

US APPROACH TOWARDS TALIBAN

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirement
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

SHANTHIE MARIET D'SOUZA



American Studies Division
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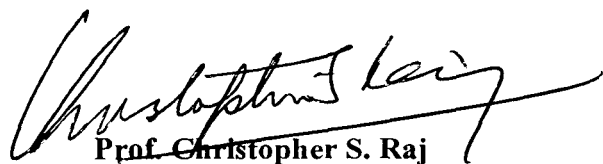
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NEW DELHI-110067

Date July 20, 2001

CERTIFICATE

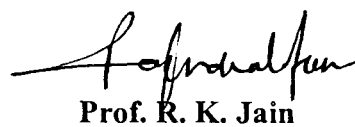
This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**US Approach Towards Taliban**” submitted by **Shanthie Mariet D’Souza** in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is his original work. This has not been published or submitted to any other university for any other purpose.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.



Prof. Christopher S. Raj

(Supervisor)



Prof. R. K. Jain

(Chairperson)

My Parents

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July 20, 2001



Shanthie Mariet D'Souza

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Preface

The Taliban, especially after their capture of a significant portion of Afghanistan has emerged as a force to be reckoned with. Not necessarily known for their virtues, the Taliban has also emerged as a significant area of research for scholars both in the West and in the East. To the world as a whole, the Taliban has posed a multiplicity of images: the torchbearer of Islamic fundamentalism, the supply house of transnational terrorism, a violator of women rights, a generator of lethal narcotics, the initiator of a large-scale refugee movement so on and so forth. Thus, these characteristics have also emerged as different fields of probe and research, which is evident in the surfeit of books and research documents. Afghanistan with the Taliban, at its helm must have been the briefest phenomenon to have induced such a vastness in pedantic deliberations.

In this context, another piece of research on Taliban runs the danger of being considered as a duplication effort, a reproduction of the oft-repeated developments and analysis. The simple question that's bound to confront every reader is what's new in this? With this drawback and challenge, this work attempts to bring out a new focus into the already dissected phenomenon. It seeks to analyze the American approach towards the Taliban. The choice of the word 'approach' in contrast to 'policy' is intentional. It falls short of the narration of the chronological developments and on the contrary, tries to look for the gray areas in American foreign policy, which might have contributed as a force multiplier for the Taliban. It's neither a propagandistic eulogy of the American ventures, nor a flag bearer of the Islamic denigration of the Western values. It attempts a middle yet an uncompromising path. After all this is what research is, seeking for and arriving at truth, nothing but whole truth.

The first chapter builds up the events in Afghanistan till the arrival of the Taliban as a force to reckon with. It deals with the evolution of US-Afghan relations since the time of king Amanullah. It divides the whole gamut of relations into various parts beginning with 1946. It touches upon the significant developments in Afghan politics and analyses the corresponding American reaction to it. What comes out in the end that Afghanistan for the United States was nothing but another playground in the height of the Cold War. American interest in the region was directly proportional to the concern Soviets showed towards the country. The chapter introduces the pre-Afghan politics to the readers and creates a benchmark as regard to the future American policy towards the region.

The second chapter is all about the origin of the phenomenon called the Taliban. There are a number of theories, emanating from the pro-Western and pro-Taliban sources, regarding the underpinning nature of the Taliban. While the chapter attempts to introduce all the schools of thought, it's primary emphasis lies on the conspiracy mechanism that was responsible for the growth of the Taliban. It's humble origin from the religious madrassas would have gone unnoticed had Afghanistan not be converted into another battle zone of Cold War politics. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and its sister concern the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan played no less significant roles in converting the religious scholars into Islamic zealots with extremely myopic visions of life. Frankenstein's monsters, as they were taught to be, it was but natural that their trainers had to bear the brunt in course of time.

The third chapter is titled the 'US policy towards the Taliban'. As mentioned earlier, the term 'policy' is a narrower version of the expression 'approach'. Thus, it deals

with the specifics of US foreign policies with regard to certain issues and objectives. With a brief analysis of the complexities of the foreign policy mechanism in the United States, the chapter divides its various objectives into two separate categories: Vital and Secondary interests. The vital interests' category includes the lucrative oil reserves in the region, controlling of the growing menace of narco-terrorism and checkmating the new hub of transnational terrorism headed by Osama Bin Laden. In the secondary interests category, American policy makers seek to address the issues of violation of women rights, the criminalized economy, eradicating poppy cultivation, retrieval of U.S. Stinger missiles and addressing the refugee migration problem. The chapter also attempts to formulate policy alternatives for the United States administration

Afghanistan's plight today had been entirely different in a different set of geographical location. Surrounded by nations with conflicting national interests has converted the nation into a favourite hunting ground for its regional powers. The final chapter analyses the roles and the strategic interests of neighbouring powers such as the Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, India, China and the Central Asian Republics in the region. While some of these nations had been the victims of the degenerating fall out of the Taliban movement, most of them have joined hands with the United States to deal with the situation.

Chapter-1
Introduction: Evolution of U.S.-Afghan Relations

How can a small power like Afghanistan which is like a goat between these lions (Britain and Tsarist Russia) or a grain of wheat between two strong millstones of the grinding mill, stand in the midway of the stones without being ground to dust¹.

-Amir Abdal-Rahman Khan

The history of early US-Afghan relations is the story of a continuous Afghan effort to convince a reluctant American government that it was in its national interest to be represented in Kabul. The beginnings of US-Afghan relations can be traced back to the early 1920s when King Amanullah (1919-29), having sought Afghanistan's independence from the British by the treaty of August 8, 1919, sought to establish diplomatic relations with the United States.² While the Soviet Union was the first country to grant formal recognition to Afghanistan on February 28, 1921, it was only on August 21, 1934, President Roosevelt accorded recognition to King Zahir Shah's (1933-1973) regime.³ This facilitated the conclusion of a provisional agreement on March 26, 1936 in Paris regarding diplomatic representation between the United States and Afghanistan.⁴ However, it was not until June 6, 1942 that President Roosevelt gave consent to the establishment of a permanent American legation.

The Second World War brought about significant changes in the international scenario. While Afghanistan under King Zahir Shah's royal decree of September 6,

¹ Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, (Princeton: 1973), p.415.

² In July 1921, an Afghan mission under the leadership of Mohammad Wali Khan met President Harding with a letter from King Amanullah seeking diplomatic relations. But President Harding considering Afghanistan to be in the Anglo-Soviet influence gave a non-committal reply. For details refer to Ludwig Adamec, *Afghanistan Foreign Affairs to the Mid-twentieth Century* (Tuscon: 1974), pp.234-5.

³ In 1935, W H Hornibrook, who headed the American legation in Kabul came to arrange for accreditation of American diplomats in India as representatives in Afghanistan. See Ram Rahul, *Afghanistan, the USSR and the USA*, (New Delhi: 1994), p.10.

⁴ Though Afghanistan and the US never concluded a political treaty, economic relations were strengthened when in 1937 the Afghan government granted its first concession to a US oil

1939 maintained strict neutrality, the Afghan ruling elite realised that Afghanistan's position during the war had remained same as during the Great Game demanding the same kind of a policy of *bi-tarafi* as required of a traditional buffer.⁵ In the period between the two World Wars, the Afghan rulers had encouraged Germany's involvement in Afghanistan as they had envisioned " a distinct political role as a third power in the balancing effort"⁶ of the Great Game between the expansionist powers of Great Britain and Russia. Following Germany's dismemberment in the Second World War, the United States emerged the only alternative for the Afghan rulers.

Cold War in Afghanistan:

After the Second World War, Afghanistan's foreign policy continued to be dominated by geopolitical considerations. In the north, Afghanistan came to share a common border with a country that was feared to have substituted Czarist policy of expansion for a policy of 'political expansion or subversion'⁷. Thus, the Afghan ruling elite looked towards the Americans to play a balancing role to counter pressures from the north. In 1947, the British withdrawal from the Indian sub-continent further increased the need for American presence in the region to fill in the power vacuum. United States gradually emerged as the most important power in post war Afghanistan.

However, in the post World War II era, the United States to a much more limited extent, replaced the British as the major international force balancing the southern side of the geopolitical equation in opposition to the Soviet Union. The

company, Inland Exploration. See Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization: 1880-1946*, (Stanford: 1969), p.381.

⁵ For details of Great Game, see Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, (Durham: 1983), p.9. Also see John C Griffiths, *Afghanistan: Key to a Continent*, (London: 1981). The term *bi-tarafi* is a Persian word meaning 'without sides' or 'equal sides'. For details see Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan Under Soviet Domination, 1964-83*, (London: 1984), p.47.

⁶ For details of the special relationship between Afghanistan and Germany, see Adamec, n.2, pp.213-60.

British had always been aware of the importance of Afghanistan as the “keystone in the defence of the imperial position in the Indian subcontinent and the Persian Gulf.”⁸

In contrast, even at the height of the Cold War, the United States never considered Afghanistan to be within its politico-strategic definition of the ‘Free World’. The Soviets, on the other hand had drawn exactly opposite conclusions with regard to Afghanistan’s geopolitical significance in the region and therefore took active interest in the political affairs of the country.

1946-1953: Warming up of US-Afghan Relations

During Shah Mahmud’s premiership (1946-53) expansion of foreign ties dominated the political agenda. The American legation established in 1942 was upgraded to the status of an embassy on June 5, 1948. Afghanistan also set up an embassy in the United States. Thus, the groundwork being laid for closer relationship between the two countries, led to considerable American influence on various sectors of Afghan life. In March 1946, an irrigation project on Helmand river was started with the assistance of Morrison-Knudsen construction Firm from Idaho, Boise.⁹ By 1949, the US aid atmosphere was beginning to change and under Truman administration’s ‘Point-4 programme’ the United States on June 30, 1953 concluded with Afghanistan an agreement on technical assistance. In spite of increasing economic cooperation, closer political ties were not possible. This was mainly due to United States evolving relations with Pakistan in the Cold War atmosphere.

However, coupled with the United States policy makers’ view of strategic insignificance of Afghanistan, the hostile relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan,

⁷ ibid., p.263.

⁸ Ralph H. Magnus & Eden Naby, eds., *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx and Mujahid*, (New Delhi: 1998), p.59.

⁹ However, by 1953, the Helmand project ended up becoming a white elephant swallowing huge finances and resulting in misgivings between the two governments. Marvin Brant,

especially on the 'Pushtunistan issue'¹⁰ impeded its closer relationship with the United States. On the other hand, it led to cementing of relationship between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. As Pakistan closed its borders and halted Afghan goods passing through its Karachi port, causing colossal economic losses to Landlocked Afghanistan, Soviet Union came to the rescue of Afghanistan by providing a duty-free transit route. From then on Soviet Union started aiding Afghanistan vis-à-vis Pakistan on the Pushtun cause. For weapons as for economic aid, Afghanistan first approached the United States. In 1944 and later in 1948, Premier Shah Mahmud's request for military aid was turned down by the Truman administration.¹¹ It's South Asian specialist were engrossed with India and Pakistan in the wake of British withdrawal from the region to worry about a small and unimportant country like Afghanistan. Thus the perceptions of the Great Game seemed to be forgotten.

In the 1950s, at the height of the Cold War, the Americans were more interested in a northern tier alliance in the Middle East to prevent a repetition of 1950 Korean episode. It was difficult to get further north in the northern tier, as Afghanistan was next to the Soviet Union and on terms of hostility with Pakistan. Thus, even before Pakistan became a formal ally of the United States by signing the Mutual Security Agreement of 1954, the American military experts had reached the conclusion that "Afghanistan was too distant to be defensible by US action,"¹² should the Soviets repeat the Korean type aggression in the region.

"Recent Economic Developments" in Louis Dupree and Linette Albert, eds., *Afghanistan in the 1970s*, (New York: 1974), p.94.

¹⁰ For further details on 'Pushtunistan issue' see Fraser W Tytler, *Afghanistan: A Study*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.306-10. Also see George Grassmuck and Ludwig Adamec, *Afghanistan: Some new Approaches*, (Ann Arbor, 1969), p.277.

¹¹ Leon B Poullada, "The Failure of American Diplomacy in Afghanistan", *World Affairs* (London), vol.145, Winter 1982-83, p.233.

¹² In 1953, a study for the US Defense Department's Joint Chief of Staff stated, "Afghanistan is of little or no strategic importance to the United States...Its geographic location ...Soviet

for arms aid.¹⁵ Soviet Union, under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev was too willing to comply as it wished to see Afghanistan remain outside the American sponsored military alliances.

During the Cold War period Afghanistan played the role of a buffer between the USSR and the US sponsored Baghdad pact (later CENTO) countries. In a way, the disinterest of the American administration to promote an ally in Afghanistan pushed the latter to the Soviet camp. During Khrushchev and Bulganin's visit to Afghanistan in December 1955, a loan of \$100 million was provided at two- percent interest, the non-aggression and neutrality treaty was renewed and support for the pushtun cause was reaffirmed.¹⁶ Contacts grew rapidly after that and co-operation in every field expanded. The most significant military agreement¹⁷ to be signed between Afghanistan, Soviet Union and its COMECON (Economic Association for Communist Countries) allies in 1956 had a profound impact on the nature of relationship between the two countries in the years to come by.

However, in the post-1955 period, the increased Soviet involvement in Afghanistan started to be viewed with concern by Americans, prominently by the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. After 1956 the regular economic support to Afghanistan started assuming political overtones. Five months after the Soviet arms deal was made, the National Security Council found that, the "capability of the US to shape events in South Asia is severely limited and therefore, recommended to

¹⁵ Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two Party Communism: Parcham and Khalq*, (California: 1983), p.12.

¹⁶ Khrushchev explained the Soviet thinking at that time in his memoirs " America was courting Afghanistan ... The capital we have invested in Afghanistan ...we have one Afghan friendship and it has not fallen into American trap". Quoted in *The Truth About Afghanistan: Documents, Facts, Eyewitness Reports*, (Moscow: 1981),p.31.

¹⁷ L.B.Poullada points out that military aid to Afghanistan was secretly struck during Khrushchev's visit in 1955. See L.B.Poullada, *The Kingdom of Afghanistan and the United States : 1828-1973*, (London: 1995) p. 189. The large amount of military aid (\$600 million) and training provided to the Afghan soldiers by the Soviets played a crucial role during the leftist coup in 1978. Anwar, n.14, p.36.

‘encourage Afghanistan to minimize its reliance upon the Communist block for military training and equipment and to look to the US and other Free World sources for military training and assistance.’¹⁸ The State department designated Afghanistan as an ‘emergency action area’ where vital US interest needs to be protected and it began, in 1959, devising ways to compete with the Soviet Union.¹⁹ It was followed by an exchange of visits by both American and Afghanistan leadership and conclusion of several bilateral treaties for cooperation. American engagement in Afghanistan had entered a new phase.

Though many observers feared that Daoud was leading the country into Soviet vassalage, others perceived his action to be ‘high risk gamble’²⁰, to improve his country’s lot by playing off the Super Powers against each other, at the same time maintaining the fragile non-alignment policy. One analyst termed Afghanistan as an ‘economic Korea’²¹ where the competition between the East and the West benefited the local population without endangering the independence of the country. Hardly had agreements with the USSR been concluded in early 1956, the United States in a turnaround of its Afghan policy, also started providing aid to the country to make its presence felt.²²

¹⁸ The United States began to offer places in US military school to Afghans as part of low budget programme for neutral countries. However, by 1978, only twenty Afghans were enrolled in US military school as compared to 3725 Afghans trained in the Soviet Union. Bradsher, n.5, pp.28-9.

¹⁹ A secret study of the NSC concluded that “vital United States objectives were best served if Afghanistan remains neutral and not over-committed to the Soviet block”. *ibid*, p.29.

²⁰ The terminology was used by A.S. Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan: An Insider’s Account*, (Washington D.C.:1988), p.194.

²¹ Dupree, n.1, p.514.

²² Before that time, i.e. 1956 the Afghans had secured individual commercial loans from the West, but these were not connected with the overall US policy. Official US policy had been on a very small scale. Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan, The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*, (Stanford: 1985), p.38. Upto 1979, when the aid was halted, the US had provided \$532.87 million aid to Afghanistan. Of this, \$378.17 million was in outright grants or gifts and the remaining \$154.7 million was in loans on concessionary terms. Bradsher, n.5, p.18. Barnett R.Rubin, *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State*, (London: 1995), p.21-2.

United States projects included road building, further aid for Helmand Valley and long-term education aid. In addition, the United States donated one hundred thousand tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan in the period 1956-59, under the terms of PL-480 II, in comparison with the earlier 1952-54 period, when it had sold just twenty thousand tonnes. Although the United States did not try to match the volume of Soviet assistance, the impact of US projects in Afghanistan was considerable. Thus, in the late 1950's and early 1960's, Afghanistan became "a peaceful battleground of the Cold War with the Soviets and the American rivalry being based on the value of their respective foreign aid programme."²³

While economic relations between Afghanistan and the US strengthened, US political commitment towards Afghan's Pushtun cause still floundered. The 'Pakistan factor' played a major role behind the deliberate ambiguous US commitment towards Afghanistan. Further in 1956, US backed SEATO endorsed Pakistan's position for the Pushtun cause. In early 1957, the visit of Special Presidential Assistant James P. Richards to Kabul, resulted in a communiqué that confirmed US support to Afghanistan's independence, but did not say whether or not Afghanistan was protected by the 'Eisenhower doctrine'²⁴. On September 6, 1961, diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan were snapped, due to differences in Pushtun issue and subsequent border closure, resulting in economic hardship to the Afghans. The Soviets yet again came to their rescue, further reorienting the Afghan economy to the north.²⁵ Premier Daoud's brother, Foreign Minister Naim Khan appealed to President J.F. Kennedy, on September 27, 1962 to help resolve the political impasse by

²³ During the Cold War peaceful competition brought foreign aid from Western sources, the US being the largest donor For further details on competitive aid see Peter G. Franck, *Afghanistan Between East and West*, (Washington D.C.1960),p.67. Richard S. Newell, *The Struggle for Afghanistan*, (London: 1981), pp. 128-9.

developing an alternate overland trade route through Iran. The American President, instead, told him “to make adjustments in its policy to resolve its problems with Pakistan, because no country could maintain its independence by complete dependence on the Soviet Union.”²⁶ But Daoud was too rigid on the Pushtun stance to concede. Following a consensus in the royal family that he should step down, he did so in 1963.

1963-1973: Constitutional Liberal Experiment

During the constitutional liberal period, also known as ‘*democracy-i-naw*’²⁷ (New Democracy), King Zahir Shah by the 1964 constitution provided for the first time a representative government with a bicameral parliament.²⁸

During this period Zahir Shah and his five Prime Ministers down played the Pushtunian card and sought improving relations with the West to ward off excessive Soviet dependence. During the visit of king Zahir Shah in September 1963 to the United States, the American President assured him of the ‘continuing US desire to cooperate in economic and technical fields.’²⁹ However, US policy objectives as approved in 1966 was to preserve Afghan independence to prevent Soviet influence from becoming dominant in Afghanistan and to improve ties between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.

On July 19, 1967 the US and Afghanistan signed an agreement for the sales of agricultural commodities under the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance

²⁴ Eisenhower doctrine of January 1957 did not specify whether Afghanistan would enjoy US armed support in the event of a Soviet invasion. Dupree, n.1, 1973, p.511, Mohammad Khalid Ma’arouf, *Afghanistan and Super Powers*, (New Delhi: 1990), p.58.

²⁵ A. Fletcher, *Afghanistan: The Highway of Conquest*, (Ithaca: 1966). pp.275-6.

²⁶ For reasons of Daoud’s downfall, see J. N. Dixit, *Afghan Diary: Zahir Shah to Taliban*, (New Delhi: 2000), pp.7-9.

²⁷ Anthony Hyman, n.5, p.53.

²⁸ This period also saw the mushrooming of various political parties, *Hizbi Demokratiki Khalqi Afghanistan* (The People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan), *Shula-e-Jawid* (Eternal Flame), *Eikhwan-ul-Muslimin* (Islamic Brotherhood) to name few. For further details see Hafizullah Emadi, *State, Revolution and Super Powers in Afghanistan* (New York: 1990). pp.43-4.

the United States, Afghanistan at present has limited direct interest; it is not an important trading partner; it is not an access route for the US trade with others; there are no treaty ties or defence commitments and Afghanistan does not provide US with significant defence, intelligence or scientific facilities. Bradsher, n.5, pp.51-2.

perceive any combination of circumstances which would make such crude, overt, highly visible action essential or desirable to Moscow.”³¹

In the late 1960s, the détente between the US and the USSR weakened the US competitive aid giving with the Soviets in remote areas like Afghanistan. By the early 1970s, the overall extent of US economic aid declined and became far more selective³². Afghanistan was no longer a priority of the United States' foreign policy when compared to US commitments in Southeast Asia. However, ever since the split of PDPA in 1967 into two factions—the *Parcham* and the *Khalq* and the subsequent power struggle between and within the factions followed by Shafiq's government's crackdown on leftist dissidents, their strength had been waning³³. In contrast, the Western influence, despite fall off in US government aid, appeared to be growing³⁴. Thus, Afghanistan and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s maintained a cordial relationship till the time Daoud usurped the monarchy by a coup in 1973.

1973-1978: Daoud's Republican Era

The year 1973 was a landmark in Afghan history not only because of Daoud's comeback through a bloodless coup on July 17, 1973, but also because of a complete reversal of Daoud's foreign policy. The Nixon Doctrine of 1969, which encouraged nations reduce their security dependence on the US by assuming more responsibility for their own regional problems, had led the Shah of Iran to seduce Afghanistan away from its Soviet influenced neutrality to its own anti-Communist network. Daoud, on his part, approached countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait for economic aid. By 1976, Daoud, to get out of the Soviet tilt, started ignoring the pro-Soviet

³¹ Ibid., pp.52-60.

³² Louis Dupree and Albert Linette, n.9, p.80.

³³ For the formation of the PDPA in 1965 and its split in 1967 see Anthony Arnold, n.15, pp.23-36 and Hasan Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir Abdal-Rahman Khan- 1980-1901*, (Austin: 1979), p.12.

faction of the PDPA, “embarked on the delicate task of trying to retrieve his previous errors by disengaging Afghanistan from the smothering Soviet embrace”³⁵ by diversifying relations with Islamic and other non-aligned countries.

In another major policy shift, Daoud backed away from his earlier quarter century support for the Pushtun cause and took steps to improve his ties with Pakistan. This rapprochement with Pakistan was a result of Shah of Iran and United States’ mediation efforts.³⁶ Daoud visited Pakistan and both Bhutto and his successor Zia-ul-Haq paid visits to Kabul. During Daoud’s last visit to Pakistan on March 5, 1978 both the leaders agreed to resolve the Pashtun issue.

On July 22, 1973, the US recognised the Daoud regime. Due to the mediation of the visiting Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, on November 1, 1974, the Pushtun issue was amicably resolved. In order to thwart Soviet influence and encourage Afghanistan to distance herself from the Soviet bloc, Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., former US ambassador to Afghanistan advised the Department of State that US must continue to demonstrate “friendly and tangible interest through a visible American presence in this country”³⁷. In order to exert its influence, the US continued its development projects and offered financial aid to Afghanistan’s modernisation programme. As a result of the US economic assistance, the relations between the two countries improved. According to the US administration:

³⁴ Though in the late 1960’s US aid to Afghanistan tailed off, the American influence was felt through international agencies like World Bank, IMF and so on. See Newell, n.23, p.50.

³⁵ Leon B. Poullada, “The Failure of American Diplomacy in Afghanistan”, *World Affairs* (London), vol.145, Winter 1982-83, p.245. For Daoud’s relations with Iran see Andre Brigot, and Oliver Roy, *The War in Afghanistan: An Account and Analysis of the Country, its People, Soviet Intervention and the Resistance*, (New York: 1988).pp.35-6.

³⁶ For the Shah’s role in mediation see Tahir Amin, *Afghanistan Crisis: Implications and Options for Muslim World, Iran and Pakistan* (Islamabad: 1987), p.71. For the US role, see Eden Naby, “The Ethnic Factor in Soviet-Afghan Relations”, *Asian Survey* (California), vol.20, no.3, March 1980, pp.243-4. Also see A.S.Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan: An Insider’s Account*, (Washington D.C.: 1988), p.147.

