

**WAR ON TERROR IN AFGHANISTAN AND SECURITY
IMPLICATIONS FOR CENTRAL ASIA, 2001-2015**

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "WAR ON TERROR IN AFGHANISTAN AND SECURITY IMPLICATIONS FOR CENTRAL ASIA, 2001-2015" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.


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CERTIFICATE

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



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21st July 2016

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is not something that is new to the world; its origin can be traced back to the 66AD, to the *sicarii*¹ or dagger-wielders of Palestine (Rappaport, 1982). The face of the terrorists might have changed, the methods of attack might have changed, but what still remains the same is the violence and fear that the terrorists draw in. Before we start studying the War on Terror and its effects worldwide what is important is to first learn what terrorism is. Till date a comprehensive and legal definition of terrorism has not been agreed upon by the international community. The reason being, the pejorative that surrounds the world leaders when it comes to terrorism. Each country defines and understands terrorism in a different way, then comes the problem of differentiating between insurgency and terrorism, if that is somehow overcome other challenge is posed by the various discourses of terrorism. The major trouble came up when US supported and financed Mujahedeens against the Soviet army, later when this group splintered and formed the Taliban which US is currently engaged in suppressing and overthrowing; highlighted a very contradictory position of the United States regarding the same terrorist organisation. The attacks of 9/11 jolted the world and the United States of America leading to the War on Terror where terror was defined unilaterally.² No questions were raised against any of the actions taken by the US, because the widespread emotions that were aroused post 9/11 gave a firm ground and opportunity to construct a framework and outline what terrorism was according to the West.

Some scholars have said that the international politics changed its track post 9/11-the major concern of the world became Taliban and Afghanistan. Dunmire (2009) describes it as a disjuncture in history, which demarcates the 21st century from the rest of the

¹ Sicarii: in Latin means dagger-man, this term was used for the Jewish zealots who fought the Roman occupation of Judea in an attempt to expel the Romans from the area. Although they were not terrorists in the modern sense but their method of killing people in crowded places terrorized people.

² The US Department of State defines Terrorism as, premeditated and politically motivated violence against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.

history. The terrorism emanating from Afghanistan has not only destabilised Afghanistan itself but also the surrounding region especially the five Central Asian countries which lie in high risk zone of spillovers.

Analyzing the situation in Afghanistan and its implication in Central Asia requires a detailed examination of some very important issues. The first requirement is to understand the background and the geopolitics behind the instability of Afghanistan, which is sometimes called the 'Tyranny of Geography'. The landlocked situation of Afghanistan has made it strategically important harking back to the silk route days and later on becoming the venue for the Great Game between the British and Russian empires. Any discussion or analysis about Afghanistan cannot be done in isolation; that is to say that, in order to closely study the state of affairs in Afghanistan it is imperative to also examine the neighbouring countries, especially the Central Asia. Historically, Afghanistan's borders with Central Asian states did not exist *per se*, rather they consisted of certain frontier areas, the control of which constantly went into different hands, as warfare used to play decisive role in the region. Though the area comprising the Central Asian states and the North Afghanistan were sometimes part of the same empire, it changed with the approaching Great Game in the 19th century. The growing influence of the British realm over South Asia and particularly India coincided with Russian colonial expansion into Central Asia, resulting in the creation of a buffer zone which is now Afghanistan. Later we see that with the transition from Russian Tsarist regime to the Soviet Union in the 20th century the borders between Afghanistan and the Central Asian states are closed off, for the first time in the history. This demarcation of borders and the different governing structures; led to the development of very distinct political and cultural traditions among the tribes staying in Afghanistan and those within Central Asia.

Nevertheless, the ties remained intact as these countries had porous borders because of the tough geographical terrain, and particularly during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979-89. The Soviet Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turks met and were exposed to their more ethnic and tribal counterparts in Afghanistan that left a strong impression among the Central Asians. The collapse of Soviet Union only two years after it withdrew the military from Afghanistan created a spectacular new environment within both Afghanistan and Central

Asia. The five states of Central Asia, namely Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan – became sovereign republics for the first time in the modern sense of the word. They were now faced with the challenges of ruling their country on their own, deciding the political system, foreign policy, security, governance; in short building the nation, of which they had no experience. Because these were nations who had always depended upon the external rulers for security and governance; getting the first chance to rule on their own, brought many challenges to the ruling class.

The fact that Afghanistan's neighbours – Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan still share common cultural and social heritage makes the region strategically significant and all the more complex. The isolation during the Soviet-era of Central Asian states from their more traditional and tribal neighbours ended in 1979 when Soviet Russia invaded Afghanistan and then later during Taliban years these states supported their ethnic counterparts to form an anti-Taliban group, popularly known as the **Northern Alliance**³. Various factors come into play while exploring the interconnected but separate relationship between Central Asia and Afghanistan. In practical sense the stability in Afghanistan and regional cooperation amongst all the neighbouring countries is essential for the development of the area, but this also means that the continued fighting and instability will and has already damaged the potentials it had. Links between Central Asia and Afghanistan have always been security driven the Central Asians see it as the source of all problems like narcotics trafficking, Islamic extremism, militancy and others all originating from Afghanistan.

Since common history, geography, cultural and ethnic ties on one hand and common political instability, economic problems, shared security concerns on the other, tie down the Central Asian republics together, obliging them despite the differences of opinions, population size, degrees of threat and military capacity to stand together and face the issues emanating from Taliban. The five Central Asian countries were affected by Talibanised terrorism and also Islamist extremism to varying degrees and hence each had

³ Northern Alliance was an anti-Taliban group led by the previous president Burhanuddin Rabbani, Defense Minister Ahmed Shah Massoud (both ethnic Tajiks), Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, and Hazara leader Abdul Karim Khalili, other Hazara and Pushtun factions and forces under the leadership of commanders such as Abdul Haq, Haji Abdul Qadri, Qari Baba or diplomat Abdul Rahim Ghafoorzai.

a different reaction and response to it. Kazakhstan faced the challenge of narco trafficking, Turkmenistan which remained neutral tried to cooperate with Taliban because of its own economic hardships in the field of oil and gas. Uzbekistan though became the focus of Islamist dissatisfaction and unrest. The Uzbek government responded by putting an official restriction on all forms of political Islam. Nevertheless the conflict kept spilling into other parts of the region and also into Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, who were already facing their own civil unrest. After being adversely affected by extremist policies of Taliban, the bordering countries of Central Asia- Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan had to fight battles with the local armed warlords who had the backing of IMU and Taliban, and who were trying to establish an Islamic State in Ferghana Valley.

The instability and unrest in Afghanistan has always disturbed its neighbours. But Taliban's usurpation of the Afghan government proved to be the most destructive and insidious to the regional security of the Central Asian region. Central Asia itself faces the complexities of ethnic, social, political and economic factors which were produced by a difficult transition of the nascent republics from their long communist past towards a democratic future. This transition gave the developed countries an opportunity to present their influence under the garb of helping the new nations achieve some level of liberalism and democracy. But it is said that success doesn't come without challenges. Challenges were brought by more than two decade of self-government, globalization; which required these new nations to behave in a particular way so as to look good in the international arena, to get benefits out of regional cooperation and also bilateral partnerships with the big powers. Central Asia perhaps has become more vulnerable even though it's comparatively more aligned than it was in 1991. Also known as the *unsettled hinterland*, Central Asia faces lot of tensions and challenges from its neighbourhood, namely Afghanistan, Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous region of China and also the Chechen Republic in Russia. The Islamic neighbourhood tried to influence these countries by trying to fill the ideological vacuum which was created when the Soviet Communism collapsed. Even though the Soviet Union kept the religion bottled up, there were many in Central Asia who practiced Islam, and after the collapse of USSR the religion was openly revived and its values served as the much needed national self-identity which was seen as legitimate. Nonetheless, the attempts that were made to replace one ideological tenet by

another political one became the most painful obstruction to the democratisation process of the region. But this is a different debate and will be dealt in other chapters.

So with the Taliban coming into power a lot of significant changes in Central Asia happened, one of them was going through immense political and economic crisis as the Russians withdrew subsidies and the Soviet industrial-military complex with which Central Asia was completely integrated collapsed. Tajikistan plunged into a civil war, when a group known as the **Popular Front** fought with another group of Islamists, democrats and the clan of Pamirs collectively known as the **United Tajik Opposition** (UTO). Both the sides were joined by outside powers along different political and ideological lines. The neo-communist and secular Popular Front received all the support from Russia and Uzbekistan, while on the other hand the UTO was supported by many Tajiks who were in Afghanistan and particularly the Islamic Factions of the **Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan** (IRP) which eventually came to be known as the **Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan** (IMU). The Uzbek militant movement carried out attacks from 1999-2000 in Uzbekistan and Fergana Valley, after being pressured by the Tajik government *Namangani* took refuge in Afghanistan under Taliban leader *Mullah Mohammad Omar* and *Osama Bin Laden*, leader of Al Qaeda. The sanctuary that was provided by Taliban to the IMU was on the condition that IMU would be supporting and also participating in the offensives launched by Taliban against the Hazaras, Uzbeks and Tajiks in the Northern Afghanistan – **Northern Alliance**.

Northern Alliance was supported by Russia, Iran and Uzbekistan, while on the other hand Taliban had the backing of IMU and Al Qaeda, this resulted in total chaos and lawlessness, networks of transnational militancy and trafficking of all sorts made the already poor guarded borders between Central Asian countries and Afghanistan outlawed from all standpoints, harking back to the pandemonium of the pre-Soviet days.

Goodson (2001), points out six important factors which explicate the collapse of Afghanistan as a state and the rise of Taliban; linguistic and ethnic cleavages, social structures, religious ideology, the annihilative history of conflicts, geopolitical positioning and a very limited economic development. He also describes Afghanistan as

an example of many third world countries who have been trying very hard to maintain themselves as a functioning state since after the great power game.

By this time the situation in Afghanistan had become a textbook example of a failed state. The continued civil strife led to economic collapse and breakdown of the welfare system, the people started fleeing to neighbouring countries as refugees, and some organized themselves along ethnic and tribal lines to establish independent fiefdoms, others engaged in illicit economic practices, smuggling drugs and arms threatening the stability of the region (Helman & Ratner, 1993). Facing these challenges Afghanistan became its own worst enemy, unable to maintain its political and territorial integrity both within and outside the country it fell victim to designs of external powers and became a breeding ground for dangerous non-state actors. Most alarming of all Afghanistan as a failed state provided a perfect environment for the mercenaries, social rejects, religious fanatics, ideologically blind politicians and criminals to colonize the physical space and use it to promote their own particular vision or consolidate and expand their interests and operations (Gros, 1996). The same failed state theory suggests that the international community can intervene in such a state with the objective of regime change and bringing order to the situation. This suggestion stems from the reason that a failed state is not only a threat to itself but also its neighbours, the region and to the international community as a whole. Hence it is the responsibility of the international community to do everything possible to uproot this threat. US intervention in Afghanistan and unseating of Taliban was viewed and started within this very framework of argument. Some scholars have often cited the UN Charter, Chapter 7 which says that, if a failed state is threatening the international order there is no normative predicament because the great powers are charged specifically with defending international peace and security.⁴

Taliban is basically an Islamic Fundamentalist group, predominantly deriving from the Pashtun tribe residing in the south and east of Afghanistan, which ruled from 1996 till 2001. It was formed in the early 1990s by one faction of the Mujahedeens, who fought the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan from 1979-1989, getting covert military and financial assistance from the US-CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and its Pakistani cohort the ISI

⁴ "Charter of United Nations", Chapter VII.

(Inter-Services Intelligence). The people of America had no clue that their government along with the secret service of England, with the help of Pakistan had begun funding and training the religious fanatics including Osama Bin Laden – out of which came the Al Qaeda, Taliban and also the unfortunate 9/11. Initially Taliban attracted popular support for the promise to bring stability and peace in the wake of Soviet withdrawal and the period of conflict between various mujahedeen factions from 1992 to 1996. Taliban imposed its own brand of rules and justice over the territory it had consolidated over the years. It drew from the pre-Islamic Pashtun tribal codes and interpreted the Sharia and Wahhabi doctrines to suit its cause. It rejected and neglected the social services and other functions of the state to its people, its Ministry for The Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice enforced prohibitions on behavior it deemed un-Islamic⁵. Taliban's outlook and the world-view it had led to a complete breakdown of afghan society, and the regime's involvement in terrorizing the region outside convinced the international community that it's a threat not only to Afghanistan but also to the world peace at large.

Before 9/11 the world community had no clear approach to deal with Afghanistan or particularly Taliban. There have been a few indirect military confrontations by Washington and Iran and also an imposition of arms embargo, which could not be pursued owing to porous borders between Pakistan and Afghanistan.⁶ The international community had chosen to ignore or rather not see in the direction as Taliban went on violating all the international laws, human rights and so on. The list of inhumanity and atrocities included treating women as second-class citizens, extrusion of all international agencies and NGOs, mass abuse and persecution of religious and ethnic minorities, gross human rights violations, cultural vandalism which was in the form of destructing the Bamian Buddhas and other artifacts of the country's non-Islamic heritage, promotion of an illicit economy with networks covering the whole of Central Asia and Russia including opium trade and production, and finally providing a safe haven for militants to train and launch offensives from Afghanistan.

⁵ Laub, Zachary, "The Taliban in Afghanistan", 4th July, 2014, Council on Foreign Relations.

⁶ Regardless of the problems with border control, the council of European Union at the end of 1996 imposed an embargo on the delivery of arms, ammunitions and military materials to Afghanistan. But it had little or no effect.

Post 9/11 US led NATO forces invaded Afghanistan invoking Article 5 of the treaty.⁷ (NATO: 2005) The offensive launched was named the **War on Terror** for toppling the Taliban regime which provided sanctuary to Al-Qaeda and the mastermind behind the attacks Osama Bin Laden. So now we see that the whole world comes together to end the terrorism and the terrorist organizations that were operating from Afghanistan. Even Russia and Central Asian countries joined the Great War on Terrorism, by providing logistical and military use of the bases to support the foreign forces fighting the Taliban. In a few years the Taliban were ousted from Afghanistan, the insurgents scattered and found a safe haven across border in Waziristan, FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Area)⁸ of Pakistan. They regrouped under the leadership of Mullah Mohammad Omar and began fighting the Western backed government in Kabul. The resurgence of Taliban post-2001 was financed by the drug cartels operating across border all the way till Central Asia and Russia and also the revenues from illicit mining.⁹

The war on terror and the invasion of Afghanistan started with the main objective of rooting out terrorism by capturing or killing Osama Bin Laden, wiping out al Qaeda and all its networks, eliminating Taliban or making it defunct and in the process democratizing Afghanistan. Although the global war on terror started with Afghanistan on the frontline, there was no definition of terrorism that included all (Rahman, 2010).

Terrorism used to be a crime before 9/11 and the terrorists were brought to the court of justice, then there was a necessary investigation for finding out the cause and the motivation behind the acts of terrorism; the rationality behind doing so was that any act of terrorism was not itself an end, but was used as a means to achieve something concrete. The attacks on the World Trade centers and the US changed the whole world perspective towards terrorism. It was an act that now needed no investigation but only punishment and elimination. It made the whole world terrified at the level to which the

⁷ Article 5 of NATO states that, the signatories agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.

⁸ FATA is a semi-autonomous tribal region in northwestern Pakistan, it comprises of seven tribal districts, six frontier regions and are directly governed by Pakistan's federal government through a special set of laws called the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR).

⁹ First report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Implementation Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) concerning the Taliban and associated individuals and entities. UNSC report 2012.

terrorists had gone this time and every nation in the world was afraid it could be the next target. So the whole world joined US-troops and stood up against Osama Bin Laden the mastermind of the attacks and the Taliban. And this intensified anti-American feeling which further increased the numbers joining terrorist organizations and also new organizations came up parallel to the war on terrorism. Afghanistan became the region to be bombed by the international forces, the objective was not only to eliminate Taliban but also to help the country democratise and bring back the peace.

Gradually and perhaps because of the failures that happened in the actual execution of the plan, the objectives of the war kept shifting and reshaping accordingly to serve the interests of the forces that were fighting the war in the region. At times it focused on cutting down the Taliban and at others the focus was on rehabilitating and strengthening the political structures and other democratic institutions of the country, the recent focus has been to train and support the Afghan forces to combat the terrorists that have now been seen taking up new territories. The Taliban with its fellow insurgent groups like the Haqqani Network¹⁰, Hezb-e-Islami and others are still deep in the region and the emergence of ISIS at this point of time cannot be ignored nor can it be seen in isolation. It won't be wrong to say that the dominant US strategy did not work the way they hoped it would, to name one was the implementation of Counter-Insurgency (COIN). It is high time that the US military policy-makers realise that COIN will not give the desired victory in Afghanistan or anywhere in the world. What they fail to understand is that more guns with people on a foreign territory will never win a war. The tragedy behind COIN was that it deluded the policy-makers into believing that if the military force was used in a certain manner it could give them political gains and outcomes further culminating into victory.

Thousands of troops withdrew from Afghanistan in December of 2014 the ones that remained were called the ***Resolute Action Force***, with the primary objective of training

¹⁰ Haqqani network composes of the Zadran tribe, based in Waziristan conducted cross-border operations into eastern Afghanistan and Kabul. Centered in the city of Kosht, in the 1980s Jalaluddin Haqqani fought as a mujahedeen leader against Soviet forces, receiving substantial financial and military assistance from the CIA through ISI.

and supporting the Afghan National Force to take over the combating operations and securing the region off Taliban.

As the **ISAF withdrawal** from Afghanistan approached, the international community increasingly looked towards the impact that a stable or unstable Afghanistan might have on the broader region, including Central Asia. The radical Islamism along with extremism originating from Afghanistan threatens the stability and peace of Central Asia. Furthermore the risk of spill out stems from the potential failure of Afghan security forces, and the state apparatus. One cannot deny that the recent developments have shown that though after more than a decade of this war on terrorism and against Taliban, the international forces have yet not been able to neutralize Taliban or the Al-Qaeda. The so called war on terror is in the second decade of its course and still it does not seem to end anytime soon in the near future.

Domestic stability is an important part of the broader security puzzle. And in this regard it seemed that Afghanistan made some progress when the power was peacefully taken up by the National Unity Government. But over the years, even after constant support of the international community and with money pouring in for rehabilitation, the re-emergence of Taliban and especially the ISIS, poses a serious threat to Afghanistan and Central Asia, now more than ever before. Quite a lot of concerns about the phenomenon of ISIS which has come to the region recently as opposed to the Taliban which were Pashtun and more pan-Afghan and were not interested in going beyond the Amu Darya. ISIS does have interest to go beyond not only Amu Darya but to take over the whole area and it also is multi-ethnic unlike Taliban. ISIS also does a huge amount of recruitment in Central Asia, though the numbers are contested, but huge numbers of people are fighting along with ISIS in Syria and Iraq. There is a difference in the approach for Afghanistan and Central Asia. For Central Asia it is a question of prevention, a question of loss or a kind of looking towards an ideology-less vacuum, something that the security forces and intelligence departments are dealing with. On the other hand, for Afghanistan the presence of ISIS is a continuation of the entire war economy, the war tradition, and the response in Afghanistan is much more force driven with the ISAF and foreign troops

involved in it. So it is a difference of radicalization for both Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The intervention in Afghanistan rescinded Taliban's control in the country, but it remained short-lived. The resurgence of Taliban after 2014 military drawdown by the US has increased the vulnerability of the country and the region on a whole. Though more than a decade long war has reduced the capacity of Taliban and Al Qaida, yet the recent developments indicate that these terrorist organisations consider a prolonged conflict with the US and the non-Islamic world as inevitable and are not going to give up. In the light of these events and arguments one can say that, the war on terrorism has not yet been a success and the future looks bleak at best. The international community has lacked severely and the need of the hour is to change and amend the current strategy to fight this war.

