghanistan was completed in October 2006.¹⁶⁸

ISAF expansion out of Kabul began in 2004 in the north and continued to other four sections. OEF forces handed over the most of security and operation responsibilities in a specific region once the ISAF moved in, although U.S. Special Forces continued to operate all over Afghanistan with ISAF forces. OEF and ISAF continued to coexist until the late 2014. ISAF primarily focused on peacekeeping, counterinsurgency and stability operations while OEF concentrated mainly on counterterrorism missions and Afghan National Army (ANA) training duties.¹⁶⁹



Map 4: ISAF Expansion¹⁷⁰

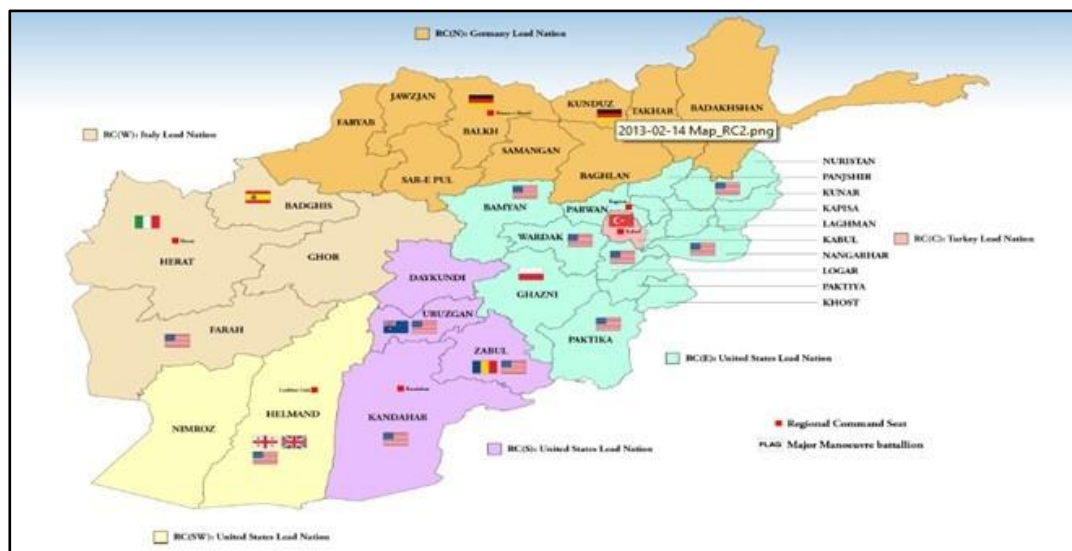
ISAF operated in five separate command centers, which were called Regional Command Centers (RCs). These RCs were; RC-North, RC-West, RC-South West,

¹⁶⁸ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 22

¹⁶⁹ David P. Auerswald and Stephen M Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014) pp. 32-33

¹⁷⁰ "ISAF Expansion" https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/images/oef_isaf_expansion_04-06.jpg last accessed on June 20, 2019

RC-South, RC-East and RC-Capital. A different lead nation was placed in charge of each RC.¹⁷¹



Map 5: ISAF Regional Command Structure in Afghanistan¹⁷²

Three problems have occurred over time with this structure of ISAF. The first problem was naming of a lead country in each RC. In this respect dividing Afghanistan into ISAF RCs, which were administered by different countries created cooperation problems among commands. The second problem was the geography of the RCs, which caused disconnections between military units. The third problem was that the RC headquarters rarely have the authority to function as operational headquarters.¹⁷³

Another major problem within ISAF was the poor coordination between the U.S. forces and other forces from other Coalition partners. The U.S. involved in both the OEF and ISAF structures. Some U.S. military units only operated within OEF and

¹⁷¹ “ISAF Regional Command Structure” https://www.nato.int/isaf/structure/regional_command/index.html last accessed on September 2, 2019

¹⁷² “International Security Assistance Force Regional Commands & Major Units” <http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat.pdf> last accessed on June 20, 2019

¹⁷³ David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014) pp. 46-47

mostly stationed in RC-East. The U.S. also had troops within ISAF. In addition, U.S. had Special Forces units which were responsible only to their commanders rather than OEF or ISAF military officials. In this sense OEF and ISAF had diverse missions. On the other hand, the coordination was easier among NATO forces that had experiences with the U.S. military. However, some serious frictions occurred between some ISAF members and the U.S. Some part of that friction was due to insufficient intelligence sharing. According to some Coalition partners, U.S. forces executing counterterrorism missions hardly shared any intelligence.¹⁷⁴

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) emerged as another key problem during the Afghanistan operation. The PRTs were first used during the U.S. operations in Iraq. Main mission of PRTs were to assist governance and reconstruction, to make Afghan administration functional and self-sufficient. Majority of the PRTs in Afghanistan were under command of a single country. However, making coordination between PRTs all over the country became a serious problem for the ISAF. Afghan side also complained that the PRTs usually did not coordinate their efforts with the Afghan government and did not give any information regarding their plans.¹⁷⁵

The first PRT started operating in Afghanistan in January 2003. The PRTs played important role in solving local level conflicts and coordinating local development projects. There were 25 PRTs, with 12 under RC-East, five under RC-North, four under RC-West, and four under RC-South.¹⁷⁶ In accordance with the decision taken at the NATO's Chicago Summit, held on May 20-21, 2012, to transfer all security

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 44-46

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 48-50

¹⁷⁶ "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan – how they arrived and where they are going" <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2007/issue3/english/art2.html> last accessed on June 20, 2019

responsibility to Afghan government in mid-2013, also all the PRTs were handed over to Afghan government in late 2014.¹⁷⁷

In Afghanistan, the initial U.S. strategy was a unilateral military intervention. However, this stand point was transformed into a coalition to which willing countries participated. Finally the U.S. decided to continue the war in Afghanistan as part of an alliance. There were several reasons behind this policy shifts. First of all, by including other countries in the military operation the U.S. aimed international political legitimacy. The second reason was the resources needed for the 2003 Iraq invasion. Following the military intervention in Afghanistan, the U.S. administration initiated a second war, this time in Iraq, which consumed much of its energy and sources. By including Coalition partners in Afghanistan operation, the U.S. was able to relocate some of its military resources to Iraq. Thus, the alliance, as in form of ISAF, let the U.S. to keep control over its troops, exert influence over ISAF effort as an important member of NATO and at the same time benefit from international legitimacy.¹⁷⁸

At time of 9/11 attacks, Bush administration was against a nation building process and to international military intervention. Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz, a key figure in the Bush Administration, was known for his inclination for unilateralism. Also, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who was put in charge of the war in Afghanistan, believed that the U.S. must get out from Afghanistan as soon as possible. He believed that the U.S. should send minimal number of troops and allocated limited resources. Rumsfeld's idea was to focus on training the ANA and conduct counterterrorism operations.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ "Chicago Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Chicago on 20 May 2012" articles 5 and 6 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_87593.htm?selectedLocale=en last accessed on June 20, 2019

¹⁷⁸ David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014) p. 51

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 86-87

Throughout 2003, the U.S. Administration remained loyal to counterterrorism operations strategy. During this period mostly special operations forces were used. The general conviction among the U.S. military officials was to train the ANA in the fastest possible way and get out of Afghanistan. Building ANA was a major aspect of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy. It was believed that a large and a capable ANA would let the Afghan government to manage the security of the country. However, as NATO took control of the ISAF in August 2003, important changes started to emerge in the U.S. strategy. The U.S. became more interested with state building efforts.¹⁸⁰

In late 2003, the U.S. military officials started to feel the need for a detailed review of the strategy regarding Afghanistan. According to the U.S. military officials current policy was not functioning and a new strategy was needed. The new strategy called “Five Pillars Strategy” was designed. This new strategy was close to classical counterinsurgency which required the U.S. to engage in state building activities. The new strategy also shifted its focus from directly fighting against terrorists to help Afghans.¹⁸¹

Regarding this new policy, then the commander of the U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan Gen. David W. Barno said that;

The late 2003 shift in strategy from an enemy-centric counterterrorist strategy to a more comprehensive, population-centered COIN approach marked a turning point in the U.S. mission.¹⁸²

Despite all the good intentions, by mid-2005 the security situation in Afghanistan started to deteriorate, which threatened the achievement of U.S. objectives in

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 90

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 91

¹⁸² David W. Barno, “Fighting the Other War: Counterinsurgency Strategy in Afghanistan, 2003-2005” *Military Review* 87(5): 2007 p. 44

Afghanistan.¹⁸³ The enemy attacks became more frequent and deadlier in 2005, compared to 2004. The expansion of ISAF missions into southern Afghanistan was made public at the NATO meeting in December 2005, but did little to change the status quo on the ground.¹⁸⁴ This was partly because majority of ISAF partner countries perceived their part in Afghanistan as “peacekeeping” rather than “counterinsurgency and war”.¹⁸⁵

The security situation in Afghanistan further deteriorated in 2007. With increased attacks on ISAF, the casualty figures also spiked. In light of these developments President Bush was forced to deploy extra 3,200 soldiers in 2008. But, then Defense Secretary Robert Gates said NATO forces in Afghanistan were poorly trained and were unable to fight the insurgency.¹⁸⁶ In June 2008, Gen. David McKiernan was appointed as the new commander of ISAF. This was an important appointment since McKiernan became the first U.S. commander in charge of OEF and ISAF at the same time, which gave him full authority over all U.S. and Coalition forces in Afghanistan, creating a more efficient command structure.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ “Afghanistan Reconstruction - Despite Some Progress, Deteriorating Security and Other Obstacles Continue to Threaten Achievement of U.S. Goals” <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-05-742> last accessed on June 21, 2019

¹⁸⁴ “NATO to head South in Afghanistan” <https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/12-december/e1208a.htm> last accessed on June 21, 2019

¹⁸⁵ David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014) pp. 95-96

¹⁸⁶ “Gates says NATO force unable to fight guerrillas” <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-jan-16-fg-usafghan16-story.html> last accessed on June 21, 2019

¹⁸⁷ “Statement by the President on Senate Confirmation of General David D. McKiernan as Commander of U.S. Forces - Afghanistan” <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/10/20081002-8.html> last accessed on June 21, 2019

When Barack Obama took office, the security situation in Afghanistan was in severe decline. In January 2009 there were nearly 32,000 U.S. troops on the ground.¹⁸⁸ On March 27, 2009, he announced a new U.S. strategy which focused on a counterinsurgency plan. The new plan required deployment of additional 4,000 soldiers, an emphasis on Pakistan's role in Afghanistan and speed up U.S. efforts to build a more capable ANA.¹⁸⁹ In August 2009, then the commander of the U.S. forces, Gen. Stanley McChrystal reviewed the new U.S. policy. Gen. McChrystal pointed out that;

Additional resources are required, but focusing on force or resource requirements misses the point entirely. The key take away from this assessment is the urgent need for a significant change to our strategy and the way that we think and operate.¹⁹⁰

Upon McChrystal's report on the U.S strategy in Afghanistan, the U.S. Administration decided to send extra 30,000 troops. Those troops would be supporting the 68,000 U.S. and 39,000 ISAF soldiers on the ground.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014) p. 100

¹⁸⁹ "A New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan" <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2009/03/27/a-new-strategy-afghanistan-and-pakistan> last accessed on June 21, 2019

¹⁹⁰ "COMISAF Initial Assessment" <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/21/AR2009092100110.html> last accessed on June 21, 2019

¹⁹¹ David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014) p. 102

	Albania	255		Georgia	175		Portugal	105
	Armenia	0		Germany	4415		Romania	945
	Australia	1550		Greece	15		Singapore	40
	Austria	2		Hungary	315		Slovakia	240
	Azerbaijan	90		Iceland	3		Slovenia	70
	Belgium	575		Ireland	8		Spain	1070
	Bosnia & Herzegovina	10		Italy	3150		Sweden	410
	Bulgaria	540		Jordan	0		The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ^a	165
	Canada	2830		Latvia	175		Turkey	1755
	Croatia	295		Lithuania	165		Ukraine	8
	Czech Republic	440		Luxembourg	9		United Arab Emirates	25
	Denmark	750		Netherlands	1940		United Kingdom	9500
	Estonia	150		New Zealand	220		United States	47085
	Finland	95		Norway	500			
	France	3750		Poland	1955		Total	85795

Figure 1: ISAF Troop Levels by Nationality (as of February 2010)¹⁹²

3.4. NATO Drawdown

The fight in Afghanistan was going nowhere by the late 2009. There were very few options left for the Coalition member countries. A phased drawdown seemed to be the best option, which would not leave the Afghan government vulnerable and at the same time allow an honorable way out for the U.S.-led Western forces. In this regard, at NATO's 2010 Lisbon Summit, it was decided that the gradual transition of security responsibility to Afghan government would be finished by the end of 2014. In the Summit Declaration, it was stated that;

The process of transition to full Afghan security responsibility and leadership in some provinces and districts is on track to begin in early 2011, following a joint Afghan and NATO/ISAF assessment and decision. Transition will be conditions-based, not calendar-driven, and will not equate to withdrawal of ISAF-troops. Looking to the end of 2014, Afghan forces will be

¹⁹² "International Security Assistance Force and Afghan National Army strength & laydown" https://www.nato.int/isaf/placemats_archive/2010-02-01-ISAF-Placemat.pdf last accessed on June 21, 2019

assuming full responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan.¹⁹³

In this respect, a partial transfer of security responsibility to ANSF was planned by U.S. military officials for July 2011. This plan required a significant U.S. force level decrease. The reduction of the Coalition troops was planned as five phases beginning with March 2011 and ending June 2013. Each of those phases were planned to take place between each 12-18 months.¹⁹⁴ In March 2001 then President Karzai announced the initial stage of transition process, which would start with seven Afghan districts.¹⁹⁵ In June 2013 the Afghan government announced that Afghan forces took control of the security responsibility all through the country.¹⁹⁶

President Barack Obama, on June 22, 2011, stated that troop levels of U.S. troops would decrease from 100,000 to 90,000 latest by the end of 2011. He also announced that the number of the U.S. soldiers would go down to 68,000 until September 2012. In February 12, 2013, President Obama declared 34,000 soldiers would remain in Afghanistan by February 2014.¹⁹⁷

On May 27, 2014, he announced the plans for the post-2014 period. According to the plan, the military presence of the U.S. would be around 9,800 in 2015. It was also announced that majority of this force would be trainers as a part of the “Resolute Support Mission” (RSM). On the other hand, it was also announced that nearly 2.000

¹⁹³ “Lisbon Summit Declaration” https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_68828.htm last accessed on June 21, 2019

¹⁹⁴ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy” *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 23

¹⁹⁵ Louisa Brook Holland and Claire Taylor “Afghanistan: The Timetable for Security Transition” *House of Commons International Affairs and Defence Section*, 2012 p. 9

¹⁹⁶ “Afghanistan's security forces take over from Nato” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/18/afghan-forces-take-security-lead-from-nato> last accessed on June 21, 2019

¹⁹⁷ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy” *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 pp. 23-24

soldiers, from Special Operations Forces, would contribute to counterterrorism missions and the U.S. force level would drop to 5,000 until the end of 2016.¹⁹⁸ Following 13 years of military operations, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel in December 2014, announced that the name “Operation Enduring Freedom” was changed to “Operation Freedom’s Sentinel (OEF)”.¹⁹⁹

According to the Obama plan, after 2016, the U.S. military footprint in Afghanistan would be at a level enough to protect U.S. Embassy and other U.S. installations.²⁰⁰ During second half of 2013 and 2014, the U.S. and Coalition partners made arrangements to end the ISAF mission. In this regard ISAF also handed over the most of the 800 military bases and the PRTs to the Afghan government.²⁰¹

However, as the drawdown date came nearer the security situation in Afghanistan started to deteriorate. Despite the claims by the U.S. military officials that the Afghan security forces were showing a good performance, heavy Afghan casualties and increasing insurgent activity caused concerns among the U.S. administration and outside observers. But the ISAF mission was ended with UN Security Council Resolution 2189 on December 12, 2014 and the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) was established.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 24

¹⁹⁹ “Operation Enduring Freedom comes to an end” https://www.army.mil/article/140565/operation_enduring_freedom_comes_to_an_end last accessed on June 21, 2019

²⁰⁰ “Statement by the President on Afghanistan” <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/27/statement-president-afghanistan> last accessed on June 21, 2019

²⁰¹ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy” *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 24

²⁰² “UN Security Council Resolution 2189” [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2189%20\(2014\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2189%20(2014)) last accessed on June 21, 2019

3.5. Resolute Support Mission (RSM)

Following the NATO drawdown in December 2014, Taliban intensified its attacks against the Afghan forces as early as January 2015. In first months of 2015, the Taliban scored significant achievements in Helmand, and managed to capture Kunduz city in September 2015.²⁰³ In March 2017, Taliban seized Helmand's Sangin district, which links Helmand to Kandahar.²⁰⁴ Although Coalition forces retook many of the regions captured by the Taliban, after the NATO drawdown, the area controlled by the Taliban steadily increased. In August 2016, it was estimated that around 63% of Afghanistan was under government control. The figure was 71% in January 2016. According to the SIGAR report of October 2017, Afghan districts which are under government control fell to 57% in August 2017.²⁰⁵

Due to the insurgent gains in Afghanistan, several adjustments were made throughout the drawdown process. In November 2014, the President approved U.S. soldiers to perform battle missions if faced an immediate threat. On March 24, 2015, President Obama, announced that the number of the U.S. soldiers would remain around 9,800 for the rest of 2015, contrary to the previous announcement that the troop level would be reduced to 5,500 by the end of 2015.²⁰⁶

On October 15, 2015, President stated that;

I've decided to maintain our current posture of 9,800 troops in Afghanistan through most of next year, 2016.....But maintaining

²⁰³ "Taliban overrun Afghan city of Kunduz" <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34377565> last visited June 22, last accessed on June 22, 2019

²⁰⁴ "Why Sangin's fall to the Taliban matters" <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39366111> last accessed on June 22, 2019

²⁰⁵ For further details of SIGAR's October 2017 report see <https://www.sigar.mil/quarterlyreports/> last accessed on June 22, 2019

²⁰⁶ "Remarks by President Obama and President Ghani of Afghanistan in Joint Press Conference" <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/24/remarks-president-obama-and-president-ghani-afghanistan-joint-press-conf> last accessed on June 22, 2019

our current posture through most of next year, rather than a more rapid drawdown, will allow us to sustain our efforts to train and assist Afghan forces as they grow stronger — not only during this fighting season, but into the next one.²⁰⁷

Another adjustment to the drawdown plan was made on July 6, 2016 and President Barack Obama stated that number of U.S. soldiers would be reduced to 8,400 by the end of 2016, a diversion not 5.500 which was previously declared. President Obama stated that;

Instead of going down to 5,500 troops by the end of this year, the U.S. will maintain approximately 8,400 troops in Afghanistan into next year, through the end of my administration. The narrow missions assigned to our forces will not change.²⁰⁸

At NATO summit in Warsaw in February 2017 member states confirmed NATO's promise to contribute to Afghanistan's stability and agreed to support ANSF after 2016 and keep on contributing to funding of the ANSF until 2020.²⁰⁹ As mentioned above, the fluctuation of the number of Coalition troops was highly resulted mostly from the U.S. decision to send in or pull out troop from Afghanistan. The number of NATO and Coalition troops in Afghanistan, when it was highest in mid-2011, reached 132,000 and 90,000 of those troops were U.S. soldiers.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ "Obama Reverses Course On Afghanistan Withdrawal Plan" <https://www.rferl.org/a/obama-afghanistan-slowdown-troop-withdrawal/27307829.html> last accessed on June 22, 2019

²⁰⁸ Full text of President Obama's speech on Afghanistan, July 6, 2016" <https://www.stripes.com/news/full-text-of-president-obama-s-speech-on-afghanistan-july-6-2016-1.417760> last accessed on June 22, 2019

²⁰⁹ "Warsaw Summit Key Decisions" https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_02/20170206_1702-factsheet-warsaw-summit-key-en.pdf last accessed on September 2, 2019

²¹⁰ "Resolute Support Mission (RSM) Troop Contributing Nations" https://www.nato.int/isaf/placemats_archive/2011-07-26-ISAF-Placemat.pdf last accessed on September 2, 2019














 Albania	260	 Greece	162	 Portugal	133
 Armenia	40	 Hungary	383	 Romania	1938
 Australia	1550	 Iceland	4	 Singapore	21
 Austria	3	 Ireland	7	 Slovakia	308
 Azerbaijan	94	 Italy	3880	 Slovenia	80
 Belgium	507	 Jordan	0	 Spain	1552
 Bosnia & Herzegovina	55	 Republic of Korea	350	 Sweden	500
 Bulgaria	602	 Latvia	139	 The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*	163
 Canada	2922	 Lithuania	237	 Tonga	55
 Croatia	320	 Luxembourg	11	 Turkey	1786
 Czech Republic	519	 Malaysia	31	 Ukraine	22
 Denmark	750	 Mongolia	74	 United Arab Emirates	35
 Estonia	163	 Montenegro	36	 United Kingdom	9500
 Finland	156	 Netherlands	192	 United States	90000
 France	3935	 New Zealand	191		
 Georgia	937	 Norway	406		
 Germany	4812	 Poland	2560	Total	132,381

Figure 2: Resolute Support Mission (RSM) Troop Contribution by Nationality (as of June 2011)²¹¹

Majority of military experts were expecting a change in the Afghanistan policy of the U.S. when Donald Trump was elected as the new president, since, before he was elected, he announced policy for Afghanistan was to pull out as soon as possible. However, after his inauguration, the President ordered Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis to initiate a detailed evaluation of the U.S. policy in Afghanistan. As a result of this review, in August 2017, President Donald Trump made it public that he would introduce a new planning for Afghanistan, which prioritizes fighting to win and decreases the nation-building efforts.²¹² President Trump also authorized Mattis to determine new force levels and an additional 3,500 troops were ordered to be deployed in Afghanistan. The additional forces arrived in September 2017 and with this surge the number of U.S. troops reached to 15,000.²¹³

On the other hand, Trump's new policy also employed a harsher policy against Pakistan and offered a bigger role to India. In addition, Trump's new strategy; gave

²¹¹ Ibid.,

²¹² Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy In Brief" *Congressional Research Service*, March 5, 2018 p. 1

²¹³ Ibid., 11-12

up “timetables” in favor of a “conditions-based” approach, integrated diplomatic and economic efforts into the military operations and expanded targeting authorities for U.S. troops. In this regard President Trump said that;

A core pillar of our new strategy is a shift from a time-based approach to one based on conditions.....The next pillar of our new strategy is to change the approach and how to deal with Pakistan. We can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond.....Another critical part of the South Asia strategy for America is to further develop its strategic partnership with India — the world’s largest democracy and a key security and economic partner of the United States.²¹⁴

Despite the radical change in the strategy and the optimism of the U.S. administration that the things would go better in Afghanistan, the military commanders on the ground were more cautious. U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John Nicholson, referring to the new strategy announced by President Donald Trump, on November 23, 2017 said that;

We are still in a stalemate....We are only 90 days into this new policy, but with the U.S. forces that will be arriving, with the new authority that we have been given, put the pressure on external enablers, with the fact that we are condition based and not time based, we’ve set all the conditions to win.²¹⁵

Outside observers made more negative assessments of the security condition in Afghanistan. In February 2018, Chuck Hagel, former Secretary of Defense described the situation in Afghanistan “worse than it’s ever been,” adding that “the American military can’t fix the problems in Afghanistan.” He also made a prediction that “the

²¹⁴ “Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-south-asia/> last accessed on 24 July, 2019

²¹⁵ “‘Still in a stalemate,’ top U.S. commander in Afghanistan says” <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/still-stalemate-says-top-u-s-commander-afghanistan-n823671> last accessed on 24 July, 2019

U.S. will eventually have to leave Afghanistan.”²¹⁶ However some U.S. military experts were more optimistic regarding the situation on the ground. The top RSM commander in Afghanistan Gen. John Nicholson said in his twitter account on June 8, 2018 that;

The Taliban are no longer fighting to gain new ground in Afghanistan. They are fighting to inflict casualties and get attention. They are now fighting to improve their bargaining position.²¹⁷

But the figures released by SIGAR belied their positive assessments that the military operation was on the right track. The Taliban-led insurgency has steadily grown the size of the territory it controlled in recent years. In its October 2018 quarterly report, SIGAR claimed that the percentage of regions under government control or influence has decreased to 55.5 %. SIGAR also showed that 12 % of the country was under Taliban control, and the remaining 34% was contested.²¹⁸

In 2018, the number of the NATO troops was increased. In March 2019 RSM troop level was 17,034 from 39 countries, of which 8,475 belong to the U.S. In June 2019 number of the Coalition soldiers in Afghanistan was 17,148.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ “Afghanistan worse than ever, Russia ‘holds the cards’ in Syria, warns former DoD boss” <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2018/02/06/afghanistan-worse-than-ever-russia-holds-the-cards-in-syria-warns-former-dod-boss/> last accessed on 24 July, 2019

²¹⁷ For Gen. John Nicholson’s remarks visit US Mission to NATO official twitter address <https://twitter.com/USNATO/status/1005081651943178240> last accessed on 24 July, 2019

²¹⁸ SIGAR Quarterly Report October 2018, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2018-10-30qr.pdf> last accessed on 24 July, 2019

²¹⁹ “Resolute Support Mission (RSM) Troop Contributing Nations” https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_06/20190625_2019-06-RSM-Placemat.pdf last accessed on June 22, 2019

	Albania	135		Germany	1,300		Poland	330
	Armenia	121		Greece	12		Portugal	214
	Australia	300		Hungary	93		Romania	763
	Austria	18		Iceland	3		Slovakia	33
	Azerbaijan	120		Italy	895		Slovenia	8
	Belgium	83		Latvia	40		Spain	67
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	63		Lithuania	50		Sweden	29
	Bulgaria	159		Luxembourg	2		Turkey	593
	Croatia	106		Mongolia	233		Ukraine	21
	Czech Republic	343		Montenegro	31		United Kingdom	1,100
	Denmark	155		Netherlands	160		United States	8,475
	Estonia	42		New Zealand	13			
	Finland	67		North Macedonia	47			
	Georgia	870		Norway	54		Total	17,148

Figure 3: Resolute Support Mission (RSM) Troop Contribution by Nationality (as of June 2019)²²⁰

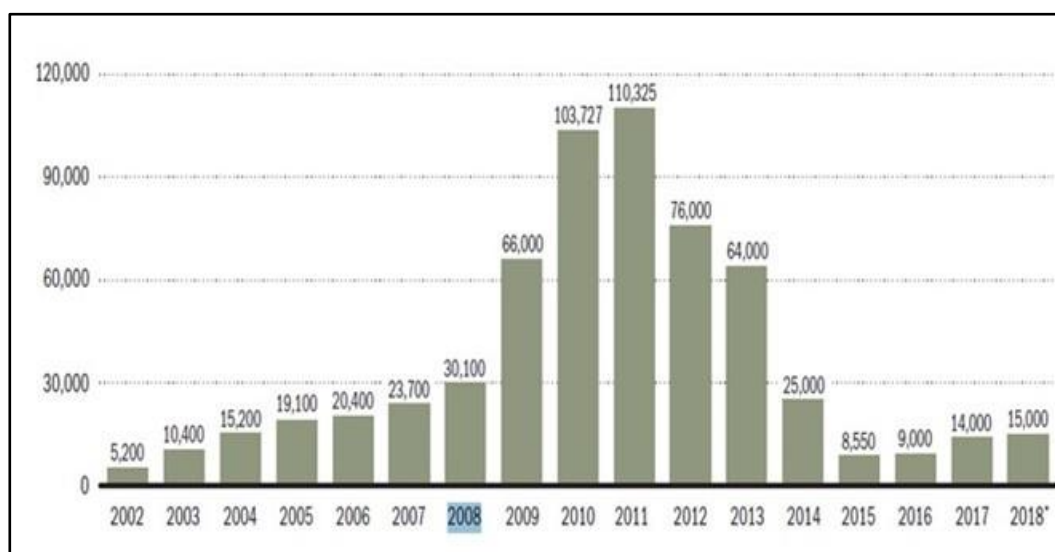
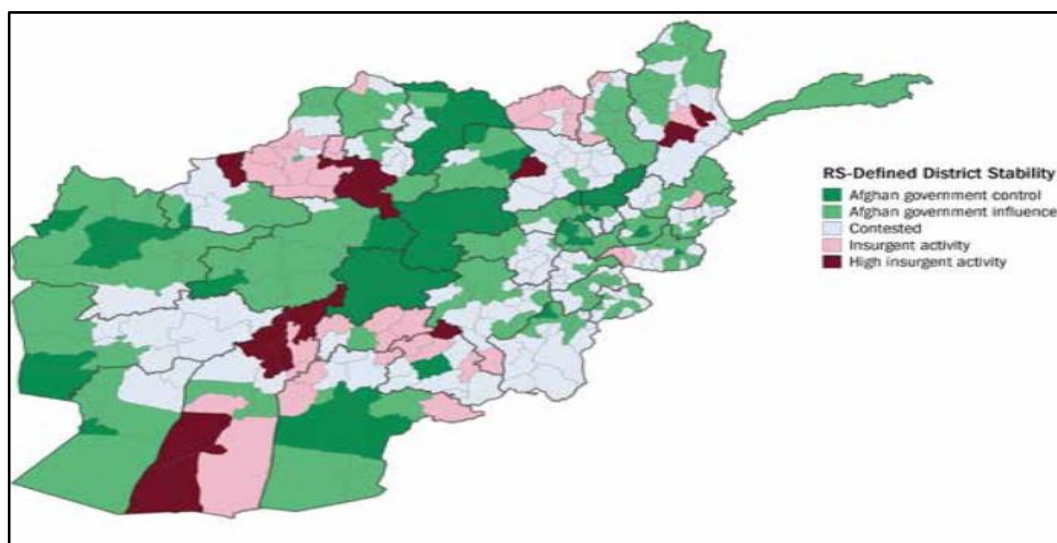


Figure 4: U.S. Troop Levels in Afghanistan 2002 - 2018²²¹

²²⁰ “Resolute Support Mission (RSM) Troop Contributing Nations” https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_06/20190625_2019-06-RSM-Placemat.pdf last accessed on June 22, 2019

²²¹ See SIGAR’s January 2018 Quarterly Report p.89 <https://www.sigar.mil/quarterlyreports/> last accessed on June 22, 2019



Map 6: Insurgent Activity in Afghanistan as of October 2018²²²

Although the number of US soldiers in Afghanistan, (8,550 in 2015) increased to approximately 15,000, by 2018, the Taliban’s expansion in the country could not be prevented. In the table above, although the areas directly under Taliban control are small, the scale of the areas shown as “controversial regions” and “Afghan government influence” are remarkable.