³⁷ Quoted in Emadi, n.28, p.76.

“US-Afghan relations during 1977 were excellent...Daoud accepted an invitation to make a state visit to the US in the summer of 1978...Funding for the US military training programme for Afghan officers was doubled in an effort to offset ...albeit to a modest degree...the massive Soviet predominance in the area of foreign support for the Afghan armed forces.”³⁸ The new Carter administration expected to make gesture of increasing the dwindling level of aid. Behind this lay confidence in Washington that, “Afghanistan would remain the quiet political backwater that it had traditionally been.”³⁹

On the domestic front Daoud repressed the Islamic movement, which had gained influence from 1965 in Kabul University. The prominent leaders like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani and others fled to Pakistan from where they started aiding insurrections in Afghanistan with active Pakistani collaboration.⁴⁰

During the initial years of Daoud’s second term, Daoud maintained a pro-Soviet orientation in his foreign policy and even endorsed Breznev’s Asian Collective Security Arrangement of 1969.⁴¹ But when the Soviets started peddling the Pushtun cause since the mid-1960s to win Pakistan over to its side, while competing with the Chinese and American influence, Daoud felt betrayed. Thereafter, he turned towards the Muslim and Western countries, more in view of the economic development of the country. Coinciding with this, Daoud began reducing the leftist influence in the government, fearing their political influence in the army, more specifically the Parcham faction of the PDPA, with whose help he had come to power.

³⁸ ibid.

³⁹ Bradsher,n.5, p.66.

⁴⁰ For the origin of this movement see Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, (London: 1986) and Col. (Retd.) N. D. Ahmad, *The Survival of Afghanistan: The Historical Background of Afghan Crisis, 1947-1979*, (Lahore: 1991),p.287.

⁴¹ Thomas Hammond, *Red Flag over Afghanistan: The Communist Coup: The Soviet Invasion and the Consequences*, (Boulder: 1984), p.38.

During Daoud's visit to Moscow in June 1974, the Soviet leadership urged him to carry on reforms by working closely with the PDPA. However, that was the time when Daoud had developed close ties with the anti-Communist countries and had banned all political parties. Strains in the relationship with the Soviet Union were becoming apparent.⁴² In 1975, Daoud set up his own National Revolutionary Party that required all political elements to come under its umbrella. Gradually the strained relationship led to a situation when Daoud was viewed by the Soviet leadership a burden, which needed to be relieved. With the Soviet blessings, the two factions of the PDPA, the *Parcham* and the *Khalq* after a decade of factionalism were united by Soviet efforts in March 1977⁴³, staged a coup on April 27, 1978 and proclaimed Afghanistan a 'democratic republic'.

1978 Coup: The *Saur* (April) Revolution

Following the 1978 coup with Noor Mohammad Taraki as the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and the prime Minister, Afghanistan was declared Democratic Republic. The Soviet Union was the first to recognize the democratic regime.⁴⁴ There was no immediate US official reaction to the Communist coup. No attempt was made to break relations with the Communist usurpers nor to express official disapproval of such a shift in political power in such a strategic country.

Although the United States recognized the Kabul regime, it was exploring means to re-establish its influence in Afghanistan. A top secret diplomatic note depicted U.S. concerns: "closing out our efforts in Afghanistan would likely to be seen as an abdication of our responsibility and accomplish for the Soviets one of their

⁴² For the strained Afghan-Soviet relations during the latter part of Daoud's tenure see A.S.Ghaus, n.36, pp.173-9.

⁴³ Beverlay Male, *Revolutionary Afghanistan, A Reappraisal*, (London: 1982), p.59

⁴⁴ In May 1978, the Soviets signed 31 economic projects and in July 1978, an agreement for providing \$250 million in military assistance. In November 1978, the Treaty Of Friendship and

primary objectives, namely to reduce further US and Western influence in Afghanistan and the region. It would not be in our interest to give such a blank cheque signed to Moscow.”⁴⁵

As Afghanistan was passing through a stage of power struggle within the government between Prime Minister Taraki and Foreign Minister Hafizullah Amin, the United States pursued a policy of ‘watchful waiting’. However, the killing of the US ambassador Adolph Dubs on February 14, 1979 caused rapture in the US-Afghan relations. President Carter announced severe reduction in assistance programmes projected for 1979, withdrawal of US Peace Corps by April, and the termination of a military assistance programme that was in the planning stages.⁴⁶

An added source of irritation for the Americans was the regime’s proximity with the Soviet Union. The US policy hardened towards the government and led to the searching of clandestine potential groups to challenge the regime. The US began supporting the exiled afghan Islamic parties⁴⁷ based in Pakistan and started providing them financial and military assistance⁴⁸. By late May 1978, within a month of the coup, a National Rescue Front was founded by seven Islamic organisations under the leadership of Syed Burhanuddin Rabbani. Following uprisings of landowners, businessmen, peasants and religious clerics against the democratic state, the situation provided these Islamic parties an opportunity to use Islam as an unifying force in

Cooperation was signed between the Soviet union and Afghanistan which was later used by the Soviets as an excuse to invade Afghanistan in 1979. See Emadi, n.28, pp.83-4.

⁴⁵ Hafizullah Emadi, “New World Order or Disorder: Armed Struggle in Afghanistan and US Foreign Policy Objectives”, *Central Asian Survey*, vol.18, no.1, March 1999, pp.49-64, p.110.

⁴⁶ K.P.Misra, ed., *Afghanistan in Crisis*, (New Delhi: 1981), p.54. Also see Hyman, n.27, p.100.

⁴⁷ For details of these parties see Peter Marsden, *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan*, (London: 1998),pp.29-34. Also see Appendix -A

⁴⁸ Following post-1978 political changes the Hekmatyar’s (Hizb islami) and Rabbani’s (Jamiat-e-Islami) consolidated their organizational structure with funds from the US and other Western countries see Emadi, n.28, p.99. Also see Appendix-B

resistance against the Soviet backed government in Kabul. This led to the beginning of anti-Soviet '*jihad*'⁴⁹ in Afghanistan.

Afghan politics witnessed another turbulence because of widening of rift between Taraki and Amin. While Amin, who was jockeying for more power and was showing increased animosity towards the *Parcham* faction and was not averse to exploring possibilities of securing US assistance, Taraki under Soviet direction was planning Amin's removal. But the attempt failed and on 16 September 1979 in a palace shoot out staged by Amin, Taraki was killed and Amin became the Prime minister. However Amin's pro-western tilt and increasing estrangement with the Soviet leadership led to his exit from the Afghan political scene. Babrak Karmal of the *Parcham* faction took over as the head of the Democratic Republic.⁵⁰

1979-1989: The Soviet Intervention:

The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan can be dealt in two phases. In the first phase, i.e. from December 1979 to May 1986, the Soviet policy was dominated by a hawkish approach under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko. In the second phase with the arrival of Gorbachev in Kremlin in 1985 there was a significant change in the thinking with the realisation that the war in Afghanistan is unwinnable.

1979-86: Active Soviet Policy

The reasons that led the Soviets to invade Afghanistan on the eve of Christmas of 1979 have been well documented.⁵¹ For the United States, however, the Soviet intervention was a direct threat to its global interest and security. President Carter

⁴⁹ For details of the anti-Soviet jihad in 1978 see Grant M. Farr and John G. Merriam (eds.), *Afghan Resistance: The Politics of Survival*, (London: 1987), pp.21-50.

⁵⁰ Anwar, n.14, pp.183-93., M.S. Agwani, "The Saur Revolution and After", *International Studies* (New Delhi), vol.19, no.4, October-December 1980, pp.557-573.

⁵¹ See Edward Girardet, *Afghanistan: The Soviet War*, (New York: 1985), p.26-9. Also see Brigot & Roy, n.35, pp.58-60.

stated, "Our own nation's security was directly threatened. There is no doubt that the Soviet move into Afghanistan, if done without adverse consequences, would have resulted in the temptation to move again until they reached the warm water ports or until they acquired control over a portion of world's oil supplies."⁵²

It was definite case of altered strategic situation for the Americans. Strong statements conveying a clear disapproval of the Soviet action marked the American policy. President Carter's statement that the invasion constituted "the greatest threat to peace since the Second World War" set the tone and the image of an expansionist Soviet Union hardened.⁵³

Carter's State of the Union address to the Congress on January 23, 1980 stated, "Let our position be absolutely clear. An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary including military force."⁵⁴

However, the prevailing spirit of détente compelled the Carter administration not to take any serious step, which would antagonize the Soviets.⁵⁵ Therefore, the US policy makers were interested only to impose military and economic costs that might discourage the Soviet Army from consolidating its position in Afghanistan and moving against Pakistan. Therefore the US policy makers prepared resistance as the 'second best policy' to drain Soviet resources and diminish Soviet influence in the

⁵² Qoted in Emadi, n.45, p.58.

⁵³ Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations From Nixon to Reagan*, (Washington D.C.: 1994), pp.27-8.

⁵⁴ Bradsher, n.5, pp.192-3. This came to be known as the Carter Doctrine.

⁵⁵ Moderate reaction to the Soviet action included boycotting the Summer Olympics in Moscow, postponing of cultural and educational exchange programmes, delaying the opening of a Soviet Consulate in New York and that of the American's in Kiev, curbing Soviet fishing privileges in US waters, stopping of the sale of US technologies to USSR and blocking the sale of grain to USSR.

region and justify a policy of resistance to the real dangers of Soviet expansionism in a region of vital importance to the security of the United States.⁵⁶

Hence, the US started supporting the Afghan resistance parties based in Pakistan. President Carter decided that the US had a 'moral obligation' to help the resistance movement.⁵⁷ On January 9, 1980, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence was briefed by the CIA on plans for covert aid to the *mujahideen*.⁵⁸ National Security Advisor Brezezinski visited Pakistan and assured the resistance parties supply of arms.⁵⁹ However, the aid was in its modest beginnings.

With the change of Presidency in the United States in 1981, the new Reagan administration adopted a highhanded approach towards the Soviets. It included provision of financial aid to *mujahideen*⁶⁰ battling the Soviets and declaring its solidarity with Afghanistan. On March 10, 1982, the US administration designated March 21 as 'Afghan Day' in the United States. It attempted to depict the Soviet invasion as a threat to the security of the Islamic nations and began to portray itself as a natural ally of all the Islamic nations.

In an address to a gathering of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, in July 1983, Secretary of State George Schultz stated, "This is a gathering in the name of freedom, a gathering in the name of self determination, a gathering in the name of getting the

⁵⁶ Eden Naby and Ralph H. Magnus, "Afghanistan: From Independence to Invasion", *The Middle East Annual Issues and Events*, vol.1, 1981, pp.107-31.

⁵⁷ In July 1979, six months before the Soviet invasion President Carter signed a Presidential finding on covert action that began as a modest programme of medical aid to the rebels. See John H. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*, (London: 2000), p.129.

⁵⁸ Arnold, n.15, pp.118-9, Bradsher, n.5, p.223. For CIA funding see Brigadier Mohammad Yousaf & Major Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan's Untold Story*, (Lahore: 1992), p.120.

⁵⁹ Yousaf, n.58, p.120. National Security Advisor Brezezinski got Carter to sign a secret directive for covert aid to the nascent anti-Soviet resistance fighters. Also see Cooley, n.57, p.13.

⁶⁰ It was the Soviet intervention in the climate of the Cold War that allowed respectability in the West for the concept of Mujahideen or the Holy Warriors. President Reagan's administration was particularly fond of using the term. See Ralph H Magnus and Eden Naby, n.8, p. 135

Soviet forces out of Afghanistan, a gathering in the name of sovereign Afghanistan controlled by its own people. Fellow freedom fighters we are with you.”⁶¹

The Reagan administration, in the largest CIA covert operation since the Vietnam War, provided the Pakistan-based Islamic groups more than \$625 million⁶² aid. The US Congress increasingly pushing for more aid, took the initiative of doubling the administration’s request to \$250 million plus an extra allocation for anti-aircraft weapons.⁶³ The entire aid programme was channeled through the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), which was created by Zia-ul-Haq in 1979 to channel the Afghan war.⁶⁴ The whole objective of the Americans seemed to be transforming Afghanistan into a ‘Soviet-Vietnam’⁶⁵, to reduce Iran’s influence in Afghanistan, to restore confidence among the US allies that the US post-Vietnam isolationism is over and they can rely on the US leadership, and reestablish American domination in the region which was torn apart by the US hostage crisis in Iran. However, the consequences of this ruthless policy of arming all the ethnic groups especially the non-Pushtun groups like the Tajiks and Uzbeks, were colossal. This has been dealt in detail in the second chapter.

In the meantime, Afghan domestic politics was marked by ups and downs. The Soviet hope that their intervention would end the internecine quibbling within PDPA came to a naught. All of Karmal’s attempts to bring about party unity and enforce discipline floundered on the Khalq-Parcham fault line. As a fall out Karmal was begun to be viewed as an embarrassment for the Soviets. Being associated with the

&259. Also see http://www.afghan-politics.org/Refernce/Soviet-invasion/Jihad/Afghan_jihad.htm.

⁶¹ Quoted in Emadi, n.45, p.59.

⁶² For details of covert aid during Reagan era see Barnett Rubin, n.22, p.30.

⁶³ Riaz Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot: Negotiating Soviet Withdrawal*, (Lahore: 1993), pp.351-2.

⁶⁴ Marving G Weinbaum, *Pakistan and Afghanistan: Resistance and Reconstruction*, (Boulder: 1994), p.31.

⁶⁵ Brigot & Roy, n.35, p.141.

policies of the Breznev era, Karmal had no place under the policies of glasnost and perestroika of the Gorbachev regime. The choice befell on Mohammad Najibullah, head of the State security organisation, KhAD to take over the mantle.⁶⁶

1986-1992:Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan

The US-sponsored *mujahideens* proved to be a difficult force to deal with for the Soviets. The CIA's aid to the anti-Soviet resistance increased in the mid-1980s and the supply of anti-aircraft Stinger missile in 1986 to the *mujahideen* turned the tide of the war against the Soviets.⁶⁷ The details of the arms supply, training and involvement of other powers in the Afghan affairs have been discussed in the subsequent chapters. The Soviets failed to subjugate the *mujahideens* and facing severe opposition both at home and in the international fora, began searching for formula for a graceful exit from Afghanistan. As a result, 1987 onwards the Soviets demonstrated an increasing commitment to the U.N. sponsored peace-negotiations involving Pakistan, the U.S.A., Afghan government, but excluding the *mujahideen* parties. The Geneva Accord of May 14, 1988 signed between the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan concerning non-interference in each other's internal affairs provided the Soviets with an opportunity to undo its 'monumental blunders'⁶⁸ and withdraw its troops from Afghanistan in February 15, 1989.

In anticipation of the fall of the Najibullah government immediately after the Soviet withdrawal, Pakistan and the US put a strong pressure on the seven party alliance to form a government in waiting. Agreement between them proved elusive,

⁶⁶ For details see, Ralph H Magnus and Edwin Naby, n.8, pp.128-33.

⁶⁷ Colonel G D Bakshi, *Afghanistan, the First Fault line War*, (New Delhi: 1999), p.56. It was the first time that the sophisticated weapon was distributed outside NATO. CIA using Saudi and American funds brought weapons from China, Egypt, Israel and elsewhere. To preserve the 'myth of deniability' CIA supplied no American weapon till the Stingers in 1986. See Yousaf and Adkin, n.58, pp.97-112.

⁶⁸ D. Cordovez and S. S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal*, (New York: 1995), p.14.

but the seven party alliance was reformed into the Afghan Interim Government only days before the Soviet withdrawal.⁶⁹

After the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the regime in Kabul continued to maintain its rule, but its authority and influence was gradually eroding. The country had already been thrown into the quagmire of conflicting aspirations. The disunity among the various *mujahideen* factions had a telling effect on the future political developments in Afghanistan. In addition the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1990 not only led to the independence of several Central Asian States but also paved the way for substantial political transformation in Afghanistan. In the dying months the USSR finally reached an agreement with the US to halt arms supply to the respective protégées that is the Najibullah government and the *mujahideen*. In 1989 the Najibullah regime to bolster its position boldly sought allies in the West. Using the US cut off of aid to Hekmatyar in November 1989 as a political stepping stone, Najibullah launched a campaign to exert the United States to “join hands with him to checkmate the progress of the Islamic fundamentalists so that they may not be able to establish an Islamic fundamentalism government in Afghanistan.”⁷⁰

1992-1994: Period of Fratricidal Warfare

In the milieu of eroding Communism, the regime in Kabul had to concede to the United Nations peace formula detailing the transfer of power to a transitional Islamic government headed by Sebtagullah Mojaddadi, Chief of *Jabha-e-Nijat-e-Nelli*,⁷¹ in April 1992.

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⁶⁹ Marsden, n.47, p.36.

⁷⁰ Ralph H. Magnus & Edwin Naby, n.8, p.148.

⁷¹ Immediately after the fall of Najibullah, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif brokered Peshwar Accord and Islamabad Declaration, proved ineffective and the fratricidal war continued unabated. See Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan, 1994-97*, (London: 1999), p.8.

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'By 1992, America's main motivation for close attention to Afghanistan- the existence and threat of the Soviet Union- had passed. Both Washington and Moscow cut off supplies to their clients at the end of 1991, and by April 18, 1992, the day Najibullah quit presidency, the *Mujahideen* had entered Kabul marking the beginning of fratricidal warfare in the country. During the Mojaddadi presidency, the US Ambassador to the Afghan resistance Peter Tomsen and his deputy, Richard Hoagland, made the last significant visit of a US official to Kabul'.⁷²

Sebtgullah Mojaddadi having failed to disarm the militia in Kabul was succeeded by Burhanuddin Rabbani, head of the *Jamiat-e-Islamic* Party on August 30, 1992. The United States, however, did not open its embassy in Kabul. On October 7, 1992 President George Bush declared that the United States will provide financial assistance and resume normal diplomatic ties with the Rabbani government.⁷³ In December 1992, Rabbani reelected himself as the President by a handpicked National Assembly, an arrangement, which failed to address the concerns of other *mujahideen* parties. This resulted in the struggle for power among various Islamist and assumed ethnic character with each ethnic group rallying behind its leader, Pakistan's policy further ethnicized post-Soviet politics in Afghanistan by its support to Hekmatyar against Rabbani- a Tajik from Badakshan. Finally on January 1, 1994, Rashid Dostum and the Hizb-i-Islami head Gulbuddin Hekmatyar joined forces to unseat the Rabbani government by rocketing the capital. The attempt failed, but spread panic among people leading to a mass exodus to Pakistan.

In the situation of complete ethnic strife with each group rallying behind its leaders, the United States had little option, but to keep a close watch on the unfolding events. However at the end of the cold war Afghanistan was no longer a priority area

⁷² William Maley, ed., *Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban*, (London: 1998). p.95.

for the United States. The Afghans were left to fight among themselves. In the prevailing situation of anarchy and chaos the Taliban began their victory march.

⁷³ Emadi, n.45, p.60.

Chapter-2
U.S. Involvement in the post-Soviet Afghanistan:
Rise of Taliban

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past.

-Karl Marx¹

Although the emergence of the Taliban is shrouded in mystery, it would be incorrect to say that they emerged from anonymity. There have been numerous explanations regarding the origin of the movement, each of them speaking at a more convincing voice than the rest. Understanding the Taliban phenomenon is made even more complex because of the excessive secrecy that surrounds their political structure, their leadership and decision-making process within the movement. According to Ahmed Rashid, after the *Khmer Rouge* in Cambodia 'The Taliban are most secretive political movement in the world today.'²

In spite of a surfeit of literature on the phenomenon, only a handful of scholars have attempted to study the precise milieu, which nurtured them. The problem, however, attains a more critical nature because of their insistence of a particular aspect of the growth of Taliban. The present chapter, within its limited scope, while attempting a brief analysis of the existing theories, focuses only on a part of the whole story: the supposed American involvement in the region as a factor in the growth of the Taliban movement. While other opinions and theories have been mentioned in brief, a substantial section

¹ Quoted in V. Krishna Iyer, and Vinod Sethi, *The New Afghan Dawn*, (Delhi: 1988), p.19.

² Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, (London: 2001), p.5.

deals with the examination of the role of the US in the ascendancy of Taliban in Afghan politics.

Opinions Regarding the Origin and Nature of the Taliban:

There are a host of theories, which explain the origin and nature of the Taliban and its conversion from a group of religious apprentices to into an armed force. However, certain common factors underline all the arguments irrespective of their differences in degree of involvement of various actors in the power game.

1. Taliban as a Social Movement:

“A ‘*talib*’ is an Islamic student, one who seeks knowledge compared to the ‘*mullah*’, who is one who gives knowledge. By choosing such a name, the Taliban³ distanced themselves from the party politics of the *mujahideen* and signaled that they were a movement for cleansing the society rather than a party trying to grab power.”⁴

It is difficult to understand the social roots of Taliban. Yet as Oliver Roy points out “the Taliban did not after all come from no where”.⁵ Taliban do not represent a new phenomenon in Afghanistan.

“The network of teachers and students from private, rural-based madrasas in Afghanistan and the neighbouring Pushtun-populated areas of Pakistan has played an important part in the history of the country for centuries. During the jihad against Soviet forces in the late 1970s and 1980s, they were an important source of recruitment for *mujahideen* (holy warriors) in the tribal areas. They were particularly prominent in the Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islami (Movement for Islamic Uprising) of Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi and the breakaway

³ Persianized plural form of the Arabic word *Talib*, which means ‘religious student’. See Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan, 1994-97*, (London: 1999), p.12.

⁴ Ahmed Rashid, n.2, pp.22-3.

⁵ Oliver Roy, “Has Islamism a future in Afghanistan?”, in William Maley, ed., *Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban*, (London: 1998), p.205.

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faction of Hizb-i Islami (Islamic Party) that was led by Mawlawi Yunus Khalis.⁶

However, this group of students and teachers found themselves marginalised as a result of the years of state building by Afghanistan's royal regime, which created a new elite educated in the modern schools and universities. The royal regime, the Communists and the Islamists recruited primarily from different sectors of this new elite. However, as a result of the country being thrown into a protracted civil war situation, the rural *madrassas* remained the only source of education for the Pushtun boys who reached school age after 1978, just when the Communist regime came to power. Thus, the groundwork for today's Taliban movement was initiated much before the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan.

The Taliban movement was formed in response to the failure of the *Mujahideen* to establish a stable government after the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989 and the collapse in 1992 of the Najibullah government. A group of *madrassa* teachers and students led by Mullah Mohammad Omar formed the Taliban movement to end the power of the *Mujahideen* warlords and establish a pure Islamic regime. According to Peter Marsden, the 'Taliban had little experience in running a government administration, nor did they see this as a priority when they took power'.⁷ He goes on to point out the basic objective the Taliban wished to address. "They have demonstrated enormous single mindedness in focusing on the military campaign, on the eradication of corruption and on the achievement of law and order. The maintenance and strengthening of administrative

⁶ Barnet R. Rubin, *Afghanistan under Taliban*, *Current History* (Philadelphia), vol.98, no.625, p.80.
⁷ Peter Marsden, *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan*, (London: 1998), p.45.

structures have been very much secondary concerns.”⁸ Ahmed Rashid voices a similar opinion by adding, ‘Deeply disillusioned with the factionalism and the criminal activities of the *Mujahideens*, the Taliban saw themselves as the cleansers and purifiers of a guerrilla war gone astray, a social system gone wrong and an Islamic way of life that had been compromised by corruption and excess.’⁹

2. Taliban as a Religious Force:

The pro-Taliban sources would highlight only the religious angle of the Taliban. According to them, like all the other social and cultural aspects of Islam, concepts like mosque, *Imam* and *Talib* came to Afghanistan with the advent of Islam more than 1300 years ago and hence constitute an integral part of the Afghan socio-cultural structure.¹⁰ Historically Afghanistan was a deeply conservative country where Shariah as interpreted by tribal customs prevailed for centuries. The Taliban emerged at such a critical juncture in Afghan history when the country was fractured by warlords. Pushtun hegemony was dissipated and ideological vacuum grew within the Islamic movement.¹¹

The Taliban’s anomalous interpretation of Islam emerged as an extreme and perverse interpretation of ‘*deobandism*’, preached by Pakistani *mullahs* (clerics) in Afghan refugee camps.¹² The Taliban subscribes to a sect of *deobandi* school, which asserts that incorporation of local tradition and national identity is dangerous because it dilutes Islam. Deobandis reject all forms of *ijtihad*, the use of reason to create innovations

⁸ ibid.