The neighbourhood of Afghanistan is seriously worried about the fate of the country and of their own. Central Asia has been the most affected by the spillovers from Afghanistan and the military drawdown of the international forces have raised many questions and issues relating to the security of this part of the world. The bordering countries of Central Asia already face many internal challenges to their governments and state like insurgency from the Fergana Valley, narco-trafficking, small arms and weapons proliferation, corruption and to top it all the influence of Islamic terrorism from Afghanistan have been a serious trouble for them.

The **Rationale and Scope of the Study** will basically be looking into the War on terror in Afghanistan and the impact it has on Central Asia. Withdrawal of the ISAF from the region, signaling the official end of the war brings the dawn of a new era of 'uncertainty' for both Afghanistan and Central Asia. Central Asia can never be stable and peaceful if Afghanistan does not stabilise. The spillover from the Afghan region has since a long time raising serious security issues in Central Asia. The presence of ISAF and more than a decade long war on terror has not achieved anything significant in combating terrorism. The raid in Abbottabad and the killing of Laden cannot be counted as an achievement, given the present status of terrorism and the Taliban which used to

operate from the south, which was supposed to be eliminated, now has also captured the northern region of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan and Central Asia share a long history and have been facing somewhat common security challenges. Still one does not see the will on the part of the leaders to engage in solving the regional problems. The re-emergence of Taliban taking over the north, drugs and narcotics trafficking, deteriorating economy, increasing fiscal gaps, massive security challenge in dealing with armed and violent conflicts across the country and more importantly the real political challenge of establishing structures of government in Afghanistan along with the recent rise of ISIS have made the Central Asian region all the more vulnerable in terms of security. Against this backdrop this research will try to analyse some of the important problems and issues that need to be discussed when it comes to the security of Central Asia. The particular time period has been taken because it covers the period from the 9/11 attacks followed by the US attacking the Taliban led Afghanistan in 2001. And we see that in 2015 the NATO-led ISAF has started withdrawing from the region and other players like Russia and China through SCO and CSTO are playing a greater role in securing the region.

Research Question:

The following research questions will be analysed:

1. How successful has been the so called transformation decade in Afghanistan?
2. What are the reasons behind the re-emergence of extremism in Central Asia?
3. Which are the external and internal actors affecting the security of the region?
4. What are the roles of US and the Central Asian states in combating terrorism in Afghanistan?
5. What are the security mechanisms used by Central Asia to combat the growing extremism on its own soil and the spillover from Afghanistan?
6. What will be the possible threats to the region after the withdrawal of ISAF and foreign troops from Afghanistan?

Hypotheses:

1. US decision to withdraw from Afghanistan impacted on the security situation in Central Asia, which has witnessed a number of terrorist incidents in recent years.
2. War on Terror brought US military involvement into Central Asia which resulted in engagement of other powers in the region and thus created a competitive environment.
3. Unsure of future US involvement in regional security, Central Asian states have created alternative security strategies in collaboration with Russia and China to combat terrorist threats.

Chapterisation:

1. **Introduction**

This chapter will briefly deal with the Central Asian security situation during the Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

2. **US and the War on Terrorism in Afghanistan**

This chapter will shed some light on the developments in the war on Terrorism very briefly; current situation in Afghanistan, Islamic fundamentalism and the anti-American feelings.

3. **Security Implications of Afghan instability for Central Asia**

This chapter will analyse Central Asia's role in the global war on terror, security challenges and the growing radicalization in the region.

4. **Anti-Terrorism strategies of Central Asian states**

This chapter will show a brief history of the strategy Central Asian states have adopted over the years to combat terrorism in the region and the present challenges they face due to the official end of the combat mission and withdrawal of the international forces from Afghanistan other than a policy reversal of keeping 9800 troops in Afghanistan in a bilateral security agreement.

5. **Conclusion**

The last chapter will summarise the key findings and arguments of the study.

Chapter 2

US AND THE WAR ON TERRORISM IN AFGHANISTAN

“.....most of the territory of Afghanistan looks like a scene from the movies Mad Max or some post-holocaust futuristic movie, with craters on roads and fallen walls of the cities, debris from the war can be seen everywhere.....”

-Nick Danziger

“How can you wage war on terror, when war itself is terrorism?”

The United States invaded Afghanistan under the name of War on Terror which later on became the Global War on Terror. The whole world with a few exceptions was seen rallying behind the US/NATO-led forces launching an offensive in Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban regime. This chapter will be a detailed study of the different phases of war on terror in Afghanistan and how successful or unsuccessful has been the transformation decade. The second part of the chapter will explain how and what led to the anti-American feelings that fuelled the Islamic Fundamentalism.

Even after fifteen years of the war on terror and a persistent military operation, Taliban seems far from being vanquished and the war looks riddled and fragmented. The Taliban along with other armed associates has been expanding its sphere of influence to the once peaceful provinces of north like *Kunduz* and *Baghlan* etc. Before analyzing the stages of war on terror I will very briefly narrate the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism and of Taliban in Afghanistan.

Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism in Afghanistan:

Since late 1960's Islamic Fundamentalism and Extremism has been active in the politics of Afghanistan, and was later on was strengthened by the Soviet invasion and the stunning victory of the Mujahedeens over the Soviet army. The strength of this movement depended to a great extent on its military capacities and on the quality of political associations it had. The development of the Islamic movement in Afghanistan

was not much known, though it was greatly revered for the part it played during the Soviet invasion. It got its authenticity from having given the ideological platform to the battle, the radical Islam here rose above the unimportant patriotism. The Islamic movement however had effectively opposed and fought back the communist impact in Afghanistan five years before the socialist coup started. The Islamic fundamentals even today possess an important place in the legislative issues of the country. (Fuller, 1991) Though in Afghanistan tribal and ethnic lines used to work on the frontline, but all of them had one converging point and that was – Islamic fundamentals.

The whole problem started when the Islamic radicals rejected the constricted ethnic preferences for the basis of state, but supported those political groups who had an outlook similar to what they thought was Islamic. This was the reason that after the soviet withdrawal which was followed by armed conflict between the Mujahedeens and huge loss of civilian life, that the Islamic movement gained much momentum. As a result of which we saw the rise of Taliban bringing in strict interpretations and implementation of the Sharia Law. They believed that only religious fundamentals of Islam could bring in peace to the war torn country. This also appealed to the common people who always felt alienated from the government. The Afghan people had already lost all faith in the ruling elites and also lack of proper governance, high rate of illiteracy and unemployment, chaotic law and order situation, lack of basic infrastructure, etc. Hence, Taliban received initial support from the masses as they promised to bring peace and stability to the anarchic situation of the country.

When sermons were issued to attack the ruling elites, and the declaration of a holy war by the religious leaders against the enemies within, embalmed the suffering public; and the fact that it was framed in a religious context was ignored. In order to achieve the unadulterated “essentials” of Islam, they called for cleansing the nation off all kinds of Western, outsider or non-Islamic impacts that had ruined the culture and drove society off track. Islamic fundamentalism, be that as it may, had no intelligible project to take care of the monetary and social issues confronting the masses. It had no solid arrangements to give living compensation occupations, lodging, social insurance, modern advancement, or popularity based political foundations. Regardless, without any options or alternatives

for development fit for driving a battle to change the society, Islamic fanaticism possessed the capacity to flourish as the main radical option.

Situation after withdrawal of Soviet Forces from Afghanistan:

Soon after the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Afghanistan the country plunged into a civil unrest, the warring factions of the Mujahedeens fought for control over Kabul. In 1992, after the fall of the Najibullah-regime¹¹ the political parties of Afghanistan signed and agreed for the Peshawar Accords¹² for creating the **Islamic State of Afghanistan**, also appointing an interim government. **Hezb-e-Islami**¹³ headed by **Gulbuddin Hekmatyar**¹⁴ was the only faction who did not sign the Peshawar Accords and rejected the nascent interim government that was formed. He took on himself to not only refuse to accept the government but also launched missile attacks on Kabul and the government forces. (Human Rights Watch, 2005) Hekmatyar received all the support he needed from Pakistan – military, financial and operational- whatever he needed Pakistan made it available to him. Afghanistan was challenged not only by the internal warring forces but external forces also played a key role in subverting and aggravating the situation in a country which was already witnessing armed conflicts all over it.

¹¹ Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai was a pro-Soviet President of Afghanistan from 1987-1992. The Soviet army withdrew from Afghanistan when he came to power; during his tenure he tried to solve the ongoing civil unrest without the Soviet troops on the ground. He tried to portray his government as an Islamic one, by removing all references to communism from the constitution of 1990. Even this attempt didn't garner him much support. After the collapse of Soviet Union he was left without any foreign aid, meanwhile the Mujahedeens were still being supported by the US. All this culminated in the internal collapse of his government and was ousted from power in April 1992. Later Najibullah was executed by Taliban.

¹² Signed on 24th April 1992, the Peshawar Accords was a peace and power-sharing agreement establishing the post-communist era Islamic State of Afghanistan. It was signed by all the major Afghan anti-Soviet resistance parties except for the Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

¹³ Hezb-e-Islami literally meaning Islamic Party was an organisation founded by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to fight the pro-Soviet Government in Afghanistan. It was established in Afghanistan in 1975 which later became a political party. The members of Hezb-e-Islami mostly are ethnic Pashtuns and it draws its ideology from the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami

¹⁴ Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is a former Prime Minister of Afghanistan who founded the Hezb-e-Islami political party and has been one of the most controversial commanders among the other warring Mujahedeen factions. The reason being he was (in)famous for killing more Mujahedeens than the Soviets. Hekmatyar was later in 2007 declared a wanted terrorist by The United States.

External forces and neighbouring countries like Iran, Saudi Arab and Pakistan took the unrest of Afghanistan as an opportunity to enforce their agenda and conjured the events and conditions to suit their own political and security interests. One of the other reasons for this was that after the Soviets withdrew the West had largely disengaged and lost interest in Afghanistan. Therefore with none of the big powers in the region the already weak state of Afghanistan became an easy target for its ambitious neighbours. Weapons and money kept flowing into the hands of the Mujahedeens who were fighting with all ferocity to take over Kabul. Going by the official data of the Afghanistan Justice Report of 2005, almost 25000 people (civilians) died during this intense period, and close to half a million fled the country. (Afghanistan Justice Report, 2005)

2.3 Rise of Taliban in Afghanistan:

It was around this time the Taliban came into Afghanistan, as a political and religious resistance to the local governor of South Afghanistan. **Mullah Omar**¹⁵ started the movement from Kandahar, his home town. In 1994 Taliban had forced the Pashtun warlords of South and Central Afghanistan to surrender and took over the control of these regions. *Taliban* in Pashtun means *Students* (Talibs), which was later joined by the many Pashtuni talibs studying in the *madarsaahs* of Pakistan. Taliban by early 1996 had taken over many provinces of central and southern Afghanistan, but Kabul was still under the dominance of government forces headed by Ahmad Shah Massoud. On 26th September 1996, after having received fresh reinforcements-- military support from Pakistan, financial from Saudi Arabia – Taliban was planning a full fledged armed attack on Kabul, but before they could attack Massoud pulled back his forces; Kabul finally went into the hands of Taliban. (Coll, 2004)

Some analysts say that by 2001 Taliban controlled almost 90 per cent of the country. It attracted some initial support for promising stability and peace in the war ravaged post-Soviet era, the other promise it made was to rid the people of Afghanistan from the

¹⁵ Mullah Omar emerged on the Afghan scene in 1994, leading the Taliban to rid Kandahar off its tyrannical governor. He founded the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in 1996, the Taliban recognised him as Commander of the Faithful or the Supreme leader of the Muslims.

corrupt government of **Burhanuddin Rabbani**¹⁶ -- a Tajik, who the Talibanis considered anti-Pashtun. But soon the anticipation of peace and order was replaced by a strict interpretation of Islam, which included banning all opposition, trade unions, political parties, a brutally repressive *Sharia law*¹⁷ was imposed on the Afghans who were otherwise historically followers of the *Hanafi School of thought*¹⁸ – the most tolerant of the Sunni Islam. They had executions and amputations for crime, virtually enslaved half of the population – the women, in houses restricting their movement and actions, it was decreed that the men folk have to keep a certain length of beard, homosexuals were buried alive and they did not stop there, banned and outlawed flying kites, dancing, singing, music, musical instruments, playing cards and also boxing, internet and television were considered as symbols of Western decadence, hence were banned. (Rashid, 2000) The Sharia Law of Taliban had nothing in common with the culture and practices of the Afghan people. They had their own version of “Pure Islam” or Wahhabism¹⁹ and they were in a constant fight between the believers and the non-believers – including the non-Muslims and also the Muslims who did not follow or subscribe to the pure Islam as they did.

Some analysts like Rashid believe that Taliban as a group could not have had the kind of success it had on its own. As a group Taliban comprised of young students, who were politically and practically inexperienced, they were guided by external masterminds belonging to the political elite of the neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Though after the creation of the **Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan** by Taliban on

¹⁶ Burhanuddin Rabbani was the President of Islamic State of Afghanistan from 1992 to 1996, when Taliban took over Kabul. He served a second term for a month when US invaded Afghanistan and ousted Taliban from Kabul. He was succeeded by Hamid Karzai after the Bonn Conference (December 2001). He was one of the leaders of the Northern Alliance fighting against the Taliban till the US invasion. Rabbani also headed the Jamiat-e-Islami Afghanistan which had close ties to the Jamiat-e-Islami of Pakistan. He was killed by a suicide bomber at his house in Kabul in 2011.

¹⁷ Sharia Law is a body of Islamic law, it means path or way and is the legal framework within which the public and some private aspects of life are regulated for those living in a legal system based on Islam.

¹⁸ Out of the five Schools of Islamic Thought- Jafiri, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali and Hanafi is one which has the largest number of followers among the Sunni Muslims. It is predominant in countries that were once part of the historic Ottoman Empire.

¹⁹ Wahhabism is a puritanical trend of Sunni Islam imported from Saudi Arabia. It is considered to be ultraconservative, fundamentalist and as an Islamic reform movement to restore pure monotheistic worship. The adherents often object to the use of the term Wahhabi as derogatory, and prefer to be called *Salafi* or *Muwahhid*.

27th September 1996, the United States of America never directly or indirectly sent any material help, but it always remained sympathetic towards the same group it ousted with all its might in 2001. A few reasons for such sympathy from the US are: it saw Taliban as anti-Iran and at that time it was looking for allies that were against Iran. Secondly, Taliban was also anti-Soviet/Russia, and anything anti-Russian was acceptable, and thirdly it was looking for pipeline options through Afghanistan, for which befriending and recognizing the new regime in Afghanistan was necessary. (Rashid, 2000) And therefore the United States turned its gaze away from the atrocities and gross human rights violations done by Taliban under the name of Islamic laws and way of life.

Rise of Osama bin Laden:

Osama bin Laden the leader of **Al Qaeda** (meaning ‘the base’ in Arabic) came to Afghanistan in May 1996 after he was exiled from his own country Saudi Arabia for conspiring against the government. Bin Laden who was born in Saudi, Mohammad Atef²⁰ along with a few others founded Al Qaeda in 1988 and remained one of the major financiers of the Mujahedeens fighting the Soviet army in Afghanistan. Laden was exiled from Saudi in 1991 after he retaliated through violence against the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia even after the Gulf War.²¹ He fled to Sudan where he set training camps for the recruits into al Qaeda, he also had a few agro and construction businesses there which used to finance his networks/camps and also camouflaged the trade of arms through several of his networks. Al Qaeda was a network of extremists which recruited Muslims from around the world and not only trained them in the camps but also financed

²⁰ Mohammad Atef was the military commander of Al Qaeda and was among the founding members of the group along with Osama bin Laden and Ayman Al Zawahiri (Egyptian deputy of Laden). Atef was killed by a drone attack in 2001 near Kabul. The intelligence agencies could not learn much about his role in the terrorist organisation

²¹ Gulf War: also known as the Persian Gulf War (1990-1991) started when Saddam Hussein of Iraq invaded Kuwait in early August 1990. The grounds being that Kuwait was siphoning off crude oil from the Ar-Rumaylah oil fields located along their common border and he also refused to recognise Kuwait as a state, saying that it was carved out off Iraqi coast by Western colonists. However the Iraqi aggression was condemned by two-thirds of the 21-members of the Arab League and they called in the US and allied forces. Saddam Hussein also defied the UNSC demands to withdraw from Kuwait in mid- January 1991 and then the US-led allied forces started with a massive air offensive known as Operation Storm. After relentless bombardment from air and also on ground after 42-days most of the Iraqi troops had either surrendered or fled. On February 28, 1991 a ceasefire was declared by the then President George H W. Bush.

them to overthrow or at least use violence against their governments who were pro-West, especially pro-US.

In August 1996, Laden issued a fatwa declaring a **Jihad**²² or holy war against the United States of America, and asked his followers to use violence against all US nationals in all parts of the world as it was necessary for the protection of their own faith.

Laden's return to Afghanistan was a watershed moment for Taliban because not only did he infuse more funds into the movement but also showed them the world of Islamic radicalism. It was only after this that Taliban grew hostile to the west and particularly the US and also became more radical in handling the public of Afghanistan when it came to Islamic laws. It is said that Taliban started asserting and imposing itself on the Afghans more vehemently and cruelly. It burnt down crops and pillaged the villages it conquered, killed civilians for no reason and interpreted Islam radically. This made Taliban lose whatever little popular support it had from the masses, so much that it hardly found any Afghan men for recruitment into the ranks and files of the group.

US did not respond to any of the reports by Human Rights Watch or any other international organisation regarding the gross violations of all type of rules. Instead the Clinton administration was sending funds to the Taliban so that they could fight and stop the opium trade. (Khalil, 2001) It was only after 9/11 that the US took a U-turn for Taliban and al Qaeda, in its policy by launching a war against it.

Afghanistan under Taliban:

By 1998 Taliban had already captured the city of Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif (Shia dominated), and was also bombarded in the same year by US for the first time for attacks on embassies in Tanzania and Kenya²³. The bombing of the embassies in Africa was the event that propelled Laden to the spotlight also bringing a military reaction from the US.

²² Jihad is often translated into the Holy War but linguistically in Arabic it means struggling or striving. It is perhaps the most misunderstood concept of Islam. War in Arabic is called "al-harb". The Islamic fanatics like Osama Bin Laden have often used this word in order to attract Muslims from around the world to save their religion from western influence, like he did when he declared a jihad against the United States.

²³ August 7, 1998, bombs exploded almost simultaneously in US embassies at Kenya, Nairobi, Tanzania and Dar es Salaam, killing 224 people, more than 5000 were wounded, 12 of those killed in Kenya were US citizens.

This was followed by an air and arms embargo imposed by the United Nations on Taliban in late 1999 and early 2001. But this did not stop it from blowing up the 2000-years old Bamian Buddha statues in early 2001. (Rashid, 2001)

The Bamian Buddha statues were world's tallest sandstone carvings of the Buddha revered as a cultural and heritage spot by Iraq and also in the world. This attracted a huge international outcry against Taliban and its Islamic zealots; there have also been reports that the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Kofi Annan met Taliban's foreign minister, Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil in Islamabad asking him not to go ahead with the demolition and to respect others' religious feelings. Nevertheless it fell to the deaf ears of the minister who said that the statues were non-Islamic and could not be tolerated under their territory. (The Telegraph, 12/3/2001)

During all this time the forces of Ahmad Shah Massoud kept challenging the Taliban along with the Northern Alliance forces.

