

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND INTER-GROUP CONFLICT (1992-96)

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Mohammad Hanif Sharifi

Centre for the Study of Social Systems
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi – 110067
India
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DECLARATION

This dissertation entitled "ETHNO-RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND INTER-GROUP CONFLICT IN AFGHANISTAN (1992-96)" submitted in partial fulfilment for Master of Philosophy degree for Jawaharlal Nehru University and it has not been previously submitted for any other degree nor any other university. It is my original work by Mohammed Hanif Sharifi, We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Mohammed Hanif Sharifi

S. Visvanathan

Prof. Susan Visvanathan

(Supervisor)

Professor
Centre for the Study of Social Systems
School of Social Sciences,
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110 067

Nilika Mehrotra
Prof. Nilika Mehrotra

(Chairperson)

Chairperson
CSSS/SSS
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067

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Mohammed Hanif Sharifi

ABBREVIATION

ANDSF	Afghan's National Defence and Security Forces
BCE	Before Common Era
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
IVC	Indus Valley Civilization
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
POT	Public Opinion Trend
RCT	Realistic Conflict Theory
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

1. INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan witnessed civil war from 1992-1996, which is also known as ethnic war. The war devastated the country. For a long time Afghanistan has been home to a multiplicity of ethnic groups and several sects of Islam. Historical and geographical factors have created diversity in varying degrees in the country. This diversity made Afghanistan a culturally rich country, but at the same time, it has also provoked conflicts and violence among different identity groups. Afghanistan has a complicated social structure in terms of ethnicity, culture and language. Every Afghan, as an individual always obtains their identity from ethnicity, religion, region, and other factors, which was, in time, followed by a wide variety of cultures and traditions among particular identity groups.

The ethno-religious diversity of Afghanistan is the product of hundreds of years of imperial policies and political decay. Therefore, Afghanistan attracts different scholars' attention from various disciplines to study Afghanistan, as part of the 'old world', and as a country which still have the pre-modern social structure. There is no doubt that Afghanistan is a diverse country in terms of culture, language and ethnicity, which makes Afghanistan more vibrant in the region, but at the same time it is also becomes the basis of its complicated socio-political stature. Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic society which had experienced almost three decades of wars and conflicts where peace is still elusive for the people of Afghanistan today. The conflict of 1992-1996 was a battle, which was fought between different ethno-religious groups. The conflict arose when the minority groups claimed political recognition and equal social status. Hence the question of identity became a social demand and perversely a political tool for the minorities in that period.

After the withdrawal of Soviet Union from Afghanistan, it was immediately followed by a civil war among different ethnic groups. This war completely devastated the country where a million of people died as a result of this war, and five million people lost their home and fled to the neighbouring countries to seek refuge. The civil war was the result of power vacuum in the region where different ethnic groups clamoured to gain political power. However, this political struggle became an avenue creating opportunity for small minorities that sought political recognition and equal social status. Accordingly, issue of identity, political recognition, control

of resources and power have led the people of Afghanistan to a deadly intergroup conflict, which inadvertently destroyed the country of its national wealth and cost millions of life.

Majority of the Afghan population follow Islam; the two dominant sects of Islam are 'Sunni' and 'Shia', though there are numerous minor sects existing within this two sects. The dominant sect is Sunni and Shiaism is the second major sect among other minor sects.

Afghanistan is a diverse society in terms of culture, ethnic, and religious beliefs, therefore Mousavi (1998) called Afghanistan as a Chinese box, which is a box inside another box, in the light of its ethnicity and religion diversity. In Afghanistan, minority groups are still perceived as a threat to other dominant groups in relation to the distribution of job opportunities, security, and their hegemonic culture.

Therefore, 1992 conflict was inevitable among these various distinct social groups, where the elites in the echelon of power used the issue of ethnicity and religion as a trump card to provoke conflicts towards each other. In the history of human kind, the ethnocentric attitude have always led to mass murder, genocide, and catastrophic world wars (e.g., in the former Yugoslavia, Nazi Holocaust and World War II). Over the last two decades social and behavioural scientists have increasingly emphasized in the role of identity and the categorisation of 'self' and the 'other' in studying the causes and consequences of intergroup hostility and harm-doing. The issue of self and identity always occur at multiple levels of analysis: individual within a social context, groups within a society, and nations of the world. The perspectives in social sciences supports that ethnic identity and religious identity as positive social identity contributing to both in-group bonds and hostility toward other groups. This study attempts to apply the theory in the context of Afghanistan, that whether ethnicity and religion had contributed to the conflicts of 1992, as positive social identity or not.

'Afghanistan' and 'Yugoslavia' are good examples of such ethnic conflict and ethnic cleansing, although these two countries are geopolitically different, but both countries have experienced similar kind of conflict. Certainly, that ethnic identity and religious identity are the two significant factors which contribute to intergroup hostility and conflict, and simultaneously the identification of 'self' and identity are central concepts to the understanding of human thought, feeling, and action. Therefore better understanding of self and identity will provide a possibility for an appropriate understanding of intergroup conflict.

The primary concern is to understand the correlation of identity, ethnicity and religion in the context of Afghanistan; how they contributed to conflict and violence in the country. In the first major section, a general explanation is provided regarding individual and group identity dynamics and their role in intergroup conflict; from the perspectives of sociology, social psychology and anthropology.

Literature review

In the global trend on identity and ethnic theory generally in the anthropological literature the term ethnic is designated to a population which is largely biologically self-perpetuating; which shares fundamental values, and have cultural unity forms to make up the field for communication and interaction, and every member identifies itself, and is identified by others. And among different perspective and ideas which exist about ethnicity, the work of Barth (1969) and Smith (1991) are the prominent ones.

Smith refers to six main attributes to define an ethnies, a group sharing the same ethnicity: a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, an association with a specific homeland, and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population. (Barth 1969, 11)

Both scholars, Barth and Smith, focussed on culture hegemony which exist between the member of ethnic groups, Smith called it 'common culture' and Barth named it as 'culture unity'. There is no doubt that culture plays a significant role in case of ethnicity and spontaneously, ethnic and culture have an intense bond. And both have the potential for creating intergroup conflict in a country or a region. Ethnic is a main determinant of social identity which leads social groups to define their 'self' as an entity different from others. Ethnic is based on blood and biological factors, but scientifically speaking there are no such pure ethnic existing anymore. During many centuries of wars, shortage of food and natural disasters all inhabitants are forced to immigrate to other places for their survival. Therefore, such claim as a pure ethnic existing anywhere is superfluous, but still in the old world of African and Asian society ethnicity is a substantial source for identity. Apart from culture and language, territory is also a fundamental factor in shaping social identity especially in this globalized world.

Among the classical thinkers Max Weber was more concerned than other classical thinkers about questions of the ethnic. He described 'ethnic' as mass status groups. In his work he

attempted to combine the ethnic groups' subjective and objective aspects and balance their cultural and political bases. He observed the issue of ethnicity giving primacy to political factors and historical memories in shaping a sense of their common ethnicity, and the prevailing preoccupation with culture and biological differences in limiting ethnic affiliations, According to Weber, what is important in ethnicity is the belief in, and not the fact of, common descent. After all, commonality of descent is impossible to determine precisely because parents, grandparents and other ancestors have different lines of descent and also because people of the same descent may identify themselves differently (Jackson 1982: 6).