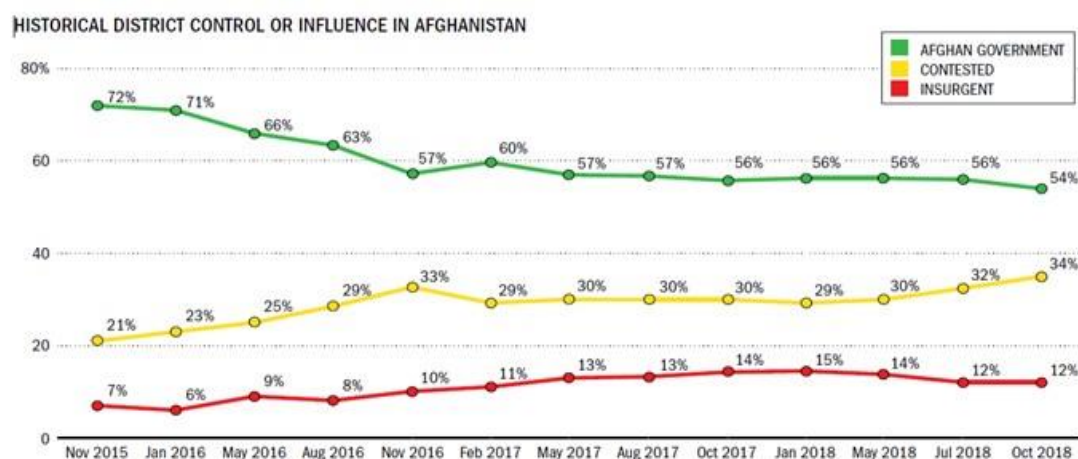


Figure 5: Historical District Control or Influence in Afghanistan (as of October 2018)²²³

²²² “SIGAR Quarterly Report January 2019” can be reached at <https://www.sigar.mil/quarterlyreports/index.aspx?SSR=6> p. 71 last accessed on 24 July, 2019

²²³ 69

One of the²²⁴ factors that encouraged the U.S officials to speak optimistically was a sharp decline in military losses after 2014. While the total losses of the U.S. and the U.K, the countries sending most troops to Afghanistan, were recorded as 137 in 2013, the figure decreased to 61 in 2014 and 24 in 2015. This casualty figure further decreased until it reached 14 in 2018.

Year	US	UK	Other	Total
2001	12	0	0	12
2002	49	3	18	70
2003	48	0	10	58
2004	52	1	7	60
2005	99	1	31	131
2006	98	39	54	191
2007	117	42	73	232
2008	155	51	89	295
2009	317	108	96	521
2010	498	103	109	710
2011	415	46	102	563
2012	310	44	48	402
2013	128	9	25	162
2014	55	6	14	75
2015	22	2	2	26
2016	13	0	2	15
2017	15	0	2	17
2018	14	0	5	19
2019	13	0	0	13
Total	2430	455	687	3572

Figure 6: Coalition Casualty Figures by Year (as of July 17, 2019)²²⁵

However, the misleading point here is that this decline in military casualties was presented by some experts as a good job in Afghanistan. The decrease in the loss of lives of the Coalition forces was due to fewer Coalition boots on the ground, majority of whom involved in activities such as training and air support rather than active

²²³ Ibid., p. 70

²²⁴ For latest casualty figures see <http://icasualties.org/> last visited on July 17, 2019

²²⁵ Ibid.

operations. Regardless of the decrease in military losses, the losses of the Coalition forces by 2019 had reached an unacceptable level for their public opinion. At the end of 18 years, 3,572 Coalition soldiers lost their lives and thousands were injured.²²⁶

3.5.1. Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA)

On the other hand, although NATO decided to withdraw from Afghanistan in 2014, it was observed that the U.S. was making attempts to stay in Afghanistan after 2014. In this context, the United States negotiated with the Afghan government in order to legitimize its presence in Afghanistan after the withdrawal. In May, 2012, U.S. and Afghan officials signed a “Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA)”.²²⁷ The SPA which will expire by the end of 2024 was signed after lengthy debates and the Afghan side insisted on control over detention facilities and ending night-time military operations by the U.S. forces, which the Afghan government claimed that increased the number of civilian casualties and cause unrest among civilian population.²²⁸

The SPA stated a close cooperation between the U.S. and Afghanistan and implied that U.S. soldiers would continue to assist ANSF after 2014. However, no specific detail was given about the size and mission of that force. It was also stated in the SPA that the U.S. would continue to train and give logistic support to the Afghan security forces beyond 2014.²²⁹ The SPA was approved by the Afghanistan Parliament on May 26, 2012.²³⁰

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ “U.S. Relations With Afghanistan- Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet” <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-afghanistan/> last accessed on June 24, 2019

²²⁸ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy” *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 27

²²⁹ Ibid., 27-28

²³⁰ “Afghan Parliament Approves US Partnership” <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia/afghan-parliament-approves-us-partnership> last accessed on June 24, 2019

3.5.2. Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA)

As the date for the NATO withdrawal came closer, the U.S. Administration began to demand a legal ground for the post-2014 period for the U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan. One of the most important issues for the Obama Administration was the legal status of the U.S. soldiers, who would serve in Afghanistan after 2014. Immunity to the U.S. personnel was granted by the Afghan government in November 2013. A Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) was signed on September 30, 2014.²³¹ The agreement stipulated that;

The Parties shall continue to foster close cooperation to strengthen security and stability in Afghanistan, counterterrorism, contribute to regional and international peace and stability, and enhance the ability of Afghanistan to deter internal and external threats against its sovereignty, security, territorial integrity, national unity, and its constitutional order. Unless otherwise mutually agreed, United States forces shall not conduct combat operations in Afghanistan.²³²

Also, another agreement was signed outlining a legal base for NATO forces in post-2014 period. The agreement was approved by the Afghan Parliament in November 2014.²³³

3.6. Reconstruction and State Building Efforts

In the initial stages of the military operation in Afghanistan, the U.S-led Coalition's mission was to deny safe havens to Al Qaeda by destroying its camps in the country and topple the repressive Taliban regime. However, as the military campaign

²³¹ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 27

²³² Full text of the BSA is available at <http://staging.afghanembassy.us/contents/2016/04/documents/Bilateral-Security-Agreement.pdf> last accessed on June 24, 2019

²³³ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 27

progressed it was clearly understood that stability and security of Afghanistan was closely linked to its reconstruction in all aspects.

On March 28, 2002, to maintain the implementation of the Boon Agreement, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was founded with the UNSC Resolution 1401. The UNAMA mandate provided an outline to all UN humanitarian activities in Afghanistan.²³⁴

On January 21-22, 2002, the “International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan” was held in Tokyo. The Conference was co-organized by the U.S., Japan, the EU and Saudi Arabia. Representatives from 61 governments and 21 international organizations participated. The Tokyo Conference expressed international community’s determination to assist the reconstruction of Afghanistan. At the Conference, participant countries pledged to contribute over \$1.8 billion for 2002. Several donor states made long term pledges, which carried the total amount pledges to \$4.5 billion.²³⁵

In December 2002, U.S Congress approved “Afghanistan Freedom Support Act” which enabled U.S. to increase its economic and military assistance to Afghanistan. The AFSA stated the U.S. goals in Afghanistan was establishment of a democratic state which; 1) denies terrorism, drug trafficking 2) have peaceful relations with its neighbors and 3) is able handle its own security.²³⁶

Financial aid was flowing to Afghanistan, in a hope that “a financially prosperous Afghanistan” would do better in the field of security and good governance. On January 2006, 66 states and 15 NGOs attended to “the London Conference on Afghanistan”. At the end of the conference Afghanistan Compact was approved.

²³⁴ “UN Resolution 1401- The situation in Afghanistan” <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1401> last accessed on June 24, 2019

²³⁵ “Co-chairs' Summary of Conclusions The International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan” http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/middle_e/afghanistan/min0201/summary.html last accessed on June 24, 2019

²³⁶ “H.R.3994 - Afghanistan Freedom Support Act of 2002” <https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/house-bill/3994> last accessed on June 24, 2019

Afghanistan Compact was an agreement signed between the Afghan government and the international community. It outlined how the donor states should contribute to reconstruction of Afghanistan and in return what the Afghan government would do.²³⁷

Following the Afghanistan Compact, on April 21, 2008 “Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)” was signed by President Karzai. The ANDS was drafted to be Afghanistan’s blueprint for the development of the country. The ANDS contained policies for improving security, economic growth, governance and reduction of poverty for the 2008-2013 periods.²³⁸

In June 2008, the Afghan government presented the ANDS to the donor countries at the “International Conference in Support of Afghanistan” held in Paris. The ANDS estimated that \$50 billion would be necessary in the coming next five-year period for implementation of the goals set. At the end of the Paris Conference a declaration was released, in which it was stated that the contributing countries would continue to support reconstruction and development of Afghanistan.²³⁹

There were also efforts from Russia and China to take a more active part in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. On March 27, 2009 with the organization of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) a conference was held in Moscow. The Moscow Conference was attended by SCO ministers and representatives of G8, Turkey, Iran, Turkmenistan and the UN to discuss the security situation in Afghanistan. Although the main topic of the Moscow Conference was the

²³⁷ “Afghanistan Compact - London 31 January – 1 February 2006” https://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/afghanistan_compact.pdf last accessed on June 24, 2019

²³⁸ “Afghanistan National Development Strategy 2008-2013” https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/afg_e/WTACCAFG18_CD_1.pdf last accessed on June 24, 2019

²³⁹ “Declaration of the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan Issued Under the Authority of the Three Co-chairs, The President of the French Republic, The President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, The Secretary-General of the United Nations Paris, 12 June 2008” <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/english.pdf> last accessed on June 24, 2019

fight against terrorism and drug production, financial support to Afghanistan to achieve its reconstruction and development was also discussed.²⁴⁰

On March 31, 2009 the International Conference on Afghanistan, hosted by the Netherlands was held in Hague which was attended by 73 countries. A joint statement was released in which the participant countries agreed to “Give firm support to the preparing and holding of elections that are secure, transparent, fair and credible, so as to enjoy the confidence of the Afghan people and to consolidate democracy in Afghanistan.”²⁴¹

On January 28, 2010, “the International Conference on Afghanistan” was held in London, where the progress on the democratization, development and reconstruction of Afghanistan after the Bonn Agreement of 2001 was discussed. The Afghan Government agreed on timetables to assume control of certain security functions and to launch a program to reintegrate Taliban militants back to normal life.²⁴²

On July 20, 2010 for the first time the “International Conference on Afghanistan” was held in Kabul to which 70 countries and numerous international and regional organizations attended. The Conference initiated the Kabul Process, which placed emphasis on Afghan “leadership and ownership” of development, reconstruction and security.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ “Moscow hosts conference on Afghanistan” <https://sputniknews.com/world/20090327120771499/> last accessed on June 24, 2019

²⁴¹ “Chairmen's Statement of the International Conference on Afghanistan Issued Under the Authority of the Three Co-chairs The Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan The Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan The Hague, 31 March 2009” https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/AF_090331_Hague%20Conference%20Declaration.pdf last accessed on June 30, 2019

²⁴² “Afghanistan conference opens in London” <http://www.dw.com/en/afghanistan-conference-opens-in-london/a-5176888> last accessed on June 30, 2019

²⁴³ “A Renewed Commitment by the Afghan Government to the Afghan People - A Renewed Commitment by the International Community to Afghanistan” http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Kabul_Conference/FINAL_Kabul_Conference_Communique.pdf last accessed on June 30, 2019

On December 5, 2011 “The International Afghanistan Conference” convened in Bonn with attendance of 85 countries and 15 international organizations. The Conference was, in a sense, the initial step taken by the international community and Afghanistan to make the necessary preparations for the ISAF military drawdown scheduled for the late 2014. The Conference called the process “transition” and the decade between 2015 and 2024 as “transformation” of Afghanistan.²⁴⁴

However, there was a once major shortcoming of the 2011 Bonn Conference, which was the boycott of Pakistan. Pakistan, following a NATO airstrike in which 24 Pakistani soldiers were killed on the border with Afghanistan, announced that it would not participate in the Bonn Conference. Many experts argued that Taliban having safe havens on Pakistani side of the border, a Pakistani boycott of the Bonn Conference would seriously hamper the peace and reconciliation efforts.²⁴⁵

Following the Bonn Conference, Afghan Government, 55 states and 25 NGOs convened in Tokyo on July 8, 2012 to “to reaffirm and further consolidate” their relations after 2014, which was labeled in 2011 Bonn Conference as Transition and Transformation period (2015-2024). The Tokyo meeting was titled as “Partnership for Self-Reliance in Afghanistan from Transition to Transformation”, indicating the main theme of the Conference. Although the donor countries at the Tokyo Conference pledged \$ 16 billion through 2015 and continue to support Afghanistan through 2017, a self-sustaining Afghanistan and steps to be taken to achieve this was

²⁴⁴ “The International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn, 5 December 2011 – Afghanistan and the International Community: From Transition to the Transformation Decade - Conference Conclusions” http://www.germancooperation-afghanistan.de/sites/default/files/2011_11_conclusions_bonn_en.pdf last accessed on June 30, 2019

²⁴⁵ “Afghanistan's Bonn Conference: 4 things you need to know” <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-Issues/2011/1129/Afghanistan-s-Bonn-Conference-4-things-you-need-to-know/Pakistan-says-it-won-t-attend.-Why-is-that-important> last accessed on June 30, 2019

one of the most important topics. Also, at Tokyo Conference, Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework was established.²⁴⁶

The last meeting between the Afghan Government and the donor states, before the NATO withdrawal was held in London on December 4, 2014. The London Conference also coincided with the Afghan Presidential elections and the new government led by Ashraf Ghani represented Afghanistan at the Conference. Before the London Conference, on December 2, 2014, President Ghani and CEO Abdullah met with Foreign Ministers of the 42 NATO member states and partner nations at NATO Headquarters. At the meeting they agreed to initiate RSM. Although no new financial aid pledges were made at the 2014 London Conference, the donor countries reaffirmed their pledges to supply \$ 16 billion through 2015 and continue to support Afghanistan through 2017.²⁴⁷

Afghanistan, with the external financial support from the donor countries showed a significant achievement in security, economy, infrastructure, housing and stable and self-sufficient governance since 2002. There has been a steady growth in Afghanistan's GDP, an average of 7 % since 2003. But following the NATO withdrawal in late 2014, the increase slowed down to around 2% in 2014, 1.45% in 2015 and 2.26% in 2016. However, there was a slight recovery (2.67%) in 2017, but it is not certain whether or not Afghanistan could reach to high levels of growth when the foreign economic aid ends.²⁴⁸

As of December 31, 2017, in addition to the contributions of the international community the U.S. had spent nearly \$ 122 billion for reconstruction efforts in

²⁴⁶ "Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan The Tokyo Declaration Partnership for Self-Reliance in Afghanistan From Transition to Transformation July 8, 2012" http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/middle_e/afghanistan/tokyo_conference_2012/tokyo_declaration_en1.html last accessed on June 30, 2019

²⁴⁷ Full text of the conclusion document of the London Conference is available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/383205/The-London-Conference-on-Afghanistan-Communique.pdf last accessed on June 30, 2019

²⁴⁸ "Afghanistan GDP" <https://www.worldometers.info/gdp/afghanistan-gdp/> last accessed on June 30, 2019

Afghanistan since 2002. From this total amount; \$ 75 billion was spent for security, \$ 33 billion was allocated to development and governance, \$ 3.4 billion was used for humanitarian aid and \$ 11 billion spent for civilian operations.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ SIGAR Quarterly Report, January 2018, p.63 <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2018-01-30qr.pdf> last accessed on June 30, 2019

CHAPTER 4

NATIONAL ASPECTS OF AFGHAN SECURITY

4.1. Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)

Afghanistan's security and stability is closely related to the effectiveness and success of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The ANSF consists of two basic elements; the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP). Contemporary Afghan security structure was established with the presidential decree by Hamid Karzai on December 1, 2002.²⁵⁰ Following the U.S.-led military operation the initial target for the ANSF was planned to be 70,000 soldiers and policemen combined. The recruitment and training process of the ANSF started in May 2002.²⁵¹ However, both ANA and ANP as of mid-2019 suffer from serious problems during its reconstruction period. Attrition is the biggest problem the ANSF faces. It is claimed that ANA loses nearly 30 % of its soldiers each year which means a gradual decline in the quality and professionalism of the army.²⁵²

ANSF faces widespread illiteracy of its personnel, making the training process of the troops much more difficult. Unsustainable casualty rates are another obstacle the ANSF faces. Only in 2016, 6,700 ANSF personnel were killed in action. The casualty figure was 5,500 in 2015. Despite the efforts of the U.S. and Coalition members, a shortage of logistics such as airlift, and resupply, limits ANSF's

²⁵⁰ "Statement by H.E. Hamid Karzai President of Afghanistan" https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/middle_e/afghanistan/pv0302/ddr_state.html last accessed on September 2, 2019

²⁵¹ Barış Ateş, "Afghan National Army Challenge with Attrition: A Comparative Analysis" *Security Strategies*, 2014, Issue: 19 p. 177

²⁵² Ibid., 189-190

operational capabilities. Many units also still suffer from insufficient weapons, ammunition and spare parts.²⁵³

Another major problem of the ANA is the poor leadership, which was inherited from the Soviet era. As it was in 1970s and 1980s, most of the Afghan officers are loyal to their tribes, sects or regional warlords. The source of loyalty of many ANA officers to their units is economic or the level of Taliban threat in the where they are assigned. Some officers even shift sides according to which side serve their interest best.²⁵⁴

As a result of the Coalition training and recruitment efforts, ANA reached to nearly 30,000 in July 2006, to 40,000 in July 2007 and to 66,000 in July 2008. A joint board consisting of the U.N. and Afghan officials, in 2010, decided that the ANA would reach to 171.600 before the end of 2011.²⁵⁵ However, the plan was revised to 358,000 in August 2011, (ANA 196.000-ANP 162,000) to be achieved by the end of 2012. In January 2017, the size of the ANSF forces was about 8% below target levels.²⁵⁶

Funding of the ANSF is another serious problem for the Afghan government and the U.S. It is estimated that \$5 billion is needed each year to fund the ANSF. The U.S. contributed \$3.65 billion in 2016 to the ANSF. The Obama Administration requested \$3.45 billion for 2017. The NATO Summit in July 2016 was held in Warsaw and Coalition member states at the Summit promised \$1 billion (per year) for the ANSF funding between 2017-2020. Contribution of Afghanistan to ANSF is around \$500 million per year. In 2007, ISAF established a Trust Fund for the ANA, which was

²⁵³ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 29

²⁵⁴ Barış Ateş, "Afghan National Army Challenge with Attrition: A Comparative Analysis" *Security Strategies*, 2014, Issue: 19 p. 180

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 178

²⁵⁶ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 29

used for the transportation of donated military equipment and ANA training. Since 2007, 26 countries have given nearly \$1.5 billion to the ANA Trust Fund.²⁵⁷

4.1.1. The Afghan National Army (ANA)

The ANA, which existed since 1880s, was dissolved during the civil war (1992-1996) and the Taliban era (1996-2001). After the Taliban was ousted in 2001, the Afghan National Army was built from zero. The ANA consists of 43 % Pashtuns, 32 % Tajiks, 12 % Hazaras and 10 % Uzbeks and the rest from smaller ethnic groups. The ratios are approximately the percentages of these communities within the Afghan population.²⁵⁸

Although there has been some changes regarding the targeted size of ANA starting from 2003, the targeted size of the ANA was 195.000 and its size as of January 2018 was around 170.000. The ANA also has a special force unit, 12.000 in total, which was trained and equipped by U.S. Special Forces. However, this force has been used in day-to-day operations, which diminishes its role as an elite unit. The ANA has six regional corps. These are; Kabul Corps (Division HQ, 201, Air Corps), Gardez Corps (203), Kandahar Corps (205), Herat Corps (207), Mazar-e-Sharif Corps (209) and Helmand Corps (2015). The 111th Capital Division is an independent unit, which is responsible for Kabul's security and stability.²⁵⁹

In parallel with the increase in Taliban attacks in 2009, U.S. President Obama decided a surge in the number of U.S. troops. He also decided to raise the end-strength of Afghan security forces to 352,000 (ANA and ANP total). During this period, the U.S. aimed to improve the security and stability in Afghanistan rapidly and at the same time to train and equip the ANSF to ensure that the ANSF is capable

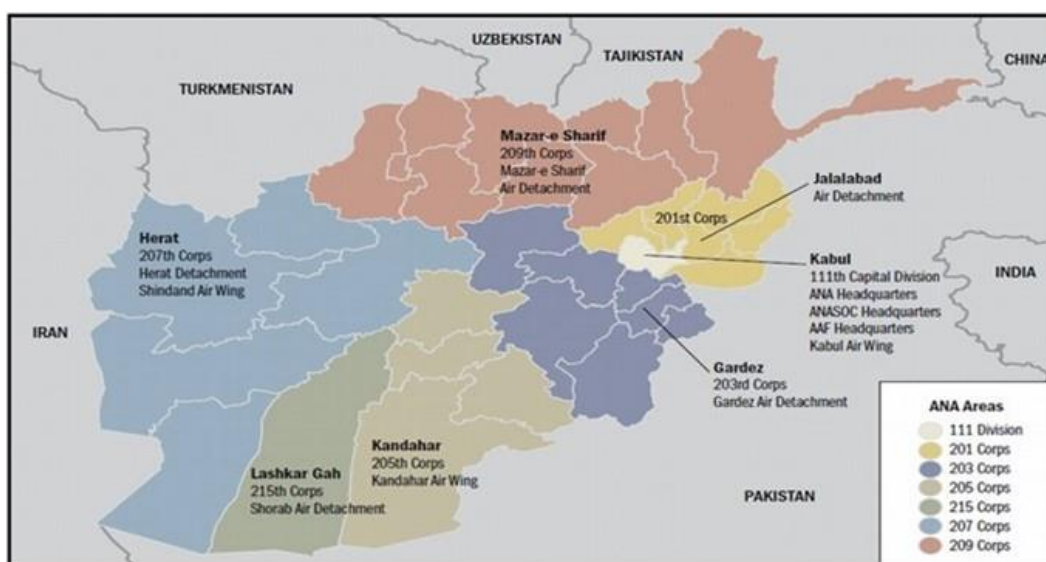
²⁵⁷ Ibid., 30

²⁵⁸ "The Afghan National Army in 2014" <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-afghan-national-army-in-2014> last accessed on June 30, 2019

²⁵⁹ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 31

of taking the security responsibility in the country alone. However, the targeted success in these efforts could not be achieved.²⁶⁰

As of mid-2019 the authorized troop number for the ANSF is 352,000. Also there is a 30,000 target number for the Afghan Local Police (ALP). There is a controversy regarding the actual number of Afghan security personnel since the Afghan government and the U.S. numbers regarding the issue differs. However according to Afghan Personnel and Pay System (APPS) there are nearly 181,000 ANA and 92,000 ANP personnel as of late May 2019.²⁶¹



Map 7: ANA Force Posture²⁶²

4.1.2. Afghan National Air Force (ANAF)

Afghanistan National Air Force (ANAF) was planned to take an important part in ANSF's fight against the Taliban. Just like the ANA, virtually there was no ANAF after the Taliban took control of the country. Following the U.S. operation in 2001,

²⁶⁰ "Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan" <http://www.derechos.org/nizkor/iraq/doc/afgsigar.html#1> last accessed on September 3, 2019

²⁶¹ U.S. Department of Defense "Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan", June 2019 p. 33

²⁶² Ibid.