On one hand there was the Taliban forces mostly Pakistani and Saudi Nationals along with a few ex-Mujahedeens supported by the IMU²⁴ (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) and the al Qaeda trying to take over the northern part of the country, and on the other was the anti-Taliban group, the Northern Alliance who were ethnic Hazaras and Tajiks and were getting assistance from Uzbekistan, Russia and Iran. The result of this face off was a web of armed militancy, violence, transnational networks of drug trafficking, and lawlessness. Taliban had tried many a times in the past to kill Massoud, and finally on 9th September 2001 al Qaeda operatives assassinated him in a suicide attack, his death was a severe blow to the anti-Taliban resistance in Afghanistan. (Bergen, 2006) And then on the fateful day of 11th September 2001, four commercial flights were hijacked and the twin towers of New York, the Pentagon and Shanksville in Pennsylvania were attacked by the terrorist of al Qaeda. Around 3000 people died including about 400 police officers

²⁴ IMU – Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan was formed in 1998 by two Islamic ideologues one a former Soviet paratrooper Juma Namangani and Tahir Yaldashev, both ethnic Uzbeks from the Ferghana Valley. Its original objective was to overthrow President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan and to create an Islamic state under *Sharia*, however in subsequent years it reinvented itself by pledging allegiance to al Qaeda and fighting alongside Taliban.

and firemen, several were injured. This attack shook the otherwise blind Westerners to the menace of al Qaeda, Taliban, Islamic Fundamentalism and terrorism on a whole.

The President of United States vowed to bring the perpetrators to justice declaring the war against terrorism on a global level and particularly against Taliban and Afghanistan, he also added that his country would make no distinction between the terrorists and the ones who have supported or harboured them. Though out of the 19 terrorists who had executed the 9/11 attacks none were Afghan nationals -- 15 were from Saudi Arabia, Mohammad Atta the one who piloted the attack was an Egyptian, one from Lebanon and two others were from UAE (United Arab Emirates). Nevertheless Afghanistan became the battleground for the US-led Global War on Terrorism, with the initial objective being ousting Taliban, eliminating Al Qaeda and either arresting or killing Osama bin Laden.

War on Terror – Legitimate or Not?

The Charter of United Nations clearly states that the member countries shall settle all their disputes peacefully, and that no one shall use the military force except for self-defense. On the other hand the US Constitution states that though the international treaties which are ratified by the US are part of the law, but the Congress can at any point of time rescind it by passing an Act for the same. In this case also we see that the US congress passed a resolution ‘Authorising the Use of Military Force Against Terrorists’²⁵, on September 14, 2001, even though the UNSC did not authorize the military assault in Afghanistan -- **Operation Enduring Freedom**. The NATO meanwhile investigating the attacks evoked **Article 5** – an attack on any of the signatories shall be considered as an attack on all - for the first time in history since its inception (NATO Update 2001). The legitimacy of the war on terror and specially the US-led military invasion has been defended on the ground that **Article 51** of the Charter of United Nations provides for action in self-defense. Nevertheless the critics of the war have held a different view. They assert that invasion in self-defense which the US claims it has used for invading

²⁵ Congress-Senate Joint Resolution 23 - 107th Congress (2001-2002) was passed without amendment which – authorizes the President to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organisations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harboured such organisations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organisations, or persons.

Afghanistan is in fact not legitimate, for US was not attacked by any state or country in particular but by the non-state actors; a group of individuals.

Phases of War on Terror:

Coming to the discussion on the phases of the War on Terror in Afghanistan, the longest war that the US-led NATO forces are fighting can be divided into three broad periods – the first being the air campaign followed by the ground forces taking control of important cities like Mazar-i-Sharif, Kabul, Kunduz and Kandahar, second was the COIN (Counter-Insurgency) period; and third which is in process by the Resolute Support Force.

October 7, 2001 military operations were launched in Afghanistan, with bombs dropped in cities of Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad. (CNN Archives, 2001) The first US troops to enter Afghanistan were the CIA's Special Activities Division (SAD), and were later joined by the US Army Special Forces from the 5th Special Forces Group and other units of USSOCOM.²⁶ (Schroen 2006) The United Nations Security Council created the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) by passing a **Resolution (1386)** on December 20, 2001, to help the Afghan authority; and on August 11, 2003 NATO took over the charge from the ISAF.

The **first phase** which lasted roughly till the end of 2006, headed by Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was also known as the '**shock and awe**' phase – it relied on the capacity of the attacker to bring down the will of the enemy to fight any further – sudden attacks, massive casualties was the basic idea that was reflected in the initial period of the war. This concept was kind of already tested by the US forces when they dropped the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, resulting in the immediate surrender by Japan. In the initial months of Operation Enduring Freedom heavy bombardments were carried out on hostile territories, destroying air-defenses, training camps of Taliban and resulting in huge losses of men and territory to Al Qaeda. By the end of November 2001, Taliban had lost Kabul, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kunduz and Qala-i-Jangi to the Northern Alliance

²⁶ USSOCOM is the United States Special Operations Command is the Unified Combatant Command charged with overseeing the various Special Operations Component Commands of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force of the US armed Forces, activated on April, 16 1987 is headquartered in Florida. The role of USSOCOM is to provide fully capable special operations forces to defend the United States and its interests and plan and synchronize operations against terrorist networks.

supported by the American troops. Early December the city of Kandahar, which was also the birthplace of Taliban, was taken back by the forces of Gul Agha Sherzai (the former Governor of Kandahar) and the troops from US (Saylor Academy, 2011).

Also in December 2001 the **Bonn Conference**²⁷ was held in Bonn, Germany which selected **Hamid Karzai** -- a Pashtun -- as the head of the Interim Government of Afghanistan, and created and deployed the International Security Assistance Force to preserve the security in and around Kabul. It was also decided that the interim government would work towards the creation of a new constitution for two years and the next *Loya Jirga*²⁸ would determine the future course of action. The battle of Tora Bora has been one in which many Talibanis and anti-Taliban forces were killed, whereas no casualties to US or UK forces were reported (Saylor Academy, 2011). Though Osama Bin Laden along with some loyal fighters fled the complex, the victory over the Tora Bora caves was considered to be important from a strategic point of view, many terrorists fled to Waziristan and FATA regions of Pakistan during this raid. The US continued to bomb the whole of southern region to push back the terrorists from the territories they were holding.

No matter what results were expected out of the ‘shock and awe’ strategy in case of Taliban and Al Qaeda it was not the same what they achieved. Even after heavy bombings and U.S. ground troops close to a total of 10,000 operating in Afghanistan, the insurgents had started to regroup in the mountains of Shahi-i-Kot, Paktia Province. This was followed by what was called Operation Anaconda initially planned to be for four days, but could only be officially ended after 17 days of battle (Kugler, 2007). Operation Anaconda was also the second instance of ‘friendly-fire’ which claimed the life of one US soldier on the very first day of the mission in Shahikot Valley; first being on Karzai

²⁷ Bonn Conference was held in Bonn, Germany on December 5, 2001, attended by four anti-Taliban ethnic factions – the Northern Alliance, the Cypress Group (group of exiles with ties to Iran), The Rome Group (loyal to former King Mohammad Zaher Shah) and the Peshawar Group (group of Pashtun exiles based in Pakistan); 18 outside countries had send representatives to monitor the talks but the Taliban was not included. It was decided that Hamid Karzai who was supported by the US would become the head of the interim government and that the UN would deploy the ISAF in the country.

²⁸ Loya Jirga or the grand council of the elders is an old traditional practice of the country which is mainly held for electing a new head of the state in case of sudden death, adopting new constitution or to settle issues of national importance like War.

near Kandahar, when due to the confusion about the coordinates a bomb was dropped very close to Hamid Karzai's location injuring him and killing three special U.S. operators. This operation also brought the most casualties on part of US till that time in the war – killing 8 American soldiers; wounding 82 others (Reid, 2014). Meanwhile, the Taliban insurgents remained in some Southern provinces like Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul and Uruzgan.

A lot of operations led by NATO-ISAF were carried out – Operation Valiant Strike (Kandahar), Operation Avalanche, Operation Mongoose, Operation Mount Thrust, Operation Mountain Fury, Operation Falcon Summit - to gain control over these areas and push the Taliban away from those areas. Nevertheless, the fact remained that Taliban forces kept regrouping and grew stronger. Now they even had the weaponry to shoot down US helicopters- 2005 they shot down the Chinook helicopter killing 16 soldiers. (Hayes and Brunner, 2016)

In the mean time US invaded Iraq in 2003 taking its global war on terrorism a step further, though it still remains unclear as to how was Saddam Hussain linked to al-Qaeda or where did the so called lethal weapons of mass destruction vanish from Iraq. General David Petraeus came up with the plan of reviving Counterinsurgency strategy to implement in Iraq. The idea was to complement the military action along with other activities of political, social and economic development. In other words, rather than killing the enemy, facilitate the creation of a feasible and legitimate nation-state in the conflict zone. This was the argument that the US government gave for the 'surge' in Iraq. However, today in the post-war years of Iraq it is still struggling to build a workable and stable state. While the COIN was arguably regarded as a success in Iraq, it did not work in Afghanistan.

Reasons for COIN not working in Afghanistan:

The main reason being the safe haven offered by Pakistan, the shelter and protection that was offered to al Qaeda, Taliban and Haqqani Network posed a real challenge to stop them from leading armed attacks against foreign troops in Afghanistan. Pakistan's assistance was needed by the ISAF in fighting Taliban and also to bar it from finding a

place for reorganising only to turn back and attack the Afghan and International Forces. Pakistan promised it allegiance and support for the cause on the very next day of the Twin tower attacks, but was the last nation to sever its ties with the Taliban government three months after the attack, and the whole intention came under question when the same Pakistan's intelligence offered protection to Osama bin Laden and Taliban. (Kassel, 2014)

COIN also did not work because of the rampant corruption by the Afghan officials. It was very clear that the populace in Afghanistan had given in for Taliban not because they had much of faith in its ways or ideologies but because it promised to fulfill the needs of the people which the government could not; also fear being the other reason. Sarah Chayes in her recent book highlighted the fact that the acts of corruption by the Afghan officials did not go unnoticed by ISAF and NATO commanders but they did nothing about it, which alienated the people all the more from an already fragile government. (Chayes, 2015)

Although there were plenty of voices raised against the implementation of COIN in Afghanistan it shapes the **second phase** of the War. General Petraeus was the man who revived and implemented COIN in Iraq, however what it achieved there is a topic for a different debate but the task fell on General Stanley McChrystal to implement the same strategy in Afghanistan in 2009, which was codified in the **Field Manual 3-24**.²⁹ The people were to be kept in the focus that is to say that the civil population was to be protected at all costs; the insurgents and their camps were to be eliminated, a stable, accountable and legit government should be created that provides for the basic necessities of the citizens. It was envisaged that this policy would definitely bring a drastic change in the situation of Afghanistan, for now the war needed a different approach.

David Galula the French soldier and also an intellectual first came up with the concept of COIN he asked the soldier to become a school teacher, civil engineer and a nurse in the conflict zone as need be, but only in the initial stages of COIN, later on the civil and local agencies should takeover. (Galula, 2006) This is a problematic concept because, these jobs require a degree of expertise and the soldiers that are sent into a foreign country to

²⁹ Field Manual 3-24 basically talked about the 'clear and hold' strategy for the war in Afghanistan also extensively describing the length and expense to be

maintain the law and order would not be willing to do anything other than what they are there for. Other problem in this particular context is that, the foreign troops – the ISAF – comprised of troops from all parts of the world and they were sent to fight the insurgents who were mostly locals and if not knew the local language and culture. The ISAF troops was seen as the outside force, the population was not even happy with the fact that they were in the country, so no matter what amount of funds were poured in to build schools, hospitals and other infrastructures they were not used by the people. In other words the schools were built but there were no teachers, the roads were constructed but there was no security so were never used and they led nowhere, most of the local soldiers who were trained by NATO were illiterate, and the opium trade that they were fighting was at its peak during this time, financing the terrorists as usual. One wonders then why was COIN implemented? Didn't the policy makers anticipate the issues that could arise? The answer to these questions lies in the analysis of the assumptions on which the concept rested.

The Faulty Assumptions on which COIN rested and was implemented:

There were three assumptions: first being that if they could protect the civil population it would be decisive, but they forgot that who were they protecting the population from and against what? The problem in Afghanistan was not only the Taliban but also the corrupt afghan officials and police officers, the drug trafficking, the ethnic and tribal rivalries, and the biggest issue was unemployment. The youths who were unemployed were being recruited and brain washed by the radical Islamic terrorist leaders.

The second assumption was that the more foreign assistance comes in, the legitimacy, strength and capacity of the Afghan government would increase. The issue here was that the growth of civil society and government in any given society is a sociological matter, adding funds to it and expecting that money would create an accountable government and that the citizens give their consent in just one day is naïve and immature; and sometimes more funds add more to the trouble. Making of a legitimate, strong and accountable government that has the backing and trust of the civil society is an organic and a gradual process, and it also needs certain level of security and safety so that a due political process could be run.

The problem with the third assumption was that they thought Karzai would be willing to cooperate fully without any questions, but the case was very different the political backing which was expected from the then Karzai government was not received. Karzai had his own doubts for the COIN Doctrine, but more than that he always had a strained relation with the big brother attitude that US had, the highhandedness, the increasing civilian casualties for which the figures were very disturbing. Karzai did not completely support the doctrine but had anyway given in as he had no choice. The US commanders had always tried to convince him that the first step was to fight the Taliban and drive the insurgents out; rather focusing on building decent state machinery that could deliver on the duties he was supposed to. And now even after so many years into the war, Taliban was still not completely destroyed or chased away from the country, this was Karzai's concern. The problems mentioned above were not hypothetical, but these were real and were faced on a daily basis by the foreign military forces, development professionals, and civil diplomatic personnel who were actually doing all the ground work in Afghanistan. Hence, it was clear that COIN doctrine was not giving the expected results.

War Under Obama's Administration:

2009 the new US President Barak Obama inherited the war from Bush, not one; but two – one in Iraq and the other one in Afghanistan. During his election campaign he emphasized that there was a need to stop the loss of money and lives in both the wars that needed to come to an end. (Brown 2015) But as soon as he entered the oval office he faced the same dilemma the previous administration faced with respect to war in Afghanistan, and despite the campaign rhetoric he ordered a surge of troops towards the end of 2009 and further in the coming years. There had been whispers from some pockets of think tanks and strategists in both US and Afghanistan about a change in the strategy of war after, i.e., negotiations with the enemy, but the US administration was never in favour of any talks with Taliban.

On the other hand Taliban kept attacking NATO and ISAF forces anywhere and everywhere possible. They also attacked the supply convoys coming through Pakistan, which later created a lot of problems between US and Pakistan relations, when US troops accidentally killed Pakistani soldiers and civilians while they were conducting an air raid

near the Afghan-Pak border. In retaliation Pakistan closed off the Torkham ground border in 2009 for an indefinite period and later in 2011 asked the American to vacate the Shamsi Airfield. (Perlez and Cooper, 2010)

Later in mid-June 2010 walking into more troubles during a critical time in the war President Obama removed General McChrystal, the one person Karzai trusted for the job. (Seib and Rosenberg, 2010) The new Chief General David Petraeus shared the same view as General McChrystal regarding the war effort in Afghanistan. In fact he was the one who revived the counterinsurgency approach when he was heading the US troops in Iraq. So the idea remained the same, to clear and hold, protect the civil population and win their loyalty by cooperating with the local leaders. But the difference was he was not trusted by the Afghan or Pak leaders the way McChrystal was, and unlike McChrystal he did not have much knowledge about Afghanistan, which proved to be a major hindrance in going ahead with the plan and working with the top officials in the US embassy of Kabul who were handpicked for the job by General McChrystal. Irrespective of the change in the top echelons of leadership in the security forces the ground reality remained unchanged.

For example in case of the city of Marjah, after ousting the Taliban in early 2010, the allied and Afghan forces failed to establish a working government quickly, which gave the insurgents time to regroup and making it a contested territory for a long time. In the meanwhile there were many casualties perhaps the highest since 2001 in the allied forces, one of the reasons being; restrictive options for engagement. This was something that the troops on the front line also were coming to realise and were complaining about the fact that the only advantage they had on their side was of being technologically advanced which was taken away from them. The enemy they were fighting knew the terrain and the local language blended in with the civilians but the new pattern of engagement had tied one of their hands, which resulted in more casualties. Even the most generous of the analysts in the world were pointed out that the progress being made in reducing the insurgency, collateral damage (of non-combatants, infrastructure and security forces) and increasing the capacity of the Afghan National Forces in countering the insurgents - was negligible.

The Surge of 2009 and Negotiations with Taliban:

Because of the increasing risk of sending supplies and forces through Pakistan (Khyber Pass), the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) was established through several Central Asian states and Russia. (Oppel, 2009) This provided an alternative to the route in Pakistan, the NDN was much safer and the countries through which it passed were more cooperative with US for fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan. And in July Russia announced opening up of its airspace for the transit of not only non-lethal cargo but also lethal cargo--weapons and troops. (Baker, 2009)

By the end of 2009 the US had sent almost 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan. In the same year General McChrystal had made a classified assessment stating that at least 500,000 additional troops were needed and the fighting would go on for five years in order to completely eliminate Taliban and to build up the capacity of the Afghan National Force. (Andrews, 2009) This called for a country wide protest in the United States with protesters comparing the additional deployment to the war of Vietnam. On the other hand in November, Karl W. Eikenberry the US Ambassador to Kabul raised his concern against sending more troops to Afghanistan, until the then Karzai government made serious efforts in curbing the widespread corruption and gross mismanagement of the funds it was already getting. He also pointed out that the situation in Afghanistan was no more a military problem and sending more troops was one of the reasons why Taliban kept growing in numbers and capacity. (Jaffe, Wilson and DeYoung, 2009)

Meanwhile presidential and provincial council elections are held in Afghanistan in August 2009. It was a completely rigged with least voters turnout, lack of security and fraudulent practices reported from almost all polling booths. Nonetheless Hamid Karzai won the election defeating his rival Abdullah Abdullah, when he refused to participate in a re-election which was scheduled for November, after much pressure mounted on US by the allies to hold a fair and free election. Karzai became the President of Afghanistan for five years.

This year can be marked important when it comes to the change in the strategy of US war efforts. There was much high demand of troops than were actually sent, there were protests against these deployments, pressure was mounted on US to modify and alter its strategy to resolve the stalemate situation. President Hamid Karzai for the first time publicly called on US to start and support negotiations with the Taliban forces, another popular notion was rising that whatever was happening in Afghanistan was not a military problem and that pouring in more troops was not a wise decision, or was not going to yield any result. Despite all of this the year 2009 also witnessed the deteriorating relations between Karzai and Washington. Karzai blamed US for rigging the elections in an attempt to usurp him from the government, and he also questioned the commitment and efforts of the US-NATO led coalition forces in arresting the terror of Taliban and also in destroying the sanctuaries in Pakistan.

Peace Initiatives by Karzai from 2010:

After being reelected Karzai made reconciliation his top priority and urged the international community to support him in his peace initiatives during the London Conference of January 2010. Four months later he convened a Peace Jirga which gave him a strong mandate to go ahead with the peace talks and reconciliation process.³⁰

With all these elements working in the background, President Obama though reluctantly gave his nod for indirect talks with Taliban, asking Afghan Government to lead the Talks. He also perhaps remembered that during his election campaign in 2008 he had advocated that America should be willing to talk to its enemies. This brings us to the **third phase** of the war in Afghanistan.

Peace initiatives with Taliban began in 2010, and an official statement was made after the conference in London³¹ which agreed on a two-tier peace strategy. It was decided that in

³⁰ Afghanistan's National Consultative Peace Jirga (NCPJ) or the Peace Jirga was held on 2-4 June 2010, organized by President Karzai and presided by the former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani. After nine year of war, and with no victory in sight, there were clear signs that the Afghans were tempted by the idea of negotiations with the hardline Islamists. About 16,00 delegates including, 300 women, tribal leaders, religious leaders and members of Parliament from all over the country attended the three-day assembly. It was the first major public debate in Afghanistan on how to end the ongoing war.