However, Marx ignored the ethnic and he is more concerned about class struggle, he believed that survival is the first egalitarian principle. To quote Vishvanathan, 'He distinguishes between the varieties of needs, and the varieties of labour to fulfil these needs. Act of satisfaction of primary needs, he says, lead to new needs' (2011: 63, 64). Marx believed that material needs leads human to conflict, and human always have to fulfil their needs through material sources which always cause conflict. For Marx the root of conflict is not about identity, but rather it is about manipulation of resources. And he believed that your class is the only vehicle of your social identity in a capitalist society.

Human a social being or as an individual, always has the desire to be recognized as a responsible agent to be noticed. Therefore, identity has gained value in social life and has a special role in social life for both individuals and groups. Anthony D. Smith described in his book *The Ethnic Origins of Nation* that

Ethnie are nothing if not historical communities built up on shared memories. A sense of common history unites successive generations, each with its set of experiences which are added to the common stock, and it also defines a population in terms of experienced temporal sequences, which convey to later generations the historicity of their own experience. (Smith, 1988: 25)

Smith had described that ethnicity can be "instrumental" to further individual or collective interests, particularly when the elites require to mobilize large followers to support their political goals in the struggle for power. In this struggle, ethnicity becomes a relevant social tool. The discourse on identity is linked with the concept of identity politics. Between these two extremes lie those approaches that stressed on historical and symbolic cultural attributes of ethnic identity. In this perspective, ethnic group is a type of cultural collectivity, and it

emphasizes the role of myths of descent and historical memory. Another renowned scholar is Tajfel, a social psychologist, who proposed in 1979, that social group is a source of pride and self-esteem and it gives a sense of social identity, a sense of belonging to the social world. In order to increase our self-image, we enhance the status of the group to which we belong. Therefore, the world is divided into the 'us' and 'them'. In the academia and in conducting research the concept of identity is separated in two principle groups; those who argue from the stand point of psychological analysis and those who are eager to see from the anthropological and cultural point of views. The theory of identity in psychology is based on the identity development theory of the Freudian psychology. The theory posited adolescence as a crucial time in the human life cycle consisting of a psychology of identity crisis

Identity crisis [is] whereby identity diffusion is overcome by adolescents. It was argued that now identity is formed but exploration has to take place. However, this framework doesn't explain crucial aspects of religious identity because religious identity is built without exploration, it is on faith. And religious identity has deep connection with culture and even in some cases religion dominates other several cultural factors and even reproduce those cultures in different forms. Smith argued that 'for organized religion, its role is both spiritual and social. The myth of common ethnic origins is often intertwined with creation. (Smith, 1991: 27)

In contrast to studies, which conceive religious identity in terms of exploration commitment at the psychological core of the individual, some scholars conceptualized the religious identity by drawing upon on the research tradition like cultural anthropologists. Hence, the study of religious identity proposed an essentialist approach rather than a psychological status of an individual. And it is more about the matter of social groups than individual. There is a vast literature which has been produced since September 11, 2001 about Islamic radicalism in South Asia and specifically about Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is beyond the scope of this study to cover. These literature has been generated in response to 9/11, which has been tied to U.S. counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency. Oliver Roy (2002) has contributed substantially to the problem of radicalism. This was published by (UNHCR) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and it is a very useful source for understanding religious relation among Afghans.

Regional studies

F. Barth in his work *Ethnic Group and Boundary* (1969), he was familiar with Middle East and published his work which inspired a generation of anthropological research on ethnic studies. He was working closely with Afghanistan dealing with problem of ethnic and boundaries. However, he work was about the transformation of identity among the north Pakistani 'Pathan', who are more Punjabi than the 'Pathan'(Barth, 1969:13). The other prominent scholar is Thomas Barfield, who conducted field work in north Afghanistan in mid-1970s and published a book under the title of *Afghanistan: a culture and political history*. Louis Dupree with his wife Nancy Hatch Dupree, The two renowned American archaeologists and anthropologists have worked on afghan culture and history. There are several other scholars whom I used their work for my thesis which is beyond the scope of this short review to list all their names and their works. In this thesis, I am concerned with two important questions, what was the role of ethnic and religious belief in this intergroup conflict? And how is social identity defined?

Hypothesis

According to social identity theory, identity competition plays a central role in the inception and escalation of intergroup conflict. Therefore, this study will examine that whether the same theory can be applied in intergroup conflict of 1992-1996 in Afghanistan or not.

Methodology

The present study relies on secondary sources which are available on the research area. The research methods chosen for the research takes on a qualitative approach, following deductive method and descriptive analysis. The analysis of the existing literature and other variety of academic disciplines, include but are not limited to sociology, anthropology of conflict studies, theology, and social psychology. The studies attempts to examine and understand the role of ethnicity and religion as 'social identity', and their impacts on creating conflict. The objective of the research is to capture the diversity of approaches that are deployed in the study of ethno-religious identities and intergroup conflict. This study is attempts to underline an interdisciplinary approach taking into account the various available perspectives on the subject matter in order to understand the nature of the conflict which took place in Afghanistan during 1992-1996.

Chapterization

First chapter examines the issue of social identity and the crisis of national identity in Afghanistan which led Afghans to use their ethnic and religious identity in absence of national identity. Moreover this chapter theorizes the concept of conflict and looks at how conflict is happening in relation to social identity in the process. And it also attempts to draw a theoretical framework in order to understand the contribution of social identity in conflict of 1992-1996. Subsequently, this section draws from the discipline of ethno-religious studies to demonstrate the ways in which religion and ethnicity powerfully serve individual and group identity needs. And I wish to explain how certain analytical tools may account for the frequent entanglement of religion, ethnic with intergroup conflict.

The second chapter will give an overview of classical thinkers dealing with social conflict from a classical point of view. I will locate other ideas which influence social conflict in general. In the later part of this chapter, I trace the process of conflict of 1992-96 that happened in Afghanistan since the collapse of the communist government when Taliban took over Kabul. The data is collected from Afghanistan newsletters which is translated by Public Opinion Trend (POT). This chapter also includes the Human Watch reported under the section of War crime.

The third chapter discusses the ethnic boundary, territory, and discourse on identity in Afghanistan, which influenced the conflict in the country. Furthermore, in this chapter the three dominant theories on identity are discussed, touching upon the sensitive issue of prejudice and stereotyping, and explaining how the discrimination plays a role. This chapter is also dependent on the work of those anthropologists and sociologists' writings who are familiar with the region.

CHAPTER 1: IDENTITY, ETHNIC AND INTERGROUP CONFLICT IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan after communism

While escaping communism, Afghanistan was unable to escape civil war. Despite the century's long co-mingling of different ethno-religious groups in Afghanistan, political leaders successfully mobilized them in a deadly struggle for power, resources, and survival. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russians stopped supporting the communist government of Najibullah¹, and the Najibullah government could not survive longer. Najibullah's regime lost its strongest backer, and immediately he announced his willingness to resign in order to make way for a neutral interim government. The coalition force, which was also known as Mujahideen,² took over the political power in Kabul, and created an interim government for six months. But the coalition between these militant groups did not last longer, and civil war broke down in Kabul and another part of the country. The civil war in Afghanistan had frequently been analysed as an ethnic war, because each ethnic group was fighting separately under its own commanders and military structure. Accordingly, ethnic conflict or civil war in Afghanistan was the outcome of various internal and external reasons, but the dominant postulate of this study is that identity, ethnic, religion, and ethnocentric attitude of social groups towards each other played a vital role.