⁹ Ahmed Rashid, n.2, p.23.

¹⁰ According to a World Bank survey published in 1977, there were approximately 20,000 villages in Afghanistan at the time. Each village in Afghanistan has an average of two mosques, with one Imam and around two Taliban, at http://www.afghan-politics.org/Reference/Taliban/facts_about_taliban.htm.

¹¹ Ahmed Rashid, “Taliban: Exporting Extremism”, *Foreign Affairs* (New York), vol.78, no.6, November- December 1999,pp.24-5.

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Rise of Taliban

in *sharia* in response to new conditions. The revival of *ijtihad* is a key plank in the platform of the Islamic modernists. *Deobandis* oppose all forms of hierarchy within the Muslim community, including tribalism or royalty, favour excluding Shia from participation in the polity, and take a very restrictive view of the social role of women. All these characteristics of the Indian and Pakistani Deobandis are found in exaggerated form among the Afghan Taliban.

According to Oliver Roy, the Taliban is a “new fundamentalist movement’ although it’s genuine rural base distinguishes it from others of the kind”.¹³ Islamic unity in Afghanistan has been undermined because of the ethnicisation of the struggle and the proving inability of the parties to implement an Islamic policy. Roy further points out that the Taliban is a genuine Pushtun movement, a feature, which antagonises people of other ethnic background and carries the potential for a strong and politicised Pushtun identity. This is closely linked to the fervent anti-Shi’ism of the Taliban, another distinction from the Islamist movement who were always eager to suppress the sectarian differences.¹⁴

According to Sharani, the essence of Talibanism based on the particularistic interpretation of Islam is to deny the division of society into divergent interests, whether economic or ideology.¹⁵ Sharani observes religion has become a means to hide these divisions...and is mobilised in order to avoid the creation of institutions that can express social and ideological differences within the community.

¹² Matinuddin, n.3, pp.21-2. For details on *deobandism* see “Taliban’s origins: Deoband, 1867”, *Times of India* (New Delhi), December 1, 2000.

¹³ Oliver Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, (London: 1986).

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ M. Nazif Sharani, “Resisting the Taliban and Talibanisation in Afghanistan: Legacies of a Century of Internal Colonialism and Cold War Politics in a Buffer State”, *Perceptions*, Special Issue on Afghanistan, vol.4, no.4, December 2000-February 2001, pp.121-40.

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However, the Afghan case illustrates dominance of ethnic and tribal ties over those of Islam. Oliver Roy points out that below the broad ethnic groups exists “micro-ethnic group called *qawm* and no political system can destroy these rules of the game.”¹⁶ Similarly J N Dixit points out to the rise in ethno-centric rival nationalistic impulses, the Pushtun versus the non-Pushtun antagonism being the most important factor in the Taliban phenomenon.¹⁷

Thus, even though there is little value for a debate on the long presence of the Taliban as a socio-religious entity, it is important to distinguish the latter from its present day ‘*avatar*’. William Maley ascribes certain characteristics to the Taliban.

1. Its leadership is drawn from the former *Mujahideen*.
2. The Taliban movement has also accommodated the Pushtuns with notably secular backgrounds.
3. The movement also has accommodated some of the Kandahari *Pai luch* brotherhood, a secret society, considered to be responsible in the anti-modernist disturbances in 1959 in Kandahar.
4. The movement also has opened its doors to the armed Pushtuns who reflagged themselves as Taliban for reasons of expediency.
5. It draws its resources from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, who have transformed a disorganised collection of fronts with local agendas to an organised political force with countrywide objectives.¹⁸

¹⁶ Oliver Roy, “The Mujahideen and the Future of Afghanistan” in John Esposito, ed., *The Iranian Revolution and its Global Impact*, (Miami: 1990), p.182.

¹⁷ J N Dixit, *Afghan Diary: Zahir Shah to Taliban*, (New Delhi: 2000), p.xii.

¹⁸ William Maley, n.5, pp.15-6.

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J. N Dixit points out the composition of Taliban as originally having five factions, namely recruits from Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, retired military personnel from Pakistan who had joined Taliban cadres, former *mujahideen*, middle level commanders and fighters who defected from the original groups to the Taliban and former member of the PDPA who defected to the Taliban when it came into being.¹⁹

Socio-ethnic Composition of Taliban:

Mullah Omar and all but one top leaders of the supreme *shura* (Council), in charge of governance are Kandahari Pushtuns. The Kabul *shura* is also predominantly Kandahari Pushtun but includes more eastern Pushtuns, a couple of Persian speakers, and one Uzbek. Though Kandahar has been dominated by Durrani for centuries, the area also includes some Ghilzais and other Pushtuns, and the Taliban leadership reflects this fact. Furthermore, there was a traditional hierarchy among the tribes of the area, with the Durrani senior tribes on top, Durrani junior tribes next, and other Pushtuns and ethnic groups below. The Taliban leadership structure shows no trace of this traditional hierarchy. Mullah Muhammad Omar descends from the Ghilzai Hotaki tribe. His deputy, and chair of the Kabul *shura*, Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, is a member of the Kakar tribe. Of all the Taliban leaders whose tribal affiliations are identified by Ahmed Rashid, only one is a member of the formerly powerful Barakzai tribe, the tribe of the Afghan royal family.²⁰

¹⁹ J.N Dixit, n.17, p.xii.

²⁰ Barnett R. Rubin, Testimony on the Situation in Afghanistan, United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. October 8, 1998. For further details on the multi-ethnic Afghan character see Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, (Princeton: 1973), pp.57-67. Also see Appendix-C

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Indeed the once powerful tribal structure of Kandahar, dominated by large landholding clans allied with the royal family, has been shattered by the war. As in the other regions of the country, a new elite has emerged. The Kandahari character of the movement is not tribal but a version of the ethno-regionalism described above. In the Taliban case the social network of the elite at the core of the coalition is formed from Kandahari *mullahs* who studied in the same set of madrassas in Pakistan and participated in the *jihād*. Hence the movement has a strong ethnic and regional characteristic, though its leaders had no intention of forming such a movement, and it has therefore attracted support from many who do indeed seek a Pushtun ethnic movement capable of ruling Afghanistan.

Structure and Organization of the Taliban:

The Taliban ruling structure is based on a narrow understanding of the Islamic precepts of government. It is headed by an *amir* (Mullah Muhammad Omar) who is assisted by *shuras* or the consultative bodies. Since their concept of Islamic authority is that of the *amir* leading a community (*millat*) of Muslims, Mullah Omar renamed the Islamic State of Afghanistan the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in October 1997.²¹

In making the transition from a militant movement to a would-be government, the Taliban have changed their institutional structure. They do not seem to be maintaining the Taliban Islamic Movement as a formal structure parallel to the state. Instead, the movement is becoming an informal network connecting the leading figures in the new state structure, where power now resides. Mullah Omar, as *amir al-mu'minin*, is head of state. Originally Mullah Omar headed a ten member supreme *shura* and a military *shura*,

²¹ Barnett R Rubin, n.20.

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both based in Kandahar. After the Taliban captured Kabul, they established the Kabul *shura*, consisting of the ministers and acting ministers of the Taliban government.²²

Mullah Muhammad Omar, the head of state, was 'elected' as *amir al-mu'minin* (commander of the believers, a title of the caliph) by an assembly of about 1,200 invited *ulama* held in Kandahar from March 20, 1996 to April 4, 1996. He apparently has the final say on all matters. Subordinate to him is the Kabul *shura*, effectively a cabinet of ministers, chaired by Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, whose position is analogous to that of a Prime Minister or head of government.²³

While this government has few resources and many parts of it are hardly functioning, the Taliban have increasingly adopted a discourse of Afghan nationalism as well as of their Islamic traditionalism and are trying to recreate a centralized Afghan state. In areas under their control they have appointed provincial governors and administrators of districts, cities, towns, and precincts from the center. The administrators are invariably natives of areas other than the ones they govern. The location of the head of state in Kandahar and the government in Kabul, however, encumbers decision making. It also continues to communicate the message that the Taliban's power is based in one section of the country, rather than in the national capital, which was moved from Kandahar to Kabul in 1775.

Role of External Powers:

Pakistan overwhelmingly dominates any investigation into the rise of the Taliban movement. There are differing views with regard to the extent of Pakistani involvement

²² Matinuddin, n.3, pp.41-2.

²³ Sharani, n.15, p.138.

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in the nurturing of the Taliban into a potent force. However, the fact remains that many of the Taliban were educated in Pakistani madrassas and had learnt their fighting skills from *Mujahideen* parties based in Pakistan. As such the younger Taliban barely knew their own country or history, but from their madrassas they learnt about the ideal Islamic society created by the prophet Mohammad 1,400 years ago and that is what they wanted to emulate.²⁴

Two personalities stand out in the bigger design to convert the so-called teachers and students into a force to reckon with. The first one was the mercurial Maulana Fazlur Rahman and his *Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam* (JUI), a fundamentalist party, which had considerable support in Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The madrassas in Pakistan were in all probability run by him.²⁵ The first batches of Talibs from seminaries run by Fazlur Rahman were trained by the Frontier Constabulary Corps and the Sibi Scouts in camps on the border with Afghanistan. Subsequently, reinforcements for the Taliban militia came from other seminaries located in other parts of Pakistan.

The other personality was Naseerullah Babar, the Interior Minister in the Benazir Bhutto's government, who made no secret of his happiness at the fall of Kandahar by saying that the Taliban were 'our boys'.²⁶ Babar is credited with converting the despondency of a significant *Mujahideens* into a support base for the Talibans. Gen Babar perceptively recognised the role of the madrassas in being the fertile ground for indoctrinating the Afghan Talibs to find a new way of establishing a new order. Closer

²⁴ Ahmed Rashid, n.2, p.23.

²⁵ P. Stobdan, "The Afghan Conflict and Regional Security", *Strategic Analysis* (New Delhi), vol.23, no.5, August 1999, p.740.

²⁶ Ahmed Rashid, n.2, p.29.

interaction with numerous madrassas all over Pakistan and specially those belonging to the Deobandi .. saw the first beginnings of a new puritanical group that would seek to cleanse the country of its corrupt *mujahideen* leaders²⁷.

Not going into the intricacies of Pakistani politics, it can be safely presumed that the Taliban emerged from anonymity in 1993, consequent to a turf battle between the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and Interior Ministry in Islamabad during Benazir Bhutto's second term as the Prime Minister. Interestingly, in the initial phase, the ISI, which had run the Afghan operations with complete autonomy since the late 1970s, was averse to the Taliban. It continued to pin faith on the Hizb-i-Islami party under Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to dislodge the Rabbani government. Significantly, the Taliban was viewed by the ISI as a Benazir Bhutto ploy to reduce the latter's role in Afghan affairs. Eventually, however, the remarkable success of the Taliban forced the ISI to co-opt itself into training and guiding the Taliban ranks. Thus, despite persistent denials by the Benazir Bhutto government, there is little doubt that the Taliban have been created, trained and equipped by the ISI and Interior Ministry Special Forces.

The training and supplying of arms by the ISI made the Taliban emerge as a potential alternative to the chaos and confusion the country was subjected to after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces. It's growing popularity witnessed a few thousand disillusioned *mujahideens* joining the movement between 1989 and 1991.

In late 1994 and early 1995, the ISI began assisting the Taliban in a massive way by providing new Kalashnikov assault rifles, large quantities of ammunition, training and

²⁷ Abha Dixit, "Soldiers of Islam: Origins, Ideology and Strategy of the Taliban", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.20, no.5, August 1997, p. 665.

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logistical support.²⁸ Indeed, at a meeting in Islamabad in 1994, Hekmatyar complained to then ISI chief Lt. Gen. Javed Ashraf about the ISI's growing assistance to the Taliban. By February, 1995 the Taliban forces reached some 25,000, predominantly Pushtuns. It does not include over a thousand Tajiks and Uzbeks from the Jowzjani Special Forces sent to Kandahar in the last days of Najibullah's regime.

(ii) The American Involvement:

The American role in creating and strengthening the Taliban can be analysed at two separate levels. While the overt policies contributed in terms of logistics to the Taliban, the indirect role paved way for the creation of a social set up which necessitated a fundamentalist force to take control of the chaotic and disorderly situation.

(a) The Covert Role:

Selig Harrison from the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars created quite a furore in March 2001 when he stated that the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) worked in tandem with Pakistan to create the Taliban. "The CIA made a historic mistake in encouraging Islamic groups from all over the world to come to Afghanistan." The US provided \$3 billion for building up these Islamic groups, and it accepted Pakistan's demand that they should decide how this money should be spent".²⁹ Harrison claimed to have warned the CIA authorities against creating a monster, which at a later period might run wild. However, the CIA obsession with defeating the Soviets proved to be myopic. As a result, "some 35,000 Muslim radicals from 40 Islamic countries joined Afghanistan's fight between 1982 and 1992. Tens of thousands more

²⁸ In 1995, Taliban possessed around 200 Tanks, 12 Mig-23s and over a dozen helicopters. Mark Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, (London: 1988), p.230.

²⁹ "CIA worked in tandem with Pak to create Taliban", *Times of India*, March 7, 2001.

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came to study in Pakistani madrassahs. Eventually more than 100,000 foreign Muslim radicals were directly influenced by the Afghan jihad.”³⁰

The creation of the Taliban might have been central to Pakistan's ‘pan-Islamic vision’, which was assisted by the American objective of bleeding the Soviet’s white. Thus, the story of Frankenstein’s monster was displayed in real life. This analysis might appear to be too cynical of the American goal. It might also appear as an attempt to belittle the present American concern in dealing and containing the Taliban brand of Islamic terrorism.

President Reagan and his CIA Director William Casey are believed to have pursued a policy of tying the Russians down in Afghanistan by financing, arming and organising so-called resistance organisations using Zia-ul-Haq’s Pakistan as a staging point.³¹ The now CIA declassified information shows that William Cassey in 1986 had stepped up the action against the Soviets by taking three significant measures. He managed to persuade the US Congress to provide the *Mujahideen* with American-made Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, which had a telling effect on the Soviet fortunes in Afghanistan. Secondly, guerrilla attacks were launched on the Republics of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan from where Soviet troops were believed to receive support. And lastly, Casey committed CIA support to an ISI initiative to recruit radical Muslims from around the world to come to Pakistan and fight with the Afghan *mujahideen*. Among these thousands of foreign recruits was a young Saudi student Osama Bin Laden, the son of a

³⁰ Ahmed Rashid, n.11, p.31.

³¹ Vir Sanghvi, Taliban: Another Frankenstein’s monster, Hindustan Times, May 24, 2001 at www.hindustantimes.com/nonfram/240501/detVIR20.asp. Also Brigadier Mohammad Yousaf & Major Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan’s Untold Story*, (Lahore: 1992), pp.208-10.

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Yemeni construction magnate Mohammad Bin Laden.³² It is a travesty of history that the same warriors with their private agenda went on to undermine the American interests in the region.

Incidentally, the CIA official website includes Osama Bin Laden as one of the top ten most wanted criminals. It runs a brief biography of the warlord. However, it conveniently forgets to mention the fact that Osama's front organisation *Maktab al-Khidamar* (MAK), which funneled money, arms, and fighters from the outside world into the Afghan war, was nurtured by the ISI.³³

It can also be mentioned in brief that American understanding of and its attitude towards the Taliban had been heavily influenced by Assistant Under Secretary of State, Robin Raphel, who had met the militia leaders on several occasions. Raphel apparently believed that the Taliban constituted a force under Pakistan's control, which could serve US interests in the region. This view received endorsement from a significant section in the CIA.³⁴

(b) The Indirect role:

If an actor in a conflict situation can claim credit for the positive fall out of the situation, it must also share the blame for the negative state of affairs. If Americans can afford to bask in glory of driving the Soviets away off the Afghan soil, they must also be held responsible for what happened to Afghanistan afterwards. In a way, American policy of neglect did contribute to the development of a social situation where the support base for the Taliban could make a steady growth.

³² For details see Ahmad Rashid, n.11, pp.129-31.

³³ <http://radiobergen.org/terrorism.binladen-5.html>.

³⁴ Col. G.D. Bakshi, *Afghanistan: The First Faultline War*, (New Delhi: 1999), p.145, Also see Amin Saikal, *Afghanistan's Conflict, Survival*, vol.40, no.2, Summer 1998.

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After the withdrawal of the Soviets, Afghanistan ceased to be a priority area for the American policy makers. “The Afghans, once on the frontline of the Cold War, were left with a devastated country. One million had died during the ten-year occupation. But only three years later, when Kabul fell to the *mujahideen* who had fought off the Soviets, gory civil war gripped the country...pitted the majority Pushtun population in the south and east against the ethnic minorities of the north--Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara and Turkmen.”³⁵

Even in the hey day of the Soviet occupation, the US policy of granting autonomy to the ISI, created malcontents whose personal interests did not necessarily coincide with that of the Americans.

“The ISI’s preferred recipient of the vast inflow of arms, Soviet and otherwise, was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Chief of the extremist *Hizb-i-Islami* and deemed by Zia-ul-Haq’s men, with somewhat reluctant agreement by the CIA, as the most effective of the seven leaders of the seven main groups of the *Mujahideen* in fighting the Soviets. Later he became a leader, trainer and inspiration to the terrorists and guerrillas of the Afghan international.”³⁶

Richard Mackenzie points at the same loophole in the American policy. He says:

“Prima facie evidence of that failure was the creation of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who gained notoriety in Afghanistan for killing more fellow *mujahideen* than he did Communists. Despite repeated warnings from Human right groups and western journalists over several years, U.S. government officials rarely deviated from the Pakistani line that Hekmatyar was the most effective and representative *mujahideen* leader.”³⁷

The analysis of the direct or indirect American role in propping up the Taliban should not undermine the internal environment, which favoured such development in Afghanistan. As K B Harpviken points out, foreign support is a necessary but not

³⁵ Ahmed Rashid, n.11, p.23-4.

³⁶ John K. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*, (London: 2000), p.62.

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sufficient condition for non-state military mobilisation to succeed.³⁷ It needs to be remembered that before the arrival of the Taliban, none of Islam's extreme orthodox variety, such as the Wahabis of Saudi Arabia failed to gain foothold on Afghanistan. Thus, the Taliban found it easy to interpret their emergence as the beginning of a reform process based on the Islamist notion of Jihad- the holy war against the infidels. They vowed to bring peace to the region, establish law and order, disarm the population, and impose the Islamic Shariah. It was but natural that the Taliban were welcomed by the war-weary Pushtuns. There was no stopping for the Taliban victory march.

It is a fact that the 'Taliban were welcomed in many provinces, by locals as well as commanders. Such was the psychological impact of the Taliban's easy advance from Kandahar towards Paktia, Gardez, Logar, Sarobi and Kabul, that some people believed that these fighters of Islam had the ability to bodily deflect bullets. In other areas like Heart and Mazaar-i-Sharif, the Taliban gained control through both fighting and defection of opposition commanders."³⁹

³⁷ Richard Mackenzie, "The United States and The Taliban" in William Maley, n.5, p.95.

³⁸ K B Harpviken, "Transcending Traditionalism: The Emergence of Non-State Military Formations" in Afghanistan, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol.34, no.3, 1997, pp.271-87.

³⁹ Zehra, Nasim, "Taliban Afghanistan: Image and Governance", *Himal* (Kathmandu), vol.13, no.4, April 2000, pp.28-9.

Chapter-3
U.S. Policy Towards the Taliban

Afghanistan has gone from one of Washington's greatest foreign policy triumphs to one of its most profound failures.¹

Foreign policy has been regarded as a reflection and application of a country's national interest to the international arena. On numerous occasions, nation states have shown their willingness to delve into great depths to protect their national interest. However, in a 'smarter than thou' world order, it is possible to commit faux pas and get trapped in a vicious circle, getting out of which becomes the ultimate goal for a nation state. Zeev Maoz, an Israeli analyst, in his *Paradoxes of War: On the Art of National Self-Entrapment*, has dwelt at length upon the paradox of how nations guided by very intelligent and rational analysis, sometimes knowingly get into traps of tremendously destructive proportions.² The application of the concept of 'policy paradox' reveals the typical nature of US foreign policy towards Afghanistan.

The processes by which the US foreign policy is determined are complex and obscure. While the end policy decisions reveal very little regarding its formulation process, in actuality too many actors have a decisive say in this matter. The President, in spite of his monolith appearance in foreign policy making is open to the influence of the Congress, the Secretary of State and most importantly in this particular case the CIA. The attention, which a particular issue receives depends on how prominently 'the issue' engages the attention of these actors and evokes the personal interest and commitment of

¹ Zalmay Khalilzad and Daniel Byman, "Afghanistan: The Consolidation of Rogue State", *Washington Quarterly*, vol.23, no.1, Winter 2000, p.65.

² Quoted in Col. G D Bakshi, *Afghanistan: The First Faultline War*, (New Delhi: 1999), p.99.

any of the above key figures in the decision making process.³ Outside these institutional structures, the lobbies and the pressure groups, and corporate interests may also exert considerable influence in shaping the approach to particular issues, either by direct lobbying or by supplying personnel for particular administrations. “A consequence of this multiplicity of influences is that there is rarely a ‘mastermind’ behind US foreign policy steps, let alone a master plan.”⁴ Thus, it can be concluded that while it is national interest that guides foreign policy formulations, it is the coming together of a diverse range local interests that plays an important role. This intricacy in policy making towards Afghanistan in the pre and cold war period has been witnessed in the first chapter. After the end of the cold war and having bled the Soviet’s white in Afghanistan, Washington’s policy towards the region was stymied by the lack of a strategic framework. The U.S. dealt with issues as they cropped up, many a times in a random and slapdash fashion rather than adopting a coherent approach.

As discussed in the second chapter, the United States welcomed the Taliban’s victory march in Afghanistan for reasons of its national interests. Interestingly it seems to have been guided by Pakistan’s assurance that Taliban, would be able to bring the much needed peace and stability to the war-ravaged region. So it was but natural that the policy makers in Washington hoped for a quick Taliban control over the whole of Afghan territory. The underlying dynamics, which guided the US support for the Islamic forces appear to be at least two vital objectives, i.e. the Oil politics and Narco-terrorism.

³ A number of members of Congress such as Senator Gordon Humphrey of New Hampshire, Congressman Charles Wilson of Texas, senator Hank Brown of Colorado, Congressman Dana Rohrabacher of California and so on have at different times taken considerable interest in the Afghan issue, For the role of Congress see Robert A. Dahl, *Congress and Foreign Policy*, (New York: 1964).

⁴ Richard Mackenzie, “The United States and the Taliban” in William Maley, ed., *Fundamentalism Reborn, Afghanistan and the Taliban*, (London: 1999), p.93.

However with the emergence of bin Laden network as a major anti-US terrorist group, denying bin Laden a base of operations in Afghanistan has become an increasingly significant U.S. priority. Other concerns include curbing the criminalized economy, ending discriminations against women, eradicating poppy cultivation, retrieval of U.S. Stinger missiles and addressing the refugee migration problem. Each of these factors would be examined in detail to realize the intricacies and convolution of US foreign policy in dealing with the Taliban.

[A] Vital Objectives:

(1) Oil Politics:

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union leading to independence of the Central Asian republics and the subsequent interest exhibited by international oil companies in exploiting the vast energy resources there, the debate over a viable route became a priority.⁵ The scramble for this gold mineral in this new found 'middle east' by the major powers like the U.S. and Russia; the regional powers--Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkey and the most powerful players of post cold war world politics--the oil companies compete in 'the new great game'⁶

While Washington's policy has been to tap Central Asia's energy resource at the same time it is unwilling to give any leverage to Russia in the north and Iran in the south.⁷ Due to the land-locked nature of the Central Asian states, out of the many routes

⁵ Ahmed Rashid, Islam, *Taliban: Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, (London: 2001), p.144. In the early 1990s the USA estimated that Caspian Oil reserves were between 100 to 150 billion barrels.