³¹ The International Conference on Afghanistan was held on 28th January 2010 at the Lancaster House, London, where members of the international community discussed the further progress of the Petersburg

the first phase the foot-soldiers of Taliban would be lured and encouraged to sever ties with it for a better future, a good job and rural development; and then the leaders of Taliban would be called for peace talks. Hamid Karzai also called for the creation of a new body called National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Reintegration. (Richter 2010) Apart from the peace process the conference also talked about transferring the control of combat operations from NATO to the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) in most of the provinces of Afghanistan. But the criteria, the time frame and other details about the transfer was not determined in this conference. (Borger, 2010)

In March the Karzai government held talks with the leaders of Hizb-i-Islami, who presented the plan which called for withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2010. Taliban declined the invitation for the peace talks, reiterating that the foreign forces must leave first and then they could talk to the government. (Shalizi, 2010) Meanwhile the war continued with heavy losses of civilian life in the provinces, the number of foreign soldiers killed in combat also rose. The foreign troops were not welcomed any more, incidents of stone pelting and indifference towards the soldiers was reported throughout the country. (Tisdall, 2010) It was not only the civil Afghan population that wanted US troops out, but even the soldiers of the ANSF wanted them gone. There have been instances where the men enlisted in Afghan army had quit their jobs because of the callous behavior of the foreign commanders and the bad conditions in which they were expected to fight. Some said that there were soldiers who were fighting the Taliban continuously for years without holidays and without regular payment. (Amani and Macaskill, 2016) During combat missions some group of soldiers were left without reinforcements, food, medical care or even a decent commander who had any kind of strategy of prevailing in a war. Most of the recruits had left, some joining the Taliban with the sole aim driving the Coalition Forces out of the country. All of this pointed towards the fact that it was time for a broad reconsideration of the US-NATO approach in Afghanistan, military engagement and also the COIN doctrine yielded no results. The

Agreement 2001, on the democratisation of Afghanistan after ousting the Taliban regime. This one day conference was meant to chart a new course for the future of Afghanistan, bringing together representatives from 70 countries and international organisations.

need of the hour was to devise such a plan of action which could allow the forces to achieve some security in a sustainable manner.

Another important Conference was held in Kabul for the first time where almost 70 countries participated to discuss the future of Afghanistan. This was also held to show that the coalition forces have made much progress and made Kabul secure so that an international conference can be held without any disturbances. The main theme of the Kabul Conference³² was ‘reintegration’—extending a helping hand to the low-level of the insurgent groups, with promises of better jobs and lives if they lay down their weapons. He introduced the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program³³ (APRP). Later that year a High Peace Council was established by the government to oversee the talks with Taliban and also to guide APRP’s implementation. (UNDP Report 2011) Karzai also announced that he was committed to tackle and curb the widespread corruption in all levels of his government and also to improve the audit-practices.

HPC’s success was doubtful from the beginning. The reason being, Karzai did not select the 68 members council on an unbiased basis. His strategy was to eliminate his political opposition who were non-Pashtuns, by simultaneously broadening his political base in the Pashtun regions. Even the most eminent members and the chairman (Burhanuddin Rabbani) were not seen as neutral. Most of the men in the council had previously fought in the Northern Alliance and had later openly supported Operation Enduring Freedom.

³² Kabul International Conference held on 20th July 2010 in Kabul, Afghanistan was attended by representatives from 70 countries, international and regional organisations and also financial institutions to endorse an Afghan government-led plan for improved development, governance, stability and security. This conference was first of its kind in Kabul since the country plunged into war

³³ The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) is an Afghan Government peace program designed, implemented, and executed by Afghans to provide a way for insurgents to stop fighting and rejoin their communities with honor and dignity. By joining the program the fighter makes the commitment to renounce violence, sever all ties with the insurgency and abide by the Constitution of Afghanistan; this includes the acceptance of the Government of Afghanistan’s laws on women’s rights. The re-integree is not paid to stop fighting, there are incentives for joining the program but personal monetary gain is not one of them. APRP is heavily focused on the community which stands to gain the most from this program. When a community agrees to accept the re-integree back into their community it becomes eligible to receive grants for projects. The APRP enables a local, community-level part of the peace process to take place by reaching out to the fighters and encourage them to stop fighting and rejoin their community and resolve their grievances. By addressing the grievance that led an insurgent to fight in the first place you not only take the fighter off the battlefield, you ensure he won’t be replaced because the grievance no longer exists.

Nevertheless, the APRP, though was shown as a success, was not. Both the Karzai government and the US boasted about reintegrating several of ex-Talibanis, no prominent leader of Taliban joined the programme. Therefore no matter thousands of foot-soldiers and local armed groups laid down their weapons, not much changed on the security front at national or local level. Taliban continued its armed offensives on the coalition forces and the civilian population. Other concerns were also raised by the Afghan people that this so called re-integration programme was recruiting these members in local Police force, thereby legitimizing the criminals and warlords who used to loot and harass people. (Majidiyar, 2012) In spite of being on the government's payroll these re-integree did not play any positive or visible role in the process, they always advocated Taliban's cause, and also used the national and international resources in furthering the group's agenda.

Another hindrance in the peace process was Pakistan, which not only supported the Taliban, but also arrested those Taliban leaders who did not favoured or held back for negotiations with the government. (Kazem, 2014) Taliban leaders do not want to sever ties with Pakistan because they view it as a strategic necessity. And until Pakistan realises that the cost of supporting Taliban is higher than the benefits, it is neither going to raze terrorist sanctuaries from its region, nor force them into peace process with Kabul.

So far the peace talks have done more harm than good. Taliban has politically exploited the talks to alter its public image from a terrorist organisation blacklisted and banned by the United Nations, into a legitimate opposition movement. The Taliban leaders, who remained in their hideouts, now travelled freely from Pakistan to Afghanistan under the pretense of peace meetings and instead raise funds for their cause, building new alliances.

Meanwhile questions and concerns were raised in the senate regarding the exit strategy of US from Afghanistan. After nine years of war, victory was not even visible in 2010. And the population in US as well as the international community was getting impatient with the strategies being used; and also at the fact that US was not openly supporting the peace talks, the relations with Karzai government was also not favourable. US government in haste, agreed to the negotiations with Taliban but on one ground rule for any group coming for negotiations – end all ties with Al Qaida and accept Afghan constitution.

(Macaskill and Tisdall, 2010) To which some Afghan policy specialists reacted by saying that America should not be the one to set ground rules for negotiations. The Taliban would never agree for talks when they see and think they are winning the war. Hence such rules would be nothing but obstacles in the peace process. Still the additional forces were sent with the intention that these forces would help to stop the expanding Taliban and also assist the ANSF and police take over the responsibility of security faster.

Inteqal - The Year of Transition: 2014

The year 2014 was marked as a major year for *Inteqal*.³⁴ With the presidential elections in July, the new government was expected to take the country into a new era. But all of this depended heavily on the ANSF and the Afghan polices' capacity to counter terrorism and provide security in the absence of foreign troops. There have been reports that the US led coalition forces have been transferring the responsibility of security to the ANSF since 2011 in some provinces. President Karzai announced the first list of provinces to be transferred from the control of ISAF to the ANSF on March 22, 2011 – Bamyan, Panjshir, Kabul and municipalities of Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Mehtar Lam and Lashkar Gah. By 2013, 23 out of 34 provinces in Afghanistan were under the control of Afghan Security Forces. The whole transition period witnessed a rise in Taliban attacks, increasing the number of civilian casualties to 10,000 in 2014 – the highest since 2001. UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan established in 2002)³⁵ observed that there had also been an increase in the casualties of women and children during ground engagements of the armed forces. (Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 2014)

³⁴ Inteqal is the Dari and Pashtun word for transition – is the process by which the lead responsibility for security in Afghanistan was gradually transitioned from the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Launched in 2011, the transition process was completed by the end of 2014, when ISAF completed its mission. This target was set at the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon and confirmed by Allied leaders at the Chicago Summit in May 2012. Following the end of ISAF's mission, support for the further development of the ANSF is continuing under a new, smaller non-combat NATO-led mission ("Resolute Support").

³⁵ The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is a political UN mission established at the request of the Government of Afghanistan to assist it and the people of Afghanistan in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development. UNAMA was established on 28th March 2002 by the UNSC Resolution 1401. Its original mandate was to support the Bonn agreement (December 2001). It is reviewed annually, and its mandate has been altered over time to reflect the needs of the country and was extended for another year on 16th March 2015 by Resolution 2210, expiring on 17th March 2017.

Apart from the casualties in 2014 the highly-contested elections of June sort of ended the uncertainty regarding the government and the future of the country. The establishment of the National Unity Government (NUG), of President Ashraf Ghani and his CEO (Chief Executive Officer) and rival Abdullah Abdullah, though settled some issues, but the structural and fundamental problems of the new governmental set-up soon became visible and even after months stayed unaddressed. Such an arrangement of power sharing by these two leaders was nothing but a quick fix which only undermined the electoral process and institution of the country. The nation's profound and wide political divisions and wounds, exacerbated by the elections did recuperate, and the potential of any economic development also remained dim.

Officially ISAF's combat mission ended on December 28, 2014, the next phase of the mission was Operation Resolute Support – beginning on January 1, 2015 – which was basically providing training, assisting, advising the counter-terror missions of the ANSF. Coalition forces were now not supposed to engage in any tactical mentoring. They were to provide institutional and advisory support to the Afghan National Army Corps and the Afghan National Police Corps. The objective was to assist the local forces in developing necessary institutions and frameworks which would guarantee self-sustainability for the long haul.

The year 2014 was mostly marked with transitions and uncertainty, the challenge for the Coalition Forces was to focus on the operational prerequisites while also keeping the process of transition up and going. All of this depended upon the capacity of the local forces and the ANSF which was now supposed to fully take over the security obligation of the country. Though there were a lot of doubts upon the potential of the Afghan forces in defending the region, yet NATO-led international forces went ahead with the transition. Meanwhile Taliban scaled up their military movement, making it the deadliest period since 2001. They were no more limiting themselves to guerrilla strategies, instead resorted to open firings, challenging and taking over entire regions. Encouraged by the steady withdrawal of NATO forces, especially its air control, Taliban have dispatched traditional assaults against the government-controlled territories all over the country.

This waging battle uncovered the shortcomings of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), exhibiting that the whole training they received was, in the best case scenario, half done. Ghani knew that the first business in the wake of being confirmed as President was to nod for the Bilateral Security Arrangement³⁶ – keeping the US and NATO troops in the country to support and back-halting the ANSF. In any case, without a deal of peace with Taliban—Ghani called for the insurgent groups, particularly Taliban and Hizb-e-Islami to enter political talks which proved to be short of what was needed. The Taliban till date seems undaunted on its conditions for entering into peace talks with the new government, calling the solidarity bargain ‘a sham’. (Sedra 2014) Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai had refused to sign the security agreement in November 2013, as his relations with Washington had soured because he thought this agreement would dilute the chances of peace talks with Taliban and also he was concerned with the rising death toll of civilians.

Back in May 2014, the Obama had announced the drawdown of troops except 9800 American soldiers, from Afghanistan before the end of 2014 and pull out the rest before the end of 2016. This move was commended by the then Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who reaffirmed his conviction that the ANSF were prepared to accept full obligation regarding the nation’s security. The withdrawal planned by Obama to end the longest war in American history before the end of his residency in office, met with mixed responses. Some analysts viewed the drawdown of NATO forces as something that would assuage the security situation; while some others referred to the consequences that the world still faces for leaving Iraq.³⁷

³⁶ Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) 2014, September 30, was signed between US and Afghanistan to allow 9800 American and at least 2000 NATO soldiers to remain in Afghanistan after the international combat mission formally ended on December 31st. Most of them were to help train and assist the struggling Afghan security forces, although some American Special Operations forces were still supposed to be there to conduct counterterrorism missions.

³⁷The withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in 2011 left it vulnerable to extremists and Islamic Fundamentalism, today giving rise to the ISIS and yet another serious trouble of Islamic extremism for the world. Some analysts had at the time warned against the troop withdrawal, stating that without setting up a strong political system and enabling the local security forces to take over the country, would mean leaving the work half done.

The ANSF and Afghanistan post 2014:

No matter what was happening officially and what the reports said, the truth was that the war that was handed over to the ANSF by the ISAF was in a deadlock -- there was no going forward from here. The area that was taken back from under the control of Taliban and handed over to the Afghan military was much less than was actually projected officially. After the fighting with the insurgents throughout 2014, ANSF's long known issues became very apparent. The problems of poor logistics and arrangements, absence of speciality enablers, for example medical help and evacuation, lack of intelligence inputs and other sustainment capacities, all became major hindrance for the Afghan forces to go ahead with their role of providing and securing the region. Not only this, all these issues largely stayed unattended. On the other hand the Afghan forces, financially depended upon the aid of US and foreign community for sustainment, not only today but also for days to come. All these factors proved to be a boost for the insurgents to reclaim the lost territories. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned here that perhaps the biggest achievements of the ANSF was that it remained united and did not take part in a military overthrow. Though some analysts have pointed out that there is a plausibility of the Afghan military fragmenting on ethnic lines. (Rosenberg and Ahmed 2015)

The growing insurgents attack and incidents of suicide bombings urged the Afghan government to not only sign the **BSA (Bilateral Security Agreement)** but also on an official visit to US in March 2015 Abdullah Abdullah the Chief Executive Officer requested the United States to maintain the troop presence at least during that year. And then it was decided that 10000 US troops would remain in the country. Later that year reports emerged that these forces were directly engaging with the Taliban and the insurgents of al Qaeda in combat missions going beyond the previous policy of strictly advising and training. (Ahmed and Goldstein, 2015) Some war analysts have pointed out that providing air support through drones is justified, as the Afghan forces lack proper air capacity, and cutting down the support on that front untimely would severely undermine their potential in dealing with the insurgents, and also the progress that has been made to develop their capability since 2011. (Brown, Neumann and Sedney 2014) Nonetheless, White House kept denying any role in this elaboration of its mission. (ibid)

May 2015, several clashes between Afghan forces and insurgents were reported from almost ten provinces throughout the country, deteriorating the security significantly. The official announcement regarding the security issues was made by the Afghan minister of Interior Noor-ul-Haq Ulumi, stating that such attacks have increased manifolds, and that at least 11 provinces faced high security threats and 9 faced medium ones. He also did not stop from blaming Pakistan responsible for the increased and continued insurgency in the country. (National Bureau of Asian Research, 2016) Though US has tried for years to pressurize Pakistan's intelligence and military to crack down on the safe-havens of terrorists in its North Waziristan and FATA region, hoping that this would improve the security situation in Afghanistan. But finally in 2014 after a series of suicide bombings and attacks that shook up Pakistan, they announced that start of Operation *Zarb-e-Azb* – generally meaning strike of the Prophet's Sword – aiming the insurgents in these regions and also their sanctuaries.

The result of this crack down in Pakistan was that, the Pak military not only reclaimed the capital of Waziristan - *Miranshah*, but also destroyed the bases in the region, weakening the groups and most importantly pushing the Afghan-Taliban into Afghanistan yet once again. And by 2015 the security in Afghanistan worsened, in the provinces of *Helmand*, *Gazni*, *Logar*, *Kunar*, *Nangarhar* and *Kunduz*. The regions which were previously peaceful like *Badakshan*, *Ghor* and *Faryab* had now become strategically important for Taliban in order to gain control of *Heart*.

Another problem was the rise of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) not only in Levant³⁸ but also in Afghanistan. With the Islamic State declaring, Afghanistan a part of the '*Khorasan*'³⁹ region which came under its Caliphate, challenged the leadership of

³⁸ Levant is a historical name for the area in the east Mediterranean. The term has been derived from Italian 'Levante', meaning Rising. Popularly the word Levant is referred to the undefined region around Syria, which includes Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine and Jordan.

³⁹ Khorasan was a province in north eastern Iran, but historically it was referred to a much larger area east and north-east of the Persian Empire. In Persian the word Khorasan means 'where the sun arrives from'. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province (IS-K) today is a branch of the Islamist group ISIL, active in Afghanistan and Pakistan. ISIL announced the group's formation in January 2015 and appointed Hafiz Saeed Khan as its leader.

*Quetta Shura Taliban*⁴⁰ though the presence of IS also to some extent proved to be convenient for the Taliban so as to blame further civilian attacks on it, like the one in 2015 *Jalalabad*.

Present Condition of Afghanistan:

Afghanistan passed through a crucial period avoiding political turmoil after the Presidential elections of 2014, when power was peacefully transferred to the new government of Ashraf Ghani and his rival creating a new position of chief executive officer for Abdullah Abdullah. Though the future and constitutionality of this new arrangement depends upon the upcoming *Loya Jirga* of 2016, this arrangement is already facing many tripwires. Although this power sharing agreement managed to avert the violence post elections, it paralysed governance for months at a stretch. Good governance, curbing corruption and bringing peace were the key elements in the campaign pitch of both the leaders, but even after two years in office very few improvements were noticeable.

Apart from the political troubles other structural and financial challenges were already marring any development in Afghanistan. Till date Afghanistan depends upon the foreign funding for its budget, also including military expenditures which are reducing day by day. The expectations from the economy and mineral resources have worsened given widespread corruption in every governmental department and so have been slow to capitalize on. Insecurity has increased to a much higher level, making 2015 the bloodiest year of the war since 2001. The Afghan forces still face the problem of insufficient tactical support and when challenged on battlegrounds by the insurgents suffer huge losses. Though it has been seen that Taliban is no longer in a condition to hold large territories but it is evident that it can still destabilise more than it can actually control and can also continue fighting for many years.

⁴⁰ Quetta Shura: Quetta is a city in Baluchistan (Pakistan), Shura is an Arabic word for 'consultation'. The Quran encouraged Muslims to decide their affairs in consultation with those who will be affected by that decision. Quetta Shura is a militant organisation which comprises of leaders of the Afghan Taliban and is based in the city of Quetta, Baluchistan province of Pakistan. The Shura was formed at the time after Taliban regime was toppled in late 2001.

As for President Ghani, who was facing the challenge of acute fighting, financial and structural dependence on the international community and funding for running his country and government, had staked his credibility in the negotiations with Taliban. Although some initial success in peace negotiations were seen, but the results from them have been limited. And there is also an additional problem of the emergence of ISIS and its declaration that Afghanistan comes under the Khorasan province of its caliphate.

The current state of affairs in Afghanistan is very troublesome. It has no infrastructure in a working condition, people want the foreign troops out, and incidents of intense armed conflicts have risen since last three years. Not only this, Afghanistan seems to lack any future prospect for a developing economy, which could create jobs for the unemployed youth apart from the narcotics trade. The power and control of the new National Unity Government is limited to Kabul only, there are many provinces where government forces have no control; and to top that, this government is largely dependent on the foreign financial aid for all its needs. Given the situation in Afghanistan some analysts argue that the US forces will have to stay there for a very long time. Leaving the work half done will give rise to ideal situation when ISIS emerged in Iraq.

Thinking back on the choices that drove US to attack Afghanistan, the war looks like a failure. The situation of the world seems much more insecure than it was at the time of the initiation of war in 2001. In other words this war did more harm than the world had endured while making a radical arrangement of attack on the enemies. While the first motivation behind the war may have been clear – to unseat Taliban, and additionally to spread counter-terror endeavours throughout the world – we have since lost the way. Despite the fact that Taliban was officially ousted from Afghanistan on November 22, 2001, the war is still on.

During the war there have been instances of innocent Muslims being picked up by US officials and tortured in the name of suspects – most of which ended up being innocent. The war additionally prompted the foundation of the infamous Guantanamo Bay detainment camp, where gross violations of human rights was carried out in the name of interrogation. Not only this, various Afghan warlords and the Northern Alliance; who got

military and budgetary backing from the US in their battle against Taliban and Al Qaeda conferred barbarities of their own.