Theorizing social identity

Evidence shows that even in the early stage of human life, social identity was considered as a substantial aspect of group membership, which allows the member of a group or a community to share the same resources, and use the same territory. Accordingly, it was a type of evolutionary mechanism, for survival against other groups. And, even in contemporary times social identities are involved in a great variety of intergroup conflicts. For instance, whether it

¹ **Najibullah** or Dr. Najib, was President of Afghanistan from 1987 until 1992. After, he stepped down from power, he took refuge in United Nations headquarters in Kabul and he lived until 1996, when the Taliban took Kabul. He has been castrated by the Taliban, and he was dragged behind a Toyota pick-up truck in the streets of Kabul before being publicly hanged with a piano wire noose from a tree.

² **Mujahideen** in English usage, it mostly referred to the guerrilla type military outfits led by the Muslim Afghan warriors in the Soviet–Afghan War.

is 'identity politics' in American elections, ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, or riots targeting Muslims in India, the group-based identities often play a critical role in maintaining, and sometimes exacerbating, intergroup conflicts. Therefore, it is advisable to develop an accurate understanding of those dynamics which are involved in the process of social identity and intergroup relations, before studying inter group conflict. Social identity is one of several fundamental human needs that underlie many intractable conflicts. The conflicts can also arise in society over needs of social identity. The demand of positive social identity, which is relatively connected with the control of resources and territory, is what all human beings need for survival. This is fundamentally different from conflicts over interests, because interests are negotiable, whereas needs are immanent for surviving.

It becomes clear that social identity is a kind of social need for the individual. Furthermore, conflict over identity is one of the most common types of conflict which is found among social groups. When a social group or individual feels that their sense of self is threatened, and legitimacy and respect to them has been denied, then in response they will produce conflict and violence. Sense of self is fundamental and significant for individuals as members of a social group, not only for self-esteem but also how one interprets the rest of the world. When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude toward them, his competence, his trustworthiness, etc. Although some of this information seems to be sought almost as an end in itself, there are usually quite practical reasons for acquiring it (Goffman,1956:1). Accordingly any threat to the identity of individual and social group is likely to produce a strong response, this response can be both aggressive and defensive, and it can escalate quickly into an intractable conflict.

But in the modern age, the concept of social identity seems more complex than ever before. Every individual can be a part of various social groups, and can perform several roles as a member of distinct social groups. Identity at the social level can be evaluated in relation to the group memberships. It can be reduced in the case of self and society since that is how a self with society and develops social identity. The concept of self has always been involved in the process of forming identity and social identity and it seems more complex and obscure, because self is not independent itself, it comes to existence in the process its of interaction with others. Therefore self, identity, and social identity are the three matrixes, which are correlated to each other. George Herbert Mead in his work '*Mind Self and Society*' (1934) introduced the concept

of '*social self*', which produced during the period of interactions. It was a revolutionary theory by Mead, which introduced the social aspect of self. Because Sociologists and Psychologists of Mead's time felt that the self was based on biological factors and inherited traits, but according to Mead self does not exist inherently by birth, but it is developed over time from social experiences and activities.

It was the tremendous realization by Mead which completely changes our view about the concept of self. Language process is essential for the development of the self. The self has a character which is different from that of the physiological organism proper. The self is something which undergoes development; it is not initially there at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that, develops in the given individual as result of his relation to that process. The intelligence of the lower forms of animal life, like a great deal of human intelligence, does not involve a self (Mead 1934, 135). But the question that still exists is how to distinguish between identity and social identity when identity is influenced by the 'self' which is social. Therefore social identity and identity have more tendencies toward each other than differences, or in other words they are like different sides of the same coin.

But it is advisable to consider identity and social identity in unification in order to avoid redundancies while theorizing self, and provide a uniform approach to the multifaceted nature of identities in terms of their bases, their processes, and their outcomes. Social identity theory has focused more on the meanings, which is associated with being a member of a social category while identity theory has focused more on the meanings associated with performing a role. Social Identity theory seeks to explain that why an individual choose to participate in particular social roles more often than other and how these choices are shaped by her/his location to social structure. (Stets and J.Burke, 2000: 224). But more or less the concept of identity has always been used as individual character, while social identity always refers to collective identity, which developed by a group of individuals during the process of socialization.

Theory of social identity has been developed in 1979 by Henri Tajfel and John Turner. Both scholars have described social identity as part of the concept of person concept. An individual does not just have a personal selfhood, but multiple selves and identities associated with their affiliated groups. A person might act differently in varying social contexts according to the groups they belong to which might include a sports team they follow, their family, their country of nationality, and the neighbourhood they live in (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Furthermore, the

individual, by being a part of a social group, always categorizes himself/ herself in various identity groups and evaluates this categorization according to the membership alongside the value which is placed on it (Trepte, 2006: 257). Social identity becomes significant, when member of a social group participates in collective activity and develops a sense of social identity.

Tajfel argued that Social identity is a multi-dimension concept. It is the psychological dynamic that people with unsatisfactory social identity seek to change that state of affairs by restoring positive distinctiveness to their relevant group memberships. Identity refers to such features of people as their race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion or sexuality. 'The importance of identity lies in the fact that it is a performative term, for once an identity is assigned it has social and psychological effects. Thus, in state's security and its decision making process, they have a spill over effects'(Rihmo 2014: 94).

The other dimension is the complex of social and psychological processes that shifted from interpersonal to an intergroup level and the psychological consequence of such shifting is social conflict, social stratification, impassable social barriers between groups and even belief systems. It prescribes that people with an unsatisfactory social identity tend to act and seek solutions at the intergroup level. Social psychologist must be able to characterize relevant features of the social environment in order to understand or predict human interaction (Robinson 1996: 14). The critics of Tajfel's definition of social identity asserted, that he only refluxed the aspect of 'human' as individual more than social. Humans, act far different in social group according the role which they are adopting than as an individual.

National Identity Crisis in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a landlocked country, lies in the heart of Asia, and links three major cultural and geographical regions. In the southeast the Indian subcontinent, form the North Central Asia and the West with Iran. The geostrategic location of Afghanistan attracts the invaders to use Afghanistan as a path way to conquer Iran, Central Asia and India, for example, Cyrus the Great, Alexander the Great, Mahmud of Ghazni, Ching-gis Khan, and Babur, therefore a diverse ethnic group resulted from these conquests continuing living in Afghanistan. Above all it is history, which provides a narrative that demonstrates who we are, where we came from and where we should be going. History always helps us to construct the essence of a group

identity, and it answers that how it is related to other groups. Afghanistan is a complex society in terms of ethnic and religion, the current social structure of Afghanistan is a product of thousands of years of imperial policies, conquests, state building and political decay, of far-reaching spiritual, artistic and social achievements as well as of destruction and chaos (Glatzer 1998: 172). The basis of social identity in Afghanistan is the concept of *qawm*.³ *Qawm* refers to an individual's solidarity group, such as village, tribe, sub tribe, or even ethnic group, it captures broad in-group and out-group distinctions.