⁶ Ahmed Rashid coined this term in his article, "In the New Great Game-The battle for Central Asia's Oil", *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Hongkong), April 10, 1997.

⁷ Adam Tarock, 'The Politics of the Pipeline: The Iran and Afghanistan Conflict', *Third World Quarterly* (Surrey), 1999, vol.20, no.4, p.816. Also see Barnett Rubin, "In Focus: Afghanistan, Foreign Policy in Focus", vol.1, no.25, December 1996, at http://www.foreignpolicy_infocus.org/briefs/vol1/afghan.html.

passing through Russia, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, the Iran route was considered to be the safest and shortest.⁸ However, American hostility with the Islamic Republic ruled out that option. Thus the choice fell on a route that passes through Afghanistan. It is different matter altogether that the United States interpreted its national interest in terms of an attempt for the economic development of Afghanistan.⁹ But in actuality it was United States' business interests and its global strategy of containing the Soviet Union and Iran, which played a decisive role in its policy choice.

The underlying factor, however, lay in the need for a stable political environment in Afghanistan, which would facilitate such a venture. The fact that the United States welcomed Taliban's series of victories need be interpreted in the light of the American need for stability in the region.

The story of American pursuit in the region is also a story of the bitter contest between two oil companies, UNOCAL¹⁰ of the United States and Bidas, an Argentine Oil company. "In 1994, Bidas, the Argentine Oil Company proposed building a gas pipeline that would cross Afghanistan and deliver gas to Pakistan and India. In February 1996, Bidas had signed a 30-year agreement with the Afghan government headed by Rabbani, for the construction and operation of a gas pipeline. The US company UNOCAL with support from Washington proposed a similar pipeline in 1995."¹¹ The

⁸ Most independent energy experts agree that the Iran route is the best choice. For details see Julia Nanay, "The US in the Caspian: The Development of Political and Commercial Interests", *Middle East Policy* (London), 1998, vol.6, no.2, pp.150-7.

⁹ This can be inferred from many official US documents. One example cited here is, Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Current Issues and U.S. Policy Concerns*, Congressional Research Service Report, The Library of Congress, September 15, 1998.

¹⁰ UNOCAL at that time was the 12th largest Oil Company in the USA, which had considerable experience in Asia and had been involved in Pakistan since 1976.

¹¹ Ahmed Rashid, n.5, p.151.

tussle between these two companies to build this oil pipeline drew the Taliban and other factions into this new great game

Together with its Saudi partner, Delta Oil, UNOCAL had already signed a US \$2 billion contract to construct a natural gas pipeline, with an oil pipeline envisioned for the future, running between Turkmenistan and Pakistan.¹² In October 1995, UNOCAL signed an agreement with Turkmenistan proposing a gas pipeline from Daulatabad to Multan in Central Pakistan. UNOCAL also signed a second contract envisaging a 1050-mile oil pipeline from Chardzhou in Turkmenistan to an oil terminal on Pakistan's coasts. It is documented that the deals were hailed by the Clinton administration "as an alternative to schemes involving links through America's old nemesis Iran to the Saudi Arabia."¹³ While the initial contract with Turkmenistan looked all set to go to Bidas, UNOCAL managed to capture the deal.

The UNOCAL too projected the US foreign policy in welcoming the Taliban's victory over Afghanistan. "When the Taliban captured Kabul in September 1996, Chris Taggart, a UNOCAL executive, told wire agencies that the pipeline project would be easier to implement now that the Taliban had captured Kabul."¹⁴ In November 1996, UNOCAL further announced that the 'Taliban victory in Kabul was a positive sign and further announced that the company was already supplying 'non cash bonus payments to the Taliban in return for their cooperation, even before the victory in Kabul.'¹⁵ . State department spokesman, Glyn Davis said the US found 'nothing objectionable' in the

¹² Ralph H Magnus & Edwin Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx and Mujahid*, (New Delhi: 1998), p.190. Also see Appendix-D

¹³ Ahmed Rashid, n.5, p.151.

¹⁴ ibid. Marty Miller, a top executive of UNOCAL said that the projects are important part of conflict resolution. "The Afghan Conflict and Energy Security", <http://www.afghan-politics.org/Reference/StrategicStudies/IDSA/Aug1999>.

¹⁵ Ralph H Magnus & Eden Naby, n.11, p, 190.

steps taken by the Taliban to impose Islamic law. He described the Taliban as anti-modern rather than anti-western.¹⁶

The initial euphoria regarding the Taliban had to turn into a disappointment. Taliban's insistence on Islamic principles which allowed a large-scale human rights violations in the country gave rise to a lot of consternations in United States. Groups representing the interests of women rights and even Hollywood stars out rightly censured the Taliban, which forced a U-turn on part of the government.

The very fact that UNOCAL's position was closely linked with the US government gave it an advantage over its Argentine counterpart. The Taliban's acceptance of the offer had carried the possibility of US recognition of the regime. This also would have made possible the opening of the gates for financial assistance from the World Bank for the cash-strapped economy of Afghanistan. However, with these advantages UNOCAL posed some problems for the Taliban. Being closely aligned with the government it had to reiterate the government's insistence on the Taliban maintaining a positive human rights record. It also demanded the beginning of a dialogue process with the anti-Taliban alliance. Thus, UNOCAL went a step further by declining to negotiate with any body less than a recognized government. In these circumstances, Bidas emerged as favourable alternative for the Taliban. In November 1996, Bidas revealed that it had signed an agreement with the Taliban and General Dostum to build the pipeline, while Burhanuddin Rabbani had already signed. Panicked UNOCAL's crisis-management efforts proved to be futile.

Interestingly, United States discovered the wisdom of a rapprochement with Iran and started assessing the feasibility of laying a pipeline that passes through Iran instead of

¹⁶ Ahmed Rashid, n.4, p.151.

Afghanistan. The US bombing of bin Laden's camps in August 1998 forced UNOCAL to pull out its staff from Pakistan and Kandahar.¹⁷ However, considerable uncertainty remains in the oil and gas pipelines through Afghanistan.

(2) Narco-Terrorism:

“Long the linchpin of the Golden crescent- the opium growing region that stretches through Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan-Afghanistan has now assumed a dominant position in the volatile area”¹⁸. The drug trade in Afghanistan has a long history, of which Washington had conveniently publicly become aware only during the late 1980s with the de-escalation of the Soviet confrontation. Even the *mujahideens* were reportedly involved in drug trafficking to raise the revenues for their war against the Soviets and Afghan Communists.¹⁹ Authors point out that drug cultivation in the Helmand valley region of Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation days, was somewhat encouraged by the CIA in its objective of demoralizing the Soviets on all fronts. This was launched under a clandestine operation code named ‘Mosquito’.²⁰ The same had happened to the Americans in Vietnam. The use of narcotics appears to have been increased among the Soviet soldiers substantially. Some of them even indulged in the smuggling operations due to the large nature of profits it brought about.²¹

After the fall of the Nazibullah government, the US administration suddenly became aware of the dangers of the trade and hoped that the *mujahideen* would stop

¹⁷ Ahmed Rashid, n.5, p. 175.

¹⁸ Nishad Hajari, “Losing the Opium War”, *Time* (London), vol.153, no.11, March 22, 1999, at <http://www.time.com/time/asia/asia/magazine/1999/990322/opium1.html>

¹⁹ At the height of Afghan resistance, Afghanistan produced a whopping 400-575 metric tons of opium. See Sudhir Sawant, “Steps Against Narco-Terrorism in Asia”, *Aakrosh* (New Delhi), vol.2, no.3, April 1999, p.58. Also see Appendix-E

²⁰ For details see John H. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*, (London: 2000), p.129.

depending on trade of narcotics as a source of finance. However, its hopes were belied. It was difficult to suddenly give up an age-old practice, which has always brought in financial windfall.

After the arrival of the Taliban on the political scene, the US administration again hoped that the new rulers with their insistence on the principles of Islam would put a halt on the trade of narcotics. After all the *Hudud* laws of Islam discourages narcotic use and cultivation. In fact, the Taliban, after it first took power, announced to put an end to drug trafficking and poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. They were particularly vehement in their condemnation of the drug trade, which was not only against Islam but was also a major source of foreign influence and corruption in society through its vast profits.

However, with the initial spurt in anti-narcotics enthusiasm, drug production actually increased. Wendy J. Chamberlain, an expert of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement says, poppy cultivation has actually increased three fold in Afghanistan after the Taliban take over in 1996.²² Data on actual production are scarce. The INCR (International Narcotics Control Strategy Report) noted a 33 per cent increase in drug cultivation in 1996 from previous figures, particularly in areas under control of the Taliban.²³ In 1997, opium poppy cultivation jumped by 25 per cent, making Afghanistan the world's second largest source of opium with a share of more than forty per cent.²⁴ According to a report by the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board, the country may have overtaken Burma as the world's leading producer of opium,

²¹ Tara Kartha, "Weapons and Narcotics in Afghanistan: Strategies and Ambitions in a Light Weapon War", in V D Chopra, ed., *Afghanistan and Asian Stability*, (New Delhi: 1998), p.157.

²² Poppy cultivation increased threefold in Afghanistan: *Afghan News*, Internet Edition, January 11, 2001.

²³ The United Nations Drug Control Programme has estimated the trade to be worth \$ 50 billion annually. Quoted in Tara Kartha, n.20, p.174.

²⁴ Kenneth Katzman, n.9, p.17. Also see Appendix-F.

with a 1998 yield of 2,200 tons, up 9 per cent from the previous year.²⁵ The Taliban controls 97 per cent of the territory that produces illicit opium in Afghanistan. It taxes opium dealers at a rate of \$20 million per year, which goes straight to the Taliban war chest.²⁶

In October 1997, the United Nations Under Secretary General Pino Arlacchi, executive director of the U.N. International Drug Control Programme, said that the Taliban agreed to enforce a ban on opium production and smuggling and agreed to allow direct monitoring of the ban.²⁷

In April 1998, following Ambassador Richardson's visit to Afghanistan, a U.S. drug control team met the Taliban officials in Afghanistan to continue talks on the issue. However, Arlacchi said in July 1998 that Taliban was failing to comply with the U.N. agreement on drugs and that refineries to produce morphine were being opened and opium production was increasing.²⁸ In fact, the Taliban have set up model farms where farmers learn the best methods of heroin cultivation.²⁹ In March 1998, Afghanistan was listed again by the United States, as it has been every year since 1987, as a state that is uncooperative with U.S. efforts to eliminate drug trafficking or has failed to take

²⁵ Nisid Hajari, n.18. Also see United States Department of State, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1999 at

http://www.State.gov/www/global/narcotics_law/1999_narc_report/Swasi99.html.

²⁶ Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon 1994-1997*, (London: 1999), p.118.

²⁷ In exchange, the U.N. programme agreed to introduce new crops to substitute for the opium poppies, extend irrigation systems, build new factories and pay for police training and enforcement. The estimated cost is \$16 million per year, which the Taliban complained was going to be mostly administration costs. For details see Barbara Crossette, "Taliban Agree to Cooperate with Ban on Opium Trade", *New York Times*, October 25, 1997. Also see Kamal Matinuddin, n.26, p.123.

²⁸ Barbara Crossette, "Opium Surge Threatens U.N. Aid to Afghans, Official Warns", *New York Times*, July 17, 1998.

²⁹ Ahmed Rashid, "Taliban: Exporting Extremism", *Foreign Affairs* (New York), vol.78, no.6, November- December 1999, p.33.

sufficient steps on its own to curb trafficking.³⁰ In February 1999, the White House cited numerous reports of drug traffickers operating in Taliban territory with the consent or involvement of some Taliban officials before decertifying Kabul for failing to live up to its obligations under the 1988 U.N. Drug Convention.³¹

A United States Department of State fact sheet on the 'The Taliban and the Afghan drug trade' noted that the

1. The United Nations Security Council Resolution introduced on December 7, 2000, calls on all parties in Afghanistan to observe the existing international conventions to work for the elimination of illicit cultivation of opium poppy. Further, the resolution includes a measure to ban the export to Afghanistan of a precursor chemical, acetic anhydride, which is used to manufacture heroin.
2. The international community agrees that these further measures are necessary because Afghan territory under Taliban control is now the largest producer in the world of illicit opium, which is refined into heroin. Narcotics-related income strengthens the Taliban's capacity to provide support for international terrorism.
3. The Taliban benefit directly from poppy cultivation by imposing a tax on the opium crop, and they also profit indirectly from its processing and trafficking.
4. The Taliban's support for, or acquiescence to, poppy cultivation and narcotics manufacture and trade has further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis of the Afghan people. The explosion of poppy cultivation under the Taliban has reduced agricultural land available for food crops at the very time that Afghanistan is suffering the worst drought in a generation.
5. In recent years, the Taliban have announced several bans on poppy cultivation, but there has been little evidence that these bans are credible.³²

(3) Terrorism:

³⁰ Kenneth Katzman, n.9, p.17.

³¹ Nisid Hajari, n.18.

³² U.S. Department of State, International Information Programs, <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/global/drugs/00120801.htm>

Terrorism is the use of force (or violence) committed by individuals or groups against governments or civilian populations to create fear in order to bring about political (or social) change.³³ Terrorism has become a first-order priority for the Clinton administration because the phenomena of state sponsorship have been joined by a new more dangerous religious brand. According to Simon and Benjamin, four developments mark the advent of this new form of terrorism.

- Emergence of religion as a predominant impetus for terrorist attacks.
- The increasing lethality of attacks.
- The increasing technological and operational competence of terrorists; and
- The demonstrated desire of these terrorists to obtain weapons of mass destruction.³⁴

The 1993 World Trade Centre bombing in New York and the plot to blow up the Lincoln tunnel and other New York landmarks, the 1995 plot to destroy eleven US aircrafts over the Pacific, the 1996 Oklahoma city bombing and the August 1998 attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salam are the illustrations of the bin Laden brand of terrorism, otherwise called as the 'New Terrorism'.³⁵ For the past two years (1998-2000), the primary goal of Washington's Afghanistan policy has been to bring Osama bin Laden to justice, as he symbolizes a symbol of new terrorism, which has emerged during Clinton's Presidency. Ironically, Osama bin Laden is the personification

³³ Harvey W. Kushner, *Terrorism in America: A Structured Approach to Understanding the Terrorist Threat*, (Illinois: 1998), p.10.

³⁴ Steven Simon & Daniel Benjamin, "America and the New Terrorism", *Survival* (London), Spring 2000, vol.42, no.1, p.59.

³⁵ *ibid.*

of 'blow back'.³⁶ At the beginning of the Afghan war, Osama was sent to Peshawar by the Chief of the Saudi prince Turki bin Faizal, where he was actively financing the Afghan war. CIA had given Osama a free hand. In 1984, bin Laden created a front known as MAKTAB-AL-KHIDAMAR- the MAK, which was nurtured by the ISI, the CIA's primary conduit for conducting the covert war in Afghanistan. After the Soviet withdrawal Osama left Afghanistan and MAK was closed, but in 1990 Osama established Al-Qa'eda with extreme MAK members.³⁷

Since 1996, Afghanistan has become 'ground zero' for an international terrorist network headed by Osama. At the heart of the network is Al-Qa'eda, the base, which is emblematic of the new terrorism, characterised by "stateless, diffuse networks of individuals united by radical ideology rather than common ethnic or national origin".³⁸

Bin Laden has been implicated in a long string of attacks on Americans. His first terrorist attack was a December 1992 bombing of a hotel in Yemen used by American soldiers en route to humanitarian operations in Somalia. Bin Laden told CNN in March 1997 that he had trained the 'Afghan Arabs' who helped to kill eighteen American soldiers in Somalia in 1993³⁹. In addition, he was implicated as a possible unindicted co-conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York City, which killed six and wounded over thousand.⁴⁰

³⁶ At the CIA, it happens to have a code name: Blow Back. Simply defined, this is the term that describes an agent, an operative or an operation that has turned on its creator. Michael Moran, "CIA and Osama bin Laden", http://radiobergen.org/terrorism/binladen_5.html.

³⁷ Cooley, n.20, p.222. Also see www.state.gov/www/regions/nea/country/cp-yemen.html.

³⁸ James Philips, "Defusing Terrorism at Ground Zero: Why a New U.S. Policy is Needed for Afghanistan", at <http://www.heritage.org/library/backgrounder/bg1383.html>.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ While there appears to be no concrete evidence tying bin Laden to the bombing, Ramzi Yousef, the convicted mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing, was trained in one of bin Laden's

Bin Laden's network remains a prime suspect in two bombings against American targets in Saudi Arabia: a 1995 bombing that killed five American military advisers in Riyadh and the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers housing complex that killed 19 American military personnel.⁴¹ According to U.S. government sources, bin Laden also hatched two failed plots to assassinate President Bill Clinton.⁴²

Over time, bin Laden's public rhetoric has become increasingly hostile toward Americans. In February 1998, bin Laden announced the formation of the "International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders" and signed a *fatwa* (religious edict) calling on all Muslims "to kill the Americans and their allies--civilian and military."⁴³

Six months later, bin Laden's supporters detonated two truck bombs outside the U.S. embassies in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, killing 224 people, including 12 Americans, and wounding more than 5,000. The United States responded on August 20, 1998, by launching seventy-five the remotely guided tomahawk cruise missiles from US navy ships in the Arabian Sea against three of bin Laden's training camps near Khost, Afghanistan, and against Al-Chifa, a pharmaceutical plant in

training camps, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Youssef later was involved in bin Laden-financed plots in the Philippines, and Pakistani intelligence officials say that he spent almost three years in a guest house owned by bin Laden before being arrested in Pakistan and extradited to the United States in February 1995. Tim Weiner, "Man with Mission Uses Whole World to Attack the U.S.," *The New York Times*, August 21, 1998, p. A11.

⁴¹ James Philips, n.38.

⁴² The first was during Clinton's November 1994 visit to the Philippines, and the second was during a planned February 1999 visit to Pakistan that was cancelled. See ABC News, "Plots to Kill the President," August 25, 1999, at <http://abcnews.com/sections/world/DailyNews/binLaden980825.html>.

⁴³ Frank Smyth, "Culture Clash: Bin Laden, Khartoum, and the War Against the West," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (London), October 1, 1998, p. 22.

Khartoum, Sudan, suspected of making chemical weapons for bin Laden in operation codenamed 'Infinite Reach'.⁴⁴

Washington is particularly interested in preempting a chemical weapon strike because bin Laden has shown an interest in acquiring weapons of mass destruction since at least 1993. In November 1998, CIA officials confirmed that bin Laden sought to acquire chemical weapons for attacks on U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf region.⁴⁵ CIA Director George Tenet testified before Congress in March 2000 that bin Laden was the 'foremost' terrorist threat to the United States and that 'his operatives have trained to conduct attacks with toxic chemicals or biological toxins.'⁴⁶ Tenet reaffirmed that due to US manhunt to nab bin Laden, he is "placing increased emphasis on developing surrogates to carry out attacks in an effort to avoid detection,"⁴⁷

President Clinton has declared Osama bin Laden as "America's public enemy number one"⁴⁸. Hence the United States has ratcheted up the pressure on bin Laden.⁴⁹ Assistant Secretary of State, Karl Inderfurth declared Osama as a "threat to our interests and the international community worldwide".⁵⁰ The United States has pressed the Taliban

⁴⁴ John H. Cooley, n.20, pp..217-18.

⁴⁵ Bin Laden reportedly also tried but failed to buy a nuclear warhead on the Russian black market. See Stefan Leader, "Osama bin Laden and the Terrorist Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, June 1, 1999.

⁴⁶ James Philips, n.38.

⁴⁷ Such surrogates include Egypt's Al Jihad organization, which was responsible for the 1981 assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, and Algeria's Armed Islamic Group. Bin Laden has funded both of these organizations for years. For details see *ibid*.

⁴⁸ Adam Tarock, n.7, p.802.

⁴⁹ He is now on the Federal Bureau of Investigation'(FBI)'s Ten Most Wanted Fugitive list, and there is a \$5 million reward for his capture.

⁵⁰ "State's Inderfurth Outlines U.S. Policy on South Asia", at <http://www.usembassy-israel.org.il/publish/armscontrol/archive/1999/october/aco1006a.html>.

repeatedly to seize or expel him. The Taliban regime, however, maintains that bin Laden is an honored guest who is not guilty of terrorism and cannot be handed over to *kafirs*.⁵¹

Washington imposed economic sanctions on the Taliban regime in July 1999 and prompted the United Nations Security Council to follow suit in November 1999. Despite growing diplomatic and economic pressures, the Taliban regime has refused to cooperate. The reasons for this defiance, which ultimately could threaten the Taliban's hold on power--lie in the nature of the Taliban and the Afghan political scene.

After repeated refusals by the Taliban to take action, President Clinton on July 6, 1999, declared a national emergency with respect to the Taliban. Because of the Taliban's hosting of bin Laden, Clinton imposed sanctions, including a ban on trade with Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan and a freezing of Taliban assets in the United States. On August 10, 1999, the Administration banned U.S. citizens from flying on Ariana Afghan Airlines. Washington prompted the United Nations Security Council to follow suit on November 14, 1999, freezing Taliban assets and embargoing its airline.⁵²

These sanctions are designed to induce the Taliban to abandon bin Laden, but among many Afghans, the renegade Saudi is popular because of his efforts during the jihad against the Soviets. Others support him as a symbol of defiance against the West, making American public denunciations of bin Laden somewhat self-defeating. Such

⁵¹ It is highly unlikely that the Taliban will surrender bin Laden. The wealthy Saudi has supported the Taliban financially and is known to be close to Mullah Omar. Bin Laden reportedly built a house for Mullah Omar, who is rumored to have married one of bin Laden's five daughters. Also see Richard Mackenzie, "US policy towards Afghanistan", for Osama's funding of the Taliban in William Maley, n.4, p.100-1. Nasim Zehra, "Taliban Afghanistan: Image and Governance", *Himal* (Kathmandu), vol.13, no.4, p.31.

⁵² James Philips, no.38.

denunciations rally support for bin Laden among anti-Western Afghans, contribute to his mystique throughout the Muslim world, and inspire donations from wealthy Gulf Arabs who want to share in bin Laden's self-created image as a champion of Islam. In the words of one Saudi dissident, "What Clinton is saying is there are two superpowers again: the United States and Osama bin Laden."⁵³

The United States, therefore, must hold the Taliban responsible for the terrorism of its protected guest. Washington has stressed this point repeatedly to the Taliban. After bin Laden's plots in Jordan and Canada were uncovered in December 1999, Michael Sheehan, the State Department's Coordinator for Counter terrorism, called the Taliban's foreign minister to warn him that the U.S. military could retaliate against the Taliban for any future bin Laden terrorism. Sheehan told him that bin Laden "is like a criminal who lives in your basement. It is no longer possible for you to act as if he's not your responsibility. He is your responsibility."⁵⁴

In his testimony on Drugs, Crime and Terrorism, Michael Sheehan told a House judiciary sub-committee on December 13, 2000 that "The Taliban's control over most of Afghanistan has resulted in a haven of lawlessness, in which terrorists, drug traffickers and other criminals live with impunity. The Taliban naturally benefits from the resources brought in by these sources, and thus has little incentive to change their own or their

⁵³ Ahmed Rashid, "Afghanistan: Epicentre of Terror," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 11, 2000, p. 16.

⁵⁴ James Philips, n.38.