This can likewise be found in Syria today, where the vacuum left behind the toppling of Saddam Hussein prompted the ascent of ISIS, a far graver danger than either Taliban or Al Qaeda. As for Afghanistan though the US military is still there and no less than 9800 troops are still carrying out the combat missions in the country. All this has happened in the wake of increased attacks by Taliban all over the country. The most recent attack being, seizing of Kunduz in October 2015 that prompted the Doctors' Without Borders facility strike. The Afghan Security forces and the US/NATO troops have always been in a clash with the militia throughout the north eastern part of Afghanistan and struggling to contain the attacks around Kabul. Till date many regions on the outskirts of the country are beyond governmental control. Taliban holds some areas and in some others local warlords operate their dominion – these are areas with no predominant security players. The strike of Kunduz and the larger security situation in the country highlights the plight and capability of the Afghan security forces that has been built by spending billions of dollars. It should be noted that this would be the second two-term President in succession to hand off the Afghan war to his successor – a war that authoritatively finished on December 28, 2015. The longest war in American history just continues developing longer, with not a single genuine end to be found.

Chapter 3

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF WAR ON TERROR IN CENTRAL ASIA

When love and humanity are fighting to find their nation, terror doesn't need any permission to go beyond national boundaries.

Central Asia's Location on World Map:

Central Asia lies in the heart of Eurasian continent and is landlocked. It extends from Caspian Sea on the west to the border of China towards the East, Russia bordering the north and Afghanistan being in the South. Unique feature of this region is that it is completely landlocked and enclosed by more frontiers than any region in the world. Generally it constitutes former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. Though this simple demarcation is disputed and challenged by many other scholars and group of institutions. There are various definitions of Central Asia's exact composition but none completely accepted by everyone.

Despite the complication of proper demarcation and defining of borders, this region has significant features, like; it was historically closely tied to the nomadic people and to the Silk Road. This was the reason why it was the point of intersection for the confluence of people, goods and ideas in the Eurasian region. UNESCO's perception on Central Asia hugely varies from the commonly accepted definition and many others tend to include Afghanistan in the region also.⁴¹The region consists 60 percent of desert land which almost cover the entire portion of Turkmenistan and much of western Kyrgyzstan.

This chapter tries to briefly explain the role that the Central Asian republics have played in the global war on terror, and the security challenges that they face due to the growing radicalization in the region.

⁴¹Many international agencies and UNESCO tend to define Central Asia on the basis of climate and larger borders and thus they include Afghanistan and many others too.

Central Asia has become one of the breeding grounds for extremism and radicalization. Sharing the region with Afghanistan increases the pertinence of this issue. The recent attacks on Kunduz, the completion of the ISAF mission along with the withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan, other events like the Pakistani Zarb-e-Azb operation in Waziristan and the borders of Afghanistan have only facilitated the conditions for the insurgents and terrorists to infiltrate through the already porous borders in these states of north. These events have led these countries to change and rearrange their security framework in order to immune themselves from the spillover from the neighbouring countries. So much so that this has driven Turkmenistan that traditionally followed the strategy of non-intervention into reevaluating its foreign policy of neutrality. (Daly, 2015)

Before going into a detailed analysis of how have the five countries in this region fared along in the global war on terror it is important to mention one of the most unstable and unsecured region for lots of reasons - *Fergana Valley*⁴², known as the heart of Central Asia. Once it used to be a cohesive economic unit but Stalin in 1924 divided the region between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan; thus making it one of the most unstable and contested area of the region. It has been the political and Islamic nerve of Central Asia and was considered as the heart of imperial politics. It is densely populated with a population of around seven million. This area is rich in cotton production and grain cultivation. Due to exploitation, that took place in the past, this region faces problems like acute shortage of water, drying up of seas, lakes and environmental catastrophe brought by dumping of nuclear waste.

Geo- Strategic Importance of Central Asia:

Central Asia since centuries had to face the pros and cons of being the center to the four historical seats of power. It has vast natural resources but never a sedentary population to

⁴² Fergana Valley: before Russian colonisation in late 19th century the boundaries of Central Asian states were not defined, in 1924 Stalin divided the region into new autonomous republics. The borders were drawn up rather arbitrarily without following strict ethnic lines or even the guidelines of geography. The main aim was to counter the growing popularity of pan-Turkism in the region, and to avoid potential friction. Hence, the fertile Fergana Valley which was formerly ruled by the Khanate of Kokand was divided between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

exploit it. It was always the favorite battleground of world powers for supremacy. It was a prudent power seat with all essential components like trade route, line of attacks to all regional power; and probably that was the reason why the world in the future was going to be very much focused on this central region of Asia. It was in proximity with all imperial powers due to its location and thus made a conducive geographical factor in the politics of power and influence.

Central Asia has always been an important factor when it comes to global geo politics. This region has an extreme geo-political importance and has emerged as a continuing interest and concern for rest of the world. We can't rule out the fact that Central Asia has been historically a seat of conflict and cauldron of power. Since the time earliest, it has been the crossroad between different civilizations. **Mackinder** (1904) described this region as the heartland in its speech to the royal geographical society.⁴³The scholarly argument given by Mackinder gives a strong foundation to the unique location of this place which contributes in to its geo strategic importance. **Brzezinski** (1997) has also characterized the potential relevance of its location in one of his works.

This place was an easy catch for the imperial powers because of its immense resources and warfare importance. It was always vulnerable to attack from all side throughout the history, which resulted in to political fragmentation and outright power vacuum. It has been dominated by different power many a times due to its strategic location. The Huns, Mongols, the Russian empire and the Chinese empires historically dominated the region and exploited its profuse resources to assuage their imperial penchant. Mackinder went on to the extent of saying that whoever dominates the Central Asian region would dominate the world island (Mackinder, 1919:50).

This is popularly assumed that one who has got the control of Central Asian region controls almost 50% of the world. (Mackinder, 1919:194) Thus historically, it was always a vital question to control the heartland, as the control of the heartland was prelude to the control of inordinate power and resources. It has witnessed attacks of imperial Russia, China, Islamic sways of the caliphate. It has withstood the sweep of

⁴³Mackinder in his theory of geographical pivot of history used the word "heart land "for the geographical part which comprises Central Asia.

Hans, Islamic sways of the ‘Caliphate’, torn between capitalism and communism, and has also been the seed land to the ‘Colour Revolutions’⁴⁴. So it is an undisputed fact that Central Asia has always been an example of power play dynamics.

Great Game and New Great Game:

The Great Game⁴⁵ was referred to the political and territorial rivalry and clash for supremacy between Great Britain and Russia in 19th century for the control and future of Central Asia. The Great Game was an intense rivalry between the Russian empires and British empires in Central Asia. Russian bear and British lion were the metaphors given by the scholars to these two imperial powers. For 100 years, Russians had been expanding at a very fast pace in the east and south. British feared that the Tsar’s troops would subdue the influence of Khanate⁴⁶. Slowly and steadily, British and Russians got more interested in territories that separated them, buffer states specially Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet.

This competition and rivalry widely became popular as “The Great Game”. Great Britain was in constant fear throughout the nineteenth century, as it was obsessed with the apprehensions that any power could take the advantage of the decay of Islamic empire and its supremacy. The apprehension was bolstered as France was advancing. Later it was Russia’s advancement towards the nomadic routes, in pursuit of establishing a new world monarchy. England, with obvious reasons, demonstrated its fear of Russian expansion in South Asia. In the late 19th century, "it was almost established, in Europe, that the next major war is inevitably going to be between Britain and Russia" (Fronkin, 1980:936). It began in nineteenth century and continued till 1907. It describes a time period of Russian expansionism and strides made by Britain to parry what they thought

⁴⁴ Colour Revolutions was the term used by the world media to report the civil society revolutions in many cities of the Central Asian republics and Balkans during the 2000s.

⁴⁵ The term Great Game was first used by Arthur Conolly (1807-47) an intelligence officer of the British East India Co. and was later introduced into the mainstream consciousness by British novelist Rudyard Kipling in his novel Kim (1901)

⁴⁶ Khanate word is of Mongol origin is a political entity ruled by a Khan or a Khagan, it can be equivalent to tribal chiefdom, principality, kingdom or even empire.

was Russian aggression in the region. The reason why Britain wanted to control much of Central Asia was to defend the “crown jewel” of its empire - British India.

The great game had always a larger purpose than what it manifested. It had a bigger stake which was placed out of Central Asian region. The stake was India. Britain was going through a serious apprehension that Russian imperialistic desire would not limit itself in Central Asia. The British notion was that Central Asia was the entry gate into Afghanistan and then a gateway into India via Khyber Pass. Tsarist Russia wanted to expand its influence and territory in pursuit of creating one of the largest land based empires. Russians were also desirous to wrest the control of India from the clutches of Britain. There was a direct conflict of interest in Middle East where the British were determined to hold Russia in eastern Turkey and Persia as their military and commercial communication operated through that area. Control on Sultan of Turkey was a crucial factor in the course of great game as Sultan ruled the territory of Suez Canal, which was Britain’s lifeline to India. Sultan and his territory were equally important for both of the imperial powers since he was the guardian of the buffer zone. India was a vital piece on this huge diplomatic chessboard. British considered Indian more valuable than any of their possessions as it was the hotspot for the lucrative trade. They maintained most of their troops in India as for them control over India was the control of inordinate resource and power. British knew that they can’t afford the loss of India as it would culminate into decimation of their all established power and empire. They knew that controlling a population of 300 million Indian was a formidable challenge and a matter of huge concern for their imperial desire.

Britain viewed Russian empire with a significant amount of uncertainty. Britain used to see Russia as incompatible with the Victorian advancement due to its technological backwardness. On the other side Russia’s enormous expansionism and its unfazed hunger for territory was a matter of concern to the British. That was the time when Russian bear and British lion were very vigilant about the moves of the rivals. As we have mentioned above that the main reason of fear was “jewel in the crown”; India. So when Russians started taking possessions of increasing number of khanates, it enhanced the level of fear in the minds of British. The way Russia was advancing, forced the British to think

Afghanistan is going to be the next strategy in Russian imperialism. When the fear of India came to its zenith a war was bound to happen and the result was, Britain going into the First Anglo-Afghan War⁴⁷ (1839-1842). It became the most important and the first conflict of the Great Game, where Britain lost its face when it had to withdraw after being defeated and also failing in establishing a favourable government in Afghanistan. However Kabul remained an important piece for the British when it came to containing Russia.

New Great Game is a re-emergence of the old geostrategic politics in the game field of Central Asia. It conceptualizes the modern geopolitics in Central Asia as a neo-competition between regional and global powers for influence, hegemony, profit and power. When history was withering away the reminiscence of the Great Game, another was emanating in the evolution of new politics. World War first and second, changed the notion of power globally and shifted the hegemony of power from Britain to United States of America. This shift proved to dent the supremacy and hunger of previous powers and political equations. Since the time, Washington has always wanted to assert its influence in every part of the globe, in the process; it has tried to limit the influence of Soviet Union.

As we know that Central Asia has been the point of confluence with a significant geopolitical importance. “Central Asia is still relevant in the world politics for it works as a buffer zone” (Huasheng, 2009). For many analysts, it “remains a key player in the chess - game of world power” (Edwards, 2003:96). Brzezinski (1997) says that one of the main concerns of US should be to be vigilant about the fact that no one else should take control over this geopolitical space. The reason why he gave this argument was because Central Asia was significant when it came to energy, socio-political instability and for the potential domain of power.

In the New Great Game, Central Asia is also called the “black hole of the earth”, since the last century. (Kleveman, 2004) The largest reserves of untapped oil and gas resources

⁴⁷ First Anglo Afghan War (1839-1842) also known as the Auckland Folly was fought between the British East India Company and Afghanistan and ended in an overall Afghan victory. It is famous for killing 4500 British and Indian soldiers by the Afghan tribal fighters.

in the Caspian Sea have furthermore increased the interest in this region. The Great Game as a concept has come in its second version with much more complexity and many more international players involved in the phenomenon. This modern variant known as the New Great Game, has much more stakes this time.

USA wants to detach itself from under the OPEC⁴⁸ (Organisation Of petroleum Exporting Countries) and is also struggling against China, Russia, and Iran, where all of them are competing to control the Caspian region. It is quite palpable that this New Game has immense potential of gripping the whole world in itself - the struggle being for world's remaining resources.

Approach of USA Towards Central Asian States Prior To War On Terror:

Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, ideological war, known as Cold War came to an end. Many profound intellectuals came with the theories that upcoming time is going to be the time of Capitalism. "What we see today is the not just the end of cold war or passing of a period after a long ideological war, but the end of the history in a way: that is the end of mankind's intellect, ideological evolution and absolute universalisation of western liberal democracy as the final form and structure of human government" (Fukuyama, 1989).

Fukuyama in his theory was very much influenced by Kojeve⁴⁹, who envisaged that progress of history must lead towards the establishment of "universal and homogenous state". Intellectual discourses after collapse of soviet system was very much based on the admiration of western liberal democratic principles. Later, the theory advocated by Fukuyama was vehemently criticized in the work of Derrida where he said that "instead

⁴⁸ OPEC is an inter-governmental organisation of 13 countries founded in 1960 in Baghdad, by the first five members, headquartered in Vienna since 1965. These 13 countries account for 40 per cent of global oil production, and 73 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves, give OPEC a major influence on global oil prices.

⁴⁹ Alexandre Kojeve was a Russian-born French philosopher and statesman and had immense influence on 20th century French philosophy. Fukuyama was strongly influenced by Kojeve when he argued that the progress of history must lead toward the establishment of a universal and homogeneous state.

of celebrating the advent of western liberalism, instead of singing the welcome of capitalist market in the euphoria of history, instead of celebrating the end of “ideologies” and the end of many great emancipatory discourses, let us never neglect the very obvious fact that same liberal value and principles have led the human life to utmost miserable conditions: no degrees of progress would allow us to be blind to think of the thousands killing, subjugations, starvation and extermination of masses that has been done in the name of liberal western values”(Derrida, 1993).

The emerging debate in the support of Western ideology, explicitly. The US capitalist ideology, was going to be the dominant ideology after debacle of communism that took place in late 20th century. USA was more than swift, in approaching newly destabilized countries which were in complete political and ideological vacuum. Central Asian societies had the opportunity to turn into market economies. Some of them like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in particular made major strides in becoming market economies, but even these countries have stuttered on the way of creating participatory political systems. In the case of Central Asian states, such type of economic system was not palatable to the socio political dynamics of the region. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have been most reluctant in opening up their economies whereas Tajikistan which experienced a grim civil war (1992-1997), was somewhere in between. In Central Asian republics, local strongmen, many of them authoritarian in the nature, came to power. The nature of politics was not conducive to market economy and leaders were almost reluctant to Western style reform. US was aware of the fact that major transitions in the basic nature of these regimes was only possible through generational changes and long term investments.

They were acquainted with the fact that gradual approach can only help them to have a good relation with Central Asian states in future. US moved to establish embassies and to engage the important places in Central Asia with a political sagacity. Modest assistance was given to Central Asian region by US on the argument that it will help them to develop into stable modernizing countries. Key elements in the strategy was multiple pipelines to help the countries of the region to benefit from their immense energy wealth, civil society programmes to develop modern political ethos, cooperation to fetter the

export of weapons of mass destruction, and some development assistance to help economic modernization.

Afghanistan's War on Terror and its Implication on Central Asia:

The attacks of 11th September happened to be a watershed in the evolution of region politics. It has been established that since the beginning of the war on terror, the level of US engagement with these republics has increased. The different perceptions that the Central Asian republics hold regarding the war in Afghanistan result in sharp variations in the strategic priorities of the states. Since post-9/11 the Central Asian republics have contributed towards the US led intervention in Afghanistan. This intervention and the stifling of Islamic radicalism were in accordance with the interests of the secular authoritarian Central Asian republics. They likewise saw a sudden enthusiasm from USA and its associates in the area as giving an open door from which they could benefit both geopolitically and also in material terms. Hence, Kyrgyzstan permitted US/NATO forces to use the Manas airbase in Bishkek. Uzbekistan gave the permission to use the K2 (Karshi-Khanabad) base for the German units at Termez and a land passageway till Afghanistan for humanitarian aid through the Friendship Bridge at Termez. Tajikistan allowed the utilization of its international airport in Dushanbe to the French forces for refueling. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan gave over flight rights and other backing to the international forces.

With the increase in the foreign assistance to the region, there has been an increased use of conditionality in US assistance programme. Although some of the countries from the region have started behaving in a liberal approach towards the western democratic principles and market economy, but the prospects for building democracy has not been really admired at a great level in this region. Lack of social solidarity and poverty in Central Asian states provide space and opportunity for radical Islam in society; especially for some of the states of the region. There were serious reasons to believe that personalized politics, weak institutions, and rampant inequalities can create readymade ground for the penetration of terrorism. Central Asian governments had a very poor

record on corruption, and thus their ability to fight terrorism remained poor and ruptures created opportunities for terrorism to proliferate (Cohen, 2011). The most active terrorist organization in the region is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan⁵⁰ (IMU) which has been banned in its native place but still continues to work from other loose grounds. Weak border control has also been one of the reasons for concern in Central Asian states as Fergana valley can act as a Carrefour for militants to travel inside and execute terrorist activities.

United States of America felt a strong vulnerability that Afghanistan and some of the Central Asian state can act as a breeding ground for the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism. This macabre sense of fear instigated USA to take assistance of Central Asian region in course of executing “Operation Enduring Freedom”. USA needed the region for the purpose of political stability in future. This cumbersome situation led the USA to enhance the relationship with five Central Asian republics in pursuit of finding ways to have a stable and secure relation with Central Asia.

The Presidents of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan felt anguished and despaired for the incident of 9/11 and assured USA to give possible assistance to wipe out terrorism. In the course of the event, the leaders from these two countries were called for a visit to USA. This duologue perhaps benefitted both the parties, as both of them acted in mutual reciprocity. USA increased the assistance budgets for most of the Central Asian countries and, in return, was allowed to use many of Central Asian states as a functional ground for the purpose of war on terror. Many of these republics acted as excellent partners in the war against terrorism and received economic and other contribution from USA. In the process of this bonhomie, there were shrouded elements of fundamentalism, mushrooming in the wake of the new war.

Moving to the second factor which highlights the Central Asian region as a breeding ground for nurturing terrorist activities is also relevant. The failing state of Afghanistan brought Islamic fundamentalism and extremism to the door step of these countries,

⁵⁰ Islamic Movement Uzbekistan (IMU) is a militant Islamist group formed in 1991 in Kandahar, Afghanistan for the purpose of removing Uzbek government in order to establish an Islamic state. It extended its objective to establish an Islamic Caliphate in Turkistan as well.

especially Tajikistan and Uzbekistan who share 1200kms and 210kms of border respectively with Afghanistan. Kazakhstan generally believes that it is sort of insulated from the challenge of extremism coming from south. Kyrgyzstan, in contrast remains much worried for two reasons. First because it is directly involved in the war through the use of Manas airbase; and then it shares a common border with Tajikistan which has the longest border touching Afghanistan and the Kyrgyz government does not have the capacity and resources to safeguard the border from the spillover, and the poverty and under development in the country provides a breeding ground for religious extremism.

It is imperative to understand the nature of terrorism that this region was going through. Empirical study suggests that organizations involved in terrorist activities followed the *modus operandi* of cross border terrorism. The issue of religious extremism in Central Asian region has gone through a significant change. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan were always less vital in context of religious extremism whereas Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were constantly developing as a ground for terrorism. Former presence of Taliban, Afghanistan, 9/11 and Fergana valley as an old seat of religious fundamentalism are some significant reasons behind the dormant but constant activities related to terrorism. These radical groups have strongly insinuated that they are emerging as a strong counter agent to the fabric of society and constitutional system of the state as they want to establish an Islamic caliphate based on the Sharia law.