ANAF has mainly functioned as an assistance force. But starting from 2014, it has increased its operational capabilities in order to support ground forces. The ANAF headquarters is located in Kabul. It has three wings; Kabul, Kandahar and Shindand Air Wings. In addition, the ANAF has five separate detachments one in Jalalabad and the others in Shorab, Mazar-e Sharif, Gardez and Herat.²⁶³

The ANAF is mainly using the Brazilian A-29 Super Tucano fighters. It has about 8,400 personnel, which is very close to the targeted size. The AAF has 104 aircrafts in its inventory which includes four C-130s. The ANAF also has 46 Russian Mi-17 helicopters. The target size of ANAF is 140 aircrafts. There are also MD-530 helicopters, and three Cheetah helicopters which were donated by India. The Afghan government wants to acquire sophisticated aircrafts, such as F-16s. Afghanistan also wants to take back 26 taken to Uzbekistan and Pakistan during Afghan civil war.²⁶⁴

However, the most important problem the ANAF faces is not the short supply of aircrafts. Despite the small number of aircrafts, it has, there are not enough pilots and crews to fly them all. This shortage is hampering ANA's ability to fight Taliban militants. Afghan troops on the ground are desperately in need of air support, which ranges from targeting the enemy to evacuating the wounded and dead. The U.S. military experts claim that even more Afghan pilots have been trained; gaining experience can take long years which in the short term are the most important factor to limit the size of the ANAF.²⁶⁵

4.1.3. Afghan National Police (ANP)

An important part of the fight against insurgency in Afghanistan is a trained and capable national police force. Just like the ANA, the Afghan National Police (ANP)

²⁶³ "Afghanistan Air Force" <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/airforce.htm> last accessed on June 30, 2019

²⁶⁴ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 pp. 31-32

²⁶⁵ "Afghan air force needs more pilots, as well as more planes" <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-airforce/afghan-air-force-needs-more-pilots-as-well-as-more-planes-idUSKCN10R0QD> last accessed on June 30, 2019

was built up from zero after 2001. There have been important improvements regarding the ANP, but many experts argue that the ANP has not reached to desired level. There is serious corruption problem within the ANP and majority of Afghans mistrust and fear it. The ANP also suffers from a high rate of desertion, even higher than the ANA, and illiteracy rate among ANP members is also very high. Another problematic factor for the ANP is its involvement in local disputes, because many ANP personnel work in their hometowns and easily become part of a hostility among the indigenous population.²⁶⁶

The ANP's main task is to sustain domestic order, fight against corruption and illegal narcotics. The ANP is currently tasked with counterinsurgency, alongside the ANA. However, with limited personnel, heavy weapons and armored vehicles, the ANP is not sufficiently trained or equipped for counterinsurgency missions. In this regard, the future goal envisaged by the Afghan Government for ANP is to transform it to a traditional police force. The target size for the ANP was 157,000 and in January 2018, ANP had about 154,000 personnel. The ANP employs about 3,200 women and several women personnel of the ANP were appointed to high ranks, such as district police commanders.²⁶⁷

The ANP has four sections; "Afghan Uniform Police (AUP)", "Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP)", "Afghan Anti-Crime Police (AACP)" and three sub-sections; "Afghan Local Police (ALP)", "Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF)", and "Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA)". The ANP has eight zones of responsibility in Afghanistan and usually align with the ANA in those areas. AUP is the largest police force in the country with 87,000 target personnel level. In their daily lives Afghans usually come across with the AUP. The AUP, which has headquarters in all provinces, consists of traffic, fire and rescue departments. The

²⁶⁶ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 32

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 32

primary mission of the AUP is to “maintain the rule of law”, “provide security and civil order” and “fight against smuggling”.²⁶⁸

The ANCOP is a component of the ANP, which has 15,000 personnel. The ANCOP gives the ANP offensive capability. The ANCOP missions include suppressing civil unrest, fighting against insurgency in remote areas, conducting patrols and emergency response to public unrests and terrorist attacks cities. The ANCOP has nine brigades, one distributed to each ANP region and a brigade is stationed in Helmand.²⁶⁹

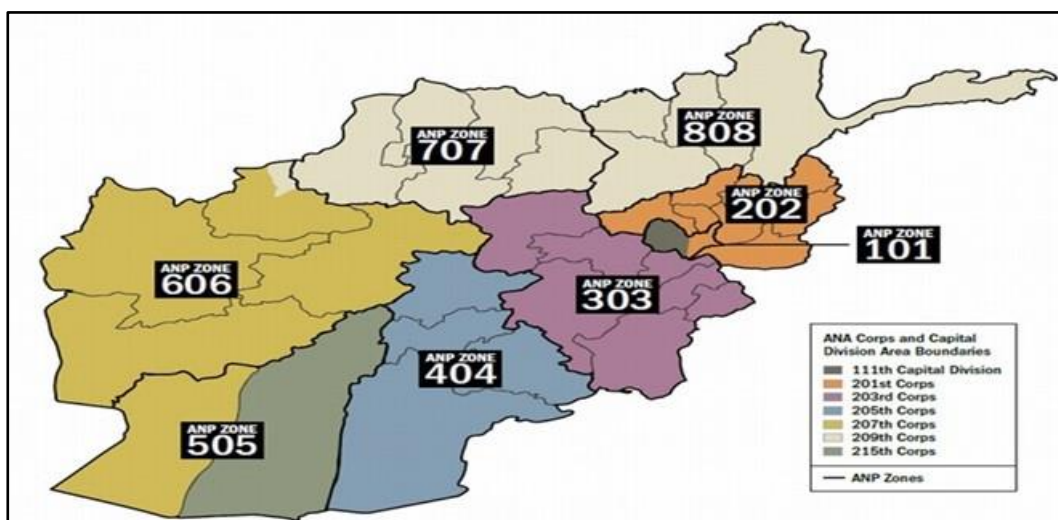
The Afghan Border Police (ABP) works within the ANCOP and is responsible for the security of the national borders and Afghanistan’s airports. It is also responsible for safeguarding “border security zone”, 45 km. into Afghanistan. The ABP is planned to transform into Afghan Border Force (ABF). The ABP’s target level is 22,000 and as of January 2018 it has almost reached that level.²⁷⁰ Due to the failure of police training efforts, in 2008, the U.S. Administration decided to develop police force to protect local communities. The Afghan Local Police (ALP), was established to stop arbitrary executions and civilian abuses. The number of ALP, was around 29,000 in early 2008.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ “Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan” U.S. Department Defense, December 2017, pp. 68-69 https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/June_2017_1225_Report_to_Congress.pdf last accessed on June 30, 2019

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 77-82

²⁷⁰ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy” *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 33

²⁷¹ Ibid., 33



Map 8: ANP Zones vs. ANA Corps Boundaries²⁷²

One of the major causes of security problems in Afghanistan is failure of the security forces in the country to reach the desired level despite 18 years of efforts of the U.S. and the coalition forces. The ANA, along with the ANP, started to be established from scratch in 2001, have been carrying all the security responsibility in Afghanistan, at least on paper since 2014. However, as observed by many experts, Afghan security forces are not capable of carrying out large-scale operations for rebel groups without U.S. training, logistics and air support. Another important problem faced by Afghan security forces is the desertion. A significant number of security guards escape every year, despite all efforts, the situation has not been prevented and the blood loss of the ANA and ANP has not been prevented.²⁷³

However, the biggest factor in the failure of the ANSF to reach the desired level is the high casualties experienced each year. As of the end of 2014, after NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan, Afghan security forces were forced to engage more rebel groups in the field. As a result, the casualties of the coalition forces have been decreasing since 2014, while the casualties of the Afghan security forces have

²⁷² "Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan" <http://www.derechos.org/nizkor/iraq/doc/afgsigar.html> last accessed on June 30, 2019

²⁷³ Ibid.

increased. In November 2018, Afghan President Ghani made it public that nearly 28,000 ANSF personnel have been killed in action since 2015.²⁷⁴ This number is too high for any modern armies in the world to bear.

The Afghan government faced a tough challenge from the Taliban in 2015 and 2016. Alone in 2015 more than 5,000 ANSF members were killed and over 14,000 were wounded.²⁷⁵ This is a 30 % increase compared to 2014. In 2016, the Afghan security forces suffered more than 18,500 casualties according to the Afghan government.²⁷⁶ Also the Afghan forces during this period suffered high level of desertion. During the ISAF mission, desertion levels rarely exceeded 20 % a year. Due to the high levels of desertion, in 2016 one-third of the ANA was composed of first-year soldiers.²⁷⁷

The issue of financing the ANSF raises questions about the future success of the ANA and the ANP. Afghan security forces are largely funded with the support of foreign donor countries. Afghanistan, which lags far behind the national income worldwide, is not likely to finance the targeted army and police size on its own. Therefore, each year, donor countries, especially the U.S., pay large sums for the financing of the ANSF. The situation continued after 2014, and most of the donor countries pledged to pay certain amounts until 2020. However, it is unclear how long this will continue. If the donor countries stopped financing the ANSF for political or

²⁷⁴ “US army chief says death toll of Afghan security forces is unsustainable” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/04/us-army-chief-says-death-toll-of-afghan-security-forces-is-unsustainable> last accessed on June 30, 2019

²⁷⁵ “Afghan forces' casualties climbing in 2016, top U.S. commander says” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-afghanistan-casualties-idUSKCN0ZQ04H> last accessed on June 30, 2019

²⁷⁶ “Afghan Army Casualties Hit 10-Year High in 2016 - Presidential Adviser” <https://sputniknews.com/asia/201703041051258215-afghan-army-casualties/> last accessed on June 30, 2019

²⁷⁷ Ivan Safranchuk, “Afghanistan and Its Central Asian Neighbors – Toward Dividing Insecurity” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 2017 pp. 15-17

economic reasons, the structure would soon become dysfunctional.²⁷⁸ Also, the civilian casualties became a serious problem for the Afghan security forces. According to UN reports in the past years more than 70% of civilian casualties were inflicted by the Taliban or other terrorist groups. However, in 2015 the insurgents were responsible for only 62% of casualties and Afghan security forces for 17%. In 2016, 61% of civilian casualties were caused by the insurgents and 24% by the ANSF. The casualty figures were slightly better for the Afghan government in 2017. According to the UNAMA report, in 2017 65 % of civilian casualties were caused by the insurgents, 16% by the ANSF, and 2 % by international military forces and 1 % unspecified pro-government groups.²⁷⁹

These numbers are troubling for the Afghan government, which means more civilians killed by the security forces the lower the public support for the central government. The future success of ANSF depends on the realization of many interrelated factors. In this context, it is considered that Afghan security forces, which can be considered as relatively successful until 2019, will require a long process before they can become a real national and self-sufficient structure.

²⁷⁸ “Warsaw Summit Key Decisions”
https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_02/20170206_1702-factsheet-warsaw-summit-key-en.pdf last accessed on September 2, 2019

²⁷⁹ UNAMA, ‘Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’, Annual Report 2017, p. 4.”
https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_protection_of_civilians_annual_report_2017_final_150218.pdf last accessed on July 10, 2019

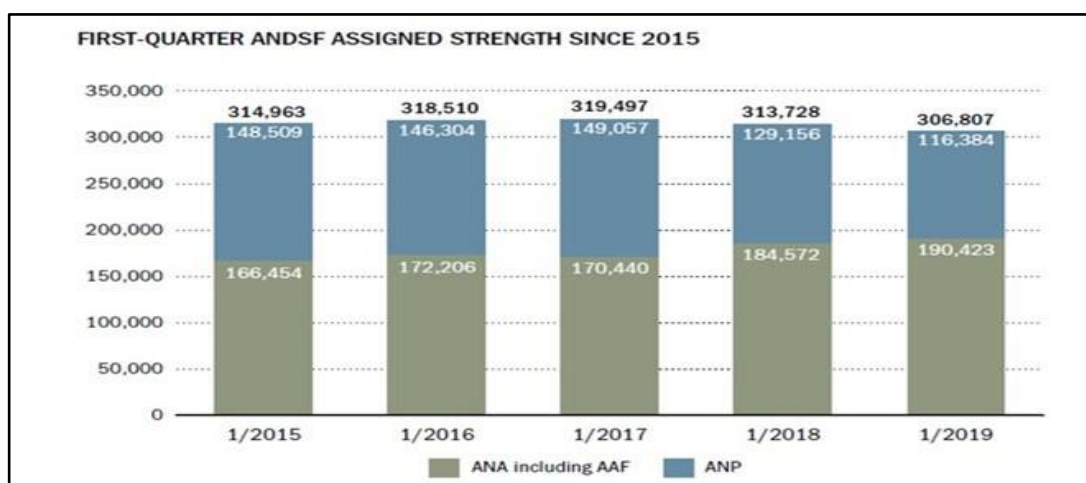


Figure 7: ANSF Assigned Strength Since 2015 ²⁸⁰

4.2. Afghan Governance

Afghanistan historically, both before and after 2001, has been governed by weak central governments, unable to have control on all over the country. In rural areas the local populations have been ruled by the local leaders and warlords rather than the central governments. Before 2001, Afghanistan had few Western-type democratic and administrative institutions.²⁸¹ With the 1964 constitution, Afghan Shah was situated as a constitutional monarch and for the first time a lower house and a upper house were established.²⁸² However, the Afghan Parliament during that time could never manage to limit Shah’s power. The period between 1964 until 1973 military coup was the golden years of the democracy in Afghanistan. The last elections were

²⁸⁰ “SIGAR Quarterly Report April 30, 2019” p.84 <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2019-04-30qr.pdf> last accessed on July 10, 2019

²⁸¹ Jennifer Brick Murtazashvili, “Afghanistan: A Vicious Cycle of State Failure” *Governance*, Vol. 29, No. 2, April 2016 p. 164

²⁸² “Constitution of Afghanistan = Assasi Qanun (1964)” <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=afghanenglish> last accessed on July 10, 2019

organized in 1969 and the Parliament was closed altogether in April 1978, when the communists seized the power.²⁸³

During the Taliban rule between 1996 and 2001, Afghanistan was administered clerics controlled by Mullah Omar.²⁸⁴ In this period there was no parliament and the government offices were barely functioning. After the Taliban regime was ousted the UN invited major Afghan groups, including the NA and supporters of the former Shah to a conference in Bonn. On December 5, 2001 the “Bonn Agreement” was endorsed by these factions. The agreement was endorsed by the UNSC on December 20, 2001 (Resolution 1386).²⁸⁵ According to the Bonn Agreement, 1964 constitution was accepted as the temporary constitution of Afghanistan. In the agreement it was stated that;

to the extent that its provisions are not inconsistent with those contained in this agreement, and with the exception of those provisions relating to the monarchy and to the executive and legislative bodies provided in the Constitution until a permanent one could be drafted.²⁸⁶

In June 2002 an “Emergency Loya Jirga” was convened and drafted a constitution.²⁸⁷ The draft text was debated by a “Constitutional Loya Jirga”, which approved it on January 4, 2004. President Karzai ratified the Constitution on January 26, 2004.²⁸⁸

²⁸³ Sultan Akimbekov, *The History of Afghanistan* (Astana – Almaty: The Institute of World Economy and Politics, 2016) pp. 270-284

²⁸⁴ For detailed information on Taliban era see Hassan Abbas, *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on The Pakistan—Afghanistan Frontier* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014) Chapter 3 pp. 53-93

²⁸⁵ “UN Security Council Resolution 1386 (2001) [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1386\(2001\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1386(2001)) last accessed on June 20, 2019

²⁸⁶ “The Petersberg (Bonn-) Accord signed on December 5, 2001” <http://www.ag-afghanistan.de/files/petersberg.htm> last visited on June 30, 2019

²⁸⁷ Loya Jirga functions visit “Loya Jirga - An Afghan Tradition Explained” <https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-loya-jirga-explainer/25174483.html> last visited on June 30, 2019

The constitution established a presidential system and a separately elected National Parliament, but gave broad powers to the president. The Northern Alliance opposed a strong presidency, which they argued that would favor the Pashtuns, but they failed to insert articles to the Constitution for a stronger parliament. According to the Article 63 of the Constitution, “president serves for a five-year term”, (limited to two-terms) and has the authority to appoint majority of the high-ranking officials, including ministers, Supreme Court members, judges, the Attorney General, provincial/district governors and local security chiefs. However, these appointments must be approved by the Parliament. The president is also “Commander in Chief” of the ANA and has the authority to “declare war and peace with the approval of the National Parliament”.²⁸⁹

According to the Constitution, the Afghan National Parliament consists of two chambers, “Lower House - House of the People” with 250 seats and “Upper House - House of Elders” with 102 seats. The members of Lower House are all elected through national elections. The 34 seats of Upper House are appointed by the president; 34 seats are appointed by the local councils for a four-year term and the remaining 34 seats are appointed by district councils.²⁹⁰

The democratic institutions started to reappear in Afghanistan only after the approval of the constitution in 2004. An important factor of the state-building and democratization efforts in Afghanistan was elections. The first election, after the Taliban regime was toppled, was the presidential elections held on October 9, 2004. There were 18 candidates competing for the presidency, including Pashtun Hamid Karzai, Tajik Yunus Qanooni, (a key figure of the Northern Alliance) a Hazara leader Mohammad Mohaqqueq and Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum. As it could

²⁸⁸ “Karzai Signs New Afghan Constitution Into Law” <https://www.rferl.org/a/1051317.html> last visited on June 30, 2019

²⁸⁹ “Islamic Republic of Afghanistan The Constitution of Afghanistan” <http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf> last visited on June 30, 2019

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

be observed from identities of the candidates the presidential race was set among ethnic lines and the Afghan people voted in this direction.²⁹¹

The presidential election was won by Hamid Karzai in the first round with 55.4% of the votes, his closest rival, former Education Minister Yunus Qanooni received 16.3% and Muhammad Mohaqeq, became third with 11.7%.²⁹² The turnout was 80%, rather high for a country just got rid of the Taliban in which for decades no elections were held. Karzai assumed the office in December 2004 and ruled the country through decrees, since the National Parliament was not yet established. Although the election processed relatively worked well, many observers claimed that voter registration process in 2004 was highly flawed, since there were no up to date population figures. The most recent numbers regarding the population of Afghanistan dated back to 1980s and even those numbers merely covered half of the country.²⁹³

The Parliament and the provincial council elections were held on September 18, 2005. After the announcement of the official results Parliament was inaugurated on December 19, 2005. The national turnout was 49%, which was significantly lower than the presidential elections in 2004. Uzbek, Turkmen, and Tajik populated provinces had a higher turnout than the Taliban dominated southern regions. The turnout was 34% in Kabul, which was a surprising outcome since the capital was one of the most secure regions all around Afghanistan.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Noah Coburn and Anna Larson, *Derailing Democracy in Afghanistan: Elections in an Unstable Political Landscape* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014) pp. 53-54

²⁹² “Election of Karzai Is Declared Official” <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/04/world/asia/election-of-karzai-is-declared-official.html> last visited on June 30, 2019

²⁹³ Noah Coburn and Anna Larson, *Derailing Democracy in Afghanistan: Elections in an Unstable Political Landscape* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014) p. 53

²⁹⁴ “The September 2005 Parliamentary and Provincial Council Elections in Afghanistan - Prepared by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)” https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/2004_af_report_041006.pdf p.15 last visited on June 30, 2019

The next presidential and also provincial council elections in Afghanistan were conducted on August 20, 2009²⁹⁵, even though the article 61 of the Afghan Constitution, which dictated that “elections for the new President shall be held within thirty to sixty days prior to the end of the presidential term”.²⁹⁶ (Karzai’s presidency ended on May 22, 2009). The Independent Election Commission (IEC), a constitutional body to oversee the process was harshly criticized both for the date of the 2009 presidential elections and the conduct of it. The IEC was also accused of being controlled by President Karzai, since the members of the Commission were selected from candidates politically close to him. On the other hand an independent body, the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC), was appointed by the UN, which was put in charge to examine election complaints and validate candidacies. The ECC was established in 2005 to inspect objections regarding the Parliament and Provincial Council elections as part of the “Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB)” in Afghanistan.²⁹⁷

The unofficial results of the 2009 presidential elections were announced on September 16, 2009, according to which Hamid Karzai received 54.6 % of the total votes, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah managed to secure 27.7 %. Ramazan Bashardost could only receive 9 % and Ashraf Ghani received 3 %.²⁹⁸ In October 2009, the ECC ruled that nearly one million votes cast for Karzai and 200,000 votes cast for Abdullah were fake and cancelled. According to the official results, announced in October 2009, Hamid Karzai received 49.67 % (2,283,907 votes), Dr. Abdullah Abdullah

²⁹⁵ “Afghan Election Called a Success Despite Attacks” <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/21/world/asia/21afghan.html> last visited on June 30, 2019

²⁹⁶ “The Constitution of Afghanistan” <http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf> last visited on June 30, 2019

²⁹⁷ “Electoral Complaints Commission” <https://iecc.gov.af/en/about-commission-0> last visited on June 30, 2019

²⁹⁸ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance” *Congressional Research Service*, January 12, 2015 p.21

30.59 % (1,406,242 votes) and Ramazan Bashardost received 10.46 % (481,072 votes) of the total votes.²⁹⁹

The results dictated a runoff between the two candidates. Karzai agreed for a second round against Abdullah. However, Abdullah refused to take part after his demands for changes to the IEC were rejected.³⁰⁰ Upon refusal of Abdullah for a runoff, the IEC chairman Azizullah Ludin, on November 2, 2009, declared Hamid Karzai winner since “he was the winner of the first round and the only candidate in the second round.”³⁰¹ The results of the provincial council elections were announced on September 26, 2009. However, the IEC announced only the results from 30 out of 34 provinces. The announcement of the results from Ghazni, Kandahar, Paktika and Nangarhar provinces were delayed due to fraud claims. The complete results of the provincial elections were announced on December 12, 2009.³⁰²

Afghanistan conducted the 2010 Parliamentary elections under the marred presidential and provincial council elections of 2009. In February 2010 President Karzai approved a decree, which changed the 2005 election law to govern the parliamentary elections of 2010. One of the most disputed aspect of Karzai’s decree was that the authority given to him to elect all five members of the ECC and oust

²⁹⁹ “Presidential & Provincial Council Elections Afghanistan 2009 Elections” http://www.iec.org.af/results_2009/Index.html# last visited on June 30, 2019

³⁰⁰ “Afghan election chaos as Abdullah pulls out of run-off” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/01/abdullah-withdraws-afghanistan-election> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³⁰¹ “Hamid Karzai declared winner of Afghanistan's presidential election” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/02/hamid-karzai-afghanistan-winner-election> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³⁰² “National Democratic Institute “The 2009 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections in Afghanistan” 2009, p.48 To see the full report visit https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Elections_in_Afghanistan_2009.pdf last accessed on July 1, 2019

foreign members of the Commission.³⁰³ The Lower House voted unanimously against the decree, but the Upper House backed Karzai's decree. However, due to the pressure and harsh criticisms from the international community, Karzai accepted the UN to appoint two members of the ECC.³⁰⁴

Following the evaluation of all appeals regarding the candidates, on June 22, 2010, finalized list was released, which included 2,577 candidates. (406 candidates were women) But the security concerns played a big part in 2010 Parliamentary elections. In late August 2010 IEC made it public that 938 polling centers would not open due to security concerns.³⁰⁵ On the Election Day, September 18, 2010, nearly 5.5 million votes were cast, (number of total voters was nearly 17 million) making the participation about 33%. Many voters did not go to polling stations due to security concerns. Initial results of the election were announced on October 20, 2010. The final results on the other hand were announced on November 24, 2010, because of numerous fraud complaints.³⁰⁶

Following the elections President Karzai ordered the establishment of a special five-member commission to investigate electoral fraud claims. Upon this decision, the international community and UNAMA declared that the IEC and ECC are legitimate bodies for elections. Despite this announcement, President Karzai delayed the opening of the parliament to complete the work of his appointed electoral

³⁰³ "Hamid Karzai takes control of Afghanistan election watchdog" <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/feb/22/karzai-afghanistan-electoral-complaints-commission> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³⁰⁴ "Afghan upper house backs Karzai election decree" <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-election/afghan-upper-house-backs-karzai-election-decree-idUSTRE6320X220100403> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³⁰⁵ "Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission releases list of polling centres" <https://unama.unmissions.org/afghanistans-independent-election-commission-releases-list-polling-centres> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³⁰⁶ "The 2010 Wolesi Jirga Elections in Afghanistan National Democratic Institute p.51-56" For full report on the election results visit <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Afghanistan-2010-election-observers-final-report.pdf> last accessed on July 1, 2019

commission. However, on January 26, 2011, Karzai officially approved the new parliament after 213 candidates who succeeded in the parliamentary elections threatened that they would formally appoint themselves.³⁰⁷

Ethnic Uzbek, Abdul Raouf Ibrahim, was named as the Parliament Speaker (Lower House) as a result of compromise among political factions. And with the appointment of 34 candidates by Karzai, the Meshrano Jirga (Upper House - House of Elders) was completed on February 19, 2011. The real crisis occurred on June 23, 2011, when the election commission announced that 62 candidates lost in the elections should be restored. On August 10, President ruled that the special court had no authority to alter the election results. The winning candidates were sworn in on September 3, and the Afghan Parliament started working after a short time.³⁰⁸ According to the Afghan Constitution “elections for the new President shall be held within thirty to sixty days prior to the end of the presidential term”³⁰⁹ which was prior to May 22, 2014, last day of Karzai in office. In this regard, in late October 2012, the IEC decided the election presidential election to be held on April 5, 2014.³¹⁰

The turnout in the first round was over 7 million, nearly 60%. Unlike the previous elections, violence on Election Day was negligible and most voters made it to the polling stations. However, 17 ANSF members were killed in insurgent attacks, but no voters were killed. Just as it was in the 2009 elections many polling centers, as

³⁰⁷ “After Months of Turmoil, Karzai Opens Parliament” <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/27/world/asia/27afghan.html> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³⁰⁸ “Afghan parliament sworn in amid outcry” https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/afghan-parliament-sworn-in-amid-outcry/2011/09/03/gIQAE5RfzJ_story.html?utm_term=.4d0374d00292 last accessed on July 1, 2019

³⁰⁹ “The Constitution of Afghanistan” <http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf> last visited on June 30, 2019

³¹⁰ “Afghan Election Commission sets next presidential poll for April 5, 2014” <https://globalnews.ca/news/303364/afghan-election-commission-sets-next-presidential-poll-for-april-5-2014/> accessed on July 1, 2019

many as 1,000, did not open due to security risks. Following the elections, as it has become a tradition in Afghan elections; scores of fraud complaints (around 870) were made. The complaints were inspected and about 375,000 votes were cancelled. The IEC announced official results on May 15, 2014, according to which Dr. Abdullah received 44.9% (2,972,141), Ashraf Ghani received 31.5% (2,084,547), Zalmai Rassoul received 11.5% (750,997) and Abdi Rab Rasoul Sayyaf got 5% (465,207) of the total votes.³¹¹ The IEC declared a runoff between Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani to be held on June 14, 2014.³¹²

Before the elections a probable agreement that might avoid a second election was discussed among political groups but no deal was reached and the elections took place on June 14, 2014. Contrary to the first round of the elections, violence was widespread in the runoff and more than 50 people were killed. The participation was similar to the first round and nearly 7 million voters cast their votes. The IEC's released preliminary results on July 7.³¹³

According the preliminary results A Ghani received 56 % of the votes, whereas Abdullah received nearly 44%.³¹⁴ After U.S. mediation, two candidates Abdullah and Ghani announced an agreement on a recount process.³¹⁵ The recount process was initiated on July 17, 2014 and completed in late August. According to initial recount results Ashraf Ghani was in lead by 800,000 votes. Realizing that the gap could not

³¹¹ "Afghanistan Election Data 2014" <https://2014.afghanistanelectiondata.org/#election> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³¹² "Afghanistan Presidential Run-Off Vote to Take Place on June 14" <https://thediplomat.com/2014/05/afghanistan-presidential-run-off-vote-to-take-place-on-june-14/> accessed on July 1, 2019

³¹³ Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance" *Congressional Research Service*, January 12, 2015 pp. 27-28

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ "Disputed Afghan election to be recounted in full" <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-afghanistan-kerry-recount-idUSKBN0FH0PJ20140712> last accessed on July 1, 2019

be closed, on September 21, Abdullah Abdullah signed a power-sharing agreement with Ashraf Ghania.³¹⁶ Ashraf Ghani declared as President on September 29, 2014. Right after that he appointed Abdullah as the CEO.³¹⁷

However, the power-sharing deal between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah was problematic. The two came at loggerheads numerous times since 2014, but with an apparent U.S. mediation, every time they managed to keep the boat floating. The power-sharing agreement seems help to increase the ethnic fragmentation of Afghan state instead of mending the bridges between different social groups thus increasing the risk of instability and insecurity.³¹⁸

The most recent elections on the agenda of Afghan politics were the parliamentary elections of 2018. The parliamentary elections were held on October 20, 2018 (except in Ghazni province for security reasons) in 33 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. Just like in the previous elections, many polling stations failed to open due to the threats of the Taliban (401 polling centers were not opened) The IEC had to extend the voting process for a another day and opened some of polling centers which were not opened the previous day.³¹⁹ On election days, more than 100 people were killed due to violence and 30 % of the polling stations were closed because of security concerns.³²⁰ In addition, Afghans in Kandahar could only vote on October 27, 2018.