“guests’ behavior”.⁵⁵ Consequently, in its ‘Patterns of Global Terrorism Report’ for 2000, the United States noted that:

Islamic extremists from around the world--including North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Central, South, and Southeast Asia--continued to use Afghanistan as a training ground and base of operations for their worldwide terrorist activities in 2000. The Taliban, which controlled most Afghan territory, permitted the operation of training and indoctrination facilities for non-Afghans and provided logistics support to members of various terrorist organizations and mujahidin, including those waging jihads (holy wars) in Central Asia, Chechnya, and Kashmir. Throughout 2000 the Taliban continued to host Usama Bin Ladin despite UN sanctions and international pressure to hand him over to stand trial in the United States or a third country. In a serious and ongoing dialogue with the Taliban, the United States repeatedly made clear to the Taliban that it would be held responsible for any terrorist attacks undertaken by Bin Laden while he is in its territory.⁵⁶

The recent attack on US Navy ship, USS Cole at Aden port killing seventeen American soldiers, once again raised the hackles of Clinton administration. However, the policy with regard to Osma’s extradition to US has met with a dead end.

[B] Secondary Concerns:

(a) Women Rights:

When the Taliban first appeared in the Afghan political scene, it ‘acted against a *mujahideen* commander in Kandahar who had abducted, raped and killed three women in

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State, International Information Programs, <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/usandun/00121303.htm>

⁵⁶ Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2000, U.S. Department of State, Released by the Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, April 2001.

mid-1994.⁵⁷ However, the incident hardly provided any indication of the things to unfold. What followed afterwards was a series of diktats aiming at restricting women to the four corners of the houses⁵⁸.

The Taliban however, maintained consistently that all its decisions are intended to protect its women folks from the evil influences. The step to shut the doors of educational institutions on girls is one such instance. With equal consistency, the Taliban, on all levels, have insisted that the movement considers it an Islamic duty to provide education for all, including women. However, given the fact that separate facilities are non-existent, a temporary ban is in order. Taliban, however, finds it difficult to explain the other measures, which are nothing short of a discriminatory practice against women. Seeking to enforce its brand of puritan Islam, Taliban has subjected women to limitations on social participation, working and education. "They must wear a head-to-toe veil in public, and they may not ride in vehicles unless accompanied by a male relative. Until November 1997, women were only allowed to be treated at one hospital in Kabul, which is under U.N. sponsored reconstruction and lacks sufficient staff and equipment."⁵⁹

Taliban policies towards the women have received widespread condemnation. It has forced many United Nations and other aid organizations, including the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, Save the Children, and Oxfam, to cut back or cease operations, either in protest or for lack of available (female) staff.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Nancy Hatch Dupree, "Afghan Women Under the Taliban", in William Maley, n.4, p.145.

⁵⁸ For details of the strict laws and decrees see Kamal Matinuddin, n.26, pp.19-20, also pp.34-5.

⁵⁹ Kenneth Katzman, n.9, p.10.

⁶⁰ Kenneth Cooper, "Kabul Women Under Virtual House Arrest", *Washington Post*, October 7, 1996.

There has been significant US and U.N. pressure on the Taliban regime to moderate its treatment of women. Several U.N. Security Council resolutions urge Taliban to end the discrimination against women. During her visit to Pakistan in November 1997, the US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright attacked Taliban policies as despicable and intolerable.⁶¹ US representative to the U.N. Bill Richardson discussed the treatment of women during his April 1998 visit to Afghanistan and reported some progress on the issue. In the month of October 1999, President Clinton was reported to have said, "Perhaps the most difficult place for women in the world today is still Afghanistan."⁶²

Ever since Madeline Albright became the Secretary of State, U.S. condemnation of Taliban policies on gender had been forthright. While the Secretary's own commitment might have influenced this direction, so has the organization of an influential lobbying network comprising of feminist, human rights, and humanitarian groups, supported by some Afghan women exiles in the United States, who made the Taliban gender policies a political issue.⁶³ In addition, the women lobby in the United States rallied consistently to put pressure on the government to act in this regard. Women rights groups like Feminist Majority and the National Organization for Women (NOW) mobilized to stop the Clinton administration from recognizing the Taliban unless it alters its treatment of women.⁶⁴ Not to forget the important role played by the Hollywood celebrities who since 1997 have espoused such causes. These networks having included

⁶¹ "Clinton Reproaches Afghanistan Rulers for Ill-treatment of Women", *Indian Express* (New Delhi), October 28, 1999.

⁶² *Indian Express*, October 28, 1999.

⁶³ Barnet R Rubin, "Testimony on the Situation in Afghanistan, October 8, 1998", United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

⁶⁴ Kenneth Katzman, n.9, p. 10. Also see <http://www.nutshellnotes.com/afghanistan-text.htm>.

key constituencies of former President Clinton and his Democratic party acted a significant manner to toughen the US attitude towards the Taliban.

In a significant development on March 17, 1999, the United States Senate passed the following resolution, which signified the American response to the anti-women policies of the Taliban. Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the treatment of women and girls by the Taliban in Afghanistan it resolved that:

1. The President should instruct the United States Representative to the United Nations to use all appropriate means to prevent any Taliban-led government in Afghanistan from obtaining the seat in the United Nations General Assembly reserved for Afghanistan so long as gross violations of internationally recognized human rights against women and girls persist; and

2. The United States should refuse to recognize any government in Afghanistan which is not taking actions to achieve the following goals in Afghanistan: (A) The effective participation of women in all civil, economic, and social life. (B) The right of women to work. (C) The right of women and girls to an education without discrimination and the reopening of schools to women and girls at all levels of education. (D) The freedom of movement of women and girls. (E) Equal access of women and girls to health facilities. (F) Equal access of women and girls to humanitarian aid.⁶⁵

The Taliban till date, however, has maintained a defiant attitude. In January 1998, the Chief Taliban representative in the US, Abdul Hakim Mujahid, proclaimed, “ninety-nine percent of Afghan women are supporting the Taliban policy toward women”. He believes that resistance to Taliban’s treatment of women is present only among “one percent of Afghan women tied to a Communist style of liberation.”⁶⁶

⁶⁵ United States Senate, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c106:1:./temp/~c106bphXJL::>

⁶⁶ Dan Morgan and David B Ottaway, “Women’s Fury Toward Taliban Stalls Pipeline: Afghan Plan Snagged in US Political Issues”, *Washington Post*, January 11, 1998.

(b) Retrieval of US Stinger Missiles:

Another US policy objective in the region is to recover the Stinger missiles⁶⁷ provided to the *mujahideen* fighters during the Soviet occupation days. It needs to be noted that these missiles were used with lethal accuracy accounting for a great number of losses of aircrafts of the Soviets. According to a 'US Defence Intelligence Agency' testimony, an unspecified number of Stinger missiles remain in Afghanistan.⁶⁸ The United States fears that the missiles could fall into the hands of terrorist groups.⁶⁹ Policy makers fear that Iran could acquire additional Stingers and provide them to groups Iran supports, such as the *Hizbollah*, *Hamas* and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. With considerable amount of money and influence in Afghanistan at his disposal, bin Laden is also suspected to have acquired some Stingers.

In 1992, the United States reportedly spent about \$10 million to buy back the Stingers from individual *mujahideen* commanders. The New York Times reported that the first effort failed because the US was competing with other buyers such as Iran and North Korea. The report further suggested that CIA would spend about \$55 million in 1994 in a renewed effort to buy back the Stingers.⁷⁰ On March 7, 1994, the Washington Post reported that the CIA had recovered only a fraction of the at-large Stingers and does not know who control the remaining ones. Thus, the concern still remains and there is very little the administration could do without the assistance of the Taliban.

⁶⁷ Common estimates indicate that 200-300 Stingers may remain at large in Afghanistan.

⁶⁸ Kenneth Katzman, n.8, p.16.

⁶⁹ Iran brought 16 of the missiles in 1987 and fired one against US helicopters. It reportedly has acquired some additional Stingers since the fall of Najibullah in April 1992.

⁷⁰ *New York Times*, July 24, 1993.

In addition other concerns such as the large scale migration problem of the refugees and Afghanistan turning into a hub for criminalized economy. The devastated condition of Afghanistan has produced the world's largest-ever single refugee case-load, at times as high as 6.2 million persons.⁷¹ Smuggling of consumer goods, fuel and food stuffs through Afghanistan is playing havoc and crippling the local industry. The Taliban tax on the smuggling trade is the second largest source of income after drugs.⁷² These needs however have remained relatively unfocussed in view of the in fashion threats such terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism.

Policy Options:

So far the United States has taken few steps to secure its interests in Afghanistan. Most of the United States' efforts are confined to adhoc measures to appease domestic critics concerned with terrorism or the treatment of women. However, a critical gap exists between the high level U.S. interests in Afghanistan and the modest level U.S. engagement in the region. Until this gap is bridged, the problems are likely to mount.

The United States has several alternatives for meeting these challenges in Afghanistan. Scholars propound three options⁷³, noting their relative advantages and disadvantages. Even if these options are highly prescriptive the United States can strive for the best rather than following its adhoc and ineffective efforts for long.

(i) Limited Involvement:

⁷¹ UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.ch/world/mide/afghan.htm>.

⁷² The entire economic interaction between Pakistan and Taliban is legalised by the Afghan Trade and Transit Agreement, 1965. See Sreedhar, "Is the Taliban being Coverted into a Jihadi Army?", *Aakrosh*, vol.3, no.7, April 2000, p.16.

⁷³ Afghanistan Foundation, <http://www.afghanistanfoundation.org/Docs/Whitepaper.htm>

This is the easiest, but the least rewarding, policy for the United States. Incidentally the United States has been continuing with this approach with minimum dividends. Accordingly Washington could rely primarily on UN efforts, restricting its own involvement to moral suasion, small amounts of humanitarian aid, and occasional military strikes against terrorists. Although the United States would press for peaceful solutions to regional problems, it would not make Afghanistan a priority in its relations with Pakistan or other regional actors. This approach would involve minimum resources and will also limit the U.S. exposure to the area. However, such a policy option has several disadvantages.

Limited involvement in Afghanistan would not necessarily lead to the Taliban's cessation of promotion to anti-U.S. forces. Afghanistan will remain a base for operation of the some of the most hostile terrorists against the United States and its allies. On the contrary United States will be left with little influence over the Taliban's activities. "Afghanistan may become an even grievous source of regional instability. The Taliban has hosted training camps for fighters who have spread radicalism to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Xinjiang, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere. A lack of U.S. involvement may allow the Taliban to intensify this support and perhaps spread its extremist interpretation of Islam to other countries."⁷⁴ In addition narcotics trafficking from Afghanistan may also record an increase. Problems of human rights and humanitarian crises are likely to continue in Afghanistan in the absence of U.S. pressure.

(ii) Increased Engagement of the Taliban:

⁷⁴ Zalmay Khalilzad and Daniel Byman, n.l, p.66.

Pragmatists seeking to avoid a confrontation might consider working with the Taliban. It would be a favorable policy decision given the latter's dominant position in Afghanistan today. By working with it more closely, Washington might make it a responsible power and perhaps lead it to renounce support for terrorism and to improve its human rights record. Even though in itself a highly subjective prescription, the U.S. support for the Taliban may help bring an end to the civil war- a tremendous humanitarian achievement even if the Taliban's human rights record remains dismal.⁷⁵ Some U.S. concessions might be required to secure U.S. objectives regarding gender issues, terrorism and narcotics. In contrast to a policy of limited involvement, the United States would be active in its engagement in the region, expending diplomatic and economic resources to further U.S objectives.

However, an engagement policy will be hampered by Taliban's intransigence. Authors point out that given the Taliban's poor past record, there is little reason to expect it to renounce radicalism in exchange for ties to Washington.⁷⁶ The Taliban's leaders, in the past, have shown little regard for Washington or the West's opinion. There is little reason to believe in a change of behaviour in the event of constant engagement. As the Taliban consolidates more power, its engagement with external powers might lead it to conclude that it can continue human rights abuses with no penalty. Most importantly, garnering domestic support will be difficult for such a policy reorientation. Deepening engagement with the Taliban is likely to be rejected by key segments of American body politic.

⁷⁵ <http://www.afghanistanfoundation.org/Docs/Whitepaper.htm>

⁷⁶ Zalmay Khalilzad and Daniel Byman, n.1, p.73.

(iii) Weaken and Transform the Taliban:

In the absence of the above policy options the United States could choose to oppose the Taliban more directly, seeking to weaken it while transforming it into a more moderate movement. This opposition would involve two steps. First, the United States and its allies must weaken the Taliban through military stalemate. To this end, Washington could pressure Pakistan and others to end support for the Taliban. Second, as Taliban difficulties increase, the movement could be taken over by more moderate elements. In order to encourage this development, Washington should identify more moderate leaders, using offers of aid and other incentives to convince individual leaders to support alternatives to the Taliban. The United States should also consider working with the former King and other leaders in exile who espouse moderate policies and seek to bring Afghanistan's communities together.⁷⁷

Sreedhar points out that the Taliban is under threat from both within in the from rebellion by tribal leaders and without in terms of Pakistan giving in to US pressure to cut aid to the Taliban. First, there was a report of a rebellion by a group of tribal leaders from Pakhiya, Khost and Paktika against the Taliban administration. Second, there was hijacking of an Ariana Boeing-727 on February 6, 2000 during a domestic flight from Kabul to *Mazar-e-Sharif*. Most of the passengers alighting at Heathrow airport were asylum seekers.⁷⁸

Researchers on Afghanistan prescribe some steps for the reformation of the Taliban involving changing the balance of power in Afghanistan, opposition to the

⁷⁷ Barnett Rubin, n.7.

⁷⁸ Sreedhar, "Can the Taliban be disciplined?", *Aakrosh*, vol.3, no.8, July 2000, pp.79-80.

Taliban's ideology, pressing Pakistan to withdraw its support, aiding the victims of the Taliban, supporting moderate Afghans and elevating the importance of Afghanistan at home.⁷⁹ James Phillips, a Research Fellow in Middle Eastern affairs in the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies also provides similar solutions. He suggests provision of military, diplomatic and economic support to the Taliban opposition, provision of humanitarian aid, forging a regional coalition to support anti-Taliban opposition and an Afghan peace settlement and allowing the Northern Alliance to reopen the Afghan embassy.⁸⁰

Transforming the Taliban offers several advantages. Most importantly, it would garner considerable support from the American people, particularly those concerned with terrorism and human rights. A transformation policy also is likely to keep the Taliban focused on problems at home, reducing its ability to spread radicalism abroad. If successful, a transformation policy could lead the Taliban to reject terrorism and narcotics trafficking and, eventually, assist in bringing lasting peace to Afghanistan.

However, this option too poses several serious problems. A resultant civil war will result in a humanitarian nightmare of death and carnage. As a result refugees will not return, and a pipeline will not be built. With a greater likelihood of a such a step's failure, it would result in the further embittering the Taliban towards the United States leading it to actively sponsor attacks against U.S. citizens throughout the world.

Domestic Efforts:

⁷⁹ Zalmay Khalilzad and Daniel Byman, n.1, pp.74-7.

⁸⁰ James Phillips, n.38.

Any policy reorientation must take into account the domestic reactions and perceptions into account. Any U.S. initiative requires a wide range of efforts in Afghanistan, in the region, and at home. The United States need to take following steps to create a congenial atmosphere in a favour of a new Taliban policy.

1. Announcing a new direction in U.S. policy, making it clear to all actors that the United States will play a major role in bringing peace to Afghanistan and the region. Washington need also emphasize that this role will be a lasting one. .

2. Appointing a high-level special envoy on Afghanistan. The envoy must have sufficient stature and access to ensure that he or she is taken seriously in foreign capitals and by local militias. Equally important, the special envoy must be able to shape Afghanistan policy within U.S. bureaucracies. Currently, Afghanistan policy involves a host of regional and functional elements of the bureaucracy involving terrorism, human rights, nuclear proliferation, and regional issues. An envoy with stature can elevate the importance of Afghanistan and facilitate the formation of a coherent strategy.

3. Revive bipartisan congressional activism on Afghanistan. The U.S. Congress played a critical role in shaping U.S. policy toward Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation. Congress often prompted the Reagan Administration to increase its efforts to support the Afghan resistance. It can play a similar role in prompting the Clinton Administration and future administrations to support the Afghan resistance to the Taliban. Congress can hold hearings to educate the American people on the situation in Afghanistan, examine the U.S. interests at stake there, and debate options for protecting those interests.

US Congress has approved a resolution calling for efforts to reconvene the *Loya Jirga* and the establishment of representative government to bring “freedom, peace and stability to Afghanistan”.⁸¹ The US Congress had passed resolution on Laden and terrorism, it was for the first time “that the issue of resolution of the Afghan conflict through elected representative government in Afghanistan has discussed in the US Congress, which reflects a major change on the policy of the Congress”⁸².

4. Lastly, for any policy to succeed, Washington must secure U.S. domestic support. This can be done by engaging in a public diplomacy campaign to explain the importance of Afghanistan. The country’s role as a host to terrorists, its proximity to critical regions, and its past role and sacrifice in defeating the Soviets all need be emphasized. Particularly important is bringing in groups concerned with the Taliban’s mistreatment of women one of the major few interest groups in the United States concerned with Afghanistan.

The above list of initiatives will require a substantial change in U.S. policy, but it will not require a massive outlay of resources. The United States will not have to use its military forces, and the necessary reconstruction aid and other financial inducements are limited given that the poverty of the region makes even modest U.S. contributions desirable to all potential partners. The key change is a political one. Washington must exercise leadership in order to bring peace and prosperity to Afghanistan and the region.

⁸¹ US Congress favours Loya Jirga to resolve Afghan conflict, *Afghan News*, Internet Edition, October 29, 2000.

⁸² US Congress for Representative Government in Afghanistan, *Afghan News*, Internet Edition, October 29, 2000.

Chapter-4
Role of the U.S. and Regional Powers in the
Resolution of the Afghan Conflict

In the Buzkashi being played in the region by external powers, Afghanistan, the nation of rugged mountains and gorgeous vales, is itself the hunted calf.¹

Few people in the world have been more distinctly shaped by their land and its location than have the Afghans. It is geography more than any other factor that has ensured Afghanistan's continuing influence in Asia. Lying across Asian land routes like a mountainous cross roads picturesquely, it is being described by Arnold Toynbee as a "round about of the Ancient world".² Being situated at the strategic juncture of three of the world's major geographic regions- the Middle East, South Asia, and erstwhile Soviet Union- geopolitical significance of Afghanistan can not be dismissed lightly.³ Afghanistan with its multiethnic character shares geographically contiguous borders with its neighbours.

Few conflicts are local in nature and limited in their scope. Not only the cataclysm in a nation state affects the stability of the adjacent region, but also the neighbouring countries in one way or the other contribute to the ongoing conflict in a nation state. The continuing civil war in Afghanistan is not only an internal affair, but has the characteristics of a 'transnational war'⁴. This chapter examines the abiding interest shown by the neighbouring regional powers in Afghanistan and the role they have played

¹ Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved, *Afghan Buzkashi, Power, Games and Gamesmen, vol.1* (Delhi: Wordsmiths, 2000), p.14. For details of the Buzkashi, the traditional winter game played in northern Afghanistan, see "Buzkashi: a way of life for the Afghans", *Times of India* (New Delhi), May 9, 2000.

² Quoted in Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, 1964-83*, (London: 1984), p.3.

³ Ray S. Cline, *World Power Assessment: A Calculus of Strategic Drift*, (Washington D.C.: 1975), p.4.

⁴ This term was used by Dr. William Maley, Senior Lecturer in Politics, in the University of New South Wales, Research Associate in the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra at a seminar on November 17, 2000 at India International Centre, New Delhi.

individually or collectively in the conflict. While the premise underlines the fact that a conflict always is a result of interplay of external and internal actors, present chapter takes up case of each of the regional powers and studies the motive behind their involvement in the conflict. It also looks at the scope of the United States in involving the regional powers in some sort of a collective effort to bring peace to the region. The various regional initiatives to provide a solution to the problem are also examined with the objective of exploring the feasibility of a broader conflict resolution mechanism.

Afghanistan's imbroglio stems mainly from two groups of actors. First, the 'primary group', consisting of the internal actors, each with its distinct ethnic identity. Second, the 'secondary group', that of the external actors, engaged in a sort of a game of self-aggrandisement by playing the internal actors one against the other, which leads to the further ethnic fragmentation of Afghanistan.

Any political solution to the Afghan problem has, thus, to take into account, not only the fighting factions inside Afghanistan, but also the interests of the neighbouring countries. These interests are expressed in terms of assets for Pakistan and Turkmenistan who view the Afghan quagmire as an opportunity to extend their regional influence. Others like Iran and Uzbekistan perceive the problem as a liability. And yet, for some like Russia, the conflict is viewed as an opportunity to maintain its influence in the Central Asian Republics.⁵

Saudi Arabia:

Currently Saudi Arabia is believed to be supporting the Taliban. While the engagement of the Saudis in Afghanistan can be traced to December 1979, this section

gives more emphasis to its present role and examines how the Saudi policy has to reckon with the supporters and opponents of the Taliban regime.

According to writers like Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, the foreign policy of the Saudis has had three major objectives: 'the promotion of Islam; guaranteeing the security of the country and the royal family; and general stability.'⁶ All these objectives were threatened by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

“Even if the Soviets did not intend any direct military action in the Gulf, the Saudis believed that the rise of Communism in Afghanistan would promote political instability in the region and hence jeopardize the security of the royal family. Saudi Arabia’s distaste for the invasion was fuelled further by the fact that it was against a Muslim country, and that it installed a communist regime in Kabul whose domestic policies were directed against Islam.”⁷

Guided by these foreign policy objectives Saudi Arabia joined its objective with that of the United States and supported the withdrawal of the Soviet forces and the right to self-determination of the people of Afghanistan. “Saudi Arabia along with the United States became one of the two main financial backers of the Afghanistan resistance organizations. For both political and ideological reasons, Saudi Arabia also promoted the Sunni Islamic fundamentalists within the Afghan resistance.”⁸ According to writers like Ahmad Rashid, “the Saudis saw an opportunity both to promote *Wahabbism* and get rid of its disgruntled radicals”.⁹ Thus, Saudi based organizations like the World Muslim

⁵ Olivier Roy, “Why War is Going on in Afghanistan: The Afghan Crisis in Perspective”, *Perceptions* (Ankara), Special Issue on Afghanistan, vol.4, no.4, December 2000-February 2001, pp.15-6.

⁶ William Maley, *Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban*, (London: 1998), pp.117-18.

⁷ *ibid.*, p.118.

⁸ *ibid.*, p.119.

⁹ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, (2000) p.129.

League became the recruiting agencies for *Mujahideen* fighters against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

However, the Soviet withdrawal brought in a dramatic shift in the foreign policy of the Saudis. They were no longer bothered about the self-determination of the people of Afghanistan. It now strove to establish a pro-Saudi Arabia government in Afghanistan. It's objectives were now directed in the direction of a military defeat of the pro-Soviet Najibullah regime. However, the Persian Gulf war of 1990-91, during which the Saudi-backed Afghan resistance groups backed Iraq rather than their patron, led to yet another change in the Saudi policy. Saudi Arabia cut off its financial assistance to these organizations and also supported the UN plan for a political resolution of the Afghan conflict.

The Saudi monarch took a direct interest in trying to resolve the differences between the Afghan leaders after the fall of Najibullah. In the wake of the formation of the government by the Northern Alliance, Saudi Arabia provided its support to the *Hezb-e-Islami* led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Although the precise extent of Saudi support for Hekmatyar remains unclear, some sources put their estimation to as high as two billion dollars. However, gradually Saudis discovered the wisdom of nurturing contacts with other groups beside Hekmatyar as well. Thus, Saudi Arabia provided financial support for Dostum, hoping to prevent an alliance between Dostum and Iran.

After the Taliban captured the seat of power in Kabul, Saudi Arabia decided to support them keeping with its consistent policy of opposing Shiites and supporting Pakistan and the Sunni Pushtuns. The initial informal alliance between the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia seemed to be supporting the Taliban. Although there is very

little hard data to support any claim of Saudi financial assistance for the Taliban, it can be safely presumed to be so.¹⁰ In the aftermath of the United States developing a hate hate relationship with the Taliban, Saudis continued to adhere to their friendship with the latter. Saudi Arabia was among the first nations to recognize the Taliban regime.