The statement release by USA was a testimony to the analysis that Central Asia's biggest threat is from IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) (Jones 2003). USA in the same statement had also expressed its concern on Hizb-ut-Tahrir⁵¹ which it believes is potentially active and can harm the purpose of war on terror. Though most of Central Asian republics have rendered their tremendous support to the cause of war on terror but US in the statement had shown its concern on the ground that Central Asia has been weak

⁵¹ Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a radical international pan-Islamic political organisation founded in 1953 in Saudi Arabia and Jordan as a Sunni Muslim organisation, by a Palestinian Sheikh Taqiuddin an-Nabhani. Filastyni and was introduced in Uzbekistan in 1995 by Jordanian named Salahuddin. HT today describes its ideology as Islam and its aim as reestablishing the Islamic Caliphate or the Islamic State. The new Caliphate would unify the Muslim community in a unitary superstate of unified Muslim-majority countries. The proposed state would enforce Sharia Law, return to its rightful place as the first state in the world. And carry Islam to the rest of the world.

in political terms, lacks leadership and thus these regimes tend to provide a readymade fertile soil for development of radical Islam and terror activities. US also questioned the reliability of Central Asian states as counter-terror partners in the same statement released.

Kazakhstan and War On Terror:

Kazakhstan and USA has been in a healthy relationship since its independence from Soviet Union in 1991. US becoming the first to recognise the sovereignty later it was manifested in the act when Kazakhstan gave up its Soviet era nuclear arsenal. Then in 1994, it joined NATO programme for peace and has been an active participant in military exercises. Kazakhstan has significantly helped USA in its mission of war on terror. After the declaration of the war, and 11 September attacks, U.S. and the coalition forces were allowed to use the air space and air bases in the country. A five year military cooperation agreement was signed, where Kazakhstan granted additional support to the coalition in combating terrorism and managing peace capability in Caspian area. Kazakhstan rendered important civilian support to Afghanistan and allowed NATO countries to ship non-fatal cargo through its territory. Kazakh government has been extremely helpful in US led war against terrorism.

The Kazakh government offered the use of a major airport for the purpose of Operation Enduring Freedom. Kazakhstan has been a tolerant nation with minimal level of religious extremism and is practically devoid of international terrorism. There has been very limited number of incidents since the developments of 9/11, but then such incidents were largely reported in the year 2011-12. (Country Report on Terrorism, 2012) A major terrorist attack, believed to have been executed by **Uighur Liberation Organization**⁵², occurred more than a decade ago. According to the Kazakh officials, they have usually uncovered and successfully prevented such attacks in the country. (Pannier, 2006)

⁵² Uighur Liberation Organisation is also known as East Turkestan Liberation Organisation (ETLO) formed in 2000. The ETLO is a secessionist Uyghur organisation that advocates an independent state called "East Turkestan", in the western Chinese territory known as Xinjiang. The organisation was established in Turkey in the late 1990s to fight against the government in Xinjiang. ETLO is a designated terrorist organisation by the governments of China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Hizb ut- Tahrir has been a strong concern for the Kazakh government as it claimed to have ties with al-Qaeda and Taliban. Over past many years, the government has cracked down on this organization, including an incident in 2007 when members of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir surrendered to the security forces. In 2011, Taliban warned Kazakhstan that its willingness to participate in the war on terrorism would make the country a target for violence. After some days, Kazakh security services' headquarters in the northwestern city of Aktobe and the city of Astana were attacked by suicide bombers. But the case was deemphasized by the government as it claimed that it was not a terrorist act. In totality, Kazakhstan is more stable than neighboring countries. It is also better equipped to tackle the issue of Islamic militancy. Nevertheless it has also replaced Uzbekistan as a favoured partner when it comes to combating terrorism, for both the United States and Russia. However, the fact can't be ignored that Kazakhstan's willingness to participate as a greater player in the war on terrorism and expulsion of al- Qaeda and Taliban insurgents can make it a target for terrorist activity.

Uzbekistan and Terrorism:

Uzbekistan has suffered the nemesis of terrorism more than any other Central Asian states. Hence its cooperation in the war on terror was without condition. It does not only have the best transport facilities and military capacity in the region but also was a frontline during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1970s. After the incident of 9/11, Uzbekistan turned positively to USA in its effort to fight against the global terrorism and wiping out terror in Afghanistan and other suspected areas. Uzbekistan's willingness to help US in Operation Enduring Freedom was taken positively as Uzbekistan itself was suffering from extremism in Fergana Valley by the IMU and the HT. With extremism and terrorism expanding to a global level, Afghanistan turning into a breeding ground for terror activities, it became inevitable for Uzbekistan to participate in it for a larger aim.

On 7th October 2011, Uzbek government agreed upon the use of its *Karshi-Khanabad* (K2) air base which was very important for USA for military strategic purpose. In return, huge economic, military and political assistance was provided to Uzbekistan to maintain

safety and stability in the region. Uzbek government also went for an official dialogue to discuss the issue of cross border-terrorism. In the joint agreement signed in October 2001 they agreed upon the elimination of terrorism, development of infrastructure, and for these purpose, the Uzbek government agreed to provide the use of its airspace, the necessary military and civilian infrastructure of one of its airport on the condition to be used for the humanitarian purpose. (Gordon and Lee Myers, 2001) The Taliban didn't find this step of Uzbekistan palatable and warned the Uzbekistan government to suffer the perils of supporting USA in its mission.

Terrorism in Uzbekistan is not a new born phenomenon. Since its independence, extremist and secular forces have been fighting each other. Government has somehow increased the space for religious extremist as it couldn't tackle the issues of rampant poverty, mass unemployment, and declining economic conditions and deterioration of living standards. It has its old root as it is said that during Soviet era, Islam was suppressed as a religion, mosques were shut and the contact with global Muslim world was hampered. This isolation came to an end when the Central Asian state conscripts were sent to fight the Afghan mujahedeen. On their return, they were impressed by the Islamic zeal of their opponents. Many of them, when returned, started doing ground work to bolster Islamic principles in the region and especially Fergana Valley became the groundwork for these workshops. This precedence was strengthened and bolstered gradually. In a very short period of time, Fergana valley became the breeding ground for radical Islam. It was radicalized and soon several different organisations started making a clarion call for Sharia law. *Adolat*⁵³ was one of the groups that started in the early phase with the motive of imposing a degree of order and security through the imposition of Sharia law.

Sharia law was ruthlessly imposed by these organizations and their cadres were involved all the time in advocating the purpose of *radical Islam*. They were influentially spreading and soon they were running a parallel civil authority in Fergana Valley. In

⁵³ Adolat, word in Uzbek means Justice founded by Tohir Yuldashev and was the parent group of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. In early 1992 the government of Uzbekistan banned and cracked down on the group and a number of members fled to Tajikistan. In 1998 they declared a Jihad against the governments of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Their ultimate goal was to overthrow the government and establish an Islamic State in the Fergana Valley.

initial phase, this Islamic group was not strongly opposed by the government of Karimov and thus was successful in making its strong foothold in the region. Soon, the government realized that such reckless attitude can motivate the radicals to expand and the state took some harsh and stringent actions resulting in the full control of government again in the Fergana valley.

After full control of government in the region, Islamic organization *adolat* was outlawed and its founding member Yuldashev⁵⁴ fled to Tajikistan, which was going through the chaotic period of civil war. After certain small incidents, Yuldashev formed the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU) with the purpose of opposing the government of President Karimov. The primary motive of this organization was to take control of Uzbekistan as an Islamic state. The organization moved away from its previous allies and steadily got associated more with the Afghan Taliban. The organization started its base from Tajikistan in Tavildara Valley, where it rallied behind it the support of young Muslims who were completely disenchanted with the authoritarian functioning of government and thus found Islam as an agent of emancipation for all their sufferings that they were going through.

The year of 1999 proved to be a watershed in the evolution of this newly formed Islamic organization which allegedly executed many bomb attacks in Tashkent. Involvement of IMU was never established as it was purely based on a postulation. The government took harsh steps to check the Islamic radicalism and escalated the repression of Islam. The step lacked political prudence as it only helped increase the number of Muslims joining the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in the valley of Tavildara.

The main objective of IMU and Yuldashev was to destabilise the government of President Karimov. There were reports that IMU was being militarily and financially aided by Pakistan's ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) to base them in Tajikistan and launch the campaign of guerrilla warfare. (Newton 2014) In 1999 IMU turned its attention to Kyrgyzstan, as Uzbeks were a substantial minority there. Then attacks took place where they nabbed the mayor of Osh (regional capital) that was verified and clearly implied

⁵⁴ Tohir Abduhalilovich Yuldashev was the co-founder of IMU along with Juma Namangani in 1998. He was born in 1967 in Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.

involvement of IMU. After the incident, considerable amount of pressure was made on the government to tackle the scourge of IMU. It was told that IMU cadres were transported by Russian helicopter to Afghanistan, a move which enraged Karimov as he strongly felt that the move was aimed to undermine Uzbekistan government (The New Yorker, 14 Jan, 2002). However, mounting international pressure on the Uzbek administration to check the activities of the group finally forced it out from Tavildara to Afghanistan in 2000.

In Afghanistan it expanded swiftly and modernized, while assisting Taliban in fighting the rival forces of Northern Alliance and particularly, Ahmad Shah Massoud. They started training camps, offices and recruited more advanced fighters. They also expanded their cadres significantly. CIS claimed that IMU was modernized in the sense that they started using snipers and night vision goggles and were also marked with a couple of small helicopters.

Later, the relationship between IMU and Taliban came in public domain overtly. It was also noted that founding member of IMU, Juma Namangani, was given an important post in Taliban government. Following the attacks of September 2001, IMU was largely destroyed parallel to Taliban as its leaders were killed by US airstrikes. It was said that IMU members started settling down in the region, some of them started business and rest in other professions for their livelihood. This was not the end of the story as it was going to emerge in future soon with different names.

Uzbekistan after 9/11:

In the time frame of war on terror, Uzbekistan happened to be a nightmare for USA. America confessed in its official statements that it has become a formidable challenge for them to curb the issue of terrorism in Uzbekistan (Maynes 2002). Bombings of 2004 in Tashkent and Bukhara were enough to flummox the USA government. At the juncture of time, when ISAF was staying just next door to Uzbeks in Afghanistan with an operational base in Uzbekistan, incidents of this type expanded the goal of USA.

Uzbekistan was less known in the street of USA prior to the incident. After the incident newspapers were loaded with the news of Tashkent and Bukhara bombing events. The

incident was one of its kind as it involved female bombers first time in the history of Central Asia. This incident raised the doubt globally that Uzbekistan is going through a metamorphosis from being an ally of USA against war on terror to becoming a third front of terror.

After the incident of 1999 Tashkent bombings, Uzbekistan government had severely repressed the Islamic fundamentalists and then the American occupation of Afghanistan which was the safe haven for IMU, diminished the problem of terrorism further. But after the steps taken by Uzbek government and 9/11, the problem became more complex with new splintered group with IMU and other fundamentalist organizations.

After the 2004 bombings, Uzbek government believed that IMU is no more active and they blamed Hizb ut Tahrir which was later denied by HT and blame was shifted to al - Qaeda. Both of these postulations went wrong as the claim of the attacks were taken by Islamic jihad union which was a splinter group of IMU. However the attacks escalated the concern of USA, as they saw a new front in Uzbekistan.

It was reported that IMU became active again in 2007, and was cited as a serious terrorist threat by government. IMU formed governments with Taliban in the areas where Afghanistan government was little fragile. There were allegations against the Uzbek government that in the garb of war on terror, government severely repressed political dissidents and demonstrator those who raised the question on unemployment and rampant poverty.

Critiques started saying that government got the opportunity to take harsh steps against the peaceful protestors in the garb of calling them Islamic extremist. Arguments have been put forward that there is a huge gap between what the West preaches and practice regarding their commitment on human rights, dissidence and democracy.

Terrorism in Tajikistan:

Tajikistan's bilateral relation with USA started in 1992. USA was one of the first states to recognize the sovereignty of Tajikistan after the dissolution of USSR. United States continues to assist Tajikistan financially and economically as Tajikistan went through a civil war which it is still trying to recover from. The relation of these countries improved and increased drastically after the incident of 9/11 as both of them aimed to tackle the issue of terrorism, narcotics, proliferation of weapons and border security. Tajikistan has been a strong supporter of USA in Operation Enduring Freedom and war on terror. Tajikistan itself is a state on the border of Afghanistan and that was enough to escalate the security concerns in Tajikistan as a stable Afghanistan was necessary for peace and security in Tajikistan. Since the war on terror began, Tajikistan has given its air space and other facilities to USA aimed against terrorism.

After the dissolution of USSR, Tajikistan plunged into the state of conflict and competition for access to power and authority. Many political groups were lined to take the control of the political vacuum. The first Presidential election in 1991 was contested by nine contestants where the winner was a former leader from the communist party. After the results of election, the legitimacy of the winning candidate was questioned and remained elusive. The multi-faceted reception of electoral result was the prelude to the devastating situation that Tajikistan was going to suffer. Rahmon Nabiev who was formerly a member of communist party won the elections and soon confronted a strong opposition from a group which was an amalgamation of many ideologies and individuals.

The opposition comprised a group of people who were underrepresented or repressed under the Soviet regime and wanted a significant ratio of representation in the legislature and policy-making. Ideologically, they were democrats, moderate Muslims, Islamic fundamentalists, and other groups who were mostly from the underrepresented regions like Garm-Kartegin and Pamiris. The conflict between the government supporters and opposition escalated and Nabiev started distributing weapons to his supporters to form a presidential guard. The capital city was the seat of conflict and soon it was trapped in the arena of political war. Supporters of Nabiev clashed with the oppositions and city witnessed the complete civil society black-out and the social fabric crumbled.

A situation of war-lordism prevailed in the state and state was witnessing chaos on many frontiers. Civil war became so complex that it became a war of all against all with no clear enemy and winner. Tajikistan witnessed a huge mass exodus due to the devastating conditions that the state was going through. Poverty, unemployment prevailed and social solidarity was almost zero. The reason of migration was the pursuit for a better living condition in Western countries, Russia and other former social republics (Human Rights Watch Report, 1994).

After many political riddles, elections took place in 1992 and Emomali Rahmon became the de facto head of the government. It is estimated that humongous loss, incurred on Tajikistan took place mainly between 1991 and 1994. The condition was so grim that more than 100,000 died and 1.2 million were refugee inside and outside of the country (United Nations, 2006). War continued to haunt and rag the capital city and state till 1997 and still continues to do it sometimes. A peace process initiated by UN general agreement on the establishment of peace and agreement on the basis of power sharing principle reduced the already established chaos in the state. The agreement was based on the proposal of giving certain power-sharing to opposition. The Agreement has only lessened the grave condition and still pops up sometime.

If we analyse the phase of war and its consequences, it becomes a difficult task given its very complex character. It confronted chaos, mass killings, debilitating economy and lowest standard of living. In the process of contestations, treaties, multilateral decisions, civil war became the source of many splintered groups with varying ideologies. Islamic extremism was one of the scourges that the phase of war experienced on a significant level. Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT) which originated from the Uzbekistan and then dispersed throughout the country was a concern as it was fundamentally against the liberal principles and envisaged a society on the basis of Sharia law. Islamic Rebirth Party of Uzbekistan (IRTP) was also aimed at a society based on conservative order and rejected modernity, globalization and other templates of change. *Adolat* which was an Islamic extremist organization moved and took the shelter in Tajikistan after being rigorously repressed by Uzbek government.

In Tajikistan it was transformed in to a principled movement with a clear and intelligible intention. It was noticed that it came in contact with radical groups of Afghanistan including Osama bin Laden. Soon, Yuldashev formed the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan with the purpose of opposing the government of Karimov. The organization declared its motto to take control of Uzbekistan as an Islamic state and to apply Sharia law.

Coming to Islamic Rebirth Party of Uzbekistan, this came into existence due to historical factors. Tajikistan as a member of Soviet republic supported Moscow's intervention of Afghanistan in 1979. Tajikistan came under the target of Afghan mujahedeen who were supported by the Americans and Pakistan. Many of them were influenced and started harboring Islamic nationalism after returning to Tajikistan. After Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and dissolution of Soviet Union, they were motivated for Islamic nationalism. They formed Islamic Renaissance Party⁵⁵ (IRP) which was against the communist government of Emomali Rahmon.

After the end of civil war, most of the element from IRP were not satisfied and made many offshoots. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan also was significantly active and tried to overthrow the government of Uzbekistan and at the same time made significant contribution to Taliban and other fundamental forces against the US. Following attacks of 11 September 2001, IMU was fighting alongside with Taliban and suffered heavy casualties. The organizer and founder Namangani was killed in the battle by US forces but the group survived. It remains active and it claims that it continues its link with al-Qaeda.

There is also another view about the terrorism that Tajikistan faces is not that much from the external sources but most of them are home-grown. Without deviating from the topic of my research, no matter where the threat emanates from, the issue remains that Tajikistan remains one of the most vulnerable countries in the Central Asian region.

⁵⁵ Islamic Renaissance of Tajikistan or the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan was founded in 1990, as an Islamic political party in Tajikistan. After independence this party was banned by the government in 1993. It fought with the United Tajik Opposition and Garmi people against the government during the Tajik Civil War but was legalized following peace accords in 1998. In 1999, it became the second largest party in Tajikistan, and boycotted the Presidential elections of 2006. The government designated this party as a terrorist organisation following the ban.

Security Threats for Kyrgyzstan Post-Withdrawal:

Kyrgyzstan is a country which though does not share its border directly with Afghanistan but is considered to be a key concern for the government. The policy-makers of the country fear a spillover from across the borders after the withdrawal of ISAF forces. Though now the withdrawal has been delayed but the present situation in Afghanistan poses a security challenge to all the neighbouring countries. Afghanistan is viewed as a nursery for extremism, drugs trafficking, organized crime and other security threats. Kyrgyzstan is a country which forms the part of the drug transit corridor through which the drugs reach Russia and Europe from Afghanistan. According to the reports, the Kyrgyz administration due to internal corruption in its own structures is able to tap the drugs transiting its region to only 2 to 3 per cent. (Kupatadze 2014) However, it is also known that the gross revenues from this trafficking is used to finance insurgency and terrorism in the region, and also that these drug cartels have their ties with various radical and terrorist organisations. Hence, many observers have considered drugs trafficking as the main threat for Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan strongly believes that post withdrawal, Afghanistan will be the source of instability in the region and for which it has resolved to support and aid the reconstruction and help bolstering the economy to promote peace and security. Not only Kyrgyz officials but many other analysts in the region believe that until Afghanistan is secured politically, economically and militarily, there is no peace and development to be seen in the near future, and this is something that needs to be addressed regionally. The neighbouring countries which are most vulnerable to the security challenges from Afghanistan are the one who hold most of the stakes in a stable or unstable Afghanistan, and hence the solution must be the result of regional cooperation. In this direction, Kyrgyzstan offers its support by being the part of the CASA-1000 Project⁵⁶ which also includes Tajikistan, and also offered its territory as a neutral venue for the dialogues.

⁵⁶ CASA-1000 (Central Asia and South Asia Power Transmission Project) is a \$1.16 billion project currently under construction that will allow export of surplus hydroelectricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to

Though apart from drugs peddling other security challenges that Kyrgyzstan faces are radicalisation on religious grounds and violent and armed conflicts by the insurgents, an increased refugee influx having adverse impact on the economy, putting the proposed construction of CASA-1000 project at a risk. The officials also see that the internal corruption in the governance in tackling the drug problem is the biggest impediment to the security of the country.

Well on the other hand there have been views that the ‘risk of spillover’ concept have been overplayed and exaggerated by the countries of Central Asia to suit their interests and, to keep other Western powers involved in the region to act as a counter force against Russia’s influence on their sovereignty. This is also done so that they can benefit from the funds and assistance they receive for fighting terrorism from various organisations and the West. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that these countries stand at a risk if things keep depleting on the security front in Afghanistan.