Furthermore, ethnicity, religion, and language are the significant sources for social identity for every individual in Afghanistan. Accordingly the individuals obtain their identity from distinct social group to which they belong, and even the ecology has played an important role in categorizing the population in different areas, like mountain areas, valleys and river banks. Afghanistan is geographically and geopolitically divided between several ethnic groups with different languages and religions, therefore the notion of national identity and social identity seems more complex and challenging in the context of Afghanistan.

The modern Afghan national identity developed in the mid-18th century under the rule of Ahmad Shah Durrani, who united all the tribes and formed the last Afghan empire. From 1709, when Hotaki dynasties rose in Afghanistan, Pashtuns were the traditional rulers of Afghanistan and more specifically, when the Durrani Empire was created in 1747. Since nationalism and national identity has been ignored in Afghanistan, as a result, every individual identified themselves as a member of an ethnic group, rather than as a nation or as an 'Afghan'. Additionally for many, even the name of Afghanistan is controversial. It was claimed by other ethnic that Afghanistan has a tribal name, which manifest the existence of only one ethnic, which is Pashtun or Afghan.⁴

Sayed Askar Mousavi considered the nationalism in Afghanistan as a 'Taboo'. He argued that over the decade, most of issues have been discussed in Afghanistan openly, with the exception of one, which is 'Afghan nationalism'. 'Afghan nationalism' refers to the whole array of attitude and belief which lies at the basis of nation, held by the Afghan, of their racial supremacy over and above all other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Crisis of national identity in

³ *Quam* refers to people, who have the same ethnic origin.

⁴ In Afghanistan, the 'other' ethnic groups refers to the name of Afghan to Pashto speaker, who were once dominant in Pakistan and Afghanistan but after partition in (1947) India, the two half Pashtun remind with Pakistan. And it was claimed that Pashtun lost the majority in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is not only cited by Mousavi but also by several scholars, who worked in Afghanistan like Dupree, Barfield and others. 'The Fragmental is the most accurate description of Afghanistan's tribal society, and therefore the root crisis in Afghanistan is a crisis of national 'national' as opposed to 'social' identity; that is to say, that no national identity has as yet been forged' (S. A. Mousavi 1998: 10). The notion of social identity becomes more complicated and obscurant in absence of national identity in Afghanistan. One of the main reasons of group conflict and ethnic conflict was the lack of national identity and national unity among the different ethnic groups, and the conflict of 1992 was basically a kind of demand for political recognition of ethnic minority.

Besides, if we consider national identity as sense of belonging to one state or one nation, it can be a sense of a nation as a cohesive whole, which is represented by distinctive traditions, culture, language and politics. National identity may also refer to the subjective feeling one shares with a group of people about a nation, regardless of one's legal citizenship status. But in Afghanistan, national identity comes under the classification of ethnic and religion identity. People are more loyal to their religion and ethnicity more than to the state or nation, there were several obstacles which filled Afghans to develop a nation. Afghanistan was established by Durrani Empire in 1747, and since that time political power was in the hand of Pashtun and other ethnic groups, and the minority which were known as 'Non-Pashtun' were excluded. Therefore, Afghans never succeeded in developing a nation to represent all the ethnic and minority groups. One of the reason for national identity crisis in Afghanistan is diversity of ethnic and religion, in absence of national identity; ethnicity and religion played an important role in developing social identity for individual and social groups to categorize them in different social group.

Simultaneously, crisis of national identity also created a huge social gap between the ethno-religious groups, which prevents Afghans from being a nation and developing national identity. Accordingly this social gap between different social groups put them in a state of hostility toward each other. In 1992, when the different ethnic groups demanded for political recognition, the civil war breakdown between four dominant groups, Pashtun, Hazara, Tajik, and Azbik , divested the country of its wealth and destroyed the Kabul city.

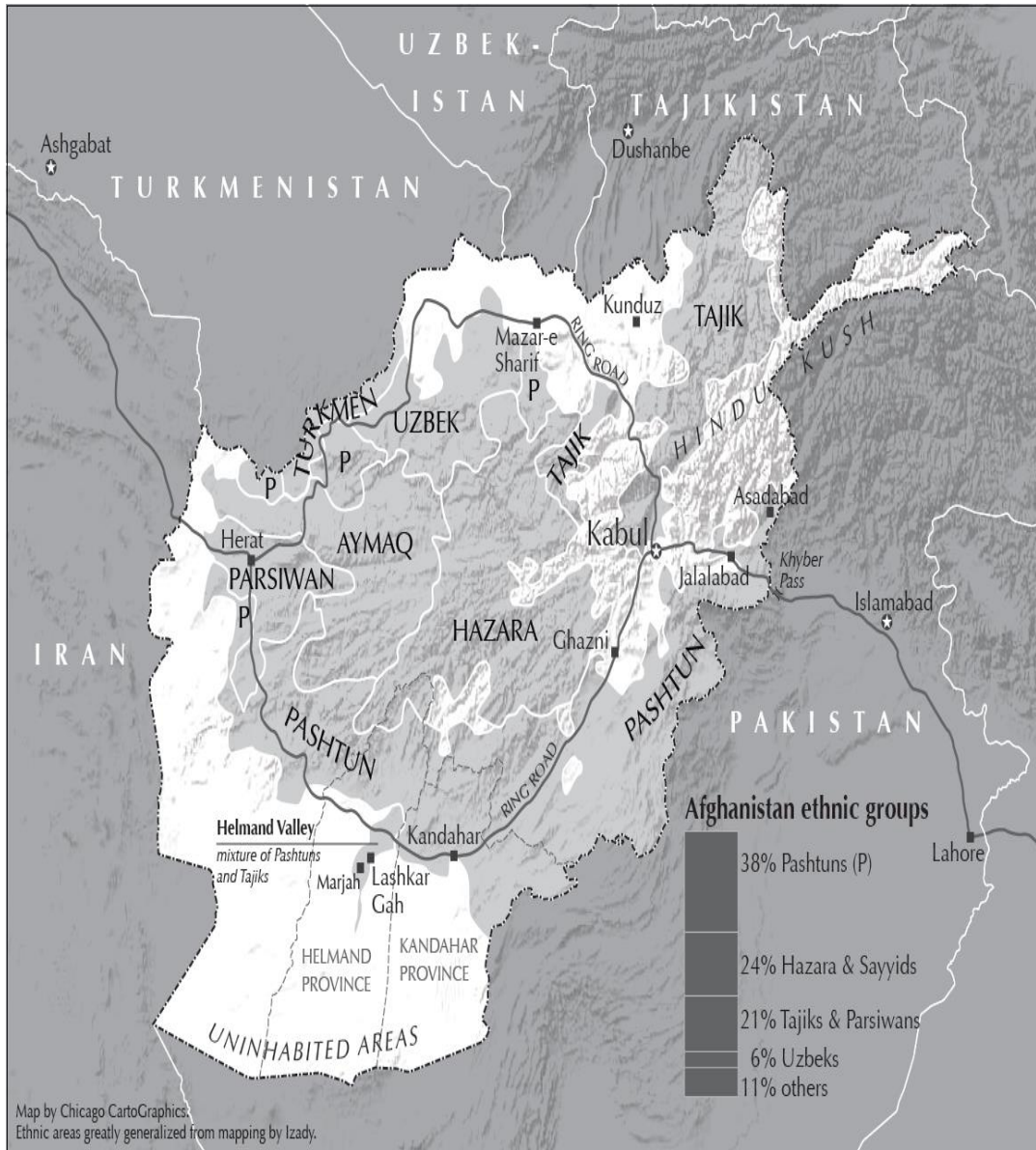


Figure I: Ethnic Distribution in Afghanistan

Source: Chicago Cartographic. URL: <http://imgur.com/WVnkyBO>

Ethno-religious Identity and Ethnic Groups in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic society, which is divided by a wide variety of ethno-linguistic groups. The anthropologists and ethnographers have tried hard to count the ethnic groups and tribe in Afghanistan, but the results are widely different. They conform forty five ethnic groups and tribes in Afghanistan. And they cited that ethnic groups and identities are local category; they are relative, variable and dynamic (Glatzer 1998: 1). The anthropologists, who worked in sectarianism among Hazara ethnic group in Afghanistan, identified several types of social identity in Afghanistan such as (*watan, quam, mazhab and tariq*).⁵ But, they argued that in reality, they never occur as discrete social entities.