³¹⁶ "Afghan leaders sign power-sharing deal" <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/21/afghanistan-power-sharing-deal-abdullah-ashraf-ghani-ahmadzai> website last accessed on July 1, 2019

³¹⁷ "President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan Is Sworn In, Even as He Shares the Stage" <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/30/international-home/ashraf-ghani-sworn-in-as-afghan-president.html> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³¹⁸ Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance" *Congressional Research Service*, January 12, 2015 pp. 29-30

³¹⁹ "The Results of Afghanistan's 2018 Parliamentary Elections: A new, but incomplete Wolesi Jirga" <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-results-of-afghanistans-2018-parliamentary-elections-a-new-but-incomplete-wolesi-jirga/> website last accessed on July 1, 2019

³²⁰ Khalid Iqbal, "Afghanistan beyond Parliamentary Elections" *Defence Journal* Nov 2018, Vol. 22 Issue 4, 2018 p. 8

The delay was caused by the assassination of Kandahar Police Chief two days before the Election Day.³²¹

The Parliament was inaugurated on April 26, 2019, however since Kabul and Paktia results were not announced 38 seats remained empty on the inauguration day. The IEC Chairman Abdul Badi Sayat revealed that more than 3 million people out of 8.8 million voters cast their votes. The highest turnout was recorded in Kabul and the lowest participation to the elections was in Uruzgan province.³²²

On the other hand, the presidential election which was planned to be held on April 20, 2019, was postponed until July 2019. However, in late March 2019, the IEC announced that “due recent amendments to election laws and the pending resolution of numerous problems and challenges facing the voting system” the presidential election was delayed again, this time to September 28, 2019.³²³

While the political struggle in Kabul was getting tense, so was the security situation. On May 31, 2017, 150 people died and more than 300 people in a bombing in Kabul resulted in mass anti-government demonstrations, in which nine people were killed by the security forces.³²⁴

The Taliban and related groups continued large scale attacks in the first months of 2018. An Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) suicide bomber attacked a market on

³²¹ “The Killing of Razeq: Removing the Taleban’s strongest foe in Kandahar, an indirect hit at elections” <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-killing-of-razeq-removing-the-talebans-strongest-foe-in-kandahar-an-indirect-hit-at-elections/> website last accessed on July 1, 2019

³²² “Day 2 of Afghan Vote After Technical Issues, Attacks” <https://www.voanews.com/a/day-2-of-afghan-vote-after-technical-issues-attacks/4622469.html> website last accessed on July 1, 2019

³²³ “Afghanistan Again Postpones Presidential Election” <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/afghanistan-again-postpones-presidential-election> website last accessed on July 1, 2019

³²⁴ “Death Toll in Kabul Bombing Has Hit 150, Afghan President Says” <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/06/world/asia/kabul-bombing-death-toll-increases.html> last accessed on July 1, 2019

January 4, 2018, killing 20 people and injuring many others.³²⁵ In an attack on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul on January 20, 2018, gunmen dressed in army uniforms, killed more than 30 people, including six foreigners.³²⁶ In another bomb attack in a central Kabul market on January 27, 2018 more than 100 people lost their lives.³²⁷ The security experts claimed that the Taliban is now following a new strategy focused on attacks in major cities on civilians. The insurgent groups also started to target international air organizations and its personnel in the first months of 2018. On January 24, 2018 ISIS militants attacked the Save the Children office in Jalalabad and killed five people and injured at dozens.³²⁸

On April 22 2018, 63 people were killed and hundred people were injured in suicide attacks at voter registration offices in Kabul and Baglan provinces. The ISIS claimed responsibility for the Kabul attack. The Kabul bombing happened in the Dasht-e-Barchi area, where predominantly Shia Hazara minority lives.³²⁹

As a part of its 2018 spring offensive, the Taliban attacked Farah city on May 15, 2018 and almost captured the city. After two-days long fighting with the Afghan security forces the Taliban fled the city, killing 25 members of the ANSF and five civilians. The Taliban attack on Farah proved that the insurgents are capable of

³²⁵ “ISIS Suicide Attack Kills at Least 20 in Kabul” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/04/world/asia/isis-kabul-suicide-attack.html> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³²⁶ “Heavy casualties after overnight battle at Kabul hotel” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-attacks/heavy-casualties-after-overnight-battle-at-kabul-hotel-idUSKBN1F90W9> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³²⁷ “Death toll in Kabul bombing raised to 103” <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-kabul-bombing-20180128-story.html> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³²⁸ “Deadly ISIS Attack Hits an Aid Group, Save the Children, in Afghanistan” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/24/world/asia/save-the-children-afghanistan.html> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³²⁹ “Afghanistan: 63 dead in attacks on voter registration centres” <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/04/afghanistan-deaths-attack-id-voter-registration-centre-kabul-180422063114761.html> last accessed on July 1, 2019

attacking a well-protected city backed up by both the ANSF and the U.S. air support.³³⁰

The Taliban continued its attacks throughout the summer of 2018. Taliban militants raided an ANSF base and a police checkpoint in Baghlan Province on August 15, 2018, killing 39 police officers and soldiers, and a suicide bomber in Kabul killed at least 48 civilians in a classroom.³³¹

The Taliban staged separate attacks against the ANSF in the Northern provinces and killed 52 Afghan soldiers on September 10, 2018. A checkpoint in Dashti Archi district was attacked by the Taliban and the insurgents killed 13 members of the security forces and wounded 15 others. Meanwhile in Jowzjan province, eight policemen were killed and three others were wounded by the Taliban. The Taliban killed 14 members of the local Afghan police forces in the Darah-ye Suf district of Samangan province. On the same day, in the northern Sar-e Pul province, the Taliban killed at least 17 members of the ANSF. The attacks on September 10 showed that the Taliban escalated its offensive since the five-day ceasefire during the Eid al Fitr in June 2018.³³²

The Taliban attacks further escalated in autumn of 2018. On November 11, 2018 50 ANSF members were killed in Farah Province and nine others were injured and on November 15, 2018 the Taliban launched a surprise attack against an army base in the Farah province killing 30 ANSF personnel. The Taliban continued its attacks against the ANSF in 2019. Taliban militants attacked a checkpoint in Kunduz on

³³⁰ “Taliban Overrun Afghan City, Kill 30 People and Leave” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/16/world/asia/taliban-farah-afghanistan.html> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³³¹ “Taliban Attack Another Afghan Army Base, Killing Dozens” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/15/world/asia/afghanistan-base-attack-taliban.html> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³³² “Taliban attack Afghan security forces in north, killing 52” <http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2018/sep/10/taliban-attack-afghan-security-forces-in-north-kill/> last accessed on July 1, 2019

February 5, 2019, killing 28 security officers and wounding 20 others.³³³ It was claimed that the Afghan government was in control of Kabul, major cities and majority of district centers the insurgents continue their high-profile terror attacks. Between December 1, 2018, and May 15, 2019, there were six major attacks in Kabul, such as the ISIS-K attack against the Ministry of Communications on April 20, 2019 in which 22 people died including six ANSF members.³³⁴ The latest large-scale attack conducted by the Taliban took place on July 1, 2019 in which 40 people along with 6 ANSF members and 34 civilians, were killed and 116 were injured.³³⁵

The Taliban was not only targeting Afghan security forces and soldiers of Western powers, but also civilians. On the other hand, when the civilian casualties in Afghanistan are examined, it is seen that some of them are caused by friendly fire. However, civilian casualties after 2001, regardless of the cause, were an important criterion for measuring the success of the Afghan Government in securing security. While the number of civilian casualties in 2009 was 2412, the number increased to 3701 as of 2014. Between 2009 and 2014, a total of 14809 people were killed as a result of Taliban attacks, coalition military operations and friendly fires by Afghan security forces. On the other hand, during the five-year period between 2015-2018, 14336 civilians lost their lives. Considering that the number of casualties in 2019 was not added to this number and covers only the 5-year period, there will be a

³³³ “Afghanistan: Taliban militants kill 28 security officers in Kunduz February 5” <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/201231/afghanistan-taliban-militants-kill-28-security-officers-in-kunduz-february-5> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³³⁴ “DoD Report - Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan June 2019” <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/12/2002156816/-1/-1/1/ENHANCING-SECURITY-AND-STABILITY-IN-AFGHANISTAN.PDF> last accessed on July 1, 2019

³³⁵ “The Taliban has launched a major attack in Afghanistan’s capital” <https://www.vox.com/world/2019/7/1/20677249/afghanistan-kabul-explosion-taliban-attack> last accessed on July 1, 2019

significant increase in civilian casualties after the withdrawal of NATO from Afghanistan.³³⁶

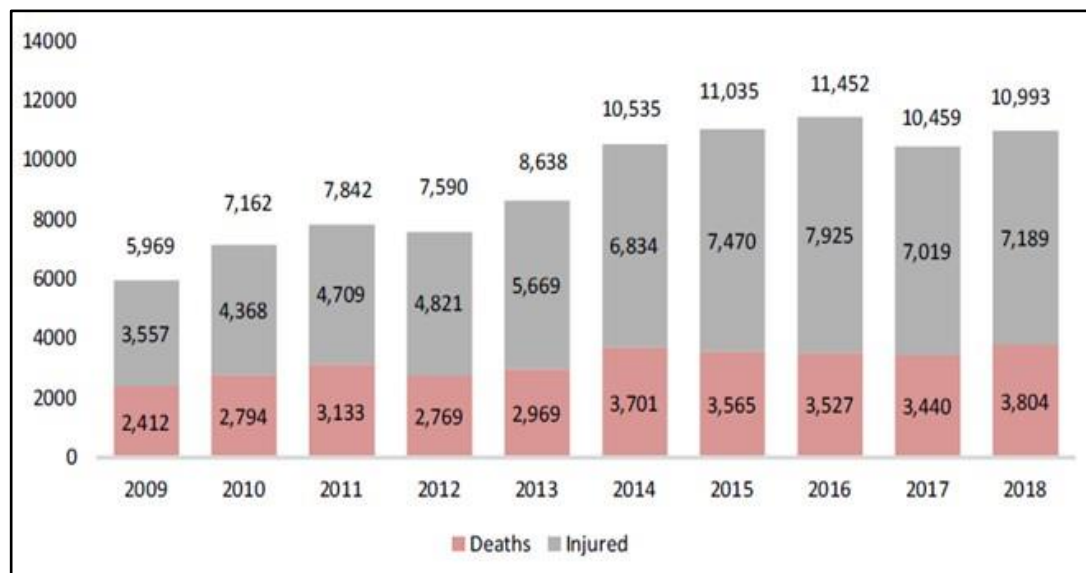


Figure 8: Total Civilian Deaths & Injured (January to December 2009-2018)³³⁷

4.2.1 Negotiations with the Taliban

As early as 2009 several military and civil experts started to voice an argument that if a lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan is desired the Afghan government should set a negotiation table with the Taliban. For this purpose in September 2010 “Afghan High Peace Council (AHPC)” was established to manage the settlement and reintegration procedure.³³⁸ Former President and a leader of the NA, Burhanuddin Rabbani was named as the head of the council. However, Burhanuddin Rabbani was killed on September 20, 2011 in a suicide bombing, in which AHPC’s secretariat

³³⁶ “Total Civilian Deaths & Injured” https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_annual_protection_of_civilians_report_2018_-_23_feb_2019_-_english.pdf last accessed on July 3, 2019

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ “Karzai sets up council for peace talks with Taliban” <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11188294> last accessed on July 3, 2019

Masoom Stanekza was wounded.³³⁹ After Rabbani's death his eldest son, Salahuddin Rabbani replaced him as head of AHPC in April 2012 with the support of President Karzai.³⁴⁰

The first meetings with the U.S. and the Taliban were held in 2011. The Taliban demanded five of its members, who were being kept in the Guantanamo detention center, to be transferred to house-arrest in Qatar. In return, the Taliban would release a U.S. soldier, who was taken hostage in Afghanistan, in June 2009. In March 2012, the talks broke off but resumed in 2013.³⁴¹ Taliban opened an office in Qatar in June 2013 and released an announcement rejecting any ties to any terrorist organizations. However, the process was interrupted when the Taliban put a flag and an official plaque to its Qatar office.³⁴² Although later both the flag and the plaque were removed, upon this action, the U.S. pressured Qatar, to close the Taliban office. However, through Qatar's mediation U.S.-Taliban talks resumed in mid-2014. As a result of the negotiations Beaudry Robert Bowe Bergdahl was released on May 31, 2014, in exchange of release of five Taliban members to Qatar, under the condition that they cannot leave the country for at least one year.³⁴³

³³⁹ "Assassination Deals Blow to Peace Process in Afghanistan" <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/21/world/asia/Burhanuddin-Rabbani-afghan-peace-council-leader-assassinated.html> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁴⁰ "A second Rabbani takes the helm at the High Peace Council" <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/a-second-rabbani-takes-the-helm-at-the-high-peace-council/> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁴¹ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 35

³⁴² "Police remove flagpole at centre of Afghan, Taliban row" <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-peace-idUSBRE95M02N20130623> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁴³ "Bowe Bergdahl was traded for 5 Taliban commanders. Here's who they are." https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/06/02/bowe-bergdahl-was-traded-for-5-taliban-commanders-heres-who-they-are/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.8d0c0f3eb1c6 last accessed on July 3, 2019

The negotiations between the Taliban and Afghan officials started in May 2015, at the Pugwash International Conference, which convened in Al Khor, Qatar.³⁴⁴ However, after a lengthy period of non-official negotiations with Taliban resulted in failure. Recently the negotiation talks with the Taliban have been conducted through U.S. efforts. As the U.S. administration realized that conditional negotiations with the Taliban could actually give Afghanistan a chance to become safe and stable, approach of the U.S. officials started to shift. President Trump, on February 6, 2019, revealed that the U.S. has been conducting peace talks with several Afghan insurgent groups including the Taliban. In his speech Trump said;

In Afghanistan, my administration is holding constructive talks with a number of Afghan groups, including the Taliban. As we make progress in these negotiations, we will be able to reduce our troop's presence and focus on counterterrorism. And we will indeed focus on counterterrorism.³⁴⁵

In this respect, the talks between the U.S. and the Taliban have been continuing as of writing of the thesis. The seventh round of meetings between the U.S. and the Taliban has been continuing as of July 2019, but no agreement has been reached despite the claims of some U.S. officials that a settlement is near.³⁴⁶

There are also some groups and individuals who used to side with the Taliban but later changed their alliances. These groups and individuals have an important effect on Afghanistan's security. Gulbuddin Hikmatyar is among those individuals. "Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin (HIG)", was established by a mujahedin leader Gulbuddin Hikmatyar. During the war against the Soviets, Hikmatyar received huge U.S.

³⁴⁴ "Pushing Open the Door to Peace? Pugwash organises next round of Taleban talks in Qatar" <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/pushing-open-the-door-to-peace-pugwash-organises-taleban-talks-in-qatar/> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁴⁵ "Remarks by President Trump in State of the Union Address" <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-state-union-address-2/> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁴⁶ "The Taliban has launched a major attack in Afghanistan's capital - It came as the US and the insurgent group are engaged in peace talks." <https://www.vox.com/world/2019/7/1/20677249/afghanistan-kabul-explosion-taliban-attack> last accessed on July 3, 2019

support, but started to fight against other mujahedin groups after the Najibullah regime fell in 1992. Following the defeat of the Taliban in 2001, HIG allied with the Taliban. However, HIG could never become a major insurgent group, but showed its strength through high-profile attacks.³⁴⁷ In February 2003 Gulbuddin Hikmatyar was declared as “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” by the U.S. government. However, HIG was not designated as an FTO.³⁴⁸

In January 2010, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar gave signs that he might engage in reconciliation with the Afghan government on the condition that elections would be held under an interim government following a U.S. withdrawal. HIG representatives participated in reconciliation talks with Afghan government in 2012. After lengthy negotiations, a reconciliation agreement, consisting of 25 points was signed between the Afghan government and HIG on September 22, 2016. The UN sanctions against him were lifted in February 2017 and in May 2017, he returned to Kabul, but harshly criticized the Afghan National Unity Government, which raised concern of his contribution to domestic reconciliation.³⁴⁹

4.3. Threats to Security

The Taliban insurgency is the greatest challenge to stability in Afghanistan. There are several reasons why the Afghan government has been unable to exert full control over the country and the insurgency still exists. First of all, despite the training efforts, the number of security forces in rural Afghanistan is below the targeted levels. Also, the Afghan security forces have been suffering from inadequate logistics. However, the most important reason for the failure of the Afghan government to suppress the insurgent safe havens the militants find in Pakistan. On the other hand, Afghan government’s inability to receive support from the majority

³⁴⁷ Kenneth Katzman, and Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy” *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 37

³⁴⁸ “Designation of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar as a Terrorist” <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/17799.htm> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁴⁹ Kenneth Katzman, and Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy” *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 37

of the Afghan people, which is attributed to civilian casualties by operations of the Coalition forces and the ANSF, is another reason why the insurgency still finds support from local populations. Also, expectations from the government, which were beyond its capabilities, in economic and military fields and government's inability to match the expectations resulted in bitterness among the Afghan people.³⁵⁰

4.3.1. Al Qaeda and Related Groups

During the war against Soviets, Osama bin Laden played an important role in bringing Arab fighters to Afghanistan.³⁵¹ Just before the Taliban captured Kabul in May 1996, Osama bin Laden moved from Sudan to Afghanistan and established his base in Nangarhar province.³⁵²

In December 2001, U.S. forces cornered Osama Bin Laden in Tora Bora Mountains. But he managed to escape and crossed the border.³⁵³ However, he was killed by a U.S. military operation in Pakistan on May 1, 2011. After Osama Bin Laden's death Ayman Al Zawahiri selected as the new leader of the terrorist organization. In the first week of January 2016, Al Zawahiri was almost killed in a airstrike in Pakistan's Shawal Valley, which is close to the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). He managed to survive and he is believed to be hiding in a big Pakistani city.³⁵⁴

After the NATO withdrawal at the end of 2014, the U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan dealt mainly with Al Qaeda and related groups. Between 2001-2015, Al Qaeda was considered to have a marginal presence in Afghanistan, mostly in the

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 16

³⁵¹ Anne Stenersen, *Al-Qaida in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) p.1

³⁵² Ibid., 52

³⁵³ "How Osama bin Laden Escaped" <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/12/11/how-osama-bin-laden-escaped-2/> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁵⁴ "Ayman al-Zawahiri: How a CIA Drone Strike Nearly Killed the Head of Al-Qaeda" <http://www.newsweek.com/ayman-al-zawahiri-cia-donald-trump-drone-strike-osama-bin-laden-pakistan-587732> last accessed on July 3, 2019

northeast of the country. However, in September 2015 U.S. forces and the ANA destroyed a major Al Qaeda training camp in the Shorabak District of Kandahar, which indicated that Al Qaeda was still present in Afghanistan.³⁵⁵ Gen. John F. Campbell said that;

It's a place where you would probably think you wouldn't have AQ. I would agree with that. This was really AQIS, and probably the largest training camp-type facility that we have seen in 14 years of war.³⁵⁶

In April 2016, the U.S. military officials estimated that there were about 300 members of the terrorist organization in Afghanistan and Al Qaeda and Taliban relations were increasing. The Afghan security officials, also worried by the increasing activity of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, claimed that the number of the Al Qaeda militants could be higher than the U.S. officials' estimates. Minister of Defense Minister Masoom Stanikzai, in April 2016 said;

They are really very active. They are working in quiet and reorganizing themselves and preparing themselves for bigger attacks.... They are working behind other networks, giving them support and the experience they had in different places. And double their resources and recruitment and other things. That is how -- they are not talking too much. They are not making press statements. It is a big threat.³⁵⁷

It was claimed that some high-ranking members of Al Qaeda were hiding in Iran, including Seyf Al Adl and Suleyman and Abu Ghaith, organization's spokesperson.

³⁵⁵ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 17

³⁵⁶ "Al Qaeda's Kandahar training camp 'probably the largest' in Afghan War" <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/10/al-qaedas-kandahar-training-camp-probably-the-largest-in-afghan-war.php> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁵⁷ "Al Qaeda 'very active' in Afghanistan: U.S. Commander" <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/04/13/middleeast/afghanistan-al-qaeda/index.html> last accessed on July 3, 2019

However, Abu Ghaith was caught by U.S. On the other hand, several senior Al Qaeda members were killed by the U.S. operations in recent years.³⁵⁸

There are also several terrorist groups in Afghanistan, which have been related with Al Qaeda. “Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)” is a faction of Al Qaeda having members from South and Central Asia. It was established in 2014 and in July 1, 2016, the U.S. declared the group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).³⁵⁹

“The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)” is an Islamic militant group, which was established to overthrow the Uzbek government and based in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The IMU cooperated with Al Qaeda, however it was claimed that some of its members have been working with the Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan. In northern Afghanistan, IMU is called “Jundullah” and took part in clashes in seven northern Afghan provinces, which border Central Asian states. IMU had been in Afghanistan in small numbers, however many IMU militants fled from Pakistan after Pakistan launched an offensive into the North Waziristan area in 2014.³⁶⁰

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET) is a Pakistani Islamist group, which has become active in Afghanistan in the recent years. LET was established to oppose the Indian control of Kashmir, however. Although mainly focused on India, LET has become increasingly anti-NATO and anti-U.S. in Afghanistan.³⁶¹ Initially, the attacks in Afghanistan by LET were to support the Taliban, but beginning with 2008, attacks have targeted Indian presence in Afghanistan. Due to its attacks against the Indian targets in

³⁵⁸ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy” *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 19

³⁵⁹ “Country Reports on Terrorism 2017 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: al-Qa’ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)” <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5bcf1f5913.html> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁶⁰ “Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) Islamic Party of Turkestan” <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/imu.htm> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁶¹ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy” *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 18

Afghanistan, LET was accused of being a tool of Pakistan in its proxy war against India.³⁶²

Lashkar-i Jhangvi is an Islamist militant group, known for its anti-Shiite attacks, based in Pakistan, but also quite active in Afghanistan. Although the organization didn't claim responsibility, it was alleged that on October 23, 2014, Lashkar-i Jhangvi militants opened fire on a bus carrying Hazaras Shiites, killing eight people.³⁶³

Harakat-ul Jihad Islami is an Al Qaeda associated militant organization based in Pakistan. The exact establishment date of Harakat-ul Jihad Islami is not known; however, it is claimed that it was established during the Soviet war. The Harakat-ul Jihad Islami continued its activities after the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989 and merged with several other Pakistani terrorist groups. Majority of its leaders, fled to South Waziristan in Pakistan's FATA after the the U.S. military operations in 2001. Although there is no exact information on the number of militants of the group, some reports claim it to be around 500-750.³⁶⁴ Ilyas Kashmiri, former leader of the group was killed in an air strike in June 2011.³⁶⁵

The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) is an ISIS associated militant group, which has been active in Afghanistan since 2014. In January 2016, the organization was declared as an FTO by the State Department. It was alleged that IS leader Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi resided in Kabul when Taliban was in power and formed an alliance with Al Qaeda. IS presence in Afghanistan grown as some elements of the

³⁶² "Lashkar-e-Taiba" <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/79> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁶³ "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)" <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/215> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁶⁴ "Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) (Movement of Islamic Holy War)" http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/terrorist_outfits/HuJI.htm last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁶⁵ "Obituary: Ilyas Kashmiri" <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-13655883> last accessed on July 3, 2019

Taliban changed sides and announced support to IS in 2013. ISKP and Taliban militants in Afghanistan had frequently turf war due to political or ideological differences. ISKP has also targeted Afghanistan's Shi'ite minority and government officials.³⁶⁶ It was claimed that in addition to disrupting the security in Afghanistan, the arrival of the ISKP to the region changed political landscape of Khorasan area and Iran was pushed to become more against an agreement between the Taliban and the Afghan government since Iran feared some members dissatisfied with reconciliation talk may change sides and join the ISKP. It was also argued that Pakistan, at the initial periods of ISKP arrival supported the organization but as the ISKP started to attack targets in Pakistan it distanced itself from the organization.³⁶⁷

4.3.2. The Taliban

After the overthrow of Najibullah government in 1992, non-Pashtuns gained prominence in Afghan politics, which made Pashtuns uncomfortable. In addition, absence of a state authority resulted in national fragmentation, increase in violence and anarchy. In this environment, every ethnic and religious group started to establish their own area of influence and control. Disappointment of Pashtuns, widespread lawlessness and intra-Mujahideen fights created a power vacuum which had to be filled by new emerging groups. In an attempt to provide local security, a group of young Islamic students, Talibs (*seekers of knowledge*), of a local madrasa, established a checkpoint near their village, Hawz-e Mudat, located near Kandahar. With the support of the local population, Taliban, as they later became known, expanded its area of influence to nearby Maiwand and Panjwayi districts. In 1994, at a meeting in a mosque attended by 33 representatives, the Taliban decided to establish a movement. During the initial period of establishment of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, an unknown mujahedeen figure who was working as a teacher in a madrasa near Kandahar, emerged as the leader of the group. In October 1994, the

³⁶⁶ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017p. 19

³⁶⁷ Antonio Giustozzi, *The Islamic State in Khorasan: Afghanistan, Pakistan and The New Central Asian Jihad* (London: Hurst & Company, 2018) p.212

Taliban seized Spin Boldak, a small town near Pakistani border, which enabled them to receive illegal custom revenues. Spin Boldak was also an ammunition and arms depot controlled by the Hikmatyar group. With the control of the arms depot the Taliban exert control over the broader Kandahar area within weeks.³⁶⁸

In late 1994, Taliban captured Ghazni, and controlled the whole region by January 1995. In February 1995, the Taliban crushed Hekmatyar forces in Logar and within days seized Maidan Shahr, Logar's capital. On March 10, 1995 the Taliban forces seized Karte Seh in Kabul and disarmed Hezb-I Vahdat forces and demanded the government officials to surrender. After the Taliban seized province after province along the way to Kabul, they announced their purpose to establish an Islamic state in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the Taliban also seized territories toward and captured Nimroz and Farah.³⁶⁹ On April 4, 1996, Mullah Omar, in a public gathering in Kandahar, declared himself as the leader of the faithful.

On September 25, 1996 the Taliban initiated an attack on Kabul and captured Sarobi a nearby town. Unable to repel Taliban offensive, on September 27, 1996 forces defending Kabul retreated to the north. The same day, the Taliban forces entered the UN complex in Kabul where Najibullah was being kept and executed him.³⁷⁰ Between 1994 and 1996, the Taliban managed to capture two-thirds of Afghanistan. After the capture of Kabul, in May 1997 the Taliban attempt to seize control of Mezar-e Sharif, stronghold of the Northern Alliance, but failed. However, in August 1997, Taliban defeated the Northern Alliance forces and occupied Mezar-e

³⁶⁸ Hassan Abbas, *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on The Pakistan—Afghanistan Frontier* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014) pp. 61-63

³⁶⁹ Neamatollah Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan: Mass Mobilization, Civil War, and the Future of the Region* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) p. 136

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 150-151

Sharif. By September 2001, the Taliban controlled nearly 90% of Afghanistan but was unable to control several Northern provinces.³⁷¹

According to many experts, the rise of the Taliban was fueled by external factors, Pakistan's notorious Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) being the most prominent. It was widely argued that Taliban were ISI and were supported and funded by Pakistan. It was also alleged that core founders of the organization came from Islamic religious schools in Pakistan and exploited the kinship of Pashtuns living in Afghanistan and Pakistan.³⁷²

Today the insurgency in Afghanistan mainly continues under the banner of the Taliban. Its leader Mullah Omar was killed in April 2013, which was a major blow to the organization.³⁷³ Mullah Omar was replaced by Akhtar Mohammad Mansour. But Mansour was also killed by an airstrike in May 2016 in Pakistan.³⁷⁴ Shortly after his death, Haibatullah Akhundzadeh was declared as the leader of the Taliban. It was also announced by the Taliban that Mullah Umar's son Mullah Yaqub and Sirajuddin Haqqani became Haibatullah Akhundzadeh's deputies. Sirajuddin Haqqani is also a leader of the Haqqani Network, another radical Islamist group in Afghanistan.³⁷⁵ The Taliban, although temporarily, seized Kunduz city in October 2015 which shows that despite the claims by the Afghan and U.S. officials that the security situation is

³⁷¹ Ali Duman, "The Return of Taliban as a Political Stakeholder in Afghanistan" Istanbul, Zirve University, 2015 pp. 50-60

³⁷² Jonathan Cristol, *The United States and the Taliban before and after 9/11* (Garden City, NY: Palgrave Macmillan 2019) p. 13

³⁷³ "Taliban's Mullah Omar died in 2013, Afghan government says" <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/29/asia/afghanistan-mullah-omar/index.html> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁷⁴ "Obama: Taliban leader's death marks 'milestone'" <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/21/politics/u-s-conducted-airstrike-against-taliban-leader-mullah-mansour/index.html> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁷⁵ "Afghan Taliban appoint Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada as new leader" <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/25/taliban-new-leader-death-confirm-mullah-mansoor-haibatullah-akhundzada> last accessed on July 3, 2019

getting better, the Taliban is still intact and strong and capable of launching large scale attacks in Afghanistan.