The risk of religious extremism and the issue of Fergana Valley pose an eminent challenge to the Kyrgyz Republic, given the reports that IMU or the ‘neo-IMU’ which kind of includes all Central Asian Jihadist groups into it is still active and operating in some regions having its base in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Hence, IMU today is very different from what it was when it came into the scene in Kyrgyzstan in late 1990s. There have been reports that large number of people are fighting alongside the IS in Iraq and Syria; though the numbers are contested, the risk of these fighters coming back to their countries and carrying out violent activities is a matter of great concern. However, it has already been discussed above that the Central Asian countries have shifted their foreign policy orientations with the changing times and tides. Unlike other countries in the region Kyrgyzstan is one country that has clung to Russia rather than West, by asking it to stop using its airbase in 2014. (Pirgov 2015) Anyways the Republic of Kyrgyzstan is closely monitoring the changes in Afghanistan given the drawdown of coalition forces, trying to better guard its borders and country against all threats emanating from Afghanistan.

Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is expected to be completed by the end of 2018. This project will allow for the export of 1300 megawatts of electricity during the summer months when both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan experience surplus electricity generation from hydroelectricity dams.

Turkmenistan:

The republic of Turkmenistan shares around 700kms long porous and deserted border with Afghanistan. It is the most isolated country in Central Asia and also the only country which officially refused to acknowledge any threats coming from its neighbour. Turkmenistan supplies power to Afghanistan's northern territories and is also a part of US supported TAPI⁵⁷ venture. This gas pipeline will connect Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India and that heavily depends on the security and stability in Afghanistan.

A number of zones in this permeable Turkmen-Afghan border are controlled by the insurgents, either by The Taliban or other armed factions. Turkmenistan has been formally a neutral republic since its independence, which greatly limits the capacity of the military force to handle any security challenge. Its geographical location and flat landscape bordering Afghanistan in the south puts it on a higher risk of attacks by the Afghan-Taliban along with Tajikistan. Regardless of the fact that the number of radical insurgents and terrorists is much less when compared to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, it's possible that the insurgents or Taliban could spread instability in the country through armed incursions along the border area, thereby challenging the central government. It is clear that the armed forces of Turkmenistan are not capable and ready to challenge the threats on borders which pose a national security problem. This is because of its traditional policy of neutrality, due to which the army never participated in any international military operations outside the country or never trained with foreign forces. And it also because of this neutrality it declined to take any interest in any regional military political alliance.

While all other Central Asian Republics seem alarmed at the drawdown of coalition forces and the rise in Taliban offensives in Afghanistan, Turkmenistan is one country which does not perceive the issue of Afghanistan the way its neighbours do. It has shown

⁵⁷ TAPI stands for Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline for natural gas being developed by the Asian Development Bank. The pipeline will transport natural gas from Caspian Sea and Turkmenistan through Afghanistan into Pakistan and then to India. Its construction began in Turkmenistan on 13 the December 2015. The Pipeline is expected to be operational by 2019. Proponents of the Project see it as a modern continuation of the Silk Road.

no signs of distress unlike the other four republics of the region. President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov seems confident that the strategy that supported and steered the country in the tough times of late 1990s will once again help Turkmenistan in preventing any hostilities from Afghanistan. (Ovozi, 2014) During the 1990s when Taliban took over Afghanistan, Turkmenistan did not oppose this move, it remained neutral; neither opposed nor officially recognised it. They also allowed Taliban to open a representative office in the country due to which Taliban never threatened the Turkmenistan government whereas other countries like Uzbekistan and Tajikistan who had opposed Taliban, were always threatened.

Today the situation has changed, when in April 2013, reports emerged in the Afghan media about a nine-day battle in the Faryab Province between Afghan forces and the Taliban fighters. Though the Taliban were chased out of the area but what is to be noted here is that these fighters were mostly ethnic Turkmen, who were staying in the province had now joined Taliban and other armed factions. Turkmenistan perhaps should be worried about these Turkmen who are being spotted beside the militants in Pakistan, Syria, Russia and other parts of the region. (Indeo 2016) It is possible that they cross over into Turkmenistan and try to destabilise the country. Till now Turkmen security forces are used to deal with repressed and frightened population, who do not oppose the government, but it is not clear as to how will the forces react if these trained, armed and determined Turkmen from the other side of the border come into the country and try to create chaos.

As indicated by many reports from the region Turkmenistan has deployed many soldiers on the Afghan-Turkmen borders that are incapable for the critical job which requires a particular skill and training, which this army lacks. Several cases have been reported regarding the armed infiltration along the borders and about the Taliban fighters who camp along the border waiting to cross over into Turkmenistan. There has been an increase in instances of armed conflicts in the regions of Faryab and Jowzjan provinces of Afghanistan, these are the areas which lie along the border of Turkmenistan; this might potentially create instability in the region. In addition to this there are a large number of ethnic Turks in the bordering provinces of Afghanistan where Taliban is still active.

These Turkmen have grouped themselves into two militia groups under the war lords – Gurbandurdy and Emir Karyad fighting the Taliban and protecting their ethnic communities. (Indeo 2016)

From Turkmenistan point of view Afghanistan is the only problem on the borders of the country, though it has remained humble to the cause of Afghanistan, in the sense offering financial aids for the Afghan issue and promoting peace in the region. The biggest threat is to the proposed TAPI Pipeline which is a short-term goal for Turkmenistan allowing it to diversify its markets for energy exports, which is now mainly limited to China. (Indeo 2016)

To sum up, the five Central Asian republics have been and are still vulnerable to the threats emanating in Afghanistan. They have a common enemy, they have similar threats and security concerns, they want to address all and bring peace and safety to their countries, but how to do it is the problem. They do not trust each other, so it is not possible for all the five to agree to one solution of the problem which is Afghanistan. Any problem including water sharing, narco smuggling, trans-border terrorism and extremism, organised crime etc. demands regional cooperation. And the lack of trust among these nations obstructs them from finding common solutions to common security problems. Not only this, the mutual distrust also weakens their capacity to handle pressure from the big powers. They do not have even one regional organisation that brings together all the five countries on one platform without the presence of either China or Russia.

Chapter 4

ANTI TERRORISM STRATEGIES OF CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

The five countries of the Central Asian region have been closely following the political events and security situation in the neighbouring, Afghanistan. The reason being -- the failed state of Afghanistan affects them deeply. The Central Asian states viewed the US troop withdrawal of 2014 with much caution and pessimism. Kabul's neighbours expect that the already unstable state of affairs in Afghanistan will further fall apart and threaten the safety and peace of their countries. They also expect that a radical Islamic movement in Afghanistan will rise up again - a situation that most of the Central Asian republics and experts think is unavoidable and will spill over from Afghanistan. (BBC News 16/1/2014)

All the governments of these republics have reacted to the threat of terrorism in different ways. Some of them went to the extremes of rooting out terrorism, by using repressive measures on not only terrorists but also on civilians; while others have used comparatively less brutal measures for containment and prevention of terrorism and insurgency. This chapter deals with this variation and the reason as to why some of these Central Asian republics have relied on different mechanisms to contain the threat of terrorism on a whole. And the second part of the chapter deals with the challenges that these republics might have to face after the withdrawal of international forces from the region.

To begin with, it has already been discussed in the previous chapters that Afghanistan has been the most unstable state of the region and the spill over to other countries have and are still affecting the neighbours. All Central Asian states shared the past of being dominated by the Tsar and then by the USSR. We still find Soviet era legacies in the political structures, political culture, governments, economy, ideology, and an insufficient system for resource management in these republics. Today all these countries are facing the challenge of interference from Russia which is like a Big Brother and the issue of

Islamic Fundamentalism. Though Central Asians in majority belong to the Hanafi Sunni School of thought, but what they follow is the culture and traditions rather than strict Islamic rituals. The kind of geopolitical competition Central Asia faces is for two reasons: the large amount of oil and gas deposits and second because it is at a frontline position when it comes to fighting global terrorism and narco crime.

The Central Asian republics have used international organisations and such global stages to address their security challenges in relation to Afghanistan. These structures allow the republics to draw on the assets of these associations and initiate a dialogue amongst them at the same time. However these states do not have adequate capacity to fundamentally impact the process in Afghanistan. Another deterrent to their positive resolve is the absence of trust and cooperation on a regional level. Moreover the Central Asian states are obliged by complex geopolitics of the region and intra-territorial competitions.

Afghanistan has been a common problem for the Central Asian republics but the level of response of each individual state to it depends upon the degree of exposure and sensed vulnerability to the challenges emanating from Afghanistan. Like for example, Tajikistan is perceived to be the most vulnerable as it shares the longest border, that too porous, with Afghanistan but Kazakhstan is comparatively less affected by Afghan security challenges due to its distance from the country.

Let us examine the counter terrorism policies adopted by the states of Central Asia. And for that we have to know that there is no definition of terrorism that has been universally agreed upon despite the UN General Assembly Committee working hard since 1997 to reach a consensus. Hence, the countries define it according to its own interests and agendas. Countering terrorism is one of the primary goals and duties of any national government in the world; and when the countries in question are the ones who are mostly vulnerable to religious extremism and which are a safe breeding ground for such activities the onus on the government increases even more.

KAZAKHSTAN:

There have been very few terrorist attacks reported in Kazakhstan; however the official data shows a rise in number of terrorist activities in 2011 and 2012. In order to analyse

the counter terrorism strategies adopted by the state, it is important to understand what is perceived as terrorism. The acts which are directed against the governmental and law enforcement institutions and not the public or public places in general are regarded as terrorism in Kazakhstan. (PRI Final Report, 2013) The people convicted and serving terms in the prisons are the ones who were involved in sedition, or participated and were affiliated with the terrorist groups. (Penal Reform International Final Report, 2013)

In 2011-12 the terrorist attacks on the government buildings and mainly National Security Committee (KNB) forced Kazakhstan to take strong steps in countering domestic terrorism. In October 2013 President Nazarbayev affirmed a state policy to fight religious extremism for the time period of 2013-2017. The policy ensured the security and safety of the society by keeping check on religious radicalism and dangers of terrorism. It conceived a series of deterrent measures, upgrading the proficiency of identifying and averting terrorism and enhancing the system of measures to handle its consequences. (McDermott, 2013) This program depended on including the general public in such protection measures and in modernising the data work among 'target bunches'. The whole thing heavily relies on the will of the public to take an interest in the preventive work in the society.

The government perhaps took such a step due to the growing influence of the Spiritual Board of the Muslims in Kazakhstan (SBMK), which is the apex body for religion in the country. Due to the situation at hand the board has been carrying on activities like guiding and enlightening prisoners and others alike, monitoring the religious temper of the people, and preventing the youth from switching to the destructive side by explaining the traditional cardinals of religion and bringing people back to practice traditional Islam.

Apart from a national policy against terrorism on the international level Kazakhstan is a part of 14 international organisations and also submits annual reports on the progress made by it annually to the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee⁵⁸. The national

⁵⁸ UN Counter Terrorism Committee is a subsidiary body of the UNSC. Post 9/11 the UNSC had unanimously adopted Resolution 1373 obliging all states to criminalise assistance for terrorist activities, deny financial support and safe heavens to terrorists and share information about groups planning terrorist activities. A 15-member Counter-Terrorism Committee was established at the same time to monitor implementation of the resolution.

list of the banned terrorist organisations in Kazakhstan includes, the IMU, Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami, an Uyghur separatist group - Islamic Party of Eastern Turkestan, Jamaat of Central Asian Mujahedeens, Kurdistan Workers Party, Boz Kurt (Gray Wolves), Lashkar-e-Toiba, Kuwait's Social Reforms Society, Asbat an-Ansar a Palestinian group, Al-Qaida, Taliban, and Muslim Brotherhood. (<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1071987.html>)

However Kazakhstan is one of the five countries in Central Asia that is least affected due to the spillover from Afghanistan.

UZBEKISTAN

From the very beginning the Uzbeks knew what national problems they were going to face. It was surrounded by neighbours having civil wars (Tajikistan and Afghanistan), regular ethnic conflicts, and developing religious radicalism in its own territory, and a neighbourhood which was plagued by threats that had the potential of becoming big. These events had a negative impact on certain sections of the society in Uzbekistan. The slogans like coming back to the traditional Islamic values and setting up of an Islamic statehood were gaining momentum, which bred people like Juma Namangani and Tahir Yuldashev who later established the IMU. The initial activities of IMU proved that terror was the only method it was going to use for furthering its cause. The world community took notice after it executed many large-scale terrorist activities and then accredited it as an international terrorist organisation.

But the government of Uzbekistan knew and had recognised that terrorism was going to be the first and foremost security threat on a national, regional and global level. And the later events proved that the Uzbeks were indeed right in their assessment of the reality about terrorism. Uzbekistan became the target for religious extremism due to the fact that even after being a country with a Muslim majority, ever since its independence it declared itself as a Secular state. All religious organisations and political parties were banned by the government. This was one of the main reasons why the Uzbek government became the target of Islamic terrorism from the start. Uzbekistan due to its size, strategic

location and an ethnic population living in almost all the five countries of Central Asia has a much larger potential of influencing the peace and situation in the region. It is also nearly impossible for any meaningful regional cooperation take place without the participation of Uzbekistan.

Located almost in equidistance from Russia and China, Uzbekistan is part of SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation), which is a regional security organisation along with Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan being the other members. In 2002 Uzbekistan became the country from SCO to house the RATS - Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure⁵⁹ (officially became functional in 2004), with China wanting to make SCO an alternative to the presence of US in the Central Asian region.

With all these geo-political religious forces squeezing the country, Karimov took a bold decision of offering its base to the coalition forces to launch an offensive against another all Muslim population country. The Uzbek leaders have always assessed the security threats to the country along with the demands of the new changing world, and the trait of existing and potential threats. This became the basis for adopting the legislative documents, like the *National Security Concept* (1997), the *Defence Doctrine* (2002), the amendments to the *Law About Defence* in 2001 and several others. (Sayfulin 2010) Military reforms have taken place in Uzbekistan in three phases which strengthened the armed forces' capacity for its defense and prevention. Not only this structures where civilian experts can significantly contribute to the policy thinking and decision making like the National Security Council are coming up. The Uzbek leadership also understands that such counter-Terrorist measures will never work effectively if the domestic social and economic problems posed by the transition period are not minimized. The efforts made by the government have given one concrete result that majority of the population do not support terrorist activities even after its leaders tried to manipulate the public showing them the difficulties of the transition period.

⁵⁹ RATS or The Regional Anti Terrorism Structure of SCO is a permanent organ of SCO headquartered at Tashkent, Uzbekistan, which serves to promote cooperation of member states against the three evils of Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism. The head of RATS is elected to a three-year term. Each member state also sends a permanent representative to RATS.

However, a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy could not be developed without the participation of the world community, as the methods of attack substantiated the fact that IMU was being supported by other outside terrorist groups. And it became imperative that in order to fight a terrorist group which was being financed by other global terrorist organisations, needed an international level of planning and cooperation. The events of 9/11 proved to be a strong argument for the same.

Uzbekistan actively participated in the US/NATO-led War on Terror focusing on Afghanistan. It became the first post-Soviet country to assist US by letting it use the Karshi-Khanabad air base just after the launch of the Operation Enduring Freedom. (Baran 2004) Meanwhile on the other hand Uzbekistan was also actively involved in the anti-terrorist initiatives taken by other regional organisation to which it was a part. The Central Asian Cooperation Organisation⁶⁰ (CACO) which was initially created by Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan opened new prospects for regional security. Russia joining the group in 2004 gave it a better position and impetus to strengthen the organisation against terrorism and other security threats to the region. Uzbekistan also invited Afghanistan to be a part of CACO so that the once again hiking opium trade in the region can be dealt with, and Afghanistan an already war-torn country could benefit from regional cooperation.

Uzbekistan also has used and uses the promises of bilateral relations for catering to its security needs, for example it has good relations with both USA and Russia along with some other European nations. Not only this, Uzbekistan also took a stand and left the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organisation) of the erstwhile Soviet states because this organisation was ineffective in countering terrorism in the region. The reason being, CSTO remained under strong sway of political priorities making it counterproductive when it came to regional security.

Nevertheless, US and its allies like Uzbekistan are in the middle of a stalemated war. Even after more than a decade of the war, Taliban, Al-Qaeda or the IMU do not seem

⁶⁰ The CACO was initially created under the name of Central Asian Economic Union in 1994, by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Tajikistan Joined in 1998 and the organisation was renamed Central Asian Economic Cooperation (CAEC). In 2004 Russia joined and it was then again renamed to the Central Asian Cooperation Organisation (CACO).

eliminated. This not only shows the failure of the international community but also the state governments in the region. The Uzbek government is losing ground for winning Uzbek people over. The reasons are plain and simple: post-Soviet Transitional woes, exacerbated by the politically and monetarily harsh policy approaches by the present administration that created massive poverty, corruption and resentment among the general public. Uzbekistan has a poor Human Rights record, with continuous torture in its prison cells; making numerous “Enemies of State”, as the Humans Rights Watch Report (2004) correctly points out. No less than 30% of the population lives under the poverty line, the ethnic clans and corrupt authorities make it impossible for any governmental programmes to work properly for an all inclusive upliftment of the masses. These are the most conducive conditions for the growth of religious fundamentalism, which first came in when Perestroika gave a kind of political crack to such groups, and since then such organisations have been constantly attacking Karimov’s secular rule.

TAJIKISTAN

Tajikistan has also additionally been known for the brutal indictment of Islamic militias. Most of the conflict emanated from increased regional differences and a competition for control over the resources. But the dispute over what role Islam would play in state-building became the reason of the war. (Glenn, 1999) Over the span of five-year of Tajik civil war, government troops used indiscriminating firing tactics during armed military operations against the extremists. The peace treaty of 1997 brought the war to an end and guaranteed representation of the Islamic renaissance Party (IRP), the one which was on the side that opposed the government. Nonetheless, the IRP’s activities have been thwarted by the renewed persecutions. (Najibullah, 2003) Tajik Administration launched criminal enquiry against the previous fighters, saying that such investigations were regarding the crimes, including terrorist activities, apparently committed during the civil war. IRP claims that these trials and punishments are motivated politically to defame and discredit the party in the country. (The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour Report, 2005)

Even after so many years since the war, the government still uses war-like tactics to liquidate the remnants of the militia who were labeled terrorists by the government. During the retaliatory assaults launched by the government in 2001, many local people lost their homes, livestock and lives. (Humans Rights Watch Report, 2001) Members belonging to radical Islamic groups have been put under constant and extreme monitoring and prosecution. There have been reports that people accused of participating or supporting any activities of Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT) – banned in the state, had biased and unjust trials and were also tortured in detention to coerce confessions. (Amnesty International Report, 2005) The Tajik leaders shaped their views on the extensiveness of threat that Islamists posed and by the role Islam played in the daily lives of the population. Since the second half of the seventh century Islam had become an important part of culture and tradition in Tajik society. Since the time of Perestroika, radical believers of Islam, though very few in number were able to gather support and became big Islamic political groups. (Malashenko 1993:70) This prevalence of Islamic fundamentals and values that was seen in the citizens contributed to such swift transformations. The fear of revivalism prompted sharp and repressive governmental reactions and opposition to the IRP in the 1990s, till it was banned in 1993. The Tajik government still sees Islamism as a key threat to national security, even with an all-time low support from the public for IRP. The policies of neighbouring states have also affected the counter-terrorism strategies of Tajikistan. Tajik officials have agreed on many instances that pressure from the Uzbek government to clamp down on the HT and other Radical Islamist groups have resulted in President Emomoli Rakhmonov taking harsh steps in response to fundamentalism. (International Crisis Group Report, 2003:35)

Tajikistan declared itself a strong supporter of the coalition forces and War on terror post 9/11 attacks in fighting terrorism in the region and in Afghanistan. Not only this, it also augmented its own efforts in combating religious terrorism and extremism. Some analysts have claimed that in the name of war on terror the Tajik government is settling old scores with its opponents of civil war. (Najibullah, 2003) Regardless of these issues Tajikistan does face the threat of spillover from Afghanistan and the government tries to guard its border with whatever means it has at their disposal.