Ethnicity has been extensively explored in Afghanistan, by many scholars as the main domain of social or group identity, and it has never been static within fixed boundaries but it has been drawn and redrawn throughout the course of its history. Furthermore, ethnicity in Afghanistan is different thing to different social groups. Every social group uses the identification term 'Quam' to explain complexity of affiliations, a network of families or occupation. In tribal areas '*qaum*' refers to a common genealogy from extended family, or clan, to tribe or tribal confederation. Most simply, *qawm* defines an individual's identity in his social world. Afghanistan as a multi-ethnic society is home for several ethnic groups. The dominant ethnic groups who are living in Afghanistan are; Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Aimak, Turkmen, Baloch, Pashai, Nuristani, Gujjar, Arab, Barhui, Pamiri and some others. Pashtun is the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan and their main territory is often called Pashtunistan. They are located between the Hindu Kush Mountains and Indus River in neighbouring Pakistan. During Durrani Empire in 1747, Pashtuns expanded by forming communities to the north of the 'Hindu Kush' and elsewhere in Afghanistan (Thomas 2003). The Pashtun divided themselves into thousands of tribes along a genealogical charter which is used as a base for unity and solidarity. Due to their explicit and elaborate tribal system and possession of their own language and code of ethnic values and norms (*Pushtunwla*), the ethnic identity for Pushtuns is straightforward

⁵ *Watan*: homeland or territory.

Quam: use for people which from the same ethnic origin.

Mazhab: the religion or systems of believes.

Tariq: the way of practicing religion.

and rarely questioned by themselves or other, although inter-ethnic fluctuation takes place (Glatzer 1998: 3). As Louise Dupree mentioned, that proximately 6.5 million Pashtuns are living in Afghanistan and equal number in Pakistan. The physical features are Mediterranean and their language is Pashtu (Dupree 1997:62).

The second largest ethnic group is Tajik in Afghanistan. They are all Persian speakers. The name of Tajik becomes more familiar during the last decade and the alternative name for Tajik is Farsi (Persian). Like other ethnic groups in Afghanistan, the origin of Tajiks is not known. Majority of Tajik are living in north part of Afghanistan close to the border of Tajikistan. Approximately 3.5 million Tajik are living in Afghanistan, which usually refer to them by the valley or region in which they live (Dupree 1997:60).

The third largest group in Afghanistan is Hazara. They speak a dialect of Persian, which is known as 'Hazaragi'. There are different narratives about the origin of Hazara, the first narrative claims that Hazara have a partial Mongolian origin. It is believed that 'Hazara' are descendants of Genghis Khan's army which invaded Afghanistan during the 12th century. But the first narrative is challenged by other historian scholars, like French scholar, J.P. Ferrier (1857). According to Ferrier, Hazara have inhabited Afghanistan since the time of Alexander the Great (Mousavi 1988: 23). Hazara mostly practice Shia Islam, while most of other Afghans are Sunni. Hazara are resident in central part of Afghanistan which is known as 'Hazarajat'.

The fourth largest ethnic group in Afghanistan is 'Uzbeks', they are the main Turkic people, who are living in Afghanistan. Most likely the Uzbeks migrated with the wave of Turkic invaders and intermingled with local Iranian tribes over time to become the ethnic group they are today. The Uzbek are mainly sedentary, and practice agriculture in North Afghanistan. They have a mix of mongoloid and Mediterranean physical feature (Dupree 1997:62). There are other minority groups also, who are living in Afghanistan, but these four ethnic groups are the most dominant groups in Afghanistan. The ethnic identity becomes much more important, while national identity is still under question in Afghanistan. It is not only the ethnic which plays an important role for constituting social identity in Afghanistan, but also religion and language. The correlation between ethnicity and identity in case of Afghanistan is a historical product, and similarly the same case can be applied with religious identity in Afghanistan as well. Lack of national identity has driven the social group to categorize itself in terms of ethnicity, religion and language. The existing literature suggests that religion is positively correlated with identity formation.

In Afghanistan, religion is seen as an institution which not only maintains the spiritual relation of individual or social group with the God, but also provides social identity for the social group. Therefore the linkage between identity and religion becomes substantial in term of social identity.

Sociologists have applied varied approaches to understand religious phenomena and the methods used in these approaches are as diverse as religion itself, thus it becomes necessary to outline the dimensions within which a researcher is considering the phenomenon of religion. Finding a condensed and universally applicable definition of religion has been a problem that has vexed scholars for generations. Some people consider religion to be eternal truth, divinely ordained laws or values by gods and spirits. The dictionary definition of religion describes it as 'beliefs and practices relative to deities, spirits or other such superhuman forces. (Shafi 2004: 2)

Almost 99% of population of Afghanistan are follows and practice Islam and the remaining one percent are the other religious minority groups like, Sikhs and Hindus. In 7th century, the Arabs chose to enter Iran and thereafter into Herat, which is known today as part of Afghanistan. Islam is also divided in two major sects like Christianity. This division is more about disputes over the political succession, rather than religious differences. The problem of succession to the leadership of the Muslim community arose after the death of Prophet Mohammad. One group thought the leader (Khalifa, or Caliph) should be elected form the Qurish tribe of the prophet; another thought Ali should succeed his father-in-law (Dupree, 1997:63). Further, Religion always plays an important role in framing social identity, not only in Afghanistan but in every society.

The issue of religious identity in Afghanistan is huge topic by itself, which is beyond the scope of this work. But one thing should always be remembered that hostility between two sects of Islam, Shia and Sunni is a considerable fact in Afghanistan. Even, the collations between different group from two distinct sects of Islam, 'Shia' and 'Sunni', is always fragile and during 1992, even the leaders of different militant groups in Kabul gave the judicial decree 'Jihad'⁶

6 The Arabic word 'jihad' is often translated as 'holy war,' but in a purely linguistic sense, the word 'jihad' means war against the enemy of Islam, include all non-believer of Islam.

against each other. As a result a millions of people have been killed, because of their religious identity, by being a ‘Sunni’ or ‘Shia’.