4.3.3. Haqqani Network

The Haqqani Network was established by Jalaludin Haqqani. He was a mujahedin leader during the war against the Soviet occupation. Haqqani was a member of the Hezb-e Islami faction led Younis Khalis. After the Soviets were driven out of Afghanistan, Jalaluddin Haqqani worked as Tribal Affairs Minister in the Taliban regime. He was known as a close ally of Osama Bin Laden and was recognized as Bin Laden's mentors during the initial years of Al Qaeda. Following the defeat of the Taliban in 2001, his group mainly fought against the Western-backed Afghan government. In 2012, the U.S Government designated the Haqqani Network as an FTO because of its involvement in the Afghan insurgency and its ties to the Taliban and Al Qaeda.³⁷⁶

Recently, Jalaludin Haqqani's son Sirajuddin has taken control of group's field operations. Sirajuddin Haqqani also became deputy leader of the Taliban. Sirajuddin's brother Badruddin was killed in a drone strike by the U.S. in August 2012. Sirajuddin brother Nasruddin was killed in November 2013 in outskirts of Islamabad by Pakistan's security forces.³⁷⁷ According to some estimates the Haqqani Network has about 3,000 – 10,000 militants, but it is believed the number went down significantly in the recent years. However, Haqqani Network has still power to carry out major attacks, especially in Kabul.³⁷⁸

Haqqani Network has been accused of being a tool of Pakistan, which it uses against India. The group announced that it carried out the attacks on Indian Embassy in

³⁷⁶ "Terrorist Groups - Haqqani Network" https://www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/haqqani_network.html last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁷⁷ "Senior Haqqani Network leader killed in Pakistan" https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/11/senior_haqqani_netwo_3.php last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁷⁸ "What Is the Haqqani Network?" <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/what-haqqani-network> last accessed on July 3, 2019

Afghanistan in July 2008 and October 2009. The group is also suspected of carrying out an attack on India's Jalalabad Consulate on August 4, 2013. In addition to those attacks, Haqqani Network also accused of Intercontinental Hotel attack in Kabul on June 28, 2011 and a bombing in Wardak in which several U.S. soldiers were injured on September 10, 2011. It was also alleged that the group is behind the attacks on the U.S. Embassy and ISAF base in Kabul on September 13, 2011.³⁷⁹ It was also claimed that Haqqani Network was responsible for the attack against Kandahar Governor, in which six UAE diplomats, including the UAE ambassador Juma Mohammed Abdullah Al Kaabi, were killed on January 10, 2017.³⁸⁰

4.3.4. Narcotic Trafficking

The issue of narcotics, its production and trade, have been present in Afghanistan as a problem since the 16th century. The weak state institutions, a poor economy coupled with a suitable geography made narcotics trade a very profitable business in Afghanistan. However, opium poppy farming boomed when the Soviet Union in 1980s destroyed the farming and irrigation channels to force the rural population into cities. This policy of the Soviets destroyed Afghanistan's agricultural infrastructure and made opium poppy production and alternative mode of farming. After coming to power the Taliban banned the cannabis production because it was being used by Muslims, but allowed opium production because it was being used by non-Muslim Westerners.³⁸¹ In this context, Afghanistan became the biggest opium producer under the Taliban regime until it banned poppy farming in 2001. After the U.S. military operation in 2001 the opium production and trade continued to expand. A narcotics economy model was established, which included farmers, warlords, tribal leaders and government officials. This business model became the most profitable

³⁷⁹ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 20

³⁸⁰ "UAE ambassador dies of wounds from Afghanistan bombing" <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/2/16/uae-ambassador-dies-of-wounds-from-afghanistan-bombing> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁸¹ Deepak LAL, "Endangering the War on Terror by the War on Drugs" *World Economics*, Vol.9 No.3, July–September 2008 pp. 2-3

industry in Afghanistan. It is needless to say that the former Mujahedeen groups and the Taliban, which started to wage war against the U.S.-led Coalition, took their part in the narcotics production and trafficking.³⁸² Majority of the insurgent groups in Afghanistan benefits from narcotics trafficking. The drug trafficking also causes corruption within the Afghan government, leading to erosion of state institutions. Regarding public and justice sectors Afghanistan is one of the most corrupt states in the world. According to Transparency International's Index in 2017, Afghanistan ranked 177 out of 180 countries.³⁸³

Five years after the Taliban was ousted from power, in 2006 the opium export of Afghanistan was nearly 8,000 tons, worth \$ 3.1 billion and more than 2.3 million Afghans made their living from drug industry. By 2010, 90 % of world's heroin was being produced in Afghanistan, providing \$2.8 billion to the economy, which was more than 30 % of GDP.³⁸⁴

Afghan government led by Hamid Karzai and the U.S.-led Coalition were much criticized due to their failure to prevent narcotics production and trade. However, the Afghan government with its limited resources and counter-narcotics security forces had little to do to eradicate such a huge industry. First of all, the ANP does not have the capacity and the training to fight narcotic production. Also, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) does not have enough resources to implement a program to prevent opium production and processing. In addition, Coalition countries, the NATO and Russia failed to take necessary steps in a coordinated manner to tackle the problem. But the major responsible for the failed anti-drugs strategy was the U.S. However, some high-ranking U.S. officials took the issue lightly. The Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith (2001-2005) argued that the

³⁸² Conor Keane, *US Nation-Building in Afghanistan* (London and New York: Routledge 2016) pp. 173-174

³⁸³ Corruption Perceptions Index of 2017 is available at https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017 last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁸⁴ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p. 21

opium production in Afghanistan was not a serious concern for the U.S. The Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld informed his senior staff that the narcotics issue was a distraction for the military from capturing high ranking Al Qaeda members.³⁸⁵ In 2009, Richard Holbrooke, the Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan said that;

Eradication is a waste of money....We're essentially phasing out our support for crop eradication and using the money to work on interdiction, rule of law, alternate crops.... That's the big change in our policies.³⁸⁶

It is estimated that narcotics trafficking generates an income about \$100 million per year for insurgent groups. A UN report in November 2017 revealed that the area used for poppy cultivation was 328,000 hectares in 2017, a 63% rise compared to 2016, and a 46% increase compared to 2014. Also, opium production increased by 87%.³⁸⁷

The opium production was estimated to be 9,000 tons in 2017, which was 4,800 tons in 2016. The increase in the opium production is mainly due to the increase in area where opium poppy is cultivated. Also, in 2017 opium yield per hectare increased, which resulted in an increase at the output.³⁸⁸ It is alleged that narcotic products play a crucial role in Afghanistan's economy, the value estimated \$ 3 billion per year and provides nearly 400,000 full-time jobs, more than the ANSF.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁵ Keane, Conor, "US Nation-Building in Afghanistan" London and New York: Routledge 2016 pp. 174-175

³⁸⁶ "Eradication is a waste of money" <https://washingtonmonthly.com/2009/06/27/eradication-is-a-waste-of-money/> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁸⁷ "United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Afghanistan Opium Survey 2018 Cultivation and Production" For full text of the report visit https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2018.pdf

³⁸⁸ Rosen, Liana and Katzman, Kenneth "Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition" Congressional Research Service, May 9, 2014

³⁸⁹ BOJOR, Laviniu and COSMA, Mircea "Afghanistan After NATO Withdrawal" Scientific Bulletin, Nr. 1 (39) 2015 p.30

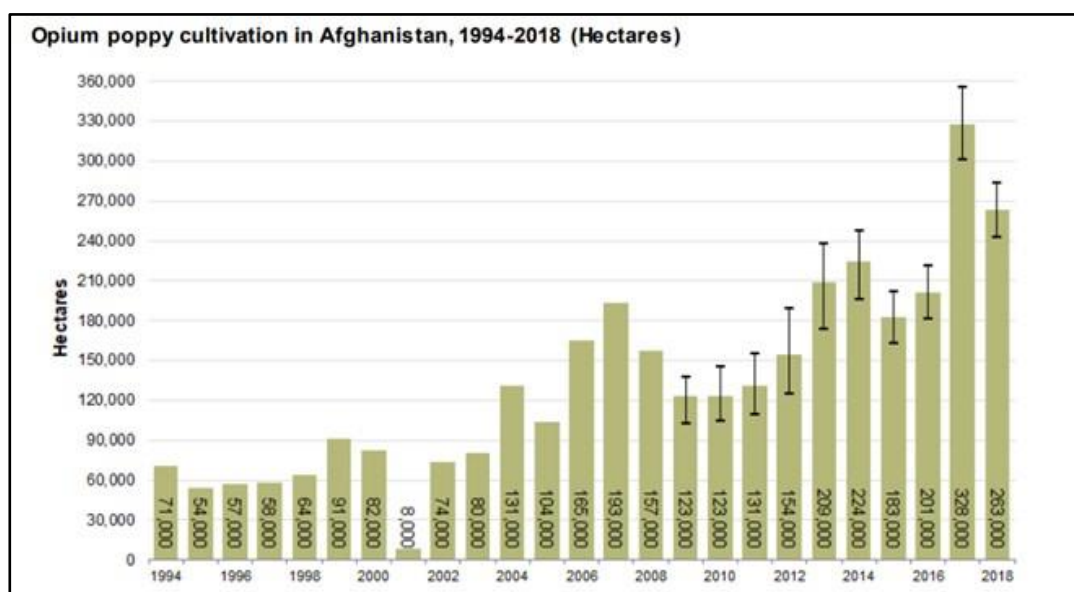


Figure 9: Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan, 1994-2018 (Hectares)³⁹⁰

Region	2017 (ha)	2018 (ha)	Change 2017-2018*	2017 (ha) % of total*	2018 (ha) % of total*
Central	1,462	857	-41%	0%	0%
Eastern	23,956	21,386	-11%	7%	8%
North-eastern	8,311	7,955	-4%	3%	3%
Northern	42,999	19,019	-56%	13%	7%
Southern	197,207	182,197	-8%	60%	69%
Western	54,367	31,174	-43%	17%	12%
Rounded Total	328,000	263,000	-20%	100%	100%

Figure 10: Regional Distribution of Opium Poppy Cultivation, 2016-2018 (Hectares)³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ “United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Afghanistan Opium Survey 2018 Cultivation and https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2018.pdf p.6 last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁹¹ “United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Afghanistan Opium Survey 2018 Cultivation and Production” https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2018.pdf p.15 last accessed on July 3, 2019

In 2017 there was a sharp increase in opium poppy cultivation in all Afghan provinces. In Helmand, cultivation increased by 79% which accounted half of the total national increase. There was also a strong increase in Balkh, nearly five times more than in 2016. Nimroz (116%), Kandahar (37%) and Uruzgan (39%) followed Balkh and Helmand in opium poppy cultivation increase in 2017. Nearly 60% of cultivation took place in southern Afghanistan, the west Afghanistan accounted for 17%, the Northern provinces 13% and the eastern region accounted for 7% of total cultivation.³⁹² Despite the huge increase in both the area and the output, counter-narcotics efforts yielded negligible results in 2017. In 2016, 355 hectares of opium poppy were eradicated. The number nearly doubled in 2017 to 750 hectares, but it was dwarfed by the increase in area where opium poppy was cultivated. The futility of the counter-narcotics effort could be understood only by observing the increase in 2017, compared to 2016, which was 127,000 hectares.³⁹³

Province	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Change 2017-2018	2018 (ha) as % of total
Helmand	100,693	103,240	86,443	80,273	144,018	136,798	-5%	52%
Kandahar	28,335	33,713	21,020	20,475	28,010	23,410	-16%	9%
Badghis	3,596	5,721	12,391	35,234	24,723	6,973	-72%	3%
Faryab	158	211	1,160	2,923	22,797	8,175	-64%	3%
Uruzgan	9,880	9,277	11,277	15,503	21,541	18,662	-13%	7%
Nangarhar	15,719	18,227	10,016	14,344	18,976	17,177	-9%	7%
Farah	24,492	27,513	21,106	9,101	12,846	10,916	-15%	4%
Balkh	410	PF	204	2,085	12,116	8,532	-30%	3%
Nimroz	16,252	14,584	8,805	5,303	11,466	9,115	-21%	3%
Badakhshan	2,374	4,204	4,056	6,298	8,311	7,703	-7%	3%
Rest of the country	7,553	7,647	6,089	9,771	23,499	15,127	-36%	6%
Rounded Total	209,000	224,000	183,000	201,000	328,000	263,000	-20%	100%

Figure 11: Main Opium-Poppy Cultivating Provinces in Afghanistan, 2013-2018 (Hectares)³⁹⁴

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ “United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017” <https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Opium-survey-peace-security-web.pdf> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁹⁴ “United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Afghanistan Opium Survey 2018 Cultivation and Production” https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2018.pdf p.17 last accessed on July 3, 2019



Map 9: Narcotics Processing and Trafficking Routes³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵ Liana Rosen and Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition” *Congressional Research Service*, May 9, 2014 p. 10

CHAPTER 5

REGIONAL ASPECTS OF AFGHAN SECURITY

All of Afghanistan's neighbors and regional countries have a high stake at the security and stability of the Afghanistan. Prior to the US military action against Taliban in 2001, neighboring and regional countries perceived Afghanistan as a problem to be contained. The Taliban administration in Afghanistan was not on the agenda of neighboring countries, with the exception of the possibility of radical Islamist infiltration into neighboring countries. However, this situation has changed radically with the US military operation in 2001. After this date, in parallel with the increasing interest of the global powers in the region, regional conflicts were moved to the Afghanistan arena. Along with the US military intervention, common concerns such as illegal mass immigration, narcotics trade and the spread of radical groups in the region are shared among neighboring countries, but it is observed that there are differences in the countries' perception regarding threats emanating from Afghanistan.³⁹⁶

In this context, it is seen that neighboring and regional countries are divided into three groups. The first group of countries, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, adopted the policy of keeping the security problems arising from Afghanistan on the other side of the border. These countries' first reaction was to protect their borders. The second group of countries, Iran, Pakistan and India, has tried to bring their problems and regional conflicts to Afghanistan. Russia and China in the last group approached the issue from a wider perspective and handled both economic and security issues with a trans-regional understanding. However, it is seen that the common denominator of all countries in the three groups is the perception of the

³⁹⁶ For different approaches and perceptions of Afghanistan's neighbors see Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) Chapters 2 - 4

security risk arising from the military presence of the Western countries led by the U.S.

The first reactions of Afghanistan's neighbors after the overthrow of the Taliban was mutual cooperation and non-involvement in Afghanistan's internal affairs. In this context Afghanistan's six neighbors gathered in Kabul to draft the "Kabul Declaration on Good Neighborly Relations". It was signed on December 22, 2001 and endorsed by the UN Security Council, with Resolution 1453, on December 24, 2002.³⁹⁷ The document showed a strong will to develop more constructive relations in the neighborhood. The parties assured;

Constructive and supportive bilateral relationships based on the principles of territorial integrity, mutual respect, friendly relations, cooperation and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.³⁹⁸

However, this attitude changed over time and each country developed different policies regarding the security problems arising from Afghanistan. In this part of the thesis, the approaches of neighboring and regional countries to the security problems arising from Afghanistan will be discussed.

5.1. Pakistan

It is a common opinion shared by many experts that among Afghanistan's neighbors Pakistan plays the most important role in Afghanistan's security. When the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan are considered historically, it will be seen that the theme that has been effective since the beginning of the relations between the two

³⁹⁷ "Kabul Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relations" <https://peacemaker.un.org/afghanistan-neighbourly-relations2002> last accessed on July 3, 2019

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

countries is an ongoing conflict. In 1947, when Pakistan was founded, Afghanistan was the only country that opposed its acceptance to the United Nations.³⁹⁹

Historically, there are four main elements of the tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The first is the Durand Line issue. It is the historical border created in 1893 between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Durand Line was created with an agreement signed between the Afghan ruler of the time and Foreign Minister of the British India Henry Mortimer Durand, but Afghanistan since then rejected the border line arguing that it was artificially created and divided the geography of Pashtuns, the most populous ethnic group of Afghanistan.⁴⁰⁰

The Durand Line issue brings us to the Pashtun population, Pakistan's second biggest security concern for Afghanistan. With Durand Line, an important Pashtun population in today's Pakistan is separated from its companions in Afghanistan. In this respect, Pakistan perceives a Pashtun nationalist government in Kabul as a strategic threat to its own existence.⁴⁰¹

Thirdly, the most important factor shaping Pakistan's perception of Afghanistan is its struggle with India. In this struggle Pakistan considers that Afghanistan would provide a “strategic depth” in a possible war with India.⁴⁰² Pakistan is also concerned with the increasing footprint of India following the U.S. military operation in 2001. Although India is only active in Afghanistan through humanitarian aid and

³⁹⁹ Aly Zaman, “Beyond Strategic Depth? Pakistan’s Evolving Relationship with Afghanistan” in Amin Saikal and Kirill Nourzhanov, *Afghanistan and Its Neighbors After the NATO Withdrawal* (New York: Lexington Books, 2016) p. 50

⁴⁰⁰ “The Durand Line: A British Legacy Plaguing Afghan-Pakistani Relations” <https://www.mei.edu/publications/durand-line-british-legacy-plaguing-afghan-pakistani-relations> last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴⁰¹ Shaun Gregory, “Pakistan: Security Perspectives on Afghanistan” in Aglaya Snetkov, and Stephen Aris, (eds.) *The Regional Dimensions to Security: Other Sides of Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) pp. 64 -65

⁴⁰² “A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan and India by William Dalrymple” <http://csweb.brookings.edu/content/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c.html#section5> last accessed on July 3, 2019

economic development projects, this did little to calm Pakistan. There is no doubt that by cancelling a defense contracts with India, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani aimed to mend the bridges with Pakistan and bring the relations between the countries to a better level.⁴⁰³

During General Zia ul-Haq's presidency (1978-1988), Pakistan supported the mujahedeen against the Soviet invasion and placed itself as the hub of the Afghan jihad.⁴⁰⁴ From different parts of the world nearly 30,000 volunteers came to Afghanistan to fight against Soviet invasion. Pakistan hosted and gave logistical support to them. Pakistan also channeled the money and weapons coming from the U.S. to Afghanistan to be used by the mujahedeen.⁴⁰⁵

When the Taliban came to power in 1996, Pakistan did not hesitate to support it. Pakistan also moved the domestic Islamist groups targeting Indian control in Kashmir, to Afghanistan as a response to the domestic pressures. However, following the 9/11 attacks, due to the U.S. pressure, President Musharraf banned some Islamist militant groups but continued to protect other Islamist groups targeting Indian interests.⁴⁰⁶

During the time Taliban was in power between 1996-2001, its relations with Pakistan have always been controversial. In this relationship Pakistan had always the upper hand since it controlled both the supplies and sanctuaries given to the Taliban.

⁴⁰³ "President Ghani Suspends Karzai's Request for Indian Arms" <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/president-ghani-suspends-karzais-request-indian-arms> last accessed on July 3, 2019

⁴⁰⁴ Javid Husain, *Pakistan and a World in Disorder: A Grand Strategy for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) p.107

⁴⁰⁵ Ahmed Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink Future of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the West* (London: Penguin Books, 2012) p. 48-49

⁴⁰⁶ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p.29

Pakistan also tried to benefit from playing the role of a broker the Taliban and the Afghan government.⁴⁰⁷

Following the 9/11 attacks Pakistan declared its support to the U.S. in its fight against Al Qaeda out fear of an U.S. reaction to those who protect and shelter the terrorist organization. In this respect, Pakistan arrested hundreds of Al Qaeda militants and opened Pakistani airspace to the U.S forces, during the beginning of the military operations. In April 2008, an agreement was reached between Afghanistan, Pakistan to set up six border posts to give officers a better control of the border.⁴⁰⁸

However, Pakistan also continued for its support to the Taliban despite the warnings of the U.S. officials, a situation which put Washington and Islamabad at odds. The relations between the two countries further strained when Pakistan refused to make military operations on the Haqqani network to eradicate it.⁴⁰⁹ If all of this was not enough, the relations between the U.S. and Pakistan received a heavy blow when U.S. raided a house in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad on May 1, 2011, and killed Osama bin Laden along with his three family members.⁴¹⁰ Relations worsened after 24 soldiers from Pakistan were killed in an U.S. airstrike in late November, 2011. Pakistan responded to the attack by closing border crossings and demanded

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 47

⁴⁰⁸ Steve Bowman and Catherine Dale, "War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress" *Congressional Research Service*, December 3, 2009 p.34

⁴⁰⁹ Ahmed Rashid, *Pakistan on the Brink Future of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the West* (London: Penguin Books, 2012) pp. 18-19

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 1-3

Washington evacuate a base used by U.S. drones.⁴¹¹ Pakistan also boycotted the December 2011 Bonn Conference.⁴¹²

The first U.S. signal for a policy change towards Pakistan followed Trump's coming to power in 2017. President Donald Trump in August 2017, declared that;

The next pillar of our new strategy is to change the approach in how to deal with Pakistan. We can no longer be silent about Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond. Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with our effort in Afghanistan.⁴¹³

During the presidency of Hamid Karzai Pakistan-Afghanistan relations had ups and downs but the general mood of the relationship was problematic. When Ashraf Ghani became president, he sought to improve relations with Pakistan and visited Pakistan several times. In May 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between two countries. MoU stipulated that Afghanistan's intelligence personnel to be trained by Pakistan.⁴¹⁴ However as the relations between Pakistan and the Taliban continued Afghanistan became more concerned with the nature of this relationship and the Afghan government, which was encouraged by the U.S.' open criticism of Pakistan, began to take a different stance against Pakistan.

But Afghanistan continued to follow a middle path between India and Pakistan and has always been careful not to favor one and upset the other. The Afghan

⁴¹¹ "NATO attack allegedly kills 24 Pakistani troops" <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/nov/26/pakistan-25-troops-dead-nato-helicopter-attack/> last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴¹² "In Protest Over NATO Strike, Pakistan Will Skip Afghan Conference" <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/30/world/asia/in-protest-over-nato-strike-pakistan-will-skip-afghan-conference-to-protest.html> last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴¹³ "Full Transcript and Video: Trump's Speech on Afghanistan" <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/21/world/asia/trump-speech-afghanistan.html> last accessed on July 3, 2019

⁴¹⁴ "Afghan backlash over security deal with Pakistan" <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/19/afghan-backlash-over-governments-security-deal-with-pakistan> last accessed on July 3, 2019

government shared intelligence and gave permission to Pakistan to attack terrorist camps of its side of the border following the attack on an army school on December 16, 2014 in which 145 people were killed.⁴¹⁵ However, despite all his efforts President Ghani could not find the support he needed to fight Taliban-led insurgency from Pakistan. In June, 2017 President Ghani said that; “*Pakistan was waging an undeclared war of aggression*” on Afghanistan.⁴¹⁶

The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan has not always been a modest chess game, and even from time to time the two countries have come to the brink of the actual conflict. In May 2017, the armed conflict at the Chaman border resulted in casualties on both sides. The Pakistan’s military claimed that its forces killed more than 50 Afghan soldiers, an argument rejected by the Afghan government.⁴¹⁷

Regardless of the relationship between them, Pakistan is a vital country for the security of Afghanistan. Even though the roots of the problematic nature of the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan are historical, it has recently been observed that regional and external powers have shaped the relationship. Pakistan's struggle against India is a determinant factor in its relations with Afghanistan and the U.S. Pakistan also seems to be disturbed by the U.S. military presence in the region. From this perspective, for a stable Afghanistan, Pakistan's constructive contributions and distancing itself from the Taliban and similar radical groups are vital. Pakistan is also one of the few actors who can bring the Taliban and the Afghan government together at the peace table.

⁴¹⁵ “Five Peshawar school attack suspects held in Afghanistan”
<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/10276-five-peshawar-school-attack-suspects-held-in-afghanistan>
last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴¹⁶ “Ghani says Afghanistan suffering ‘undeclared war’ from Pakistan”
<https://www.stripes.com/ghani-says-afghanistan-suffering-undeclared-war-from-pakistan-1.472140>
last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴¹⁷ “Pakistan and Afghanistan dispute toll after clashes”
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/pakistan-afghanistan-dispute-toll-clashes-170507195801542.html> last accessed on July 10, 2019

5.2. Central Asian Countries

The Central Asian countries, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, are crucial to Afghan security and stability. These Central Asian states are concerned about the security threats posed by Afghanistan against them.



Map 10: Afghan Provinces Bordering Central Asian States⁴¹⁸

As mentioned in previous chapters, Afghanistan and the Central Asian states share a common regional security complex, in which the security developments effects all parties. In this regard Oktay Tannrisever argues that;

There is an evolving regional security complex in Central Asia, which includes Afghanistan as well as five Central Asian states; Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The hegemonic regional powers; namely Russia and China with their regional security organizations; the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) also constitute the parts of this dynamic regional security complex, characterized by intense security relations of enmity and amity.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁸ “Afghanistan Map and Satellite Image” <https://geology.com/world/afghanistan-satellite-image.shtml> last visited on September 1, 2019

⁴¹⁹ Oktay Firat Tannrisever, (ed.) *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security since 9/11* (Washington: IOS Press, 2013) p. 1

In this sense it can be argued that there is security interdependence between Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries basically due to the fact that nearly one-fourth of Afghanistan's borderline is with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. In addition, there is a cultural and historical connection between the Central Asian countries and Afghanistan, since Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmen, have their co-ethnics among the Afghan population in the northern sections of the country.⁴²⁰

Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbors have been subjected to five major security threats from Afghanistan; smuggling (human, narcotics and weapons), extremist infiltration, direct Taliban attack, refugee flow, and direct involvement in the conflict in Afghanistan. Against those threats, the Central Asian countries have several viable options including; sealing their borders, establishing non-military or military buffer zones, and direct negotiations with the Taliban.⁴²¹

Afghanistan witnessed a dramatic deterioration security in the recent years. Following an intense fighting in 2015, Afghan government's control of districts was reduced to 70 % by the first months of 2016. A report released by SIGAR in October 2016 claimed that only 63 % of the country was under direct government control, a significant decrease compared to 2015.⁴²² Also starting with 2015, the security situation in eight provinces located in northern, northeastern, and western Afghanistan, which borders Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan deteriorated drastically. Those provinces, in the 2000s were usually considered as relatively safe regions, compared to the eastern and southern provinces.⁴²³

⁴²⁰ Ibid.,

⁴²¹ Ivan Safranchuk, "Afghanistan and Its Central Asian Neighbors – Toward Dividing Insecurity" *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 2017 p. v-vi

⁴²² "SIGAR Quarterly Report to The United States Congress, October 30, 2016" available at <https://www.sigar.mil/quarterlyreports/index.aspx?SSR=6> last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴²³ Ivan Safranchuk, "Afghanistan and Its Central Asian Neighbors – Toward Dividing Insecurity" *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 2017 p. v-vi

By the end of 2015, the Taliban had established strong positions in the eight provinces bordering the Central Asian states. As a result, the Taliban in these areas, built new training camps and arms depots in districts where they hold the control and ANSF has limited influence. However, the Taliban did not concentrate its militants in the northern regions of the country, but attempted to take control of these parts of the country to establish an administration parallel to the Afghan government in Kabul. In this respect, it is fair to argue that the Taliban abused Afghan government's strategy to focus on the security of the major cities, which left rural areas and villages unprotected and open to the Taliban attacks.⁴²⁴

However, most important threat emanating from Afghanistan, according to its central Asian neighbors, is the infiltration of radical militants who left those states to fight places such as Iraq, Syria and Chechnya. A 2016 report by the Institute for National Strategic Studies claim that there are nearly 4,000 Central Asian jihadists who have joined armed groups in Syria, and among those 2,500 returned to their home countries between 2014 and 2015.⁴²⁵ The problem is that these radical militants and remaining ones may want to return home through Afghanistan into Tajikistan or Turkmenistan and disperse throughout the region.⁴²⁶

Maybe the most remote threat for the Central Asian states emanating from Afghanistan is a direct Taliban attack. In the past, the Taliban showed no interest in launching a direct attack against Turkmenistan, Tajikistan or Uzbekistan. The Taliban struggles to take control of Afghanistan; therefore, it was assumed that there is no possibility of a direct Taliban attack. The Taliban defines its policy as “*do no*

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 5-6

⁴²⁵ Thomas F. Lynch III, Bouffard Michael, Kelsey King, and Graham Vickowski “The Return of Foreign Fighters to Central Asia: Implications for U.S. Counterterrorism Policy”, *Institute for National Strategic Studies*, New York, 2016, p. 5

⁴²⁶ Ivan Safranchuk, , “Afghanistan and Its Central Asian Neighbors – Toward Dividing Insecurity” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 2017 p. 10

harm not accept harm” which assures the Central Asian states.⁴²⁷ However, it is quite unpredictable what would happen if the Taliban manages to overthrow the Afghan government.