KYRGYZSTAN

The Kyrgyz republic after its independence proved to be an example of democratic advancement in the neighbourhood with corrupt and repressive political regimes, and soon came to be known as ‘an island of democracy’ in the post-USSR Central Asia. (Kasybekov 1999:71) It has a history of overthrowing autocratic regimes twice through violent revolts once in 2005⁶¹ (Tulip Revolution) and then later in 2010⁶². Traditionally the Kyrgyz government adopted a softer approach towards the activities of HT, setting it apart from its more harsh neighbours. However, in recent years its robust counter terrorist strategies have come into convergence with those of its neighbours. Kyrgyzstan government remains apprehensive about the future of the country’s security. The underlying socio-economic issues and lack of public services – along with other problems like, drug trade from Afghanistan, political corruption, regional instability of Central Asia and Afghanistan, and religious fundamentalism foster such conditions in which Islamic extremism can breed.

Other problem is the fault line materializing in the society of Kyrgyzstan, between the ones who value the idea of secularism (Svetski), a Soviet legacy, and the new generation that views Islam as its core identity. The distrust between these two groups and ideologies obstruct any governmental policies from addressing the issue of radicalisation in the region and particularly Fergana Valley. This polarizing effect of hyper-ethnic nationalists and the religious leaders who are very often uneducated and radical in their outlook is alarming especially for the status of women in the country, who have remained marginalized for almost two decades. Extremist notions in relation to women’s rights and other strict religious norms have the potential of spreading instability in the society. Flustered by cross-border insurgency and infiltration from Afghanistan, isolated terrorist

⁶¹ Tulip Revolution 2005: was a mass uprising against the first President after Independence Askar Akayev.

⁶² Askar Akayev’s successor, Kurmanbek Bakiyev was also overthrown five years later in 2010, after he cracked down violently on protestors in Bishkek, killing more than hundred people. Both Akayev and Bakiyev and their families were accused of nepotism and corruption. The Bakiyev regime in particular closely approximated a narco-state, in which high-ranking officials run drug trafficking operations and extracted illicit profit from the drug trade.

attacks and religious extremism Kyrgyzstan has also adopted measures to counter the impact of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in the region. However, some security experts from the region have blamed the Kyrgyz republic for exaggerating the threat of radicalism and terrorism than what actually exists. (Galdini, 2016) It is alleged that the description that Kyrgyz government gives for a terrorist and for terrorist activities is only based on the leaders' version of the occurrences.

Despite such allegations the government continues to stiffen its security responses, curtailing vast levels of political and religious freedoms and to eliminate political opposition in the name of countering terrorism. The policy making in the Central Asian region does not only depend upon the domestic determinants or the international pressure on the government's choices but other factors like availability of resources and psychological motives affect the policy-making process. As a landlocked state which is dependent upon its neighbours for supply of natural resources and access to the international community or the outside world Kyrgyzstan has been pressurized by the big regional powers – Russia, China and Uzbekistan - to adopt the counter-terrorism policies like its neighbours have. As a member of SCO and CSTO⁶³ (Collective Security Treaty Organisation), which were established to tackle the threats to regional security, Kyrgyz republic was forced to coordinate its policies and institutions in accordance to SCO and CSTO. And because it lacks adequate knowledge and expertise in combating terrorism and eliminating the drug cartels in the region, it had to emulate the practices of those neighbouring countries, who supposedly were better at combating such evils.

Nevertheless, Kyrgyzstan has been a strong supporter of Russia in the post-Soviet era and not only the elected presidents but also the senior officials in government and military have been affected by the 'Soviet thinking'. (McDermot, 2004) And so the Kyrgyz republic has always supported Russia-led regional organisation in the post-Soviet Central Asia. The Istanbul Summit of OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in

⁶³ Collective Security Treaty Organisation also known as the Tashkent Treaty/Pact: is an intergovernmental military alliance that was signed on 15th May 1992, by the six post-Soviet states that were also part of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia signed the treaty next year and the treaty took effect in 1994. Five years later, six of the nine members – all but Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan – agreed to renew the treaty for five more years, and in 2002 those six agreed to create the CSTO as a military organisation. Uzbekistan rejoined it in 2006 but again left in 2012.

Europe) in 1999, which emphasized the importance of cooperation on global and regional level to counter the security threat of terrorism, was followed by the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States)⁶⁴ member states endorsing many policy documents in order to counter international terrorism. Some of the documents were the 1999 Treaty on Cooperation between the CIS Members in Combating Terrorism and the Programs of CIS Member States to Combat International Terrorism and Other Forms of Extremism up to the year 2003. (Omelicheva, 2009:901) In 2004, The CIS member states developed the concept of the Program to Combat International Terrorism and Other Forms of Extremism for 2005-07 and adopted the Program of Joint Measures to Combat International Crime for 2005-07 (Omelicheva, 2009:901)

The Kyrgyz republic formulated national plans so that the CIS counterterrorism strategies could be implemented. By being a part of such regional organisations and party to other bilateral relations with China, Russia and other neighbours, the Kyrgyz government repositioned the international legislations on countering terrorism into domestic laws of the country.⁶⁵ Thus, the framework of Kyrgyz counterterrorism policies, legislations and institutions have been shaped up by emulating and blending with those of its neighbours and regional organisations. It largely imitates the counter terrorism policy that is practiced by Russia and the structure and authority of the institutions mimic those of its neighbours.

AN OVERALL ANALYSIS OF STATES' RESPONSES TO TERRORISM:

Till now it has been clearly stated that different states have responded differently to the common threat they face. History has led them into believing that it is the radical Islamism that poses the threat of terror. Their perspectives on the degree of

⁶⁴ Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a regional organisation formed during the breakup of the Soviet Union, whose members are some former Soviet Republics. The CIS has few supranational powers, but aims to be more than a purely symbolic organisation, nominally possessing coordinating powers in the fields of trade, finance, lawmaking, and security. It has also promoted cooperation on cross-border crime prevention.

⁶⁵ According to Kyrgyzstan's Constitution of 1993, International treaties and agreements adopted by the Kyrgyz government in accordance with the established procedure become a part of Kyrgyzstan's legislation.

danger presented by radical Islam have been multifarious depending upon the circumstances when Islam was introduced and how much of it was practiced in the societies of Central Asian republics. Islam has played a cursory role on the lives of nomads inhabiting the territories of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Whereas the people of what today we know as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have known to have adopted Islam as their principal religion much earlier and have observed and practiced its laws and prohibitions all the more closely. This very distinction in the way the sedentary population and the nomadic tribes honed Islam unraveled in a very haphazard role of religion in the Central Asian republics today. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have witnessed more prominent Islamisation than Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, where conventionally less strict adherence to orthodox practices of Islam obstructed it from deep roots in the society. Hence this has been the reason that the governments of Central Asian states have varied analysis and responses to the threat of terror.

Central Asia, since independence has a long-standing tradition of authoritarianism in all five republics. In this context, Uzbekistan has been the most repressive of all applying very harsh and brutal measures against Islamic activities. Tajikistan also holds a tough stance against the religious radicals of the country. Similarly, President Niyazov and then later his successor President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow of Turkmenistan tightened his grip on political and religious leaders and activities in the country. On the other hand Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have relatively used less brutal measures of countering terror activities. After having said this lets move on to the potential problems that these republics might be facing with the drawdown of coalition forces in the next section.

CENTRAL ASIA AFTER THE WITHDRAWAL OF COALITION FORCES:

With the withdrawal of US/NATO combat forces from Afghanistan, its immediate and near neighbours will face and are having a much greater effect on their peace and stability. This has already affected the dynamics in Central Asia and Russia, countries which are now reviewing their already in place security frameworks and priorities voicing the need for greater cooperation. They have a common concern and the

perspective regarding the Afghan government and Afghan military force, which it is still incapable of handling the insurgency which has deteriorated and is also much likely to get worse. They fear that in the absence of a strong military deterrence the Taliban and other radical elements which still have strong holds in certain areas of Afghanistan will host the insurgents and extremists of Central Asia and provide them with bases and training camps. This kind of a situation is going to severely threaten the peace and stability of the region which already is fighting a significant rise in radicalisation.

But the difference of opinions and diversions between the regional players is preventing, for the time being, any real attempt at regional cooperation. Two of Afghanistan's most influential neighbours Iran and Pakistan, have differing perspectives on its future. India-Pakistan border tensions and conflict make any political cooperation and consensus extremely difficult to attain. Regional '**non-interference**' in Kabul's matters seems like a travesty when these regional conflicts and rivalries are being played out in Afghanistan. Yet there are opportunities for inter regional and economic connectivity with Afghanistan in the fields of trade, water and energy which hereby increase the possibility of regional development. The question remains, what role can Afghanistan's near neighbours therefore play in ensuring its stability and security.

After winning the elections in 2014 the President Ashraf Ghani and the CEO Abdullah Abdullah of Afghanistan signed the Bilateral Security Agreement – an agreement on the status of coalition forces, which created a sense of momentum as a new chapter opened for Afghanistan's history. The first plan for the country was to support the transition from an inside-out perspective as the country progressed through the transformation decade. The keystone was the principle of **Non-Interference**, introduced in 2002 in *Kabul Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relation*⁶⁶ between the then transitional government, China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. In January 2010, half of

⁶⁶ The Kabul Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relations was signed on 22 December 2002 between the Transitional Government of Afghanistan, China, Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan. The Kabul Declaration reaffirmed the commitment of constructive and supportive bilateral relationships based on the principles of territorial integrity, mutual respect, friendly relations, co-operation and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. And also declared the commitment of being united against the fight of terrorism, extremism of all kinds, narco-trafficking to bring peace, safety and security in the region.

these statements and subsequent declarations of what became to be known as the **Istanbul Process**⁶⁷ also heavily relied on this principle and its application. This plan for Afghanistan relied on building regional economic cooperation which sometimes poses a chicken and egg problem with regards to security perceptions and expectations both within and outside Afghanistan. Non-Interference in a sense is perhaps a solution but also somewhat of a challenge at the same time.

The challenges in this situation is very high because of what some scholars call the region '*tyranny of geography*', due to the land-locked situation they are in, neighbours have no exit strategies. So Kabul's neighbours all have different plans for the common problem they have. Not only has this, the inter-state rivalries among them also hindered any real attempt at regional cooperation. That said ISAF's combat mission ended on 28th December 2014, NATO switched its role to the Resolute Security Force afterwards. (Rasmussen, 2014) US confirmed its plans to maintain a significant non-combatant presence until the end of 2016. Bilateral and regional diplomacy meanwhile is also adapting to this very important situation.

There are three key challenges particularly for the Central Asian republics that need to be monitored in the coming years. Collectively called the five Central Asian States but in reality these are five specific entities moving in different directions and how they look at their security dynamic to the south actually reflect on the region's future. First is the **Afghan narrative** itself, since 1989 the narrative to the north has been a failure. (Kangas & Chaudhary, 2014) Afghanistan is a security threat and challenge, source of problems after the departure of troops in February 1989. It was a problem that had been medicated; by 1992 it flared up again and was clearly an influential factor in the Tajik civil war 1996-97 and the Tajik government kept looking at it as the source of other problems – drug trafficking routes or the threats of extremism or the extremist ideology etc. This is the part of the narrative we saw moving towards the north.

⁶⁷ Istanbul Process or Heart of Asia was established to provide a platform to discuss regional issues, particularly encouraging security, political and economic cooperation among Afghanistan and its neighbours. This region-led dialogue was launched in November 2011 to expand practical coordination between Afghanistan and its neighbours and regional partners in facing common threats, including counterterrorism, counternarcotics, poverty, and extremism. The IS and over 20 other nations and organisations serve as supporting nations to the process.

Interestingly in 2014 the failure and defeat narrative was now applied to the current situation. Now that the NATO was defeated in Afghanistan they know that somehow this is a strategic retreat, which is intriguing. If someone is in US or anywhere in Europe, the response is different, but to the one in any of the capitals of Central Asian republics, this is the narrative that prevails. (Kangas & Chaudhary, 2014) The question remained as to how can these countries actually reshape this narrative, and think of Afghanistan in terms of not as a source of problems but rather as a partner or at least someone that they could cooperate and work with. This is essential for any constructive engagement in the region.

Second is a **political question** - this gets to the more specific dynamics of what was seen in the post-Karzai world. The narrative among Central Asian governments was that Karzai was an illegitimate President. (Kazemi, 2013) The narrative was that he was a President approved and supported by outside forces even the elections were managed by outsiders and impaired by widespread frauds. (Tavernise and Wafa, 2009) In such a condition these republics wanted an election that at least appears (especially to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), if not fair and free; legitimate. The elections of 2014 got a coalition – Grand Coalition of President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah. But even after this coalition started working the condition and the perception has not changed towards Afghanistan.

Third is **Security** - there is a discourse of failure here. After the NATO withdrawal and the change of its combat mission into a Resolute Security force having an advisory role, there is a big question mark. It should be noted here that what this means for the regional players. The US presence in Central Asia has greatly been reduced. (Pillalamarri, 2014) US security cooperation with Kyrgyzstan has decreased to a much lower level after they left the Manas airbase. (Kucera, 2014) This has happened because other problems have risen, worrying about ISIS and other issues. The fall off seen in the region is because the states have now to re-assess national military security strategies. Kyrgyzstan need to do some rethinking, in terms of its security perhaps becoming a bit more engaged with the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) and more importantly with the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organisation).

Along with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, other states in the region are rewriting and redeveloping their national military strategies to reflect what they see as a change in security environment where a particular outside power is no longer present in the region. Now they will reexamine how they look at Afghanistan whether they include Afghanistan into an organisation like the SCO not as an observer or a special guest but as a full member. Analysts argue that for the future of the region Afghanistan is going to be a serious challenge.

Nevertheless it is being observed that the drawdown of coalition forces and the re-emergence of Taliban are creating new dynamics in terms of both security situation and politics – between Central Asia and Afghanistan.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The borders of Central Asia are borders today, but obviously have not been those borders for a long time; they have moved around. Central Asia is one area that has been consistently conquered by great empires, by the Mongols, by the Ottomans, by the Russian Empire, the British and most recently the Soviets; and each one of these foreign empires left their own legacies of different type of institutions, dividing different ethnicities and so the borders of Central Asian region have been fluid and quite contested. Sometimes they have been quite political too. For instance, in around 2005 the US State Department moved Central Asia from its Eurasian and Russian Bureau to its South and Central Asian Bureau. The significance of the move was that it linked up to the desks of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Beijing and Moscow saw this move as an indicator that Central Asia was going to be an object of US interest and possible even US hegemony, wanting to make a link between Afghanistan and Central Asian republics.

So borders aren't natural and sometimes there really is politics to it and this gets to a second point. That Central Asia has always been an arena of competition, a theatre of competition of great powers projecting themselves, wanting to use the region for their own strategic purposes.

Coming to the other point about Central Asia is the Ethnicity of the region that greatly affects the stability and regional cooperation. There are a dozen if not hundreds of ethnicities; they are grouped in many different ways. Sometimes it's hard to fix on what exactly an ethnicity is based as opposed to just what's known as a clan or a tribe. But sometimes a lot of those groups are local and sub-local. There are different layers of identities, and these layers of identities operate in parallel and are incredibly important for politics. The ethnic makeup is relatively similar to what it was during the Soviet rule. The difference now is that there is a real attempt of state-building and nation building on the parts of the elites in these republics. Similar to what we have in other decolonized

parts of the world like Africa and South East Asia, we see that the nationalists are trying to forge a nation, trying to forge a state.

However, we should not forget that these states were meant to be a part of the Soviet whole, they were integrated. They weren't designed to be independent states. There are lots of minorities within these countries. In 2010 Kyrgyzstan for example, witnessed an ethnic violence between north and south as a result of having a big Uzbek population in the south. So the elites are faced with the challenge of building a nation, building a new national identity which used to be Kyrgyz, Kazakh or Uzbek. At the same time governments are trying to assimilate and integrate the ethnic minorities within the states as part of the national project. There is a big role played by the clans in the region. It is necessary to understand that what is possible in Moscow, in Washington and Brussels is generally not possible in Central Asia, because there is a completely different way of understanding the world here.

Knowledge of the region is very fragmented simply because the region itself is very fragmented. People from this region are not just different; they see the world in a different way. Everyone has their own point of view, their own interest, their own ideas even stereotypes of this region are completely different. To reduce all this to a single image is very difficult. Hence, it is very important for an observer to keep these things in mind before coming to any conclusion or prediction about the region's future.

Coming to the current scenario and the topic of the dissertation after the coalition forces leave Afghanistan it will have a significant impact on the Central Asian states. Because, many dangers, many risks originate in Afghanistan and Central Asia including drug trafficking, radical terrorism and of course illegal migration. For understanding the nature of these issues it is very important to address these dangers not when they mature but when they are in their infancy. It is also essential to not completely trust public sources when it comes to information, as incomplete information is always worse than a lie. It creates an illusion of credibility but conclusions which are drawn in the current scenario are just predictions and are completely inadequate.

However, the volatility of the Central Asian region has increased in the face of US troops withdrawal, and the security equations have been changing dramatically. Though a complete withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan has been postponed, but the current security situation in the country does not seem to be heading towards any kind of stability. The anxiety over terrorist attacks, militancy and growing extremism dominate the security concerns of the republics. The region has witnessed an increase in the number of terrorist attacks, which was something that was already alarming the governments of the Central Asian states. This also establishes the first hypothesis, not only the threat of militancy but also several other issues have been and are going to obstruct any solution or cooperation among the states. The biggest reason being lack of unity amongst the governments which are facing common security problems like narcotics-trafficking, cross-border crime and trafficking of goods and people, widening Islamic influence in vulnerable areas like Fergana Valley and Tajikistan etc. not only weaken them to handle such issues but also to face any pressure coming from the big powers.

This brings us to the second hypothesis which also stands correct that, US involvement in the region has created a competitive environment which engages other big powers like China and Russia. Like when Moscow, tried to beef up the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), aiming to become a viable collective security alternative, CSTO held military exercises with 12,000 soldiers from Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2011. On the other hand China, tries to influence and engage in the region on a more economic basis – making energy its key factor. Although this kind of a power play in the region is not something new, but this time it engages the republics as well. Countries like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan both of which are vying for regional leadership are expected to play a larger role in the whole scenario.

With little or no support from the local Afghan people, a weak and unpopular government, with very inadequate number of foreign forces and a local security force which is incapable of handling the situation in the country, a period of instability is certainly going to be the norm of the region. Is such a situation the international community and the US will have to rely on the neighbouring countries and especially the

Central Asian republics to contain the threat and play a greater role in stabilising the region.

Even after almost two and a half decades since independence the Central Asian Republics have failed to create a collective and cooperative security system in the region. The security thinking of the governments in the states have mostly focused on the survival of the regime in individual countries, and then also on the forceful imposition of the global security agenda. All this leave them with very little room to deal with long-standing internal tensions like, border issues, conflicts of natural resources, territorial disputes at a regional level. All the five republics have been members in various extra territorial structures like, SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation), CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organisation), CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States), NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) etc but not the driving force in these organisations. Hence, other big powers like China and Russia are looking forward to engage more in the region through these organisations to fight terrorism and extremism in the wake of US withdrawal.

Central Asia might witness a greater engagement of Russia, because conflict-mitigation, stemming narco-trade and Islamic fundamentalism for having a peaceful backyard is in the best interests of Moscow. On the other hand China, also is vying for a greater role in the geopolitics of the region, which now seems limited mostly to the economic sector. But Beijing can influence the region through SCO and the RATS (Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure) having its headquarters in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Having a peaceful Central Asia is the main concern of these big powers and also of the republics. This also implicates that the third hypothesis of the study is proved.

To sum up there is no doubt that the Central Asia's security is greatly affected by the situation in Afghanistan. Having a stable and peaceful neighbourhood is very important for the countries in the region to develop politically, socially and economically. Because only a strong nation can defend itself from internal and external security challenges. And in case of Central Asia which are relatively new sovereign states still undergoing the process nation-building, it's very important that issues like religious fundamentalism and extremism are monitored and countered.

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