Theorizing conflict

In social psychology, conflict is often defined as some sort of incompatibility of goal, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, but nature of conflict can be widely diverse. Different schools of thought in social science have their own interpretation of social conflict. But the early idea of social conflict of can be traced back to the work of Karl Marx (1818–1883). He is considered as the founding father of social conflict theory, which is based on a dialectical materialist account of history, Marxism posited that capitalism, like previous socioeconomic systems, would inevitably produce internal tensions leading to its own destruction. For Marx the base of social conflict was economy, and the conflict always takes place between the dominant class who controls the resources and the workers who demand for equal right. Marx argued that individuals and social groups within society interact on the basis of conflict rather than consensus. Through various forms of conflict, groups will tend to attain differing amounts of material and non-material resources. More powerful groups will tend to use their power in order to retain power and exploit groups with less power and basically Marx addressed economy as the source of conflict for survival among human species.

Power and violence, in a strictly political sense, has been usually related to control and conflict over resources, whether material or symbolic. Anthropologists and sociologists have regarded the use of violence as the specific characteristic that distinguishes political structures from other kinds of social organization. (De 2004: 24)

The human history is replete with conflict. It begins with slavery, conquest, exploitation, war, mass murder, genocide, and it is followed by ethnic war, religious war, and other types of violence and conflict which is universal among social groups. ‘Conflict in different hues has been a recurrent feature of the human society. These sometime escalate and become violent. Violent conflict amongst inflicts deep wounds and scares on the society that endorse it’⁷. Social group the Perspectives in social science emphasized, that social, political, or material

⁷. Moosa, Jamal.(2012). ‘Protracted conflicts and Rehabilitation: A study of child soldiers in lusophone Africa’. *Insight on Africa*.vol.4:19.

inequality led the social group to conflict. The Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT) described how intergroup hostility can arise as a result of conflicting goals and competition over the control of resources, Realistic conflict theory also offered an explanation for the feelings of prejudice and discrimination towards the out-group. Groups may be in competition for a real or perceived scarcity of resources such as money, political power, military protection, or social status.

In Sociology, conflict theory was understood in terms of social equality under the paradigm of racism, exclusion, ideological conservatism and other social group behaviour. 'Conflict theories, by contrast, are concerned with the links between racism and prejudice on the one hand and relationship of power on the other' (Giddens, 2006: 492). From both perspectives Sociology and Social Psychology, conflict has a linkage with power, racism, as well as prejudice. While considering the concept of prejudice and racism as impetus of social conflict, it requires elevating the efficacy of social identity in relation to the conflict and especially in relation with the intergroup conflict. Because social identity always provides sense of belongingness and loyalty to the group, and the idea of racism, prejudice, discrimination always developed towards the out groups, who are different from us. Therefore the scientific analysis always asserts in the role of self and identity in intergroup conflict, but it has been largely isolated from each other and the scientific analysis of conflict has blossomed only in very recent years.

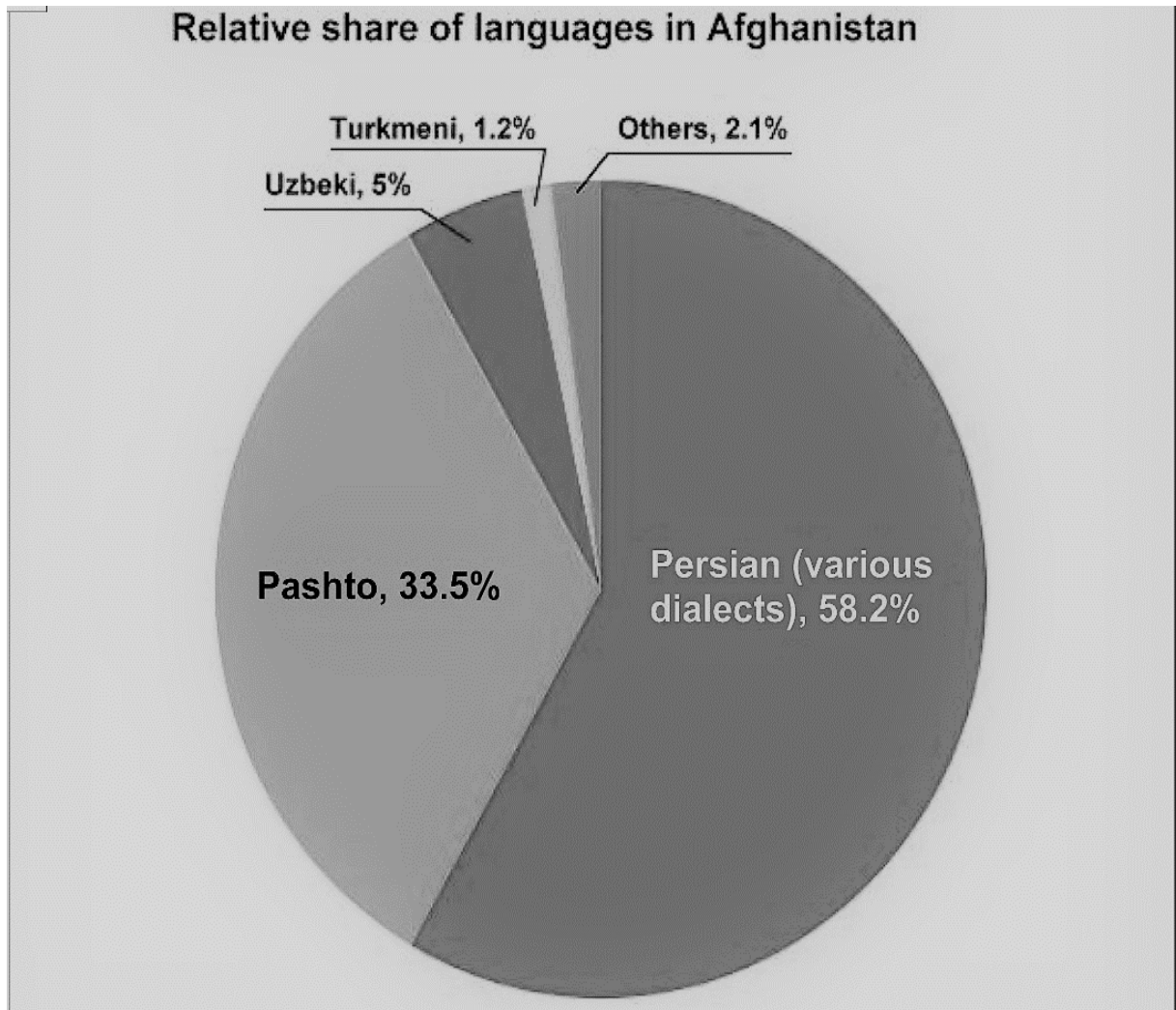


Figure II: Language Distribution in Afghanistan

Source: Dr. Michael Izady URL: http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Afghanistan_Ethnic_summary_sm.png

The Intergroup Relation and Social Comparison

The studies of different social group by scholars were intended to recognize the in-group favouritism and out-group prejudice, or another word in-group love and out-group hate.

To have a proper understanding of the grouping system, one has to observe carefully and recognise what it is that the individual gives priority as well as loyalty. This grouping system is a ubiquitous characteristic of a society and a mechanism for its smooth functioning. Thus, this grouping could be organised around kinship, which not only consider agnatic groups but also affixes. (Piang 2004:5)

The implicit assumption was that as much as we know about an individual's attachment to in-groups, the more we will understand the out group hatred, that mostly causes conflict and violence among social groups. The basic assumption is that the formation of in-groups and out-group identification arises independently of attitudes toward out-groups. Attachment to in-group is presumed here to be the primary process, fundamental to individual survival and well-being. It is not that only social identity contributed to slavery and discrimination, but it also contributes to inter-group conflict. 'Social identities create and exacerbate intergroup conflicts' (D. Ashmor 2001: 4). 'The authoritarian personality theory posited that a severe childhood upbringing could result in a rigid, authoritarian adult who is prejudiced against anyone who is different from the self' (Wolfe 1996).