Central Asian states’ policies towards their borders with Afghanistan have shifted significantly since 1990s. The initial policy of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan was to seal off their borders with Afghanistan to prevent the spillover effects from Afghanistan. However, the Central Asian states came to realization that solving the security problems on the Afghan side of the border was more productive, economic and enduring. As a result of this policy change, border protection became a part of a larger understanding to address the security challenges.⁴²⁸

In this regard all the Central Asian neighbors of Afghanistan have begun to seek more international support on border security issue as the security in the region started to deteriorate. Uzbekistan has sought to intensify cooperation with Russia. Similarly, Tajikistan has also broadened cooperation with Russia, following a period of decline in cooperation in the late 2000s. Russian President Vladimir Putin in late February 2017 made it public that Russia and Tajikistan agreed to strengthen Tajikistan’s border with Afghanistan to prevent a terrorist spillover.⁴²⁹ an extremely difficult task in technical terms, which would require Turkmenistan to engage in a military cooperation with an external power. Also, such a relation would potentially compromise Turkmenistan’s neutrality policy.⁴³⁰

For Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, establishing a non-military buffer area on the other side of the border seems much easier and effective. The main logic

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 10

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 18

⁴²⁹ “Russia, Tajikistan agree to bolster guarding of Tajik-Afghan border” <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-russia-tajikistan/russia-tajikistan-agree-to-bolster-guarding-of-tajik-afghan-border-idUKKBN1661KJ> last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴³⁰ Ivan Safranchuk, “Afghanistan and Its Central Asian Neighbors – Toward Dividing Insecurity” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 2017 pp. 19-20

behind a non-military buffer zone is to give assistance to local communities near the border regions and make them resistant to any type of insurgent presence. A less viable option for the Central Asian neighbors of Afghanistan is to engage in direct talks with the Taliban. It was alleged that Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have been in contact with the Taliban on different levels, Turkmenistan having the strongest relation with the Taliban. It is likely that Central Asian states will have limited agreements with the Taliban through nonaffiliated facilitators, however, if any further deal with the Taliban is to be pursued, all the regional countries will need the involvement of an external power, such as the UN, in the process to legitimize the negotiations.⁴³¹

Since 2001, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan relied on foreign troops and ANSF to secure the borders of Afghanistan. All long as the Taliban was kept under control this was enough to meet their security needs. All the Central Asian neighbors of Afghanistan want to benefit from a stable region, which would create economic opportunities. However, the Central Asian states do not want to be affected by an insecurity spillover from Afghanistan. Their basic interest is to stop problems on the other side of the border. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan would likely to rely on the successes of the international forces and the ANSF, but it is risky bet for the Central Asian states since ANSF's ability to maintain security in Afghanistan is questionable following the withdrawal of the Coalition forces.⁴³²

For Central Asian states, Afghanistan means both a menace and an opportunity. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are concerned that the instability in Afghanistan has possible contagious effects. Especially when narcotic and arms trafficking is concerned. On the other hand, a stable Afghanistan would offer opportunities for cooperation in the field of energy, transportation and trade.⁴³³ However, Central Asian governments share the conviction that deeper engagement

⁴³¹ Ibid., 22-23

⁴³² Ibid., 29-30

⁴³³ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p.81

with Afghanistan carries considerable risks. Turkmen, Tajik and Uzbek leaders consider that there is no clear international strategy for Afghanistan and calculate an ongoing instability in Afghanistan. They keep an eye on the policies of China and Russia and seek a balance between the benefits of supporting the international coalition and angering Russia and China.⁴³⁴

The Central Asian states also perceive themselves as having been sidelined in the Coalition efforts in Afghanistan since 2001. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan believe that their potential to play a positive role in Afghanistan is ignored. On the one hand, these states want to cooperate with the U.S. and its Coalition partners to get the NATO and the U.S. support. On the other hand, they also want to maintain good relations with Russia and China, which in their view are critical to their long-term security.⁴³⁵

5.2.1. Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has deep interest in stability of Afghanistan. The Taliban, who came to power only five years after Uzbekistan gained independence from the Soviet Union, has always been met with suspicion by Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan had supported General Rashid Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek, during the Afghan civil war between 1992 and 1996.⁴³⁶ Uzbekistan, at the initial stages of the U.S. military operation against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, opened its Karshi Khanabad Air Base to U.S. forces. However, when the U.S. Administration harshly criticized the government operations against the riots in Andijan in May 2005, Uzbekistan decided to close the U.S. base and sent an eviction note on July 29, 2005. The Uzbek government demanded that all

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 83

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 82-83

⁴³⁶ Reuel R. Hanks, "Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Desecuritization, and Regional Security" in Amin Saikal and Kirill Nourzhanov, *Afghanistan and Its Neighbors After the NATO Withdrawal* (New York: Lexington Books, 2016) p.88

U.S. equipment and personnel should leave the base in 180 days.⁴³⁷ This was a major blow for the Coalition logistic efforts to support the military operations in Afghanistan. But in May 2009, Uzbekistan opened its Navoi Airfield for shipment of Coalition equipment into Afghanistan.⁴³⁸

For Uzbekistan, the most serious threat emanating from Afghanistan is the IMU, which was responsible for four bombings in Tashkent in February 1999. Uzbekistan is concerned that the IMU will find shelter and education in Afghanistan and pose a threat to its country. In addition, many small Islamist groups operating in Uzbekistan are also have training camps and logistic support centers in Afghanistan.⁴³⁹

Afghanistan's Balkh Province borders Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, but the longest border is with Uzbekistan. In the recent years Balkh Province and Mazar-e Sharif, its capital witnessed an increasing number of Taliban attacks. On April 21, 2017, 10 Taliban militants attacked the ANA base near Mazar-e Sharif, and killed more than 150 people.⁴⁴⁰ Uzbekistan has not seen armed clashes on its Afghan borders, which is well guarded. Although minor incidents on the border occur time to time, the large Taliban groups are not able to get close to the border through Balkh Province. However, there is the risk that Taliban militants may go through Turkmenistan to Uzbekistan, since the Turkmenistan border is less fortified. In this regard, Uzbekistan considers its borders with Turkmenistan and Tajikistan risk, since

⁴³⁷ "U.S. Evicted From Air Base In Uzbekistan" <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/29/AR2005072902038.html> last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴³⁸ "Uzbekistan: Karimov Gives Washington the Air Base it Needs for Afghan Operations" <https://eurasianet.org/uzbekistan-karimov-gives-washington-the-air-base-it-needs-for-afghan-operations> last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴³⁹ Reuel R. Hanks, "Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Desecuritization, and Regional Security" in Amin Saikal and Kirill Nourzhanov, *Afghanistan and Its Neighbors After the NATO Withdrawal* (New York: Lexington Books, 2016) p.88

⁴⁴⁰ "Mazar-e Sharif attack: Afghanistan mourns deadly Taliban assault" www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39680101 last accessed on July 10, 2019

the poorly protected borders of those two countries can be used by militants to infiltrate into Uzbekistan.⁴⁴¹

The first measure Uzbekistan has taken against security threats stemming from Afghanistan was to increase the security of its border with Afghanistan. In this respect, the relatively best protected border among the neighboring Central Asian Republics of Afghanistan is the Afghanistan-Uzbekistan border.⁴⁴² On the other hand, Uzbekistan, like other Central Asian Republics, sought regional and global cooperation opportunities against the security risks arising from Afghanistan, but unlike other countries, it preferred bilateral relations and cooperation opportunities instead of entering into multiple security cooperation relations.⁴⁴³

5.2.2. Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan has historical and cultural ties with Afghanistan as well as its border with Afghanistan. Almost one million Turkmen people live in Afghanistan. Therefore, for Turkmenistan, Afghanistan is a country that cannot be ignored due to both geographical and historical ties and cultural relations. Turkmenistan's foreign policy, since 1995, has been shaped by the official policy of "positive neutrality". However, after the Taliban came to power in 1996 in Afghanistan, unlike other Central Asian countries, Turkmenistan sought to build good relations with the Taliban, calculating that it could benefit from the economic opportunities offered by other states' policy to isolate it.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴¹ "Uzbekistan Accused Of Detaining Afghans At The Border" <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-uzbekistan-detentions/27851379.html> last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴⁴² Reuel R. Hanks, "Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Desecuritization, and Regional Security" in Amin Saikal and Kirill Nourzhanov, *Afghanistan and Its Neighbors After the NATO Withdrawal* (New York: Lexington Books, 2016) p.89

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 92-93

⁴⁴⁴ Farkhod Tolipov, "Toward Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan: The Perspective of the Bordering Central Asian Republics" in Aglaya Snetkov and Stephen Aris, (eds.) *The Regional Dimensions to Security: Other Sides of Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) pp. 163-164

On the other hand, Like, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, Turkmenistan fears that instability in Afghanistan could result in domestic disturbances but considers the developments in Afghanistan as “internal affair” and refrain from interfering. Nevertheless, there is also pragmatism in Turkmenistan’s “neutrality” policy, that is Turkmen leadership does not want to put all the eggs in the same basket and make contacts with other groups in Afghanistan.⁴⁴⁵

Turkmenistan used to have relatively peaceful border with Afghanistan, but it experienced a series of minor incidents after mid-2013. On February 27, 2014, an armed group infiltrated into Turkmenistan from the Afghan province of Badgahis and clashed with Turkmen border guards, killing three.⁴⁴⁶ Incidents continued throughout the next three years, with militants attacking the Turkmen border from Badgahis and Faryab provinces.⁴⁴⁷

The Jowzjan Province, which borders with Turkmenistan, is under control of the Afghan government, however, the Taliban militants have strong presence in the Kushteppa (Qush Tepa), Darzab, Aqchah, and Khamyab districts. The first vice president of Afghanistan, General Abdul Rashid Dostum, has a strong position in the Jowzjan Province and mains security in the province through militants loyal to him. Another Afghan province bordering Turkmenistan is Faryab, where General Dostum has also a strong position. The security situation in Faryab Province in the recent years has been worsened significantly. In 2015 and 2016, the Taliban seized a several district capitals and also came close to seize province’s capital.⁴⁴⁸

In Badgahis Province, which borders Turkmenistan the Taliban has strong positions in Murghab and Jawand districts. On the other hand, Herat Province, which also

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 164

⁴⁴⁶ “Taliban kill 3 Turkmen border guards” www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/02/27/taliban-kill-3-turkmen-border-guards last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴⁴⁷ Ivan Safranchuk, “Afghanistan and Its Central Asian Neighbors – Toward Dividing Insecurity” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 2017 p.3

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

borders with Iran remains relatively safe. The Taliban was unable to capture none of Herat's district capitals in the past three years.⁴⁴⁹

Turkmenistan also followed a similar course of action to Uzbekistan and placed strict controls on religious groups which resulted in sterilization of the political and public life of radical Islam. Although there have not been any uprisings in Turkmenistan, in September 2008, a group of radical Islamists in northern Ashgabat clashed with the police and the army, killing 20 police officers.⁴⁵⁰

5.2.3. Tajikistan

Tajikistan faces security threats emanating from Afghanistan since Tajik-Afghan borders is very poorly protected on both sides. As a result, the extremist groups, drug and human traffickers benefit from this situation and can support from the Afghan side of the border.⁴⁵¹

Tajikistani like the other Central Asian republics, have deep historical and cultural ties with Afghanistan. In addition to that, nearly 25% of Afghans are Tajiks. During the civil war, Tajikistan gave support to the NA against the Taliban because an important part of the anti-Taliban coalition was composed of ethnic Tajiks. For its contributions to the fight against the Taliban, Tajikistan received a large U.S. security aid following the fall of the Taliban, especially after it allowed NATO non-military supplies to Afghanistan in 2009.⁴⁵²

Afghanistan's four provinces namely; Balkh, Kunduz, Takhar and Badakshan are bordering Tajikistan. The security situation in the Badakshan, in the recent years has

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 3

⁴⁵⁰ "20 police reported killed in Turkmen clashes" <http://macaudailytimes.com.mo/archive-2007-2009/2008/09/15/page/29> last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴⁵¹ Farkhod Tolipov, "Toward Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan: The Perspective of the Bordering Central Asian Republics" in Aglaya Snetkov and Stephen Aris, (eds.) *The Regional Dimensions to Security: Other Sides of Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p.160

⁴⁵² Kenneth Katzman, and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 pp. 48-49

become extremely dangerous. Wurduj and Jurm districts, in 2015 and 2016 have been almost completely controlled by the Taliban. Badakhshan has become a headquarters for the Taliban operating in other regions of Afghanistan.⁴⁵³

The ANSF could only remove the insurgents out of the Afghan-Tajik border areas in early 2016. On the other hand, majority of Kunduz Province is under the Taliban control since 2015. Kunduz remained under Taliban control from September 28, 2015, to October 13, 2015. The capture of Kunduz by the Taliban was significant because it was the first time since 2001 that the Taliban was able to seize a capital of a province. Throughout 2016, the ANSF was able to control only the central part of Kunduz. In September 2016, the Taliban again attacked Kunduz again and controlled the city, but only for a short period of time. Tajikistan had been reporting an increasing number of border incidents and clashes, especially in Badakhshan Province. When the security situation deteriorated in Kunduz and Takhar provinces of Afghanistan in 2015, the situation along the Tajik-Afghan border became significantly unsecure.⁴⁵⁴

5.3. Iran

The impact of Pakistan on the security of Afghanistan is accepted by many experts and the relationship between the two countries is examined under a special title “Af-Pak“. However, it is seen that this situation does not exist in Afghanistan's relationship with Iran. Iran is generally regarded as a neighbor with a negative impact on Afghanistan's security.⁴⁵⁵

Iran sees Afghanistan as a historical part of itself and attempts to be influential in western Afghanistan. Iran also aims to protect Shi'ites and other minorities having

⁴⁵³ Ivan Safranchuk, “Afghanistan and Its Central Asian Neighbors – Toward Dividing Insecurity” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 2017 p.2

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 2

⁴⁵⁵ Andreas Wilde, “Underestimated and Ignored: Iran’s Current Afghanistan Policy between Soft Power and Hard Measures” in Aglaya Snetkov and Stephen Aris, (eds.) *The Regional Dimensions to Security: Other Sides of Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p. 100

links to Iran. At the same time, Iran suspects that the U.S. may use its forces in Afghanistan to surround or attack Iran. Due to this strategy, Iran strongly opposed to signing of the U.S.-Afghanistan SPA and BSA. Iran has supported Hazara Shiites in central Afghanistan by providing scholarships in Iran and financing mosques and religious institutions.⁴⁵⁶ It was also claimed that Iran's has been recruiting Afghan Shi'ites to fight in Syria for the Bashar Asad regime since 2013.⁴⁵⁷

Iran's main Afghan strategy is anti-Taliban. Iran considers a Taliban regime in Afghanistan as an ideological threat to its own regime. During the Afghan civil strife, between 1992-1996 Iran supported anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. Iran provided Northern Alliance ammunition, fuel, and supported the group financially.⁴⁵⁸

In September 1998, Iran and Afghanistan under Taliban regime almost came into direct conflict when 11 Iranian diplomats were killed in an attack by the Taliban on Iran's Mezar-e Serif Consulate. The Taliban, denied the responsibility and claimed that the Iranian diplomats had been killed by renegade groups who had acted without orders. Iran dispatched forces to the border and threatened the Taliban with military force.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁶ "Iran's Influence in Afghanistan: Implications for the U.S. Drawdown" RAND Corporation, 2014 p. 13
https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR600/RR616/RAND_RR616.pdf last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴⁵⁷ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy" *Congressional Research Service*, May 19, 2017 p.43

⁴⁵⁸ Andreas Wilde, "Underestimated and Ignored: Iran's Current Afghanistan Policy between Soft Power and Hard Measures" in Aglaya Snetkov and Stephen Aris, (eds.) *The Regional Dimensions to Security: Other Sides of Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p. 102

⁴⁵⁹ "Iran Holds Taliban Responsible for 9 Diplomats' Deaths"
<https://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/11/world/iran-holds-taliban-responsible-for-9-diplomats-deaths.html> last accessed on July 10, 2019

However, several U.S. military reports argued that Iran has given a limited support to the Taliban.⁴⁶⁰ With this contradictory policy, Iran has aimed to put pressure on the U.S. forces in Afghanistan so that it would not be able consider opening a second front with Iran.

In August 2013, Iran signed a MoU on intelligence, military and economic cooperation with Afghanistan⁴⁶¹ and in December 2013 the two countries decided to develop it into a strategic cooperation agreement.⁴⁶² In April 2015, Ghani visited Tehran and held a meeting with President Rouhani and Ayatollah Ali Khamene. During the meetings, both countries agreed to work together against Al Qaeda and ISIS.⁴⁶³

In addition to keeping an eye on the U.S. presence in Afghanistan, Iran also attempts to balance Saudi Arabia's regional aspirations by confronting it in Afghan theatre. In late 2012, Saudi Arabia announced that it would construct a new Islamic center in Kabul, expected to cost nearly USD 100 million.⁴⁶⁴ The Saudi project included a mosque as well as a university, library, lecture halls and dormitories. Although the project has not been started as writing of this study, it is a good example to the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, since the Saudi project was said to be an

⁴⁶⁰ Alireza Nader, Ali G. Scotten, Ahmad Idrees Rahmani, Robert Stewart and Leila Mahnad, "Iran's Influence in Afghanistan: Implications for the U.S. Drawdown" *RAND Corporation*, 2014 p.13

⁴⁶¹ "Can Kabul Carry Two Melons in One Hand? Afghanistan and Iran sign strategic cooperation document" <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/can-kabul-carry-two-melons-in-one-hand-afghanistan-and-iran-sign-strategic-cooperation-document/> last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴⁶² "Afghanistan, Iran plan cooperation pact amid tensions with U.S." <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-afghanistan-iran/afghanistan-iran-plan-cooperation-pact-amid-tensions-with-u-s-idUKBRE9B709I20131208> last accessed on July 10, 2019

⁴⁶³ "Iran, Afghanistan announce security cooperation against ISIL" <https://www.thenational.ae/world/iran-afghanistan-announce-security-cooperation-against-isil-1.84340> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁶⁴ "Saudi Arabia funding \$100m Kabul mosque and education centre" <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/02/saudi-arabia-funding-kabul-mosque> last accessed on July 12, 2019

answer to Khatam al-Nabyeen Islamic University, built in 2006 by a Shia cleric with the alleged support of Iran.⁴⁶⁵

Both Iran and Saudi Arabia seek a friendly government in Afghanistan and protection of their interests, investments and territory, if the worst-case scenario happens and the civil war is renewed. The security dynamics between Iran and Saudi Arabia shape their relations with Afghanistan. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia try to control each other's influence in Afghanistan and limit other's ability to shape Afghan domestic politics. In this struggle, ethnic, religious and linguistic common grounds are used by both countries to enhance their economic and political interests in Afghanistan. On the other hand, both Iran and Saudi Arabia seek international legitimacy by attempting to offer solution to the security problems emanating from Afghanistan. In this game, Saudi Arabia on the one hand has been funding the Taliban and tries influence the insurgency through Pakistan, while on the other hand allying with the U.S. in its fight against insurgency in Afghanistan. Iran has made it clear that it is against the U.S. military in Afghanistan, but also pleased to see that the U.S. is bogged down in the region, devoting its troops and resources to fight the Taliban insurgency. Iran also trying to place itself as a neighbor without which a solution for the security problem cannot be found.⁴⁶⁶

As mentioned above, in an attempt to balance Iran in the region, Saudi Arabia carefully supports the Taliban, mainly through Pakistan. However, Saudi influence on the Taliban has proved to be fairly limited since 2001. In this regard, Iran wants a friendly government in Kabul. Iran is also concerned about the future of non-Pashtuns and the Shi'ites in Afghanistan and considers a broad and a representative government as a guarantee to protect their rights. Iran, which shares a long border with Afghanistan, is also concerned about refugees, drug smuggling and the potential

⁴⁶⁵ "Controversial Madrasah Builds Iran's Influence In Kabul" [https://www.rferl.org/a/Controversial Madrasah Builds Irans Influence In Kabul/2212566.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/Controversial_Madrasah_Builds_Irans_Influence_In_Kabul/2212566.html) last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁶⁶ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) pp. 97-99

threat of Islamist militancy. However, despite all those concerns neither Iran nor Saudi Arabia considers Afghanistan as its main foreign policy priority.⁴⁶⁷

Iran also wants a broadly representative government in Kabul to oust the Taliban and therefore it does not want to hamper the U.S.-led coalition's efforts to stabilize Afghanistan.⁴⁶⁸

Iran shares a long border with Afghanistan which is quite problematic in the fields of trafficking of narcotics, and refugees. Nearly 50 % of narcotics produced in Afghanistan cross the Iranian border, to Europe or consumed domestically. According to some estimation there are four million drug addicts in Iran. For this reason, Iran harshly criticizes international coalition's failure to control the production in Afghanistan. Also illegal immigration from Afghanistan is a major problem for Iran. By the end of 2015, Iran hosted nearly 950.000 registered and according to Iranian officials more than 1.5 million non-registered refugees from Afghanistan.⁴⁶⁹

5.4. China

The relations between China and Afghanistan date back to 1950s. Afghanistan was among the first states to recognize People's Republic of China. However China, at that time did not reciprocate this warm invitation because of Afghanistan's relations with the West. But China finally recognized Afghanistan in 1955 and appointed an ambassador to Kabul. The Chinese-Afghan relations deteriorated in late 1970s due to Afghanistan's getting closer to the Soviet Union and the communist military coup in Afghanistan in 1978. The relations between two countries remained distant during the Soviet occupation and there were no official relations between China and Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001. China decided to keep a low profile during the

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 125-126

⁴⁶⁸ Roberto Toscano, "Sources of Tension in Afghanistan and Pakistan: A Regional Perspective Iran's Role in Afghanistan", *CIDOB Policy Research Project*, January 2012 p.3

⁴⁶⁹ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) pp. 127-128

U.S. military operation against the Taliban in 2001, however, at the same time it was disturbed by the U.S. military presence which was very close the Chinese border.⁴⁷⁰

Following the U.S. military operation China was concerned on two topics regarding Afghanistan. First one was the possibility of Islamic groups infiltrating to or affecting its Muslim Uyghur Xinjiang region. The potential for jihadist groups in Afghanistan to support China's Muslim Uyghur community is a serious concern for China. The other topic was natural resources of Afghanistan. China is interested in Afghanistan because of its rich minerals and other natural resources.⁴⁷¹

In late 2012, Afghanistan and China signed a cooperation agreement on security and economic fields. In October 2014, China invited President Ashraf Ghani the ministerial meeting of "Heart of Asia" in Beijing. By hosting the meeting, China gives signals of a more prominent role in Afghanistan. During this visit, China agreed to give training to Afghan bureaucrats and give \$ 330 million in aid over the next three years. This may show that China, having depended on Pakistan to accesses to Afghanistan is developing a more independent and an alternative policy.⁴⁷²

In 2011, China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) signed an agreement with Afghanistan to develop oil fields in the Amu Darya region. The agreement included drilling and building of an oil refinery in Faryab and Sar-e Pul. It is the first international oil production agreement Afghanistan signed with an international company.⁴⁷³ China has also invested in the Aynak Copper Mine, located south of

⁴⁷⁰ Marc Lanteigne, "The Other Power: Security and Diplomacy in Sino-Afghanistan Relations" in Aglaya Snetkov and Stephen Aris, (eds.) *The Regional Dimensions to Security: Other Sides of Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) pp. 121-122

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 122-124

⁴⁷² Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance" *Congressional Research Service*, January 12, 2015 p. 49

⁴⁷³ "UPDATE 1-Afghanistan signs major oil deal with China's CNPC" https://www.reuters.com/article/afghanistan-cnpc/update-1-afghanistan-signs-major-oil-deal-with-chinas-cnpc-idUSL3E7NS40J20111228?feedType=RSS&feedName=rbssEnergyNews&utm_source=feedburner&

Kabul. The development of the mine was given to two Chinese state companies. However, copper mine project has been frozen due to security concerns surrounding the mine area.⁴⁷⁴ In return, China, between 2002 and 2010, provided nearly \$205 million and \$20 million as loan to Afghanistan.⁴⁷⁵

5.5. Russia

Afghanistan occupied a very little place in Russia's security perception in the early 1990s. Since the Soviet occupation 1980s caused a great trauma in the minds of the Russian people, Russia simply chose to distance itself from the developments in Afghanistan. In addition, after the breakdown of the Soviets in early 1990s, geographically speaking, Afghanistan became a distant place for Russia. However, the emergence of a new radical power in Afghanistan, namely the Taliban, changed this perception and by the late 1990s Afghanistan once more became a "security problem" for Russia's southern border. The civil war in Afghanistan, drug trafficking, terrorist groups and the possibility of foreign involvement in the region carried Afghanistan higher in Russia's list of security priorities.⁴⁷⁶

After the 9/11 attacks Russian President Vladimir Putin immediately called the U.S. President and expressed his country's support to the U.S.

"Russia knows directly what terrorism means... and because of this we, more than anyone, understand the feelings of the American people. In the name of Russia, I want to say to the American people, we are with you." said Putin later in a speech. In the course of U.S. preparation to launch a military operation against Al Qaeda in

[utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FUSenergyNews+\(News+%2F+US+%2F+Energy\)](#) last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁷⁴ "The Story Behind China's Long-Stalled Mine in Afghanistan" <https://thediplomat.com/2017/01/the-story-behind-chinas-long-stalled-mine-in-afghanistan/> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁷⁵ Noor Rahman Tahiri, "Afghanistan and China Trade Relationship" *Kabul Oruj University*, 2017 p.3

⁴⁷⁶ Kirill Nourzhanov, "Russia's Afghanistan Policy after 2014" in Amin Saikal, and Kirill Nourzhanov, *Afghanistan and Its Neighbors After the NATO Withdrawal* (New York: Lexington Books, 2016) p.163

Afghanistan, Putin offered further support and said; *“Russia will continue to provide intelligence information we have collected on the infrastructure, location and training of international terrorists.”* Putin also encouraged Central Asian Republics to allow U.S. forces to use former Soviet Union military bases.⁴⁷⁷

Putin and Bush issued a joint declaration on May, 24 2002 stating that;

The U.S. and Russia will continue to cooperate to support the Afghan people’s efforts to transform Afghanistan into a stable, viable nation at peace with itself and its neighbors. Our cooperation, bilaterally and through the UN, the ‘6+2’ diplomatic process.....has proved important to our success so far in ridding Afghanistan of the Taliban and al Qaeda.⁴⁷⁸

On the international level Russia supported all UN resolutions regarding U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan, including UN Security Council Resolution 1386.⁴⁷⁹ However, despite its initial support, Russia never became a part of the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan, but allowed transport of not-lethal and humanitarian cargo of the U.S.-led coalition to Afghanistan. At one-point Russia even allowed NATO military vehicles through its territory to Afghanistan.⁴⁸⁰

The most important reason behind Russia’s keeping its distance to the military operations in Afghanistan was its concern about the U.S. military presence in the region. Russia made it clear that it was giving a tacit approval to the NATO bases in former Soviet Republic for a limit time and as the war in Afghanistan continued

⁴⁷⁷ “9/11 ‘A Turning Point’ for Putin” <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:e1YTJOd4irIJ:edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/09/10/ar911.russia.putin/index.html+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=tr> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁷⁸ “Text: Bush and Putin’s Joint Declaration” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/may/24/usa.russia> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁷⁹ “UNSC Resolution 1386” <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1386> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁸⁰ “Russia Allows NATO Armored Vehicle Transit” <https://www.voanews.com/a/russia-allows-nato-armored-vehicle-transit-110610529/131223.html> last accessed on July 12, 2019

beyond expectations of Kremlin, Russia became concerned that the U.S. would establish a permanent military bases in its own sphere of influence.⁴⁸¹

By 2005, Russia started to make it clear that it was seriously irritated by the Western military presence in the Central Asia. With the increasing pressures from Russia, the Central Asian states started to revise their policies towards the Western military presence in the region. The Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev, after his election in 2011, promised Russia that the U.S. military base at Manas Airport would be shut down. The Kyrgyzstan Parliament, on June 2013, approved a bill which stipulated the closure of the U.S. military base by July 2014.⁴⁸² The base, which moved 98 % of all ISAF forces in and out of Afghanistan and loaded more than 1 billion liters of fuel to 136,000 aircrafts, was shut down in June 2014.⁴⁸³ During Barack Obama's visit to Moscow in 2009 the Russian government pledged to allow 4,500 flights per year carrying U.S. personnel and military hardware free of charge to Afghanistan.⁴⁸⁴ This showed Russia's pragmatic approach to the "war against terrorism", since Russia was pleased to see the U.S. shouldering the burden in Afghanistan. Russia President Vladimir Putin, in August 2012, during his visit to Russian troops stationed in Ulyanovsk, said the success of NATO's military operations is vital for maintaining stability and security on Russia's southern flanks. *"Do we need to fight there? Let them stay there and fight... That answers our*

⁴⁸¹ "Russia Re-Evaluates Security Ties in Central Asia" <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/russia-re-evaluates-security-ties-central-asia> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁸² "Manas International Airport Ganci Air Base / Manas Air Base Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan" <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/centralasia/manas.htm> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁸³ "U.S. vacates base in Central Asia as Russia's clout rises" <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kyrgyzstan-usa-manas/u-s-vacates-base-in-central-asia-as-russias-clout-rises-idUSKBN0EE1LH20140603> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁸⁴ "Obama agrees arms cuts, Afghan transit with Russia" <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-obama-russia/obama-heads-to-moscow-for-reset-summit-idUKTRE5640IZ20090706> last accessed on July 12, 2019

national interests” Putin also added.⁴⁸⁵ However, the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 brought an end to collaboration between the U.S. and Russia over Afghanistan. In April 2014, NATO announced suspension of all military and civil cooperation with Russia.⁴⁸⁶

In May 2015, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev ordered all NATO military transportation to Afghanistan through Russia to be terminated, arguing that UN Security Council Resolution 1386 was no longer in effect.⁴⁸⁷