The presence of Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan since 1998, however, has brought in some sort of irritation in the bilateral relationship between the Saudis and the Taliban. Osama Bin Laden was a Saudi dissident temporarily residing in the Taliban-held areas. He was critical of the monarchy in Saudi Arabia, accusing them of being subservient to American interests. However, writers like Ahmad Rashid profess a different viewpoint. For a long time the Saudis resisted the attempt of the Americans to persuade the Taliban to extradite Osama. "The Saudis preferred to leave Bin Laden alone in Afghanistan because his arrest and trail by the Americans could expose the deep relationship that Bin Laden continued to have with sympathetic members of the Royal Family and elements within the Saudi intelligence, which could prove deeply embarrassing".¹¹ "When the Saudis asked Mullah Omar to extradite him they declined to do so, though they did indicate that he would not be allowed to use Afghan territory for anti-Saudi activities."¹²

Iran:

It is important to note that foreign policy pursued by Iran has been considerably influenced by that of the Saudis and vice versa. In spite of the fact that Iran took a strong

¹⁰ In July 1998, Saudi Intelligence Chief, Turki-El-Faisal had flown into Kandahar and provided vast sums to Taliban leadership to bribe feuding Uzbek commanders. See G D Bakshi, "Mono, Ethnic Solutions: The Taliban's Chequebook Campaign, Autumn 1998", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.22, no.9, December 1998, p.1299.

¹¹ Ahmed Rashid, n.9, p.138.

¹² Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan, 1994-97*, (London: 1999), p. 159.

position against the United States following the assumption of power by the Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, both Iran and Saudi Arabia were on the same side in the Afghan conflict. They strongly opposed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, supported the *Mujahideen* and backed the international measures to isolate the Afghan regime and the Soviet Union. As the war progressed Iran was “alarmed by the growing US and Saudi involvement in Afghanistan”¹³. “Due to the estranged relations between Iran and the USA, the Afghan *Mujahideen* groups based in Iran received no international military assistance. Nor did the two million Afghan refugees who fled to Iran received the same humanitarian aid, which their counterparts in Pakistan received.”¹⁴ The fact remained, however, in contrast to the Saudis, Iran played a minor role in Afghan affairs till the late 1980s.

Iran’s interest in Afghanistan remained confined to strengthening the Shia minority in the country, namely the Hazaras and lending support to the resistance parties within the Shia communities, encouraging most of them to unite under a single party, Hizb-e-Wahdat.¹⁵ However, following the reversals of the party at the hands of Massoud’s forces, Iran took steps to nurture good relations with the Rabbani government. In 1993, for the first time Iran began to give substantial military aid to the President Buhannudin Rabbani in Kabul and the Uzbek warlord General Rashid Dostum and urged all the ethnic groups to join with Rabbani.”¹⁶ Interpreting this move is relatively simple. Writers like Anwar-ul-Haq opine that Iran had a clear-cut strategy regarding Afghanistan. It preferred

¹³ Peter Marsden, *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan*, (London: 1998), p.134.

¹⁴ Ahmed Rashid, n.9, p.198.

¹⁵ For details see Peter Marsden, n.13, p.134.

¹⁶ Ahmed Rashid, n.9, p.200.

the pro-Iran Afghan factions to dominate the government. In its absence, Iran insisted that at least some pro-Iran Afghan groups be included in the government.¹⁷

The emergence of the Taliban at the center of power in Afghanistan was a foreign policy challenge for Teheran. The collapse of the Afghan state increased Iran's own insecurity by creating a massive influx of drugs and weapons. "The sphere of Afghanistan's ethnic conflict threatened to spill into Iran along with the economic burden of supporting millions of Afghan refugees, who were deeply disliked by the ordinary Iranians."¹⁸

Of even greater concern to the Iranians was that since 1996, the Taliban were also secretly backing anti-regime Iranian groups such as *Ahl-e-Sunnahwal Jamaat*. In view of such threat perceptions, Iranian military aid to the anti-Taliban alliance escalated after the fall of Kabul in 1996, and again after the fall of Mazar in 1998. It led to the worsening of the situation as the Taliban "accused Iran of having provided support to resistance forces in Western Afghanistan and of having also strengthened the efforts of the northern alliance to withstand Taliban attacks on northern and central Afghanistan."¹⁹

Iran's conflict with Taliban should also be seen in the context of the formers' "over all policy in Central Asia, particularly in the context of the construction of the gas and oil pipeline from that region to the outside world, and also in the light of the decision by some oil companies that the gas pipeline should go via Afghanistan and not via Iran, the former route being preferred by Washington."²⁰

¹⁷ William Maley, n.6, p.131.

¹⁸ Ahmed Rashid, n.9, p.203.

¹⁹ Peter Marsden, n.13, p.135.

²⁰ Adam Tarock, "The Politics of the Pipeline", *Third World Quarterly* (Surrey), vol.20, no.4, 1999, p.809.

In June 1997, the Taliban closed down the Iranian embassy in Kabul, accusing Iran of destroying peace and stability in Afghanistan. The estranged relations created the unfortunate event of the killing of the Iranian diplomats in Mazar in 1998, which nearly forced Iran into war with the Taliban.

The intensification of conflict between Iran and Taliban resulted in a rapprochement between the USA and Teheran. "Both countries now shared the same views and were critical of the Taliban's drug and gender policies, their harbouring of terrorists and the threat that the Taliban brand of Islamic fundamentalism posed to the region."²¹

Apart from the USA, Iran has also joined hands with India at the United Nations in attacking the Taliban. On September 24, 1999, addressing the UN General Assembly, the Iranian foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi said peace, stability and the respect for the rights of Afghan people have all become distant dreams, turning Afghanistan, with its proud and rich heritage, into a bastion of narcotics, terrorism and regional instability."²²

In spite of the fact that the Taliban regime made several overtures to the Iranians regarding fresh initiatives for a rapprochement, Iranians have only scaled down to the level of accepting a coalitional politics in Kabul, which includes the opposition as well. On April 9, 2000, the Taliban foreign minister, Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil said, "We are in favour of boosting relations with Iran. We are asking the Iranian authorities to favourably consider the hurdles hampering their relations."²³ The Iranian mood can be ascertained

²¹ Ahmed Rashid, n.9, p.205.

²² *Hindu*, September 25,1999.

²³ *Times of India*, April 10, 2000.

from the response of the Prime Minister Khatami who reiterated ‘Teheran’s desire to see a coalition government that would include the opposition’.²⁴

Pakistan:

The involvement of Pakistan in post 1978 Afghanistan affairs has been much more than active. During the Soviet intervention of Afghanistan, Pakistan played the role of the chief facilitator of American foreign policy. Through Pakistan, external assistance in terms of arms and money was supplied in abundance to the Afghan *Mujahideens*. “Pakistan’s Afghan policy has traditionally been executed by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), a quasi-military intelligence agency that was created by General Zia-ul-Haq at the start of the Afghan war.”²⁵

Situations underwent a sea change after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan leading to the erosion of American interest in the region. Even though the American funding for the ISI declined, the interests shown by the successive Pakistani regimes provided the life support to the agency. Pakistan’s policy of supporting *Pushtun* political forces in Afghanistan was generated from a belief that such a government could provide Pakistan with a strategic depth vis-a-vis India and quell *Pushtun* nationalist forces at home. Thus, Pakistan emerges as a country pursuing an active and ambitious regional policy after the Soviet withdrawal.

One school of thought describes the Taliban as the creation of the ISI. Other interpretations regarding the origin of Taliban also converge on the fact that it was the ISI, which provided logistical, military and conceptual assistance. “Considerable support for the Taliban has also been generated from private, informal networks of religious

²⁴ Associated Free Press (AFP), December 29, 2000.

schools (*madrassas*) that are supported by funding sources in Saudi Arabia, and private transportation and drug trafficking networks.”²⁶ Writers like Ahmed Rashid delve deep into the Taliban’s contact points in various segments of Pakistani society. It was not simply the ISI, “but also *Jamiat-e Ulema-i Islam*, the transport mafia, the Bhutto government, and some of Pakistan’s provincial governments”²⁷ operated at different levels to nurture a lasting relationship with the Taliban.

In the absence of American support Pakistan pursued a policy, which aimed at establishing a friendly *Pushtun*-based regime in Afghanistan. Pakistan was the first country to have recognized the Taliban regime in Kabul on May 25, 1997. According to writers, a friendly regime in Afghanistan sought to fulfill at least two objectives.

1. Geo-economic function: Opening the vital transit route between Pakistan and the Central Asian market and providing access to their oil and gas resources.

2. Geo-strategic function: Offering strategic depth to Pakistan vis-à-vis India, still considered the prime threat.²⁸

As a result Pakistan continues to be Afghanistan’s only regional neighbour that maintains a continuous relationship with all sides of the Afghan political divide. In the face of an estranged relationship with the USA, Pakistan maintains regular contact and possesses an ability to influence the Taliban policies. Whereas the foreign policy set in the Zia era was designed to result in enormous windfall in terms of finance and arms from USA, China and Saudi Arabia, the post-Cold War chaotic Pakistan neither

²⁵ Ameen Jan, “Prospects for Peace in Afghanistan: The Role of Pakistan”, [http://www.ipacademy.org/Publications/Reports/ Research/PublRepoReseAfghPrint.htm](http://www.ipacademy.org/Publications/Reports/Research/PublRepoReseAfghPrint.htm).

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ William Maley, n.6, p.24.

²⁸ Citha D Maass, “The Afghanistan Conflict”, *Central Asian Survey*, vol.18, no.1, 1999, p.70.

possesses the resources nor domestic stability to sustain such a foreign policy. As a result, Pakistan's Afghan policy has been characterized as much by drift as by determination.

Since 1997 Islamabad has been involved in at least two rounds of intensive shuttle diplomacy. Irrespective of whatever the Northern Alliance's public stance, its leadership has actively sought Pakistan's intervention to initiate an intra-Afghan dialogue. Pakistan has been trying to portray an image of neutrality, which combines the attempts to resolve the Afghan crisis and at the same time being sensitive to its own problems. "Nawaz Sharif, days before he was deposed, accused the Taliban authorities of providing training to terrorists. Gen. Parvez Musharaf repeated these charges during Mullah Rabbani's visit to Islamabad in January 2000...Pakistan also allowed the opening of a new UN office in Teheran to coordinate the work on Afghanistan."²⁹ The Taliban too has shown sensitivity to Pakistan overt demands by closing down nineteen terrorist camps in June 2000.

Pakistan's overt support for the Taliban regime was established beyond doubt when it lodged protest with the United States against presumed violations of its airspace during the missile strike. It talked of six of its citizens getting killed as a result of a missile falling within the Pakistani territory.³⁰ However, it retracted its statement soon and said that all the missiles fell in the Afghan territory.³¹

In an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in August 2000, General Musharaf dropped all pretensions of non-interference in Afghan affairs. He clearly stated that "it was in Pakistan's national interest to support the Taliban as a cross border force dominated by ethnic *Pushtuns*, who populate both sides of the long Afghan-

²⁹ Sreedhar, Can the Taliban be disciplined?, *Aakrosh* (New Delhi), vol.3, no.8, July 2000, p.85.

³⁰ "Clinton Murders Six Pakistanis With U.S. Missile", http://paknews.com/aug98/pns_aug23.html

³¹ "Pakistan lodges protest over U.S. missile strikes", <http://www.cnn.com/US/9808/21/air.strikes.02/>

Pak border. Thus, it is evident, General Musharaf believes in exploiting Afghan ethnic turmoil as a means of achieving wider regional objectives.”³²

Pakistan, thus, remains a key to the solution of the problem called the Taliban. However, given the inherent weakness of the civil society in the country, Pakistan also faces the danger of being overwhelmed by the fundamentalist Islamic wave. There have been suggestions, even though guided by ulterior motivations, for Pakistan to work its way out of the Afghan problem.³³ However, as things appear, the present military rulers in Pakistan perceive contact with the Taliban to be much more rewarding than its absence. In the month of May 2000, Chief Executive Parvez Musharaf made several statements “in support of the Taliban, saying their friendly relations are important to Pakistan’s security and that his government cannot interfere in Afghan issue.”³⁴ Taliban appear to have provided the Pakistanis with a force multiplier to negotiate for better treatment by the United States. Thus, Pakistan has been advocating that the US should enter into direct talks with the Taliban regarding bin Laden, a move calculated to gain international recognition for Taliban.

China:

It is important to note at the outset that actual Chinese position on the Taliban is different from its proclaimed official stance. China has never commented publicly on its dealings with the Taliban. In fact, China has not shown any departure from its official position that the ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani represents the legitimate

³² Maj Gen. (Retd.)Afsir Karim, “South Asian Conflicts; Afghanistan, Kashmir, Sri Lanka”, *Aakrosh*, vol.4, no.10, January 2001, pp.4-5.

³³ Marvin G.Weinbaum, “The Taliban and Afghanistan: Implications for Regional Security and Options for International Action”, http://www.usip.org/oc/sr/sr_afghan.html.

³⁴ “Russia, U.S. Converge on Warnings to Taliban”, *Washington Post*, June 4, 2000.

government of Afghanistan. China had locked up its embassy in Kabul in 1992 and evacuated its staff as rival factions fought for the control of the capital.

In actuality, however, Chinese engagement with the Taliban is much more accommodating. China's compulsion arises out of the thriving Uighur Islamic fundamentalism in its Xinjiang province and the disturbing signals of the Taliban's contribution to it. The Taliban was suspected of providing support to the 'Party of Allah' an organisation floated by the Xinjiang Muslims.³⁵ Xinjiang Communist party chief Wang Lequan told the Xinjiang Daily on January 22, 1999, "Xinjiang is special in that it is the constant target of separatists both inside and outside the country."³⁶

A lot of crime is being attributed to the growing drug abuse in Xinjiang. Officials of the UN say that many of the estimated one million drug addicts of China live in the western region of Xinjiang, which abuts Afghanistan. The Chinese believe that the profits from the heroin trade are funding Chinese Islamic and nationalist movements among the Uighurs and other minorities in Xinjiang."³⁷

Even if the direct link between the Uighurs and the Taliban is hard to establish, it can be safely said that, "Uighur Islamic militants have long been students of the Afghan *Mujahideen*. They have trained and fought with the *Mujahideen* since 1986. Many Uighurs also study in *madrassas* run by the Taliban."³⁸

³⁵ Sreedhar, n.29, p.84 and Sreedhar & Mahendra Ved,n.1.

³⁶ Quoted in Surya Gangadharan, "The China-Taliban Equation", *Aakrosh*, vol.3, no.6, January 2000, p.62.

³⁷ *ibid*, p.63.

³⁸ Ahmed Rashid, "Afghanistan: Heart of Darkness", *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Hongkong), August 5, 1999.

This necessitated the Chinese to formulate a foreign policy, which engages the Taliban rather than evades it. The Chinese and the Taliban signed an agreement on 10 December 1998. Accordingly the Chinese army agreed to

- Raise and train the Taliban armed forces beginning with an initial batch of 25,000 men.
- Repair and maintain equipment captured by the Taliban militia from adversaries.
- Provide training facilities for the Taliban's air force pilots and provide \$10 million to improve infrastructure for the Taliban armed forces.³⁹

In the last week of January 1999, five senior Chinese diplomats including the head of the Asia desk in the Chinese foreign ministry, Sun Guoxian made an unofficial trip to Kabul. "Unofficial sources suggested that the visit was China's way of saying thank you to the Taliban, who in October, 1998, had allowed the Chinese missile experts to recover and examine the remains of the cruise missiles the US had targeted on Afghan terrorist bases in August that year. The Taliban also allowed the Chinese to take back the unexploded cruise missile."⁴⁰

This warming up of the otherwise apprehensive relationship was believed to be the result of a sustained lobbying by Pakistan on behalf of the Taliban that the latter "are willing to clamp down on the drug trade and have no desire to fund or support Islamic Uighurs in their fight for Independence."⁴¹ On July 26, 2000, the Afghan ambassador to Pakistan guaranteed a Chinese delegation that no groups would be allowed to operate

³⁹ Surya Gangadharan, n.36, pp. 67-8. Also see P. Stobdan, "The Afghan Conflict and Regional Security", *Strategic Analysis* (New Delhi), vol.23, no.4, August 1999, pp.734-5.

⁴⁰ Surya Gangadharan, n.36, p.66.

⁴¹ Ahmed Rashid, "Afghanistan: Taliban Temptation", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 11, 1999, p.21.

against China from Afghanistan.⁴² There are also indications that the Taliban militia may open an office in Beijing to meet the requirements of Chinese personnel who wish to visit important places in Afghanistan.

Dialogue with the Taliban also fits in with China's border strategy to build a working relationship with all its neighbours. This emerges as a serious foreign policy challenge for the United States. Any US Taliban policy must take into account the involvement of the Chinese in the region.

India:

India has no sort of direct bearing or historical involvement in the Afghan imbroglio. Its foreign policy, thus, impinges upon the indirect effects of the Taliban phenomenon in Afghanistan. Its protracted engagement with terrorism in Kashmir at the behest of Pakistan forces it to deal with foreign mercenaries a substantial number of are now found to be the products of the civil war situation in Afghanistan. Pakistan inducted various militant groups in Kashmir, the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), the Harkat-ul-Ansar and the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) were the most motivated terrorists, which drew their cadres from Afghan war veterans.⁴³ In not a very distant past India's experience with a plane hijacking episode made its foreign minister take a flight to Kandahar. However, the Taliban's unhelpful attitude left bitter memories.

India's policy towards the Taliban remains ambivalent. "The discrepancy between the self-perceived claim to participate prominently in conflict regulation but actually playing a minor part sums up India's position in the conflict."⁴⁴ India's history of a pro-

⁴² 'The Taliban reaches out to China', <http://www.atimes.com/c-asia/BG29ag01.html>.

⁴³ Afsir Karim, "A Profile of Islamic Resurgence in South Asia", *Aakrosh*, vol.2, no.3, April 1999, p.6.

⁴⁴ Citha D Maass, n.28, p.74.

Soviet Afghan policy proves a great handicap for it to play a prominent role in the conflict.

India's Afghan policy is influenced by its relationship with Pakistan. Some writers are of the view that India has conditioned its support of any of the Afghanistan's warring factions not on the latter's ideological affiliation but on its anti-Pakistan position, offering support to those Afghan warring factions which would like to break away from Pakistani influence.⁴⁵ The other view, of course, professes policy towards Taliban being India's one of many pro-Soviet policies.

The fact remains that after the hijack episode India has begun to take an active role in the conflict. The reason that India wishes to contain the conflict is that it wants specifically to prevent a spillover into the Kashmir region. India's position acquires a more determinationist nature because of the occasional statements by Osama Bin Laden supporting the right of Kashmiris of self-determination.⁴⁶ At the same time, the Taliban seems to be nursing a bruise because of India's alleged assistance to the pre-1992 Afghan Government of Najibullah and also to the troops of the Northern Alliance.

India closed down its embassy the day Taliban captured power in Kabul. Taliban did nothing to ignite confidence in India except for issuing statements, which called friendship but was followed with very little activity. On September 20, 1998, the Taliban stated, "Afghanistan and India had friendly relations in the past. We don't have diplomatic ties now, but we won't mind resuming relations with India as, at least, we

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ "Bin Laden, Taliban & India", <http://www.saag.org/papers/paper83.html>.

won't have to contend with an enemy India."⁴⁷ Similarly in October 1999, the Taliban promptly denied a statement attributed to Osama, which called for a *Jehad* in Kashmir.⁴⁸

Taliban needed India to free itself from the international isolation. Pakistan being seen as an ally of the Taliban possessed less manoeuvring capability than a detached India. However, relations have worsened so much now that India has very little option but to join the combined effort of the United States, Russia, Iran to take Taliban to task. India is also believed to have supplied the Northern Alliance leader, Ahmed Shah Massoud, with high-altitude warfare equipment. Indian defence advisors, including air force helicopter technicians, are reportedly providing tactical advice in operations against the Taliban. Several recent meetings between the newly instituted Indo-US and Indo-Russian joint working groups on terrorism led to this effort to tactically and logistically counter the Taliban.⁴⁹

Russia:

Russia's interest in the region has not ended with its withdrawal from the Afghanistan. In fact, well before Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan, Russia was cultivating Afghan Uzbeks to create a secular Uzbek controlled *cordon sanitaire* in northern Afghanistan that would resist any *Mujahideen* takeover. This policy was successful for a decade as General Rashid Dostum controlled six provinces and with Russian military aid held off the *Mujahideen* and later the Taliban.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ ibid.

⁴⁸ T. Sreedhar, "The Taliban and India", *Hindu* (New Delhi), December 30, 1999.

⁴⁹ Rahul Bedi, "India joins anti-Taliban coalition", *Jane's Intelligence Review* (London), 15 March 2001.

⁵⁰ Ahmed Rashid, n.9, p.149.

Afghanistan, apart from being a lost glory for Russia has emerged as a challenge with the Taliban at the helm of power. Among the various grievances Russia nurtures against the Taliban, the following can be noted:

1. Taliban eliminated the Russian nominee, Najibullah without any sort of cognizance of the Russian sentiments.
2. Russia accuses Taliban of providing economic support to the rebels in Northern Caucasus. In March 2000, Russian President Putin accused the Taliban of indulging in such activities.⁵¹
3. Russia is also apprehensive of the potential refugee problem, once the Taliban take over northern Afghanistan.
4. Russia also tries to prevent the flow of narcotics into Russia via Afghanistan and the Islamic States of the former Soviet Union.
5. Russia also sees Pakistan's ambitions in Afghanistan as a threat to its security sphere.

As a result Russian policies are guided by such fears and its overall interests in the region. After the fall of the Najibullah regime, Russia reduced its involvement in the country. During the civil war in Tajikistan from 1992 to 1993, however, Russia returned to the region trying to capitalize on the factors of instability. It has tried to project itself as the protector of Central Asia against the menace of Islamic radicalism.⁵² As a result, it has worked with the Central Asian states to provide arms and supplies to anti-Taliban forces. In order to assist the de facto Rabbani government in boosting up Afghanistan's

⁵¹ "Russia Accuses Taliban of Assisting Chechens", <http://jahaan.knight-hub.com/news/2000/march/mar14d2000.htm>

⁵² Zalmay Khalilzad and Daniel Byman, "Afghanistan: The Consolidation of a Rogue State", *Washington Quarterly*, vol.23, no.1, Winter 2000, p.69.

falling economy, Russia supplied \$20 million worth of Afghan currency every month. In addition, it also provided technicians, transport airplanes, arms, ammunition and fuel.⁵³ Russia at times also led an international diplomatic campaign to isolate the Taliban, pressing its case at the United Nations and in other international fora.

Russian policies are also guided by the formulation of the 'domino theory' by its former President Yeltsin's security advisor General Lebed who conjured up the bogey of Islamic fanaticism and went on to assert the "imminent collapse throughout the Central Asian region-unless..Russia acted with decisive force to stem the Islamic tide." He actually stated "the problem of Chechnya would look like nothing in comparison to Afghanistan, unless the Taliban challenge was crushed."⁵⁴

Russian direct dealing with the Taliban has also done little to allay its fears. In 1995-96, Moscow had to negotiate for more than a year in order to obtain the release of the Russian crew of a military plane, which the Taliban had shot down on its way to Kabul. Reports suggest that the crew managed to 'flee' only after the payment of a one million US dollar ransom payment was made to the Taliban.⁵⁵

Russia is operating various levels in dealing with the Taliban. Citha D Maass notes four goals Russia pursues jointly with the other neighbouring countries in regard to the Taliban.

1.As a defensive approach aiming to limit the potential damage to the Central Asian states, the Taliban threat is to be contained. 2.By delivering arms to the Northern alliance, especially to General Dostum and Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, aiming to affect the military balance of power, in spite of the awareness that the Northern alliance cannot be victorious. 3.Aiming to bring about a cease-fire as quickly as

⁵³ Kamal Matinuddin, n.12, p.176.

⁵⁴ Anthony Hyman, "Russia, Central Asia and the Taliban", in Maley, n.6, pp.107-8.