Sociologists and social psychologists have argued that individual as a part of a social group has always developed certain social behaviors which are also symbolic and conveyed meaning. Thus, as the behaviour initiated by the agent identities occur and proceed during interaction. To the extent that these meanings are shared, such flow of symbols and meaning serves to validate and reinforce existing symbols and names in the situation.⁸ Certainly, that individual identity is always influenced by the social group, and it is during social interaction that an individual develops his or her personality. Therefore the intergroup relation and behaviour becomes significant in case of studying social identity and intergroup conflict.

⁸ Sherif, Muzafer, et al. (1954/ 1961). *Intergroup conflict and cooperation: The Robbers Cave Experiment* of Oklahoma Institute of Group Relations.

One of the arguments about in-group behaviour is the social comparison, where we compare our group with other social groups. Research reveals that members of social group always develop certain behaviour accordingly with comparison to the other groups. And significantly the outcome of social comparison largely determines our social identity and self-esteem. Social identity theory assumes that we are not only categorizing ourselves and others, but also we evaluate the groups. To get an idea of the superiority or inferiority of our group and how reasonable and adequate our belonging to it is, we compare it with other groups, their characteristics, members and benefits. The psychologists argued that the child is 'rewarded' by virtue of his or her memberships, and that this reward creates the loyalty. That is to say, his family feeds and cares for him; he obtains pleasure from the gifts and attentions received from neighbors and compatriots. Hence he learns to love them. His loyalties are acquired on the basis of such rewards. We may doubt that this explanation is sufficient. A coloured child is seldom or never rewarded for being a Negro-usually just the opposite (Allport 1995: 29). Furthermore, the evidence shows that humans are always developing a complex social behaviour toward in-group and out-group and this social behaviour dependent in social situation.

One of the reasons for in-group attachment and out-group antagonism was implicit in the case of 'ethnocentrism'. The term was introduced by Sumner. Ethnocentrism was described by Sumner as a universal characteristics of human social groups. Sumner defined ethnocentrism syndrome as a features or a characteristic which includes negative attitudes toward out groups as well as positive feelings and evaluations of the in-group. Further, an explicit negative correlation between in-group and out-group is postulated; the greater the attachment and solidarity within the in-group, the greater the hostility and contempt directed toward out groups. (D. Ashmor 2001: 18). This hypothesis, which derived from Sumner's functional theory of the origins of social groups and intergroup conflict, perfectly help us to analyse the hate and love relationship of in-group and out-group in Afghanistan. The ethnic conflict of 1992 proved that the social group in Afghanistan well developed the ethnocentric syndrome what Sumner call. One of the reasons for projecting negative attitudes toward out-group in Afghanistan is the question of survival and coherence between group members. Accordingly, it is followed by propaganda and exaggeration about other social group, who have different ethnicity, religion, and language. Therefore, identity politics change in to a remarkable tool in the hands of political leaders to achieve for their own aims and political purpose.

Social Identity and Intergroup conflict

Social identity, as a collective identity of social groups, always plays an important role for studying intergroup conflict, different. Every discipline tried to understand the relation of intergroup conflict and social identity. Additionally, social psychology addresses the conflict, implicitly or explicitly. This school of thought intended to understand theories and approaches to intergroup relation. The goal of such research is typically to provide broadly applicable general explanations of phenomena such as bias, prejudice, and discrimination. Such psychological theories customarily provide individual level explanation for conflict and the method of choice is, in general, laboratory experimentation. The starting point for many such perspectives is accumulating experimental evidences in order to address the issues of stereotyping, discrimination and prejudice. Accordingly, social psychologists have started with an approach to make a bridge between social act and individual behavior, or, in other words, the social psychologist tried to bridge the gaps between psychology and sociology.

On other hand Anthropology, Political Science, and Sociology, worked in the discipline which is focused on understanding the history, sources, and nature of particular intergroup conflict. The general principles are sought; however, the starting point is usually real-world conflicts between nations, ethnic groups, or religious groups. There is often more emphasis on organizational, institutional, and socio culture level of explanation (D. Ashmor 2001: 7). The intergroup conflict among the different identity groups in one society or a country also can be traced back to the history and even social groups are classified in the base of historical evidence, besides even the ethnic is the outcome of history. While a minority group becomes oppressed by other dominant group, correspondingly, the demand for identity is conceived as essential part of their survival.

Identity is the primary issue in most of racial and ethnic conflicts, while it also plays an important role in the issue of gender and family conflicts, when men and women disagree on the proper role or 'place' of the each other, or children disagree with their parents about who is in control of their lives and how they present themselves to the outside world. Identity conflicts can be especially difficult to resolve, the opponent is often viewed as evil, even nonhuman, and the victim feels that his/her views and feelings are not worthy of attention. In addition, sitting down with the opponent can be seen as a threat to one's own identity, so even beginning efforts at reconciliation can be extremely difficult. Nevertheless, identity conflicts

can be moderated, or even reconciled if the parties want such an outcome and are willing to work for it over a long period of time.

The discourse of identity and social identity is in fact about the individual in relation to the social. Therefore, whatever is conceived as social identity, is the reflection of collective self. In other words it is the individual's perception and implication in collective social characteristics which creates social identity. But it is advisable to be conscious about those determinants, which influenced the social identity or individual identity, like ethnic, religion, language, colour, class, caste. According to social identity theory, our interpersonal relationships, particularly in the context of the groups in which we participate, are central to the project of achieving a secure and positively valued sense of a self. Individuals seek a secure sense of self by striving to achieve or to maintain positive social identity (Tajfel and Turner 1986:16). Every individual as a member of the social group has the tendency to preserve positive social identity, but this tendency also leads them to develop antagonistic attitudes toward the out group. Most of the scholars acknowledged, that scarcities of resources lead to social group conflict but some scholars like Turner (1975) argued that the scarce resources have no value outside of the context of the competition itself. This is the case of groups competing to win a contest, to achieve higher rank, status, or prestige, which Turner named 'social competition'. He added the conflict for the scarce resources rank, status, prestige, or winning a contest is realistic, when it is institutionalized and whenever it is explicitly defined as a contest or determined as such by the norms of the social situation (H.Tajfel 1982:9).

The inter-group conflict is the outcome of multiple social facts which directly depends on the social situation and the in-group and out-group relations. For instance demand for political recognition is a kind of demand for equal social and political status which includes demand for equal rights to use material resource and territory as well. Admittedly, it is an undeniable fact that scarcity of resources has a huge impact in creating inter-group conflict, but at the same time we should not escape the fact that ethnocentric idea of a social group, as positive social identity also contributes to the intergroup conflict. The comparison of individual as a member of social group is another motive which drives the social group towards intergroup conflict. The process of intergroup comparison produces a competitive dynamic in which groups attempt to enhance their identities relative to other groups. And it is also an attempt to achieve a comparatively superior position for the in-group, on the basis of valued dimensions, and the key factor leading to discriminatory intergroup behavior (Seul 1999:557).