Russia, as mentioned above, endorsed UN Security Council Resolution 2189, by which Resolute Support Mission was established, in a hope that the U.S. would be able to keep Afghanistan comparatively stable. As 2014 came to an end and the timetable for the NATO drawdown drew nearer, it became clear that the fear of security threats emanating from Afghanistan outweighed Russia’s concerns over prolonged presence of NATO troops in the region. However, Russia was skeptical over the success of the U.S-led military coalition in Afghanistan following the NATO drawdown at the end of 2014. In May 2014, Igor Sergun, Military Intelligence Director, said that “military estimates the possibility of Afghanistan breaking up into ethnic enclaves backed by foreign powers at 31 %.”⁴⁸⁸ Supporting Sergun’s remarks Russian Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov, in May 2015 said;

Unfortunately, ISAF failed its mission in Afghanistan. The security situation in this country remains a matter of concern, and the flow of drugs has grown manifold. The Taliban

⁴⁸⁵ “Putin regrets NATO’s plan on pullout in Afghanistan” <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/putin-regrets-natos-plan-on-pullout-in-afghanistan-26924> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁸⁶ “Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers” https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/news_108501.htm last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁸⁷ “Moscow ends Afghanistan military transit deal with NATO” https://www.rbth.com/international/2015/05/19/moscow_ends_afghanistan_military_transit_deal_wit_h_nato_46149.html last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁸⁸ “Moscow’s Afghan Endgame” <https://thediplomat.com/2014/06/moscows-afghan-endgame/> last accessed on July 12, 2019

movement maintains considerable combat capability. According to some reports, about 50 thousand militants are currently fighting in Afghanistan.⁴⁸⁹

In a similar vein President Putin, following Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in July 2015, said that ISIS had increased its activities in Afghanistan, which poses a serious security threats on the southern borders of SCO.⁴⁹⁰

5.6. India

The reason behind India's presence in Afghanistan is to limit Pakistan's influence. During the Afghan civil war between 1992-1996 India supported the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance.⁴⁹¹ India considered Taliban's sheltering Al Qaeda a major threat to herself due to organization's connection with radical Islamic groups in Pakistan. One of these militant groups, Lashkar-e-Taiba, has carried out a terrorist attack in Mumbai in November 2008 in which 164 people were killed.⁴⁹² The Al Qaeda related organization attacked Mumbai again in July 2011 and killed 21 people and injured 113.⁴⁹³

When the Taliban came to power in 1996, India had to close its diplomatic missions in Afghanistan. In 2001, India considered the fall of the Taliban regime as an important strategic gain. To utilize the situation on the ground India participated in the 2001 Bonn Conference. India also welcomed the U.S. and NATO military

⁴⁸⁹ "Deputy Defence Minister Anatoly Antonov gave speech in Singapore at the 14th Asia Security Summit" http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12037863@egNews last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁹⁰ "News conference by Vladimir Putin following the BRICS and SCO summits" <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49909> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁹¹ Rudra Chaudhuri, "Negotiating Its Way In: India in Afghanistan" in Aglaya Snetkov and Stephen Aris,(eds.) *The Regional Dimensions to Security: Other Sides of Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p. 88

⁴⁹² "Mumbai Terror Attacks Fast Facts" <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/18/world/asia/mumbai-terror-attacks/index.html> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁹³ "Mumbai: Explosions shake India's financial hub" <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-14141454> last accessed on July 12, 2019

operations in Afghanistan and made it clear that India does not want the international community to leave Afghanistan before the country is stabilized.⁴⁹⁴

After 2001, Indian presence and visibility in Afghanistan significantly increased with a large embassy in Kabul and four consulates, two of them in Jalalabad and Kandahar. India has viewed involvement in Afghanistan not only as necessary to curb Pakistani encouragement of militancy, but also as an opportunity to gain international recognition as a global actor.⁴⁹⁵

Despite the pressures from Pakistan, Afghanistan has been trying to establish close ties with India in order to benefit from India's huge economy. However, Afghanistan is aware that by getting closer to India, there is the risk to upset Pakistan. Despite the risks, Afghanistan signed a SPA with India in 2011.⁴⁹⁶ The agreement entrenched Pakistan's fears by giving India an official role in Afghanistan's security by training ANSF personnel. Since 2011, India has trained since thousands of ANSF personnel including Afghan Special Forces members.⁴⁹⁷ In addition to this, India donated four Mi-25 helicopter gunships to the AAF.⁴⁹⁸

The relations between India and Afghanistan further developed following the Pakistan-Afghanistan border clashes in May 2013.⁴⁹⁹ Then President Hamid Karzai

⁴⁹⁴ Srinjoy Bose and Ankit Panda, "Indian and Chinese foreign policy imperatives and strategies vis-à-vis Afghanistan" *India Review*, 2016, Vol:15 No:4 (379-406) p. 384

⁴⁹⁵ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) p. 47

⁴⁹⁶ "Afghanistan and India sign 'strategic partnership'" <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-15161776> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁹⁷ "India Begins Training Afghan Commandos" <https://www.pakistankakhudahafiz.com/india-begins-training-afghan-commandos/> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁹⁸ "India Delivers 4th Combat Helicopter to Afghanistan" <https://thediplotmat.com/2016/12/india-delivers-4th-combat-helicopter-to-afghanistan/> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁴⁹⁹ "Clash erupts on Afghan-Pakistan border" <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39809900> last accessed on July 12, 2019

visited India to demand sales of Indian military equipment which would help Afghanistan strengthen its border with Pakistan.⁵⁰⁰ In December 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Afghanistan to open India-funded parliament complex in Kabul, which was built by Indian financing.⁵⁰¹ In June 2016, Prime Minister Modi visited Afghanistan again and inaugurated a friendship dam, also known as the Salma Dam.⁵⁰²

In May 2016, India signed an agreement with Iran and Afghanistan, according to which India would pledge to invest \$500 million to Iran's Chabahar Port. The Chabahar Port, when completed will increase volume of trade between India and Afghanistan. By using the port India will also bypass Pakistan route. In addition to the port deal, Iran, India and Afghanistan agreed to establish a land transit-and-trade corridor.⁵⁰³

As mentioned above, the India and Pakistan engagement in Afghanistan reflects their bilateral relations. The main purpose of both India and Pakistan is to keep the influence of the other under control by waging proxy wars in Afghanistan. Pakistan considers, Afghanistan as necessary for continuing its strategic depth against India and for developing relations with the U.S. On the other hand, India calculates that economic and political influence in Afghanistan will bring international recognition, which will reinforce public opinion against Pakistan. India also seeks to eliminate Pakistan's strategic depth by becoming Afghanistan's ally. Thus, both Pakistan and India have strong strategic interests in Afghanistan's domestic politics and security.

⁵⁰⁰ "Afghan president Hamid Karzai hands India weapons 'wish list'" <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/afghan-president-hamid-karzai-hands-india-weapons-wish-list-8626546.html> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁵⁰¹ "Modi in Afghanistan" <https://www.reuters.com/news/picture/modi-in-afghanistan-idINRTX202HZ> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁵⁰² "Water and Power: Indian PM to Inaugurate Friendship Dam in Afghanistan" <https://sputniknews.com/asia/201606031040721027-india-modi-visit-afghanistan/> last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁵⁰³ "India, Iran and Afghanistan sign Chabahar port agreement" <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/india-iran-afghanistan-sign-chabahar-port-agreement/story-2EytbKZe06zeC1pR8WSuAO.html> last accessed on July 12, 2019

While neither Pakistan nor India has a conventional military presence in Afghanistan, the competition continues through support for armed groups and terror attacks by proxies.⁵⁰⁴ This struggle between the two countries makes Afghanistan a battle ground for proxy wars. Some writers, such as Dalrymple go as far to argue that the Indo-Pak rivalry is at the very core of the current war in Afghanistan.⁵⁰⁵

In military terms, India is far more superior to Pakistan. But Pakistan's nuclear weapon capabilities bring a relative balance to the game. It is obvious that Pakistan's tactical nuclear weapons deter a conventional Indian attack. This nuclear power presentation produces security challenges in other arenas. One such arena is Afghanistan. Both Pakistan and India are using militant groups, which offer a certain degree of deniability. The U.S. supported India's involvement in Afghanistan as the time of NATO withdrawal came closer. But India was in favor of the U.S. to continue its presence in Afghanistan, an opinion repeated by Prime Minister Modi, during his visit to Washington in September 2014.⁵⁰⁶

India prefers a government in which all the ethnicities in Afghanistan are fairly represented and is principally against a religious governance system. India is also concerned about the small Sikh population in Afghanistan. India has been skeptical in the debate about reconsolidation efforts with the Taliban for political settlement in Afghanistan.⁵⁰⁷

On the Afghan side, the rivalry between Pakistan and India represents a major obstacle to peace. Following the U.S.-led Coalition's withdrawal in 2014, India has been more willing to use the military instrument and Pakistan has a democratically

⁵⁰⁴ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) pp. 45-49

⁵⁰⁵ "A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan and India by William Dalrymple" <http://csweb.brookings.edu/content/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c.html#section5> last accessed on July 3, 2019

⁵⁰⁶ Kristian Berg Harpviken and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) pp. 34-39

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 49-51

elected government which has lost influence on foreign policy security issues to its powerful military. For Afghanistan, India is an important source of support, and Pakistan is an undeniable major player. The greatest challenge for Afghanistan is to manage relations with Pakistan and India in a way as to avoid worsening its own conflict.⁵⁰⁸

5.7. Turkey

The relations between Turkey and Afghanistan date back to early 1920s. The relations between the two countries started with signing of the “Turkey-Afghanistan Treaty” in Moscow in 1921.⁵⁰⁹ The relations gained momentum with “Second Turkey-Afghanistan Treaty”, which was signed on May 25, 1928. Turkey also signed Saadabad Pact on July 9, 1937, with Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, in an effort to strengthen security alliance with the regional countries.⁵¹⁰

In the following decades, Turkey and Afghanistan maintained friendly relations. However, during the Cold War Era Turkey chose to stay away from Afghanistan, because it had become, especially in the second half of the 1970s, a battle ground of the Soviets and the U.S. Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, Afghanistan plunged into a civil war. During the Afghan civil war and Taliban’s assuming power, Turkey established close ties with Uzbek General Rashid Dostum and later on supported the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance.⁵¹¹

After the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001, Turkey declared its support to the international efforts to fight terrorism in Afghanistan. In November 2001, Turkey announced that it will deploy 90 soldiers in Afghanistan from its elite Special Forces.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 56

⁵⁰⁹ “Turkey-Afghanistan Bilateral Political Relations” http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_afghanistan-bilateral-political-relations.en.mfa last accessed on July 12, 2019

⁵¹⁰ Canan Bayram Çubuk, “Turkey’s Role In Afghanistan In The Post 9/11 Era “Ankara, *Middle East Technical University*, 2014 p. 52

⁵¹¹ Muharrem Eksi, “Turkey’s Increasing Role in Afghanistan” *Journal of Global Analysis* Vol: 1 No: 2, 2010 p. 144

Turkish military officials said the troops would be deployed in northern Afghanistan to train the anti-Taliban Afghan forces and conduct aid operations. Although Turkey pledged to send a small contingent to Afghanistan in the initial phase of the U.S.-led military operation, its contribution was vital since Turkey was the first Muslim country to join the anti-Taliban operations.⁵¹²

Since its inception, Turkey has also participated in ISAF mission and deployed forces in Afghanistan, which mainly focused on Kabul region. Turkish forces' purpose in Afghanistan was not to fight insurgents but instead to aid the Afghan people. Turkish forces in Kabul remained there and controlled the region, which saved ISAF deploying large number of troops in the capital and enabled it to cover the rest of Afghanistan. The main Turkish force was ordered to remain in Kabul, was not allowed to engage in counterinsurgency operations, however it was allowed to respond if fired upon. Turkey actively took part in ISAF and assumed the command between June 2002 and February 2003, and between February-August 2005.⁵¹³ Following the withdrawal of the NATO forces in late 2014, Turkey continued its support to the Resolute Support Mission, and as of June 2019 it has nearly 600 soldiers stationed in Afghanistan.⁵¹⁴ Turkey's support to the international coalition against the Taliban was not limited to military sphere. In November 2003, Hikmet Çetin was appointed to the Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) in Afghanistan. Çetin continued this post until August 2006.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹² "Turkey to Send Forces to Afghanistan" <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/11/01/international/turkey-to-send-forces-to-afghanistan.html> last accessed on July 15, 2019

⁵¹³ Müge Kınacıoğlu, "NATO-Turkey Relations: From Collective Defence to Collective Security" in Pinar Gözen Ercan, *Turkish Foreign Policy: International Relations, Legality and Global Reach* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) p. 96

⁵¹⁴ "Operation Freedom's Sentinel Lead Inspector General Report To The United States Congress" 2018 full report is available at https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/21/2002134153/-1/-1/1/FY2019_LIG_OCO_REPORT.PDF p.50 last accessed on July 15, 2019

⁵¹⁵ "Hikmet Çetin Senior Civilian Representative" https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/who_is_who_116925.htm last accessed on July 15, 2019

In Afghanistan Turkey has always adopted a civilian-based approach and attempted to reach out to local communities. Especially in northern Afghanistan, Turkey paid extra attention to communities which are Turkish origin, like Uzbeks and Turkmen, and in return treated differently than other NATO member countries. In this regard Turkey played an important role in establishment of PRTs. Turkey was one of the very few countries participated in more than one PRT. PRTs in Wardak and Jawzjan provinces functioned under a Turkish civilian coordinator. The PRT in Wardak was established in 2006⁵¹⁶ and the PRT in Jawzjan became operational in July 2010⁵¹⁷. The PRTs in Jawzjan and Wardak carried out projects on training of ANP, health care, infrastructure and development of administrative capacity.⁵¹⁸

In addition to PRTs, Turkey channeled its aid program towards Afghanistan through its The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA). TIKA opened its first office in Kabul in September 2004. The TIKA office officially started functioning in early 2005.⁵¹⁹ As of March 2019 TIKA has three offices in Afghanistan, namely Kabul, Herat and Mazar-e Sharif.⁵²⁰ Since 2004, TIKA has constructed or supported the construction of dozens of schools, health care centers,

⁵¹⁶ “BN:9 - 8 Kasım 2006, Vardak İl İmar Ekibimiz hk” http://www.mfa.gov.tr/bn_9---8-kasim-2006_-vardak-il-imar-ekibimiz-hk_.tr.mfa last accessed on July 15, 2019

⁵¹⁷ “14 Temmuz 2010, Kabil’de Düzenlenecek Uluslararası Kabil Konferansını ve Cevizcan İl İmar Ekibinin Açılışını İzleyecek Basın Mensupları Hk.” http://www.mfa.gov.tr/duyuru-19_-14-temmuz-2010_-kabil_de-duzenlenecek-uluslararasi-kabil-konferansini-ve-cevizcan-il-imar-ekibinin-acilisini-izleyece.tr.mfa last accessed on July 15, 2019

⁵¹⁸ Oktay Fırat Tanrısever, (ed.) *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security since 9/11* (Washington: IOS Press, 2013) p. 162

⁵¹⁹ Canan Bayram Çubuk, “Turkey’s Role In Afghanistan In The Post 9/11 Era “Ankara, *Middle East Technical University*, 2014 p. 65

⁵²⁰ “TIKA Overseas Offices” <http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/overseasoffices> last accessed on July 15, 2019

mosques, village roads and water wells. TIKA also contributed to education programs of teachers, judges and security and healthcare personnel.⁵²¹

In addition to its support to Afghanistan in fields of security and humanitarian aid, Turkey is also quite active in Afghan economy. As of December 2018, 127 Turkish companies are operating in Afghanistan. Majority of these companies are working in construction and contracting sectors. Turkish companies in Afghanistan have completed 627 projects in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2016, worth 6 billion USD. Turkish companies also operate in service sector, logistics, health, consultancy etc., and in energy and mining sectors.⁵²²

Turkey also desires to be active in establishing functioning government structures and a working democracy in Afghanistan. Turkey believes that in order to establish a functioning state structure, internal peace and reconciliation with insurgent groups, with the condition to cease violence, is necessary. In this regard Turkey supports the U.S-led peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, after meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan on January 4, 2019 in Ankara said Turkey will host a Pakistan-Afghanistan summit to end Taliban's 17-year insurgency. Erdogan added that the meeting is expected to take place in Istanbul after Turkey's March 31 local elections.⁵²³

⁵²¹ Details of TIKA activities in Afghanistan can be found in TIKA's annual reports at http://www.tika.gov.tr/tr/yayin/liste/tika_faaliyet_raporlari-22 last accessed on July 15, 2019

⁵²² "Turkey-Afghanistan Economic and Trade Relations" http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-afghanistan.en.mfa last accessed on July 15, 2019

⁵²³ "Turkey to Host Trilateral Summit on Afghan Peace" <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/turkey-host-trilateral-summit-afghan-peace> last accessed on September 6, 2019

Despite all its efforts, Turkey could not shape the security and political developments in Afghanistan because it is not a major regional power. However, according to Tanrisever “Ankara is a medium sized regional soft power” which has some capacity to make contribution to security of Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbors.⁵²⁴

⁵²⁴ Oktay Fırat Tanrisever, (ed.) *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security since 9/11* (Washington: IOS Press, 2013) p. 155

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Since 2001, many experts seem to have had to choose between two postulates regarding Afghanistan. “Historically, the security situation in Afghanistan has been bad as a result of the struggle between Afghanistan and its neighbors and between Afghanistan and the great powers.” The other proposition adopts a more inside-out approach. “Historically, the security situation in Afghanistan has always been bad, thus negatively effecting the surrounding countries and major powers, which results in foreign interventions.” Each claim has its merits. It is usually argued that throughout its long history Afghanistan lacked a capable and strong central government and state institutions which results in poor security situation. However, some experts oppose to this argument and claim that between 1747 and 1978 there had been a relatively strong central authority and a functioning state system. In this context, experts who are close to this position claim that the security in Afghanistan degenerated due to external interventions. Although the objective of this thesis is not to seek answers to these two propositions, it is thought that the answers play a key role in explaining and understanding the security situation in Afghanistan and its environs after NATO withdrawal in late 2014.

After the Mujahideen thwarted the Soviet occupation in 1988, Afghanistan fell from the international agenda and could only made the headlines through the anti-democratic practices of Taliban, which came to power after a lengthy civil war. It was argued that even for its close neighbors, Afghanistan has been perceived as a country that does not pose any security risks for a long time, and has been treated as Pandora’s box, which should never be opened to prevent the evils from escaping.

The general opinion is that with the U.S. military intervention in 2001, Pandora’s box was opened to the end. Under the Taliban control, Afghanistan had a relatively safe period until 2001. If we ignore the Northern Alliance, which had limited

influence in the northern parts of the country, the Taliban have dominated Afghanistan and establish a self-styled security environment. Of course, this does not mean that the Taliban's anti-democratic practices, often violent, on women, minorities, different ethnic and religious groups are being affirmed. However, under the Taliban administration, there had been a period both in and around Afghanistan that is very close to the widespread definition of "security" in the discipline of international relations. In fact, it was even observed that the cultivation and trade of narcotics from which the international community suffers gravely, was lower compared to the post-2001 period.

It is argued that before 2001, neighboring countries and other regional countries did not have a significant perception of threat emanating from Afghanistan and Afghanistan played a very minor role in their security agendas. For these countries, the most important threats originating from Afghanistan can be listed as; the infiltration of Islamic groups into neighboring countries, drugs, weapons, human trafficking and illegal migration. For the regional countries, these threats continued to exist after 2001. However, severe strategic threats were added then. The U.S' military entry into the region under the pretext of "war against terror" has alerted many countries and forced them to be more active in the Afghanistan field, which they had previously ignored. In this context, Iran, which sees the Taliban as a major enemy to its Shi'ite ideology, has found the "Great Stan" at its doorstep. Russia had managed to keep the U.S. away from Central Asia in the post-Soviet period, but after 2001, Russia had to give its half-hearted consent to the U.S. to establish military bases in these countries to fight Al Qaeda and the Taliban. The Central Asian republics, which focused on economic progress in the post-Soviet era and followed a middle course between the West and Russia, were caught in crossfire. On one hand they felt the Western pressure to support the U.S. "war on terror" and on the other hand they felt constant pressure of Russia on them, to which nearly all of them were dependent this way or the other. India, on the other hand, has suffered to see that Pakistan, its arch enemy, become an important ally of the U.S. in its struggle against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The silent player in the region, China was confused to see the U.S. on the path of its economic initiatives in Central Asia.

The only reason behind all these countries' tolerance of the US-led Western military presence in the region was the Taliban. Once awakened, the regional countries feared that the Taliban would become a real threat and the war in Afghanistan would spread to their countries. In this context, is it possible to claim that the US military operation and the 18 years of struggle that followed were successful in eradicating the Taliban and Al Qaeda? The answer of the thesis to this question will be no and no question regarding Afghanistan can be answered so easily. With the exception initial years of the US military campaign the Taliban seems to be steadily gaining ground in Afghanistan. Although this situation was shyly expressed by U.S. military and political experts at first, it is now a common belief that the Taliban is far from losing the war. All the metrics regarding the fight against Taliban are proving this fact. The area controlled by the Taliban in the country has increased day by day and there has also been a significant increase in the regions that are described as "in the middle". Although it is a conscious choice, the strategic decision of the ANSF to exert control the populated city centers has left the countryside at the mercy of the Taliban.

ANSF's strategy of controlling the city centers has been perpetrated by the Taliban attacks. Since 2014, the Taliban have carried out numerous attacks in many major cities, especially in Kabul and in the provincial centers in which hundreds of people have lost their lives. There have been increases not only in civilian casualties, but also in ANSF casualties after 2014. Some U.S. experts have provided the dramatic decline in the post-2014 coalition's military losses as evidence to the improving security situation in Afghanistan. However, the decreasing number of soldiers in the field and the fact that the majority of the soldiers are operating in the background such as training, consultancy and air support are the biggest factors in declining coalition losses.

On the other hand, the performance of ANSF after 2014 is far from promising for the near future. The Afghan security forces, which were restructured after the U.S. intervention, could not be brought to the desired level despite all efforts and funds spent in 13 years. There is considerable suspicion that ANSF, will be able to fulfill assumed security responsibility. Although it has made significant progress since 2001, ANSF is still in need of Western powers for education, logistics, strategic

planning and air support and it is still far from conducting independent large-scale military operations against the Taliban. Desertion, lack of education, high casualty rates and Taliban's staunch war strategy can be pronounced as the relative failure of the ANSF. As a result, since the withdrawal of NATO from Afghanistan in 2014, there has not been a decrease in the security concerns of Afghanistan and the surrounding countries, but rather an increase.

First of all, the findings of this thesis suggest that the internal and the external causes of the chronic security problem in Afghanistan have similar effects. Afghanistan's non-centralized administrative structure, fragmented ethnic and belief structure and linguistic differences, throughout history, made the country vulnerable to attacks internally and externally. Internal struggles have weakened the state structure and weakened state structure created a security vacuum.

Also, the region in which Afghanistan is located played an important role in its problematic security environment. Afghanistan is at intersection point of three regional security complexes namely; Central Asia, South Asia, and the Persian Gulf. Each of those complexes is characterized by deep security disputes. Afghanistan, as much as its internal problems, is a victim of its surrounding. However, at this point, contrary to the claims of some scholars that Afghanistan was a buffer state among the RSCs around it, it was observed that Afghanistan is a part of a larger RSC. Afghanistan, although not fully member of the surrounding RSCs, has closely related to those RSCs. It can even be argued that this RSC, to which Afghanistan is also a part, can be called an Asian continental RSC. This RSC includes Central Asia, South Asia and the Persian Gulf RSCs. From this point of view, the security problems of Afghanistan stem from its internal structure as well as the conflicts and internal dynamics within this mega RSC. As a result, Afghanistan is not a country that no country is interested in and at the bottom of security priorities of those countries, but a country capable of influencing its environment and a wider area.

So, what is the solution to Afghanistan's security problems which not only effects itself but the regions around it, and what should be done different than what has been done since 2001. Whatever the source, Afghanistan has no chance of solving the

security problems it faces on its own. On the other hand, it was observed time and again that a super-power alone does not have the capacity to transform Afghanistan by solving its security problems. This was true for the British Empire in the 19th century as well as for the Soviet Union and the U.S. in the 20th century.

The most important step in resolving the security problems in and around Afghanistan is that the countries around Afghanistan and global super powers should stop carrying the problems between them to the Afghanistan arena and start to act together for Afghanistan. If Afghanistan is to become a self-sufficient country in the near future, if it is desired to solve its security problems, superpowers should fulfill their responsibilities and the process initiated in Afghanistan should be continued until the end, regardless of the cost. One of the main reasons for the Taliban's rebellion in Afghanistan is the military presence of Western powers in the country. However, it seems difficult for the Afghan Government to resist the Taliban oppression for a long time if these forces withdraw completely from Afghanistan. The solution to this situation is considered to be the continuation of peace talks with the Taliban by the Afghan government and the maintenance of the military presence of the Western powers in the key military areas such as air support, logistics and training.

While being aware of the naivety of all these solutions offers, it is believed that only through implementation of them, what could not be achieved through 18 years of struggle, thousands of lives lost and trillions of dollars spent on "war on terror", could be achieved.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - TURKISH SUMMARY

ABD'nin, 11 Eylül 2001'de Dünya Ticaret Merkezi ve Pentagon'a gerçekleştirilen terör saldırılarında El Kaide'yi sorumlu tutmasıyla, El Kaide'yi barındıran Taliban yönetimindeki Afganistan, bir gecede uluslararası gündemin en önemli konusu haline geldi. Taliban yönetiminin El Kaide yöneticilerini ABD'ye iade etmemesi ve örgütü topraklarında barındırmaya devam etmesiyle başlayan olaylar zinciri Ekim 2001'de ABD'nin Afganistan'a bir askeri müdahale gerçekleştirmesiyle sonuçlandı.

ABD kuvvetleri tarafından birkaç ay içinde büyük ölçüde mağlup edilen Taliban devrilerek geçici bir hükümetin iş başına gelmesi sağlandı. Bununla birlikte, başlangıçta Taliban'ın iktidardan uzaklaştırılması, El Kaide yok edilmesi ve Afgan topraklarının teröristler için güvenli bir bölge haline gelmesini önlemeyi hedefleyen ABD, kısa sürede sonra şartların da zorlamasıyla kendisini kapsamlı bir devlet inşaa projesinin içinde buldu. ABD politikasındaki bu dönüşüm, bilinçli bir tercihten ziyade ABD yönetiminin kendisini zorlayan şartlara uyum sağlaması sonucunda ortaya çıkmıştır. 1979'daki Sovyet işgalinden sonra Afganistan uzun bir iç savaşa girdi; bu süre zarfında ülkenin geçmişte gelen tüm altyapısı neredeyse tamamen tahrip oldu ve daha da önemlisi devlet kurumları işlevlerini kaybetti. Afganistan'daki söz konusu durum Taliban'ın iktidara gelmesiyle bir miktar iyileşmiş, ancak 2001'deki ABD askeri operasyonu ile Afganistan tamamen çökmüş bir devlet haline gelmiştir.

Böyle bir manzarayla karşılaşan ABD'nin Afganistan'daki öncelikli hedefi kendi kendine yetebilen bir hükümet ve güvenlik gücü oluşturulmasıydı. Bununla birlikte, zaman içinde yaşadığı ağır yenilginin etkisini atlatan Taliban, Afgan güvenlik güçlerinin tam olarak işlevsel hale gelmesine fırsat vermeden ülkede kırsal kesimden başlayarak yeniden tekrar hale gelemeye başladı. Taliban liderliğindeki hareketin,

ülkedeki Pashtun çoğunluğuna dayanan bir iç isyana dönüşmesi, Afganistan’da zaten kötü olan güvenlik durumunu daha da bozdu. Tüm bu gelişmeler ışığında ABD liderliğindeki Koalisyon 2007 yılından itibaren ülkedeki asker sayısını artırmak zorunda kaldı. Diğer yandan, askeri, siyasi ve ekonomik tüm gayretlere rağmen ABD, seçimler yoluyla Afganistan’ı batılı anlamda bir demokratik devlet haline getirme ve güvenlik ülkedeki güvenlik durumunu düzeltme çabalarında başarısız oldu. Öte yandan, ABD’nin Afganistan’a tek taraflı müdahalesi, ABD’nin ülkedeki askeri varlığı bağlamında bir meşruiyet sorunu yarattı. ABD, askeri operasyonu geniş bir uluslararası onay ile gerçekleştirmiş olmasına rağmen, zaman içinde Afganistan’ın mali ve politik yükünü omuzlarında hissetmeye başladı. Bu soruna bir çözüm olarak, Afganistan’daki askeri harekâtların sorumluluğu NATO’ya devredilerek daha fazla sayıda ülkenin Afganistan’daki askeri faaliyetin mali ve politik sorumluluğunu üstlenmesi sağlandı. Ancak ABD, aynı zamanda kendi askeri hareketlerini de yürütmeye devam ederek sürecin arkasındaki itici güç olarak kaldı. Öte yandan, NATO’nun Afganistan sahnesine girmesine paralel olarak artan asker sayısının ülkedeki güvenlik durumunu iyileşeceği ümidi kısa sürede yok oldu. Dünyadaki belki de en başarılı ve etkili askeri ittifak, bir dizi iç sorun yüzünden Afganistan’daki güvenlik sorununun bir parçası haline geldi.