⁵⁵ Citha D Maass, n.28, p. 76.

possible, a demilitarisation of Kabul, and promote negotiations concerning a representative coalition government, including the Taliban or a Taliban wing. 4. Emphasising that the UN Security Council and the leading global powers should assume responsibility for regulating the Afghan conflict in order to reduce Russia's own engagement at the southern CIS border.⁵⁶

Thus such fears and the nostalgia about the region, which remained a proud possession of the Russians have made a rapprochement with the United States possible. "In December 1997, Russian officials hosted Karl Inderfurth, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, in discussions about how Russia and the United States could work together to bring peace and reconstruction to Afghanistan."⁵⁷ In the month of May 2000, in a meeting in Moscow, "U.S. and Russian officials issued a statement expressing concern over the growing influence of extremist groups in the region. They urged the Taliban to hand over bin Laden and to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure"⁵⁸.

Russia, so far, has refused to be involved in any dialogue process with the Taliban. In November 2000, the Security Council Secretary Sergei Ivanov stated, "Our position is unchanged, there can not be any talks."⁵⁹ In March 2000, Russia had threatened air strikes if the Taliban continued to support Chechen separatists and Islamic insurgents in Central Asia. Again in November 2000, it warned the Taliban of possible air strikes if its forces continue to shell the neighbouring Tajikistan. Russian president Vladimir Putin, on 11 March 2001, signed a decree imposing sanctions on the Taliban, following the destruction of Buddha statues and other ancient relics by them in Afghanistan. The decree bans direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of any defence

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 77.

⁵⁷ "Afghanistan: Current Issues and US Policy Concerns", Kenneth Katzman, September 15, 1998, Congressional Research Service Report, The Library of Congress, p. 8.

⁵⁸ "Russia, U.S. Converge on Warnings to Taliban", *Washington Post*, June 4, 2000.

⁵⁹ Quoted in *Hindu*, November 12, 2000.

products, technology of dual application and spare parts for these products to Taliban-controlled Afghan territory from Russia or with the help of vessels or aircraft flying the Russian flag.⁶⁰

Central Asian Republics:

After the Soviet disintegration, Central Asian Republics found themselves in an arc of crises torn apart by internal conflicts, ethnic intolerance, religious extremism, regional and tribal conflict, drug trafficking and external interference. The major concerns of the Taliban advance northwards for the Central Asian Republics have been

1. The threat of religious ideology affecting the domestic political cleavages.
2. The possibility of the Afghan conflict impeding developing communication and energy pipelines towards the southern direction.
3. The probability of Central Asian states getting drawn into the 'narco-corridor' originating from Afghanistan.
4. The threat of trans-border terrorism especially in the wake of Wahabi activists' presence in Afghanistan.
5. The threat of refugee influx.⁶¹

The Taliban's advance northwards put the Central Asian states in a dilemma. In order to strengthen their own national identity and gradually lower than economic independence on Russia, these states started distancing themselves from Moscow and sought opportunities to open themselves economically towards the south and the west (Iran and Turkey).

⁶⁰ "Russia Imposes Additional Sanctions on Taliban", *Times of India*, March 12, 2001.

⁶¹ <http://www.afghan-politics.org>. Also see P. Stobdan, n.39, p.726.

Though a rich storehouse of oil and natural gas, the Central Asian Republics are unable to find suitable investors due to instability in the region emanating from Afghanistan.⁶² Presently, a great degree of ambiguity with respect to security policy of the Central Asian states is emerging. Though Russia is seen as a guarantor of Central Asian security, at the same time, it is also perceived as an imperialist force. This paradox is widening as Russia is neither able to regain control of its former republics nor does it completely withdraw from the region due to its national interests. During the civil war years in Tajikistan between 1992-97, the Russian troops were placed at the Tajik-Afghan border. President Boris Yeltsin declared in 1993 that the Tajik-Afghan border was “in effect Russian border and the 25,000 Russian troops stationed there would be defending Russia”. It was a reassertion of Moscow’s role in Central Asia.⁶³

Uzbekistan, by virtue of being the largest of the Central Asian Republics and its rich endowment of natural resources, under President Islam A. Karimov enforced its disengagement from Moscow and sought a regional role for itself. However, Taliban’s advance and Russian insistence on a joint resistance to the Taliban threat proved to be a hurdle on Uzbekistan’s aspirations.

In Uzbekistan, the 250-mile long agriculturally rich Farghana valley harbouring Islamic radical groups, partly fuelled by the Taliban is the most serious challenge to President Islam Karimov. Many of these Uzbek militants studied in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have been trained in Afghan *Mujahideen* camps in the 1980s.⁶⁴ Till the fall of Mazar in 1998, Karimov’s policy of providing aid to Uzbek warlord Dostum paid off in holding off the Taliban. But now with the Taliban at its doorsteps, Karimov has passed

⁶² Ahmed Rashid, n.9, pp.44-9.

⁶³ *ibid.*, p.148.

the most stringent laws of all the Central Asian Republics against Islamic fundamentalism.

Uzbekistan, too, in the initial years, had a strong bilateral defence cooperation with Russia, but since 1995, there has been increasing shift in Uzbekistan's security planning away from Russia. Tashkent refuses to support Russian views on North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO's) eastward expansion, and instead has become an ardent advocate of the Partnership of Peace (PfP) programme. It supports transport and pipeline routes that bypass Russian territory. Recently, Uzbekistan opted out of the CIS Collective Security Treaty of 1992, and promotes military integration within Central Asia through the Central Asian Union (CAU). Ambiguity also exists in the Uzbek security policy. Tashkent tends to reject Russian troops presence in Tajikistan because it could undermine Uzbekistan's interest, but it seeks strong Russian support against the rising Islamic threat from Afghanistan.

Similarly, Uzbekistan objects to Iranian involvement in the Tajik conflict, but goes along with the Iranian position of supporting the anti-Taliban forces in northern Afghanistan, yet it is unwilling to back Masoud, a Tajik. A similar orientation of military security interests is being displayed by Turkmenistan, which tends to pursue a posture of 'positive neutrality' and advocate close ties with Russia but does not approve of the collective security and the CIS.

The positive fallout of differing views on national security interests among the CIS states have created opportunities for the US and other international organisations to enter the region with greater intensity of security policy engagement. Already, the US has signed bilateral defence treaties with Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The 1998

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.149.

treaty with Georgia covers American air and marine defence. The US Sixth Fleet flagship visited the Georgian port of Poti in September 1998. Turkey and the US conducted naval exercise "Sea Breaze-97" in the Black Sea. It is expected that the Sixth Fleet would soon penetrate the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijan has offered the US a military base on its territory. Baku has proposed that the US should include a platoon of Azerbaijan's armed forces to the Balkans as part of the Turkish military contingent.

The US has already brought in the Central Asian states into its Central Command (Centcom) responsibility. The military exercise by Centcom that airlifted units of the 82nd Air Mobile Division direct from the US to Central Asia for the conduct of the Centrabat-97 exercise in September 1997, clearly demonstrated the US intention to build new structures for regional security in Central Asia. The Russian sources consider that the US has already defined the areas of Central Asia and the Caucasus as "zones of American responsibility" and these are already subject to intelligence monitoring and tactical planning. Except for Tajikistan, the others have joined the NATO affiliates, the North American Cooperation Council (NACC) and PfP, which provide mechanisms for individually tailored programmes of security cooperation, like training and joint exercises. The new military-security profile of each Central Asian state, which is currently evolving in response to the Afghan conflict, may influence decisively the future security policy environment of Russia and even India.

The mutual defence treaty signed under the CIS framework shaped in the form of the Tashkent Collective Security Treaty of May 15, 1992, by Russia, the Central Asian states, except Turkmenistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and others, is weakening.

However, despite all the weaknesses and constraints, the Collective Security Treaty remains operational in response to the threat from Afghanistan. In response, to counter the threat from the Taliban, a joint exercise was conducted in July 1997, in the Trans-Volga Military District as a test for a 'Pamir coalition army group'⁶⁵. The treaty nevertheless failed to take a decision to get directly involved in the Afghan conflict except to reinforce its border troop contingent in Tajikistan to 20,000 men to confirm the demilitarised zones along the Tajik-Afghan border. There is, however, talk about expanding the CIS Treaty beyond the confines of the former USSR to include Iran in the activities.

The new Central Asian security profile, such as the CAU, actively associated with NATO's PfP, does not, however, indicate the region acquiring any pan-Turkic identity or pan-Islamic orientation. Instead, the new profile is being projected as a mechanism to counter the threat of Islamic fundamentalism that the CIS Collective Security Treaty has failed to provide.⁶⁶ The CAU's objectives do not appear to be against Russia, but Moscow may lose influence in Central Asia by default. Nevertheless, an anti-Russian realignment is taking a shape in the Transcaucasus region after the formation of a grouping of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova (GAUM) in October 1997. Initially started as an economic grouping, the GAUM is now getting a security dimension as the member states are talking about forming a joint battalion. Uzbekistan has also lately shown interest in sending its troops to be a part of the GAUM contingent.

There are other initiatives like Kazakhstan's Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) modeled on the Organisation for Security

⁶⁵ P. Stobdan, n.39, p.729.

⁶⁶ O N Mehrotra, "Taliban Raises Anxiety", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.19, no.12, March 1997, p.1685.

and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). But the objective of the CICA is too amorphous and covers too many diverse conflicting interests to emerge as a functional security organisation. It is also highly unlikely that the ECO will develop a security profile, despite efforts by Pakistan and Iran to use it as a vehicle for political rhetoric. On the other hand, China is keen to give a security dimension to the 'Shanghai Dialogue', a confidence-building measure (CBM) among three Central Asian countries, Russia and China to resolve the CIS-Chin frontiers. This dynamic at the moment appears tactical rather than strategic.

Peace Initiatives adopted by the US and regional powers in the resolution of the post-Taliban Afghan imbroglio:

What failed in Afghanistan was not just the Afghan state, but the international system that had first sustained and then undermined its rulers.⁶⁷ A renowned anthropologist, M. Shahrani rightly warned the people of Afghanistan and the international community,

“The price for not acting responsibly and supporting the bloody rampage of the Taliban in their campaign to reestablish Pushtun supremacy is huge. Therefore, we must aspire to establish models of community self-governance and national state structures that guarantee both freedom and liberty of all peoples inhabiting Afghanistan, as well as territorial integrity and full independence of the nation itself. Absolutely, nothing short of that would do.”⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Barnet Rubin, *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State*, (London: 1995), p.143.

⁶⁸ M. Nazif Shahrani, “The Future of the State and the structure of Community Governance in Afghanistan”, in William Maley, n.6, pp.241-2.

If the United States and the international community pays heed to the warnings of these scholars, according to Timur, the following initiatives need to be taken on a priority basis.

1. Recognition of Afghanistan as a multiethnic country- to prevent further ethnic fragmentation, ensure all ethnic groups have equal share of power at all levels. As Bernt Glatzer, a German scholar has rightly pointed out, “What they fight for is the persecution of their local, cultural, religious autonomy not disintegration.”⁶⁹

2. Installing federal government structure based on democratic institutions can provide self-rule for each ethnic group to preserve the unity and reduce differences between them.

3. Regional cooperation to replace regional power game. Afghanistan would serve as a model for the international community where the interests of allies and rivals could converge.⁷⁰

The convergence of issue due to differing national interest can be issue based. The extent and pace at which the Taliban are keen to export its brand of Islamic extremism can be gauged from the fact that it has forged an alliance of major and regional powers to contain the spillover of Islamic terrorism from Afghanistan. The United States, Russia, China, India, Iran, Israel, Belarus, Armenia and all Central Asian Republics except Turkmenistan have created various anti-terrorism networks, strategic partnerships and collective security plans to combat the Taliban menace.

⁶⁹ Bernt Glatzer, “Is Afghanistan on the brink of ethnic and tribal disintegration?”, in Maley, n.6, p.18.

⁷⁰ Timur Koaoglu, “Could Afghanistan be a Key to Asian Cooperation & Security?”, *Perceptions*, Special Issue on Afghanistan, vol.4, no.4, December 2000-February 2001 pp.114-5.

In July 2000, Washington and Moscow sought to establish an US-Russia working group on Afghanistan. In its meeting held in August 2000, “The US and Russian sides reviewed the threat posed to the regional and international stability by Taliban support for terrorism. They explored bilateral, regional, multilateral options for addressing that threat.”⁷¹

Since Michel Sheehan, the US coordinator for counter-terrorism, visited India in October 1999, Washington and New Delhi have been trying to coordinate efforts to combat the growing threat of Islamic terrorism emanating from the Taliban controlled areas of Afghanistan. At the beginning of 2000, they established an Indo-US Joint Working Group (JWG) on counter-terrorism, which meets periodically to coordinate the counter-terrorism strategies of both the countries. As part of the process the United States have started to share sensitive intelligence information with India.⁷²

In September 2000, during the Russian President, Vladimir Putin’s visit to India, a strategic partnership between India and Russia was concluded ‘to pool efforts to combat international terrorism and religious extremism.’⁷³ Similarly India has established a Joint Commission on prevention of terrorism with Israel. Iran has also established close working with India and Central Asian Republics to check the spread of Taliban’s fundamentalism. The Taliban threat has compelled regional rivals such as Iran and Turkey into greater understanding. Like Turkey, Israel has a stake in the region for

⁷¹ Ishtiaq Ahmed, “Containing the Taliban”, *Perceptions*, Special Issue on Afghanistan, vol.4, no.4, December 2000-February 2001 p.75.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *Times of India*, October 2, 2000.

similar reasons. Besides Islamic extremism, be it Shia or Sunni poses a threat to Tel Aviv especially as it confronts growing Palestinian violent resistance.⁷⁴

Peace initiatives in Afghanistan are being viewed through three negotiating processes.

1. U.N. Supervised Six plus Two (6+2):

In October 1997, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan set up a 6+2 group⁷⁵. The group worked out a concerted approach to the inter-Afghan conflict and these were reflected in the Declaration on the main principles of a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan, adopted in June 1999 at the group's session at Tashkent.⁷⁶ But in last three years not much progress has been attained. Iran and Pakistan continue to fight a proxy war in Afghanistan and there is lack of seriousness among the regional powers in implementing the arms embargo.

2. OIC Contact Group:

It is plagued by the same problem as the 'Six plus Two' group, mainly proxy war by the regional powers. During the May 1999 meet in Jeddah, where the leaders of the Taliban and the United Front participated, they could not even come to term of an agreement on a cease-fire, leave alone the installing of a abroad based government.

3. Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly):

In September 1996, King Zahir Shah leaving in exile in Italy announced his willingness to return to Afghanistan. On September 26, 1999 as part of the Rome Peace

⁷⁴ Ahmed Rashid, n.9, pp.143-56.

⁷⁵ The group comprising of Afghanistan's neighbours- Iran, Pakistan, China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan- as well as Russia and the United States formed in 1997 at the initiative of the UN Secretary General's special envoy L. Brahimi.

⁷⁶ The document envisages for settling the conflict through peace talks and creating a broad-based, multi-ethnic and representative government. It also agreed not to provide arms supplies to any

Process, the King proposed an emergency meeting of the *Loya Jirga* with the representatives all the Afghan leaders residing within and outside Afghanistan. The main two objectives of the *Loya Jirga* was, (i) to establish a representative government and (ii) achieve peace in the beleaguered imbroglio. The United States and the European Union appear to consider the realization of a *Loya Jirga* as the most viable option to lead Afghanistan out of the present situation.

Afghan warring factions. Marrianna Arunova, "On the Situation in Afghanistan", *Perceptions*, Special Issue on Afghanistan, vol.4, no.4, December 2000-February 2001, p.46.

Conclusion

Conclusion

At the outset it is important to note that this piece of research is not an attempt to provide policy prescriptions to the American administration for conducting its relations with the Taliban. It is simply a stock taking exercise, which attempts to reveal the un-highlighted facts in the US approach towards the Taliban. It is assumed that the current literature on the subject is biased and thus, does not reveal a complete of the intricacies and dynamics of the Afghan imbroglio compelling United States dealing with the Taliban.

A purposeful United States engagement in Afghanistan started in the Cold War period. The minor contacts before that period was limited to signing of economic agreements for providing aid and other forms of assistance, occasional visits and statements, which were more of a customary nature. It was a spirit neglect that ruled the roost in that period. However, with the onset of the cold war, Afghanistan emerged as one of the many theatres of conflict and played the traditional role of buffer between the two super powers. The Soviet attempt to create a client state since 1956 renewed American interests in the region, leading to a major policy reorientation and beginning of competitive aid giving. Thus in the late 1950's and 1960's, Afghanistan became a peaceful battle ground of the cold war with the Soviet-American rivalry being based on the value of their respective foreign aid programme. However, in the late 1960's the détente between the US and the USSR weakened competitive aid giving. Afghanistan was no longer a priority for US foreign policy compared to US commitments in the Southeast Asia. Conversely in 1973, Daoud's increasing tilt towards the US and it's allies

led to improvement of relations between the two countries. During the Saur revolution, the leftist regime's proximity with the Soviets led the Carter administration to fund Afghan Islamic groups in Pakistan to curtail the ever-growing Soviet influence in the region.

The Soviet intervention of Afghanistan gave a tactical push to the American approach in the region and broadened policy options. Along with the pursuit to contain Communism, it was an opportunity to inflict a la-Vietnam on the Soviets. The increased spending in providing aid to the Afghan *mujahideen* groups should be interpreted in this light. This research is of the opinion that the foundation of a decadent Afghanistan was laid in that period. By arming the *mujahideen*, the United States not only succeeded in bleeding the Soviets white in Afghanistan, but also emerged as a sole victor of the bitterly contested cold war between the two superpowers.

With the departure of the Soviets, the Americans had their wishes fulfilled. Afghanistan came to symbolize their success story against the Communists. However, this also represented a swift conclusion to the years of American interest in the region. It was now pushed to the background. War in Afghanistan was finally over, now the *mujahideens* were left alone to fight among themselves. Such thoughts ruled the US policy priorities.

As a result, Afghanistan was back to the days of chaos and disorder, though of a different variety. The puppet regime of Nazibullah was neither capable nor willing to hammer out a peaceful compromise formula among the warring parties. His pro-Soviet credentials proved to be a major obstacle. Thus, for Afghanistan the end game of the cold war instead of bringing peace, turned the buffer state into an arena of regional conflict.

Nazibullah's departure again led a situation of various *mujahideen* leaders occupying the seats of power in Kabul until the Taliban managed to dominate the center stage.

While Afghanistan definitely exhibited incapacity to resolve its internal contradictions due to intense power struggle between the various *mujahideen* groups, its tragedy lies in the fact that time and again these contradictions seem to get trapped in the agenda of external powers. The interference by these regional powers is further compounded by religious and ethnic affiliations shared by these powers with the myriad ethnic specific *mujahideen* groups and the support in terms of arms and aid to the *mujahideen* leaders has led to continuance of the internecine warfare in Afghanistan. Thus this vicious circle of Afghanistan's imbroglio stems mainly from two groups of actors. First, the 'primary group', consisting of the internal actors, each with its distinct ethnic identity. Second, the 'secondary group', that of the external actors, engaged in a sort of a game of self-aggrandizement by playing the internal actors one against the other, which leads to the further ethnic fragmentation of Afghanistan.

The rise of Taliban rather the conversion of Taliban into a potent military force had dramatic effects on Afghan politics. Trained in the numerous madrassas in Pakistan, these religious scholars were less aware about the history and future of their parent country. Their sole guiding force remained the fundamental tenets of Islam. It was natural for them to strive to apply these principles in real life given the right opportunity. While, a significant section of the available literature concentrates in defining the Taliban in religious terms, few focus on their benefactors. It was mainly the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan at the behest of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States who promoted this brand of militant opposition against the Soviets

during the cold war era. Funded and armed by the CIA, the *mujahideens* consisting of holy warriors of various ethnic groupings turned into a lethal force to counter the Soviets. A significant portion of the *mujahideens* later joined the Taliban giving it the form of a movement.

The Taliban's initial reluctance to take over positions of decision-making has been highlighted in a number of studies. However, zeal to clean the system of decadence let loose by the war mongering *mujahideen* factions formed the motivation for the Taliban. It is also mentioned that the common man of the country were so fed up off the infighting and the turmoil in Afghanistan that they actually welcomed the Taliban victory march and the later encountered hardly any resistance.

The rise of Taliban from the days of religious madrassas to seats of power was a moment of glory not only for ordinary people, but also for their promoters who made no secret of their exhilaration. The causes lay in their goals of oil politics and a relatively stronger control of the growth and trade of narcotics in the region. The revival of American interest in the region needs to be seen in this context. While Afghanistan again was chosen by the Americans as the route for the transportation of Central Asian oil resources to Pakistan and possibly India, a motive which primarily aimed at isolating Iran and Russia, a bitter competition started between the American oil giant UNOCAL and the Argentine concern, Bidas. UNOCAL's supportive statements in favour of the Taliban's ascent to power underlined the American policy towards the region.

The Taliban regime was also expected to support the American move to prevent Afghanistan from emerging as a major narcotics producing center. After all the Islamic *Hudood* laws discouraged the trade of narcotics. The initial Taliban promises not

withstanding, the actual production of drugs increased and it constituted a major source of income for the cash-starved Taliban.

There are reasons to believe that all these could have been tolerated had not the incident of September 1998 happened. The explosions targeting the United States' embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, pushed all other issues to the background. Terrorism became the buzzword and Osama Bin Laden became the target of new terrorism for the US policy makers. He came to dominate the most wanted fugitive list of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The reaction was both direct and indirect. The United States launched cruise missile attacks on what was considered to be the camps of bin Laden in Afghanistan. After this failed mission, the American policy pressurized Pakistan, Saudi Arabia to persuade the Taliban to hand over bin Laden. It also led to the significant warming up of relationship between the erstwhile adversaries, Iran and the United States. It also witnessed cementing of ties between the Soviet Union, India and the United States. It also led to the establishment of multilateral action plans in the form of the 'six plus two' etc.

Discovery of one vice in the Taliban led to the discovery of a number of vices. Issues remaining un-highlighted for so long received promotion. Taliban began to be censured for woman rights violation, non-cooperation in the recovery of the Stinger missiles distributed among the *mujahideens* in the cold war days, pushing the country to the hub of Islamic fundamentalism and a criminalized economy, and initiating a forced migration process.

While the truth in these charges are beyond doubt, the fact remains that the United States chose to be indifferent to all these issues for far too long. Objective analysis of the

United States' sudden disinterest in the region after the Soviet withdrawal and the sudden arousal of fascination after the Taliban's emergence, reveals the complexities of the mechanism that shapes American foreign policy. The important role of the President needs to be supplemented with that of an activist Secretary of State, the Congress various lobbies and pressure groups and other sectors in American society. The perfect combination of all these forces gives shape to the dynamics of American foreign policy.

The censure of Taliban on the violation of women rights issue is a classic example of this phenomenon. Only after the personal interest of the Secretary of State, Madeline Albright came into play supplemented by the refugee Afghan groups in the United States, various women NGOs and lobbies that the US administration came to initiate strong steps against the Taliban. The role played by the Hollywood stars and the demands of an election situation necessitating the maintenance of a vote bank, forced the Clinton administration to express its disapproval of the Taliban policy in no uncertain terms.

In today's Afghanistan the Taliban sits pretty controlling over ninety percent of the country's territory. Efforts of United States to bring them to book has failed to deliver goods and a point seems to have reached when the policy makers seem to have reached a dead end. This necessitates a probe into the loopholes in the past policies and suggestions for policy alternatives.

United States' approach towards the Taliban has remained mostly event specific. It has failed to encompass a long-term vision and has been only reactionary. Be it Taliban's destruction of Buddha statues in Bamiyan, or its passing of diktats on the yellow wear for the Hindus, Americans have failed to lead a united world against the Taliban and its pursuit of fundamentalist policies. The single objective with which the

United States attempts to punish the Taliban is that of terrorism. However, it's a pity that even here there has been minimum attempts to make the movement against terrorism a broad-based multilateral initiative. It is a fact that the attack on United States' embassies was an act of terrorism and there should be no two opinion about the intention of punitive action against the persons involved. However, India, not United States remains the worst victim of the Taliban brand of transnational terrorism. Afghan mercenaries constitute a significant proportion of the terrorists fighting their so-called jihad in Jammu and Kashmir and are responsible for the daily loss of innocent lives in the region. However, the US initiative against the terrorism let loose by the Taliban hardly reflects Indian concerns.