Artan askeri zayıflar ve Afganistan’da olmanın mali yükü, 2005 sonrası yoğunlaşan Taliban direnişisiyle birlikte, Koalisyon’a üye devletleri, özellikle ABD’yi, Afganistan’dan çıkma için tarih belirlemeye itti. NATO güçlerinin Afganistan’dan Aralık 2014’te ayrılacağına açıklanması ve bu süreç zarfında Afganistan’daki güvenlik sorumluluğunun tedricen Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri’ne devredileceğinin açıklanması beraberinde bir dizi yeni sorunu gündeme getirmiştir. Birçok Afgan’ın ve tarafsız gözlemcinin en büyük endişesi NATO’nun çekilmesi akabinde Afganistan’daki güvenlik durumunun Afgan Hükümeti’nin çökeceği noktaya gelebileceğiydi. NATO’nun geri çekilme takvimi sona yaklaşırken, geri çekilmenin, Sovyetlerin 1989’da Afganistan’daki işgalini sona erdirerek ülkeyi terk etmesi akabinde üç yıl içerisinde Nejibullah Hükümeti’nin yıkılması benzeri bir tabloyu ortaya çıkaracağı yönünde endişeler dile getirilmeye başlandı.

Diğer yandan, Afganistan'a güvenliğin sağlanması konusunda ABD önderliğindeki uluslararası koalisyonun yanısıra Afgan güvenlik güçlerine de önemli bir görev düştüğü görülmektedir. Sovyetler Birliği'nin Afganistan'ı işgali ve işgalin sona ermesi akabinde ülkede yaşanan iç çatışma ortamı tarihi kökleri bulunan Afgan Ordusu'nun tamamen ortadan kalmasına neden olmuştur. Söz konusu dönemlerde Afgan ordusuna ait silah ve mühimmatın yanında birçok askeri tesis de tahrip olmuştur. ABD'nin 2001'deki müdahalesiyle birlikte ülkedeki güvenlik sorumluluğu ABD ve Koalisyon güçleri tarafından yürütölmeye başlanmış, ancak 2002 yılından başlayarak Afgan güvenlik güçlerinin yeniden oluşturulması amacıyla çalışmalara girişilmiştir.

Afganistan'ın güvenliği ve istikrarı, Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri'nin etkinliği ve başarısıyla yakından ilgilidir. Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri iki temel unsurdan oluşmaktadır, Afgan Ulusal Ordusu ve Afgan Ulusal Polisi. Söz konusu yapının kurulmasına Aralık 2002 tarihinde Cumhurbaşkanı Hamid Karzai tarafından imzalanan bir kararnameyle başlanmıştır. Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri'nin personel tedarik süreci ise Mayıs 2002'de başlamıştır. Ancak, 2019'un ortalarından itibaren hem Afgan Ulusal Ordusu hem de Afgan Ulusal Polisi yeniden yapılanma sürecinde ciddi sorunlar yaşamaktadır. Personel kayıpları Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri'nin karşılaştığı en büyük problemlerden biridir. Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri'nin her yıl askerlerinin neredeyse % 30'unu kaybettiği iddia edilmektedir. Söz konusu kayıplara; çatışmalarda hayatını kaybeden, ordudan ve polis güçlerinden firar eden ve dönem sonunda sözleşmesini yenilemeyen asker ve polisler dahil edilmektedir. Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri'nin yaşadığı bu yüksek kayıp oranı ordunun kalitesinde ve profesyonelliğinde kademeli bir düşüş anlamına gelmektedir.

Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri'nin karşılaştığı bir diğer önemli sorun ise eğitimidir. Ordu ve polis mensupların arasında okuma yazma oranı oldukça düşüktür. Personelin yaygın olarak okuma yazma bilmemesi birliklerin eğitim sürecini çok daha zorlaştırmaktadır. Diğer yandan, Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri'nin bünyesindeki sürdürülebilir olmayan zayıat oranları karşılaşılan bir başka engeldir. Sadece 2016 yılında, 6.700 asker ve polis çatışmalarda hayatını kaybetmiştir. Söz konusu can kaybının 2015 yılında 5.500 olduğu görülmektedir. ABD ve Koalisyon üyelerinin

abalarına raėmen, Afgan Ordusu ve Afgan Polisi hava desteėi ve ikmalı gibi lojistik sıkıntılar yařamaya devam etmektedir. Birok birim hala yetersiz silah, mhimmat ve yedek paralardan dolayı tam verimlerinde faaliyet yrtememektedir. Afgan Ulusal Gvenlik Gleri'nin karřılařtıėı bir diėer byk sorun ise, Sovyet dneminden miras kalan zayıf liderliktir. 1970'lerde ve 1980'lerde olduėu gibi, Afgan subaylarının oėu kabilelerine, dini liderlerine veya blgesel savař aėalarına baėlı olarak hareket etmektedirler. Birok subayın ve polisin, Afgan Ulusal Gvenlik Gleri'ne baėlılık kaynaėı ekonomiktir. Bu kapsamda bazı grevli asker ve polisler, kendi ıkarlarına en iyi řekilde hizmet edeceėini dřndkleri taraf lehine saf deėiřtirmektedir.

Afgan Ulusal Gvenlik Gleri'nin finansmanı ise Afgan Hkmeti'nin karřılařtıėı bir bařka byk sorundur. Afgan Ulusal Gvenlik Gleri'nin finansmanı iin her yıl milyarlarca Dolara ihtiya duyulmaktadır. Sz konusu meblaė 2002'den bu yanan bařta ABD olmak zere uluslararası kamuoyu tarafından saėlanmaktadır. Ancak sz konusu desteėin sonsuza kadar devam etmeyeceėi ařıkrdır. 2020 yılı sonrasında Afgan Ulusal Gvenlik Gleri'nin finansmanın byk lde Afgan Hkmeti tarafından karřılanması beklenmektedir. Gl bir retim ekonomisine sahip olmayan Afganistan'ın bu byklkte bir ordu ve polis gcn finanse etmesi zor grlmektedir. Bu kapsamda, Bu kapsamda, Ulusal Gvenlik Gleri'nin gelecekte de dıř mali desteėe ihtiya duyacaėı beklenmektedir.

Afganistan'daki gvenlik durumuna iliřkin Afganistan'ın devlet yapısının ve Afgan Hkmeti'nin nemli bir rol oynadıėı grlmektedir. Afganistan, tarihsel olarak, 2001'den nce ve sonra, lkenin tamamında kontrol sahibi olamayan zayıf merkezi hkmetler tarafından ynetiliyordu. zellikle kırsal blgelerde, yerel halk, merkezi hkmetler yerine yerel liderler ve savař aėaları tarafından ynetilmekteydi. 2001'den nce, Afganistan'ın ok az sayıda Batı tipi demokratik ve idari kurumun var olduėu grlmektedir. 1964 Anayasasıyla ilk kez biri alt biri de st kanat olan bir parlamento kurulmuřtur. Ancak, bu srete Afgan Parlamentosu, řah'ın gcn asla sınırlayamamıř ve denetim altına alamamıřtır. Afganistan'da son demokratik seimler 1969 yılında yapılmıř, parlamento, komnistlerin iktidarı ele geirdiėi 1978 Nisan'ında tamamen kapatılmıřtır.

1996-2001 yılları arasındaki Taliban yönetimi sırasında, Afganistan Molla Ömer liderliğindeki bir grup din adamı tarafından idare edilmiştir. Bu dönemde Afganistan’da herhangi bir parlamenter yapının olmadığı ve hükümet kurumlarının büyük ölçüde ortadan kalktığı veya işlevlerini yerine getiremedikleri görülmektedir. Taliban rejiminin 2001’de sona erdirilmesi sonrasında Birleşmiş Milletler (BM), Kuzey İttifakı ve eski Şah destekçileri de dahil olmak üzere başlıca Afgan gruplarını Aralık 2001’de Bonn’da düzenlenecek bir konferansa davet etti. Söz konusu konferans sonrasında “Bonn Anlaşması” taraflarca onaylandı. Anlaşma, 20 Aralık 2001 tarihinde BM tarafından onaylandı. Bonn Anlaşmasına göre 1964 Afgan Anayasası Afganistan’ın geçici anayasası olarak kabul edildi.

Bu tarihten sonra Afganistan’da demokratik kurum ve kuruluşlarının oluşturulması yönündeki çalışmalara hız verildiği Haziran 2002’de Acil Durum Loya Jirga’sı toplandı ve bir anayasa taslağı hazırladı. Taslak metin, 4 Ocak 2004’te Loya Jirga tarafından tartışılarak kabul edildi. Cumhurbaşkanı Karzai, Anayasa’yı 26 Ocak 2004’te onayladı.

Anayasa, bir başkanlık sistemi ve ayrıca seçilmiş bir Ulusal Parlamento öngörmekteydi. Ancak mezkur Anayasa cumhurbaşkanına geniş yetkiler vermemekteydi. Kuzey İttifakı, Peştunları güçlendireceği iddiasıyla güçlü bir cumhurbaşkanlığı sistemine itiraz ettiler ancak tüm itirazlarına rağmen Anayasa’nın ilgili maddelerini değiştiremediler. Afgan Anayasası’nın 63. maddesine göre “cumhurbaşkanı beş yıllığına” seçilmekte ve bakanları, Yargıtay üyelerini, hakimleri, Başsavcıyı, il/bölge dahil olmak üzere üst düzey yetkililerin çoğunluğunu tayin etme yetkisine sahiptir. Ancak, söz konusu atamalar Parlamento tarafından onaylanmalıdır. Cumhurbaşkanı aynı zamanda Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçlerinin “baş komutanı” sıfatını taşımaktadır. Cumhurbaşkanı ayrıca Parlamentonun onayıyla “savaş ve barış ilan etme” yetkisine sahiptir.

Anayasaya göre, Afgan Ulusal Parlamentosu iki kanattan oluşmaktadır. 250 sandalyeli “Aşağı Kanat” ve 102 sandalyeli “Yukarı Kanat” Aşağı Kanat Parlamento üyeleri ulusal seçimlerle seçilmektedir. Diğer yandan, Üst Kanat üyelerinin 34 sandalyesi Cumhurbaşkanı tarafından seçilmekte, yerel meclisler tarafından dört

yıllığına 34 sandalye ve geri kalan 34 sandalye bölge konseyleri tarafından atanmaktadır.

Tüm bu gelişmeler ışığında Afganistan'da demokratik kurumların ancak 2004 yılında Anayasa'nın onaylanmasından sonra yeniden ortaya çıkmaya başladığı söylenebilecektir. Afganistan'da devlet kurma ve demokratikleşme çabalarının önemli bir unsurunu da seçimler oluşturmaktadır. Taliban rejiminin devrilmesinden sonraki ilk seçim, Ekim 2004'te gerçekleştirilen Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimleriydi. Afganistan siyasetinin gündemindeki en son seçimler ise 2018 yılındaki Parlamento seçimleriydi. Parlamento seçimleri Ekim 2018'de Afganistan'ın 34 eyaletinin 33'ünde yapıldı. Öte yandan, 20 Nisan 2019'da yapılması planlanan Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimleri Temmuz 2019'a ertelendi. Ancak, Mart 2019 sonunda, Seçim Komisyonu seçim yasalarında yapılan son değişiklikler ve oylama sisteminin karşılaştığı sorunlar ve zorluklar nedeniyle Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimi bu kez 28 Eylül 2019'a kadar ertelemiştir.

Öte yandan, ABD askeri operasyonunun Taliban'ı devirmesi akabinde ülkede bozulan güvenlik durumu sadece Afganistan ile sınırlı kalmamış ve komşu ülkeler de dahil olmak üzere bölgedeki diğer devletler üzerinde bazı olumsuz etkiler yaratmıştır. İlk zamanlarda ABD askeri operasyonundan sonra Afganistan'da Taliban tehdidinin ortadan kalkmasını memnuniyetle karşılayan komşu ülkeler, Taliban'ın 2005 sonrasında yeniden canlanmasına paralel olarak ülkedeki güvenlik tehdidinin giderek daha fazla farkına varır hale gelmişlerdir. Bu etki sadece komşu ülkelerle sınırlı kalmamış, Afganistan'daki güvenlik durumunun bozulması daha geniş bir coğrafyada hissedilmiştir.

Afganistan'ın tüm komşularının ve bölge ülkelerinin Afganistan'ın güvenliği ve istikrarı konusunda farklı derecelerde menfaatleri bulunmaktadır. ABD'nin Taliban'a karşı 2001'deki askeri hareketından önce, komşu ve bölgesel ülkeler Afganistan'ı üzerinde durulması ve müdahale edilmesi gereken bir sorun olarak değil çevrelenmesi gereken bir problem olarak ele aldılar. Komşu ülkeler nezdinde Afganistan'daki Taliban yönetimi, radikal İslamcı grupların kendi ülkelerine sızma olasılığı dışında gündemde fazla yer almamaktaydı. Bununla birlikte, bu durum

2001'deki ABD askeri operasyonu ile köklü bir şekilde deđiřti. Bu tarihten sonra, bölgedeki küresel güçlerin artan ilgisine paralel olarak, bölgesel çatıřmalar Afganistan'a tařındı. ABD askeri müdahalesinin yanı sıra, yasadıřı kitlesel göç, narkotik ticareti ve bölgedeki radikal grupların yayılması gibi ortak kaygılar komřu ülkeler arasında giderek artan oranda paylařılır hale gelmeye bařladı.

Öte yandan, Afganistan'daki güvenlik durumunun bozulması, komřu ve bölgesel ülkelere yönelik tehdit oluřtururken, söz konusu ülkelerin kendi aralarındaki siyasi ve askeri rekabetleri Afganistan sahnesine tařınmıř ve bu ülkeler paradoksal olarak Afganistan için bir güvenlik sorunu haline gelmeye bařlamıřlardır.

Birçok uzmanın 2001'den bu yana Afganistan'la ilgili iki varsayım arasında seçim yapmak zorunda kaldıđı görölmektedir. "Tarihsel olarak Afganistan'daki güvenlik durumu, Afganistan ile komřuları ve Afganistan ile büyük güçler arasındaki mücadelenin bir sonucu olarak her zaman kötü olmuřtur." Diđer bir varsayım ise içten dıřa bir yaklařım benimsemiřtir. "Tarihsel olarak, Afganistan'daki güvenlik durumu her zaman kötüydü, bu nedenle söz konusu durum komřu ülkeleri ve büyük güçleri olumsuz. Bunun bir sonucu olarak da Afganistan sürekli iřgal edildi." Her iki varsayımın da haklı olduđu yanlar bulunmakla birlikte gerçeğin bu iki durumun aynı anda var olmasının bir sonucu olduđu görölmektedir.

Uzun tarihi boyunca Afganistan'ın, güçlü bir merkezi hükümet ve devlet kurumlarından yoksun olduđu ve söz konusu durumun ülkede genel güvenlik durumunun bozulmasına neden olan iddia edilmektedir. Ancak, bazı uzmanlar bu iddiaya karřı çıkmakta ve 1747 ile 1978 arasında nispeten güçlü bir merkezi otorite ve iřleyen bir devlet sistemi olduđunu iddia etmektedirler. Bu bağlamda, bu iddiaya yakın olan uzmanlar, Afganistan'daki güvenliğin tarihsel süreç boyunca tekrarlanan dıř müdahaleler nedeniyle bozulduđunu öne sürmektedirler. Her ne kadar bu tezin amacı bu iki önermeye cevap aramamak olmasa da, verilecek cevapların 2014 sonunda NATO'nun geri çekilmesi akabinde Afganistan ve çevresindeki güvenlik durumunu açıklamada ve anlamada kilit bir rol oynayacađı düşünölmektedir.

Mücahitler 1988'de Sovyet iřgalini bařarıyla engelledikten sonra Afganistan uluslararası gündemden düřtü ve ancak uzun bir iç savařın ardından iktidara gelen

Taliban'ın anti-demokratik uygulamaları ile manşetlerde kalabildi. Uzun bir müddet yakın komşuları için bile Afganistan'ın güvenlik riski taşımayan bir ülke olduğu iddia edildi. Bu iddiaya göre Afganistan, kötülüklerin dışarı çıkmasını önlemek için asla açılmaması gereken Pandora'nın kutusu olarak değerlendirildi.

Genel kanı, ABD'nin 2001'deki askeri müdahalesiyle birlikte Pandora'nın kutusunun sonuna kadar açıldığı yönündedir. Taliban kontrolü altında Afganistan'ın 2001'e kadar göreceli olarak güvenli bir dönem geçirdiği gözlenmiştir. Ülkenin kuzey kesimlerinde sınırlı etkisi olan Kuzey İttifakını görmezden gelinirse, 1996-2001 yılları arasında Taliban Afganistan'ı tek başına yönetmiş, ülke içerisinde kendine özgü ve göreceli bir güvenlik ortamı oluşturmuştur. Tabii ki bu söylem, Taliban'ın kadınlar, azınlıklar, farklı etnik ve dini gruplara yönelik şiddet içeren, antidemokratik hatta çoğu zaman şiddete varan uygulamalarının olumlandığı anlamına gelmemektedir. Ancak, Taliban yönetimi altında, Afganistan içerde ve dışarda uluslararası ilişkiler disiplindeki yaygın "güvenlik" tanımına yakın bir dönem yaşamıştır.

Bazı uzmanlar tarafından, ABD'nin 2001'deki askeri müdahalesi öncesinde, komşu ülkeler ve diğer bölgesel ülkelerin, Afganistan ve Afganistan'dan kaynaklanan önemli bir tehdit algısına sahip olmadıkları ve Afganistan'ın söz konusu ülkelerin güvenlik gündeminde sınırlı ölçüde yer aldığı iddia edilmektedir. Bu ülkeler için Afganistan'dan kaynaklanan en önemli tehditler; İslami grupların ülkelere sızması, uyuşturucu, silah, insan ticareti ve yasadışı göç olduğu öne sürülmektedir. Bölgesel ülkeler için bu tehditler 2001'den sonra artarak devam etmiştir. Bununla birlikte, söz konusu tehditlere ciddi stratejik tehditler de eklenmiştir. ABD'nin "teröre karşı savaş" bahanesiyle bölgeye askeri olarak giriş yapması birçok ülkeyi rahatsız etmiş ve daha önce ihmal ettikleri Afganistan'a ilişkin daha aktif bir pozisyon olmalarını sağlamıştır. Bu bağlamda, Taliban'ı kendi Şîî ideolojisine karşı en büyük düşman olarak gören İran, 2001 sonrasında Büyük Şeytan'ı bir anda kapısında buldu. Rusya, Sovyetler sonrası dönemde ABD'yi Orta Asya'dan uzak tutmayı başarmıştı, ancak 2001'den sonra Rusya, bu ülkelere El Kaide ve Taliban'la savaşması amacıyla ABD'ye askeri üsler kurmasına izin vermeleri yönünde gönülsüz de olsa destek vermiştir. Sovyet sonrası dönemde ekonomik ilerlemeye odaklanan ve Batı ile Rusya

arasında orta yol izlemeye çalışan Orta Asya cumhuriyetleri 2001 sonrasında kendileri çapraz ateşin ortasında bulmuşlardır. Söz konusu Orta Asya cumhuriyetleri bir yandan üzerlerinde, ABD'nin terörle savaşını desteklemeleri için Batı'nın baskısını hissetmiş, bir yandan da Batının bölgede artan askeri varlığı nedeniyle Rusya'yı kızdırmamaya çalışmışlardır. Öte yandan, Pakistan, Taliban ve El Kaide'ye karşı mücadelesinde baş düşmanı olan Hindistan'ın ABD için önemli bir müttefik haline geldiğini görmek zorunda kalmıştır. Bölgedeki sessiz oyuncu Çin'in ABD'nin bölgeye sadece askeri anlamda girmekle yetinmeyip, Çin'in ekonomik çıkarları önünde de bir engel olmaya başladığını fark etmiştir.

Tüm bu ülkelerin ABD ve Batılı ülkelerin askeri varlığına sessiz kalmalarının, hatta zaman zaman destek vermelerinin tek nedeni Taliban varlığıdır. ABD operasyonu ile yenilen ama tamamen yok edilemeyen Taliban'ın çevre ve bölge ülkeleri 2001 öncesine oranla daha ciddi bir tehdit oluşturacağı düşünülmektedir. Bölge ve çevre ülkeler ayrıca Afganistan'daki savaşın kendi ülkelerine de yayılmasından endişe ediyorlardı. Bu bağlamda, ABD askeri operasyonunun ve ardından gelen 18 yıllık mücadelenin Taliban ve El Kaide'nin yok edilmesinde başarılı olduğunu iddia etmek mümkün müdür? Tezin bu soruya cevabı hayır olacaktır. ABD askeri hareketinin ilk yılları hariç, Taliban Afganistan'da giderek daha fazla alan kazanmaktadır. Her ne kadar bu durum ABD askeri ve politik uzmanlar tarafından çekingen bir şekilde ifade edilse de, ABD ve Afgan Hükümeti'nin Taliban'a karşı savaşı kazanmaktan çok uzak oldukları artık yaygın bir inanış haline gelmiş durumdadır. Taliban'la mücadeleyle ilişkin tüm sayısal veriler bu kanıyı destekler niteliktedir. Taliban'ın Afganistan'da kontrol ettiği alan gün geçtikçe artmış ve "ortada" olarak tanımlanan bölgelerde Taliban lehine önemli artışlar görülmüştür. Her ne kadar bilinçli bir seçim olsa da ABD liderliğindeki Batılı güçlerin nüfusun yoğun olduğu şehir merkezlerini kontrol altına alma yönündeki stratejisi Afganistan'ın kırsal kesimini Taliban'ın insafına bırakmıştır.

Öte yandan, Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri'nin şehir merkezlerini kontrol etme çabalarında yetersiz kaldıkları, son dönemde Taliban'ın söz konusu şehir merkezlerine yönelik saldırılarını artırdığı görülmüştür. Taliban, NATO'nun Afganistan'dan çekildiği 2014 sonundan bu yana birçok büyük şehirde, özellikle

Kabil’de ve yüzlerce insanın hayatını kaybettiği büyük saldırılar gerçekleştirmiştir. Resmi rakamlar 2014 sonrasında sivil can kayıplarında önemli bir artış olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bazı ABD’li askeri uzmanlar, 2014 sonrası Koalisyon güçlerinin askeri kayıplarındaki çarpıcı düşüşü Afganistan’daki güvenlik durumunun iyileştirilmesinin bir kanıtı olarak göstermektedirler. Ancak bu durumun ardında, Batılı güçlerin sahadaki asker sayılarını azaltmaları ve Afganistan’da kalan askerlerin büyük çoğunluğunun eğitim, danışmanlık ve hava desteği gibi geri plan destek faaliyetlerinde görev almaları yatmaktadır.

Öte yandan, 2014’ten sonra Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri’nin performansı yakın gelecek için ümit verici olmaktan uzaktır. ABD müdahalesinden sonra yeniden yapılandırılan Afgan güvenlik güçleri, 13 yıl boyunca harcanan tüm çabalar ve sağlanan fonlara rağmen istenen seviyeye getirilememiştir. Afgan Güvenlik Güçleri’nin ülke genelindeki güvenlik sorumluluğunu hakkıyla üstlenebileceğine ilişkin uluslararası ve Afgan kamuoyunda genel bir şüphe bulunmaktadır. 2001’den bu yana önemli ilerlemeler kaydetmesine rağmen, Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri eğitim, lojistik, stratejik planlama ve hava desteği gibi alanlarda halen Batılı güçlerin desteğine ihtiyaç duymaktadır. Diğer yandan Afgan Hükümeti halen Taliban’a karşı büyük ölçekli askeri operasyonları kendi başına gerçekleştirmekten uzaktır. Sonuç olarak, 2014’te NATO’nun Afganistan’dan çekilmesinden bu yana Afganistan’ın ve çevresindeki ülkelerin güvenlik durumları ve güvenlik algılarında bir düşüş olmamış, aksine söz konusu alanda genel bir bozulma gözlenmiştir.

Her şeyden önce, bu tezin bulguları Afganistan’daki kronik güvenlik sorununun iç ve dış nedenlerinin benzer etkilere sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Afganistan’ın merkezileşmemiş idari yapısı, bölünmüş etnik ve inanç yapısı ve dilsel farklılıkları tarih boyunca ülkeyi iç ve dış saldırılara açık hale getirmiştir. İç mücadeleler devlet yapısını zayıflatmış ve zayıf devlet yapısı da ülkede bir güvenlik boşluğu yaratmıştır.

Ayrıca, Afganistan’ın bulunduğu bölge, ülkenin problemleri güvenlik durumu üzerinde önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Afganistan, üç bölgesel güvenlik yapısının kesişme noktasında yer almaktadır. Bu bölgesel güvenlik yapıları; Orta Asya, Güney Asya ve Basra Körfezi olarak sıralanabilir. Bu bölgesel güvenlik yapılarının her biri,

bünyelerindeki derin güvenlik anlaşmazlıkları ile karakterize edilmektedirler. Bu bağlamda Afganistan güvenlik alanında, yapısal sorunları kadar çevresinin de kurbanıdır. Ancak, bu noktada, bazı akademisyenler Afganistan'ın etrafındaki bölgesel güvenlik yapılarının arasında tampon bir ülke olarak yer aldığını iddia etmektedirler. Ancak bu iddianın aksine Afganistan'ın daha büyük bir bölgesel güvenlik yapılarının parçası olduğu görülmüştür. Afganistan, etrafındaki bölgesel güvenlik yapılarının tam anlamıyla parçası olmasa da, bu bölgesel güvenlik yapılarıyla sıkı bağlarla bağlıdır. Afganistan'ın da bir parçası olduğu bu bölgesel güvenlik yapısını Asya kıtasal bölgesel güvenlik yapısı olarak da adlandırmak mümkündür. Bu mega güvenlik yapısı, Orta Asya, Güney Asya ve Basra Körfezi bölgesel güvenlik yapılarını ihtiva etmektedir.

Bu açıdan yaklaşıldığında Afganistan'ın güvenlik sorunları, hem iç yapıdan ve hem de bu mega bölgesel güvenlik yapısının içindeki çatışmalar ve iç dinamiklerinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Afganistan, bu ülkelerin güvenlik öncelikleri arasında alt sıralarda yer alan bir ülke değil, birçok bölgesel güvenlik yapısının kesişim noktasında bulunan, sadece kendi bulunduğu bölgeyi değil daha geniş bir alanı etkileyebilecek önemli bir ülkedir. Öte yandan, kaynağı her ne olursa olsun, Afganistan'ın, karşılaştığı güvenlik sorunlarını kendi başına çözme şansının olmadığı görülmektedir. Öte yandan, tek başına bir süper gücün de ülkenin güvenlik sorunlarını çözerek Afganistan'ı dönüştürme kapasitesine sahip olmadığı tekrar tekrar görülmüştür. Bu, 19. yüzyıldaki İngiliz İmparatorluğu için ve 20. yüzyıldaki Sovyetler Birliği ve ABD için aynıdır. Afganistan ve çevresindeki güvenlik sorunlarının çözümündeki en önemli adım, küresel süper güçler ve Afganistan'a komşu bölgesel ülkelerin aralarındaki sorunları Afganistan sahasına taşımayı bırakmaları ve Afganistan için birlikte hareket etmeye başlamalarıdır. Yakın gelecekte Afganistan'ın güvenlik başta olmak üzere her alanda kendi kendine yetecek bir ülke olması isteniyorsa, süper güçler ve bölgesel ülkeler sorumluluklarını yerine getirmeli ve Afganistan'da başlatılan süreç maliyeti ne olursa olsun devam ettirilmelidir.

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