The vices the Taliban are accused of nurturing are global problems, which need to be addressed at the global level. Making the global issue of terrorism is a one-man issue (that of Osama Bin Laden) makes one doubt the US sincerity in addressing the serious issues. The symbolic multilateral initiatives at the behest of the United States make it appear as if the United States is pursuing its own private agenda.

The fact remains that the Taliban are the de-facto rulers of Afghanistan. Regional powers might voice their opinion on a individual basis to the acts of the Taliban. But there has been an overall tenor of reluctance to be a part of a solely US sponsored agenda. The interests of the United States, thus, will be best served only when the country chooses to be part of the multilateral effort under the auspices of the United Nations against the Taliban. In its absence Taliban will continue to be an attention seeking phrase in American politics, but not an example of a successful American foreign policy.

Appendices

APPENDIX - A

Table 5: The political parties of the Resistance

Parties	Leaders	Tendency	Membership	Implantation	Influence
<i>Sunni</i>					
Hezb-i Islami (Islamic party)	G. Hekmatyar	Radical Islamic	Intellectuals from the state educational sector	Homogeneous pockets in the east, principally Pushtun	10-15%
Hezb-i Islami (Islamic party)	Y. Khaless	Moderate Islamic	As above, plus traditional <i>ulemas</i> from the private schools	Pushtun of Nangrahar and Pakhtya	5%
Jamiat-i-Islami (Society of Islam)	B. Rabbani	Moderate Islamic	As above, plus <i>ulemas</i> from state religious schools plus Naqshbandi Sufi brotherhoods in the east	Persian-speaking and Uzbek areas in the north, beginning to penetrate in the south	35%
Harakat-i Enqelab-i Islami (Movement of the Islamic Revolution)	M. Nabi	Traditionalist	Mullahs and <i>ulemas</i> from non-state religious schools, tribal cadres	The whole Pushtun south, Uzbek and Turkmen in the north	35%
Jebe-yi Melli-yi Nejat-i Afghanistan (Front for the liberation of Afghanistan)	S. Mojaddidi	Traditionalist	Tribal chiefs, plus Naqshbandi brotherhood around Kabul	Tribal south	Less than 5%
Mahaz-i Melli-yi Islami (National Islamic Front)	S. A. Gaylani	Royalist	Tribal chiefs, plus elites of the old regime, plus Qaderi brotherhood in the south-east	Tribal south, especially Durani, Pushtun nomads in the north	5%
<i>Shi'ite</i>					
Suzman-i Nasr (Victory Party)	Collective	Radical Islamic	Young people educated in Iran, plus a radical section of the clergy trained in Iran	South-west, central and north-east of Hazarajat	25%
Shura-yi Enqelab-i Ettfaq-i Islami-i Afghanistan (Revolutionary Council of the Islamic Union of Afghanistan)	S. Beheshti	Traditionalist	Clergy and <i>sayyed</i> descendants of the prophet	Centre and south of Hazarajat	65%
Harakat-i Islami (Islamic Movement)	A. Mohseni	Moderate Islamic	Educated youth from the towns	Near Kabul, Kandahar and especially Mazar-i Sharif	10%

Note: The tiny groups without any military strength are not mentioned (only the Nimruz Front has any military force). Military effectiveness is not directly related to influence; Jamiat-i Islami, Hezb-i Islami of Khaless and Harakat-i Islami (all moderate Islamic) seem to be the most combative.

Source: P. Centlivres, M. Centlivres *et al.*, *Afghanistan, la colonisation impossible* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1984), p. 246.

SOURCE: ANDRE BRIGOT & OLIVER ROY, THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN: AN ACCOUNT AND ANALYSIS OF THE COUNTRY, ITS PEOPLE, SOVIET INTERVENTION AND THE RESISTANCE (NEW YORK: HARVESTER WHEAT SHEAF, 1988) p. 106-7

APPENDIX-B

Table 3.1 Recognized Sunni Mujahidin Parties

Party*	Leader	Ideology	Headquarters Staff	Commanders	International Links
NIFA	Sayyid Ahmad Gailani. Spiritual Leader (pir) of Qadiri Sufi order. Arab lineage traced to Prophet. Married into royal clan.	Traditionalist-nationalist (Royalist). Most pro-Western.	Leader's family; Western-educated Pashtuns of old regime.	Tribal khans; some of their educated sons.	Weak; some U.S. conservatives.
ANLF	Hazrat Sibghatullah Mujaddidi. Cousin of executed Pir of Naqshbandi Sufi Order. Long-time conservative Islamic activist. Religious lineage from India.	Traditionalist-nationalist.	Leader's family. Western-educated Pashtuns of old regime.	Too few to analyze; probably khans and some ulama.	Weak.
HAR	Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi. Traditional alim, head of madrasa. Ahmadzai Pashtun of Logar. Member of parliament under New Democracy.	Islamic traditionalist.	Leader's family. Western educated Pashtuns from Logar.	Privately educated ulama, mullahs. Mostly Pashtuns, some Uzbeks. Most Tajiks left for Jamiat.	Weak. Close to one weak Islamic party in Pakistan.
HIH	Gulbuddin Hikmatyar. Former student at Faculty of Engineering, Kabul U. Kharruti Pashtun from de-tribalized settlement in North.	Radical Islamist. Views Afghan society (not just communist regime) as un-Islamic. Favors party domination.	State-educated intelligentsia; mainly (not only) Pashtuns from outside tribal society.	State-educated intelligentsia; mainly Pashtuns, but from all Sunni groups.	Favored by Pakistan ISI, Pakistani and Arab Islamists.
HIK	Mawlawi Yunis Khalis. Militant alim educated in British India. From Khugiani Pashtun tribe of Nangarhar.	Islamist; no elaborate ideology. Favors rule by ulama. Very anti-Shia.	State-trained intelligentsia and ulama from Pashtun tribal families linked to the leader.	Some state-trained intelligentsia, but mostly militant tribal ulama. All Pashtun.	Well supplied by ISI and CIA because of high body counts.
JIA	Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani. Lecturer at Sharia Faculty of Kabul U. Trained at al-Azhar. Tajik from Badakhshan.	Moderate Islamist. Views Afghan society as corrupted but Muslim.	State-trained ulama, Tajik and some Pashtuns; Tajik secular-trained intelligentsia.	Best and most commanders. State-trained Tajik (and some Uzbek) intelligentsia, including ulama; Tajik Sufis; Alikozai tribal ulama of Qandahar.	Some links to ISI and Arabs; intermittent. Some top commanders favored by U.S.
ITT	Professor Abd al-Rabb al-Rasul Sayyaf. Lecturer at Sharia Faculty of Kabul U. Trained at al-Azhar. Kharruti Pashtun from Paghman.	Radical Islamist, Salafi. Very anti-Shia.	A few individuals linked to leader or Saudi Arabia. Mostly Pashtun.	Opportunist, responding to leader's command of Arab funds. Very few, but very well funded and armed. Base in leader's home town, Paghman.	Favored by Saudis, other wealthy Arab donors from the Persian Gulf.

Source: Rubin, *Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 208-9.

*NIFA: National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (Mahaz-i Milli-yi Islami-yi Afghanistan); ANLF: Afghan National Liberation Front (Jabha-yi Milli-yi Islami-yi Afghanistan); HAR: Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islami (Movement of the Islamic Revolution); HIH: Hizb-i Islami (Islamic Party, Hikmatyar group); HIK: Hizb-i Islami (Islamic Party Khalis group); JIA: Jamiat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan (Islamic Society of Afghanistan); ITT: Itihad-i Islami bara-yi Azadi-yi Afghanistan (Islamic Union for the Freedom of Afghanistan).

SOURCE: BARNETT R. RUBIN, *THE SEARCH FOR PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN FROM BUFFER STATE TO FAILED STATE* (LONDON: YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1995) pp 36-37

APPENDIX - C

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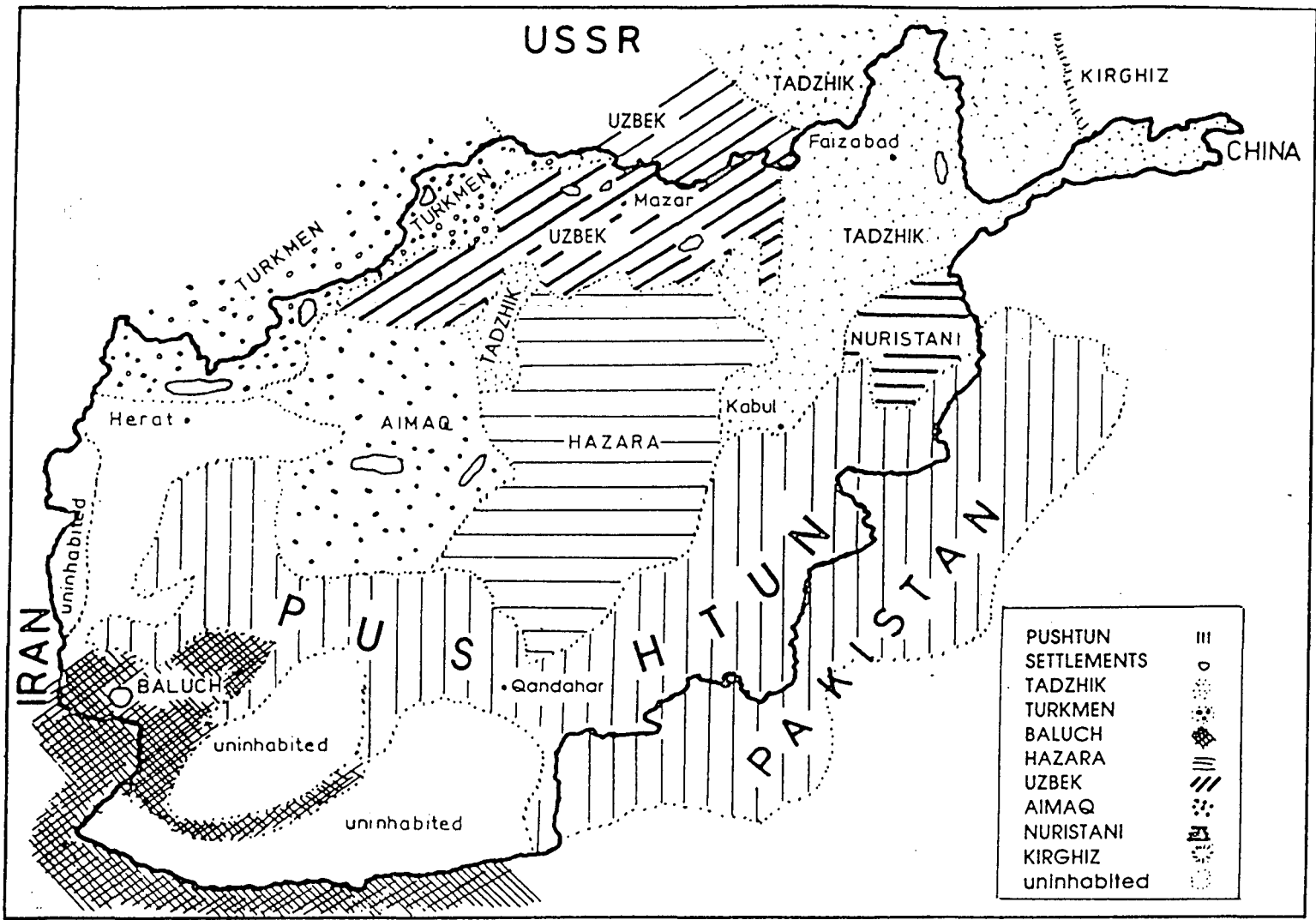
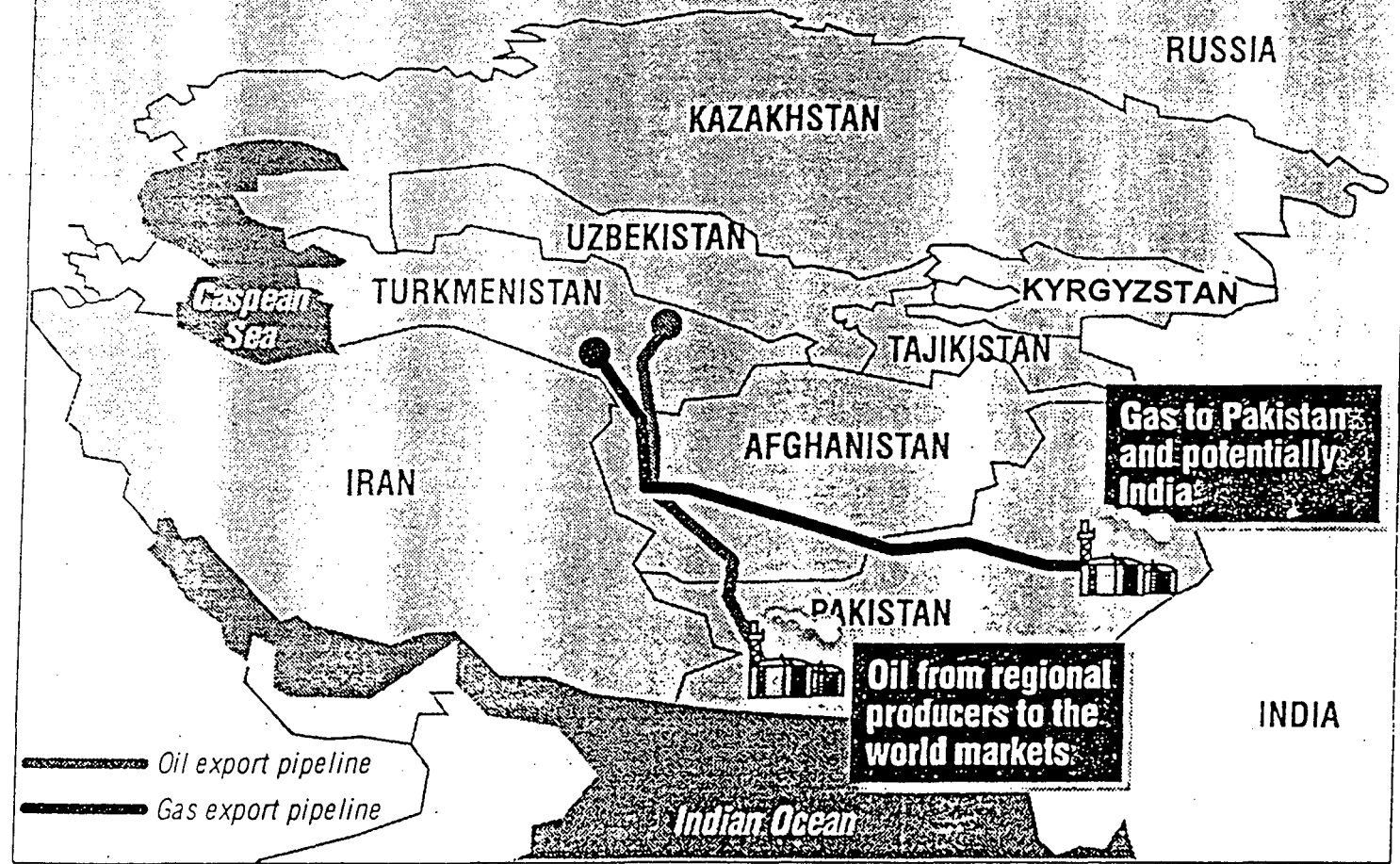


FIGURE 2. Main Ethnic Groups of Afghanistan. From John C. Griffiths, *Afghanistan: Key to a Continent* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1981), p. 79; Reprinted by permission.
 SOURCE: THOMAS HAMMOND, *RED FLAG OVER AFGHANISTAN: THE COMMUNIST COUP, THE SOVIET INVASION AND THE CONSEQUENCES* (BOULDER: WESTVIEW PRESS, 1984) p. 4.

THE UNOCAL-DELTA OIL PIPELINE PROJECTS

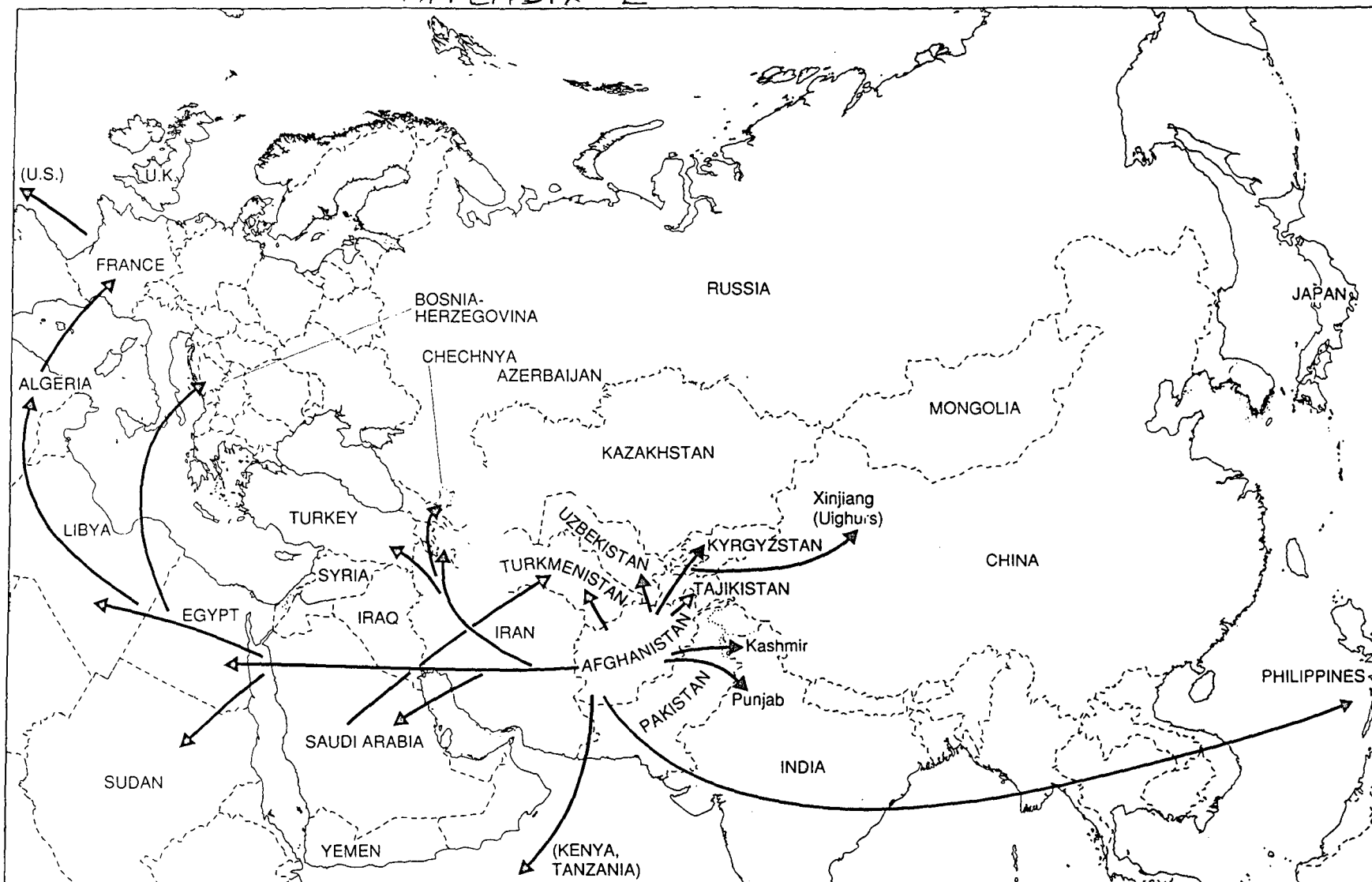
The route of the oil and gas export pipelines from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan



SOURCE : SREEDHAR (ed) TALIBAN AND THE AFGHAN TURMOIL : THE ROLE OF USA, PAKISTAN, IRAN AND CHINA (NEW DELHI : VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD, 1982) p.36

APPENDIX - E

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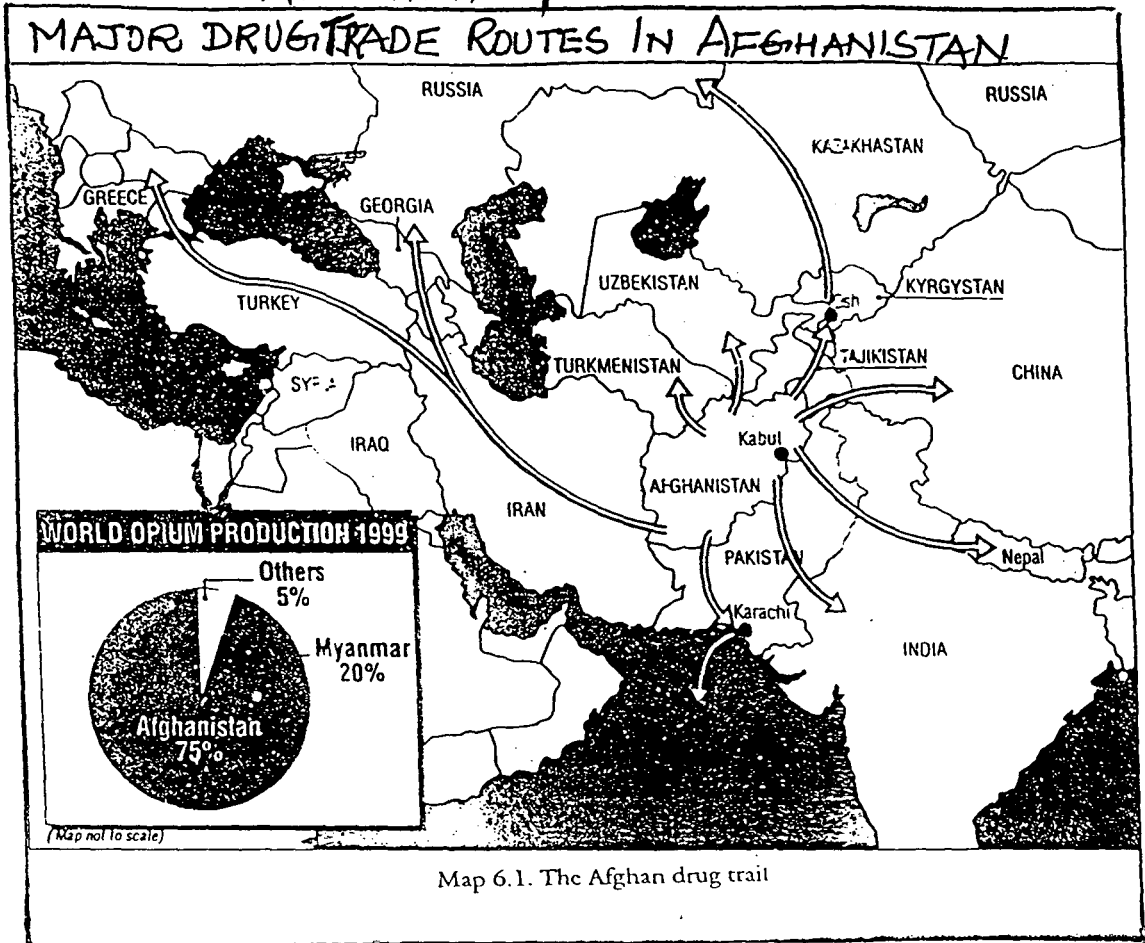


Map 2 Movements of CIA-trained guerrillas and drugs outwards from Afghanistan after the 1979-89 Afghanistan war.

SOURCE: JOHN K. COOLEY, UNHOLY WARS: AFGHANISTAN, AMERICA AND INTERNATIONAL

APPENDIX-F

MAJOR DRUG TRADE ROUTES IN AFGHANISTAN



SOURCE: SHREEDHAR AND MAHENDRA VED, AFGHAN BUZZKHASI,
POWER GAMES AND GAMES MEN, WORDSMITHS, (DELHI), VOL. I,
2000, p. 130.

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