The theories of social psychologists help us to have a better understanding of intergroup relation and intergroup conflict, but on other hand, we have other important determinants for understanding social identity, which always play a significant role in creating hostility among the social group. For instance religion, ethnicity, language, race, colour, class, caste are those factors which contribute to social identity among the social group, and boosts the violence and conflict among social groups. For instance, intergroup conflict in 'Afghanistan' and 'Bosnia' are the two good example of inter-group conflict, and it gives a clear picture as to how hugely the ethnic identity and religious identity contributes to intergroup conflict and conflict as an aspect of social identity. Not all expressions of religious identity inevitably lead to religious traditions. There are trajectories that encourage adherents to resist violent forms of conflict. Buddhism and Hinduism each contain teachings about nonviolence. In fact, these traditions of nonviolence tend to promote tolerance of other religious perceptive. However, religion is a source of identification for individual and social group, religion creates an identity dynamic which produces escalation of intergroup conflict (Seul 1999: 564). It is important to note that every intergroup conflict occurs whether or not taking place without stimulus, whether it is social or material. Therefore it is possible that in different social contexts, different motives came together to cause the conflict or intergroup conflict.

In contemporary times we have various interpretations of social conflict which hugely influence our understanding. Racism and prejudice have a huge influence in creating intergroup conflict and hostility among various social groups. It is observed that by being a member of a social group, consciously and unconsciously human beings develop prejudice and stereotyping against the out-group. As early as five years of age a child is capable of understanding that he/ she is a member of various groups. He is capable of ethnic identification when he is nine or ten but he will not be able to understand what his membership signifies, and he does not wait for this understanding before he develops fierce in-group loyalties (Allport 1995:29). Therefore, even prejudice is considered as social behaviour which an individual develops during socialization, from interaction with other group mates in certain social interactions. Therefore, by understanding social identity and intergroup relations, scholars came closer to comprehend the reason and cause of intergroup conflict.

Conclusion

A country like Afghanistan, which never succeeds in developing the sense of national identity, the inter-group conflict between the different identity groups seems inevitable. While national identity falls apart, it means a nation is falling apart and as consequence, distinct minor ethnic groups will arise to claim for political recognition and equal social right. In such a safer situation identity politics is found to be more important for ethnic groups for survival and controlling of more resources. Accordingly in such situations, social identity plays a significant role to bring in group cohesion and out group hatred. With the communist government's collapse in 1992 by Mujahedeen, different military groups form different ethnic groups, who were fighting against USSR, entered Kabul city to share political power and make the coalition government. But unfortunately, their ethno-religious segregation and discrimination turned these ethno-religious groups toward each other and never let them establish a stable government. And as a consequence ethnic conflict occurred, which divested the country and caused hundreds of casualties.

Sociology and Social Psychology in the history of social science have developed a flexible method for understanding social identity, intergroup conflict and intergroup relation, which helps us to develop a superior understanding of intergroup conflict, therefore Afghanistan intergroup conflict can be usefully analysed by the method.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF INTER-GROUP CONFLICTS IN AFGHANISTAN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE CONFLICT OF 1992-1996

Introduction:

The first chapter attempted to provide a theoretical framework about identity and intergroup conflicts with special reference to the ethnic conflict which took place in Afghanistan during 1992-1996. In social science, different approaches have been dealt with social identity and intergroup conflicts in the last century. A novel idea brought by Marx, one of the renowned scholars of his own time, who emphasized that the nature of conflict among human 'species' is the urge to control economic resources for survival (Marx 1885). Subsequently, conflicts arose among them leading to the struggle between the oppressors and oppressed. But on other hand, sociology and social psychology emerged with more comparable theories which give us the possibility to come with better analytical ability to comprehend the subject under study. Specifically, in examining the subject of social identity and intergroup conflicts, Sociologists and Social Psychologists who are studying social groups reached a common thesis that social groups always differentiate itself from the 'other' who are different. During such an interaction certain social behaviour developed which forged the social identity.

Social identity is not always positive for out-group; it can end up with racism, and provide an individual with pride and intimacy with the in-group and animosity and hatred for the out-group. Such a share of their own divinity exists in individuals and is reflected in the society. Furthermore, the discrimination, oppression, and prejudice are the products of social interaction, for in an interaction with an outsider who is different from us we tend to project our identity. Hence, conflict over identity is very common in human history. It is understandable that when the individual feels their sense of 'self' being threatened, both their existence legitimacy, and when respect has been denied, then conflict and violence will arise.

This chapter attempts to revive a clear picture of conflict which took place in Afghanistan (1992-1996), not only as second-hand narrator but also through the lens of a person who was a witness to the incident. When Russia stopped supporting Najibullah Government in 1992, those Jihadi leaders who were heroes for Afghans and fought during the Russian occupation

now turned to Warlords, fighting with each other for political power.⁹ None of them have a good Human Rights records with all of them having violated human rights and committed a different kind of war crimes against the people. Human Rights sources reported that Mujahedeen forces committed various kinds of abuses. They executed Soviet prisoners often in brutal ways. They executed captured Afghan military officers or others judged to be ‘communists’ after trial for the Islamic crime of apostasy. Some Mujahedeen groups and commanders engaged in assassinations and other forms of extra-judicial killing in Afghanistan and Pakistan to eliminate factional rivals or political opponents. Elements of the Mujahedeen began to rocket Kabul and other cities and engage in acts of terrorism, such as setting off car bombs. During offensives against government controlled areas, some Mujahedeen and their Arab allies from the group that came to be known as al-Qaida committed serious abuses, including summary executions of suspected ‘communists’ and rape.¹⁰

As the social structure of Afghanistan is fragile, it is based on ethnic divisions, and every act ends up with aggression to victims, and intimacy within in-group. Hence these Warlords still have their own ethnic groups or those groups which still favours them, and most of them are still in power. Therefore, touching such a topic is quite susceptible, for instance, a warlord from Tajik, Pashtun or Hazara ethnic groups is a Hero in their own community but an enemy and a criminal for other ethnic groups. Such antagonism led the different ethnic groups to conflicts. Perhaps the mainspring of conflict of 1992 in Afghanistan was ethno-religious division in one hand and monopolization of political power by one ethnic group on the other hand. The diversities in culture, ethnicity, language, religion make Afghanistan a unique case among the Middle Eastern countries which at the same time apparently happens to be the reason for intergroup conflicts. Anthropologists and historians who have worked in Afghanistan, agreed on one point that Afghanistan was a focal point between South Asia, Middle East, and Central Asia for a long time. Therefore, such a diverse culture was assembled in this area. And such diverse society emerged here, in other words, Afghanistan’s diversity is a historical product of gradual change over time.

Afghanistan, as a part of South Asia, has always played an important role in ancient civilizations of Indus Valley Civilization (IVC), which was a Bronze Age civilization (3300–

⁹ TRT World (2017). Afghanistan Explained: The War that Never Ends. [Online: Web] Accessed on 20 March, 2017. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyp7a_RI-oU&t=15s

¹⁰ <http://www.flagrancy.net/salvage/UNMappingReportAfghanistan>

1300 BCE; mature period 2600–1600 BCE time. ¹¹ And even Excavations of prehistoric sites by Louis Dupree and others suggest that humans were living in the area, what has now known as Afghanistan at least 50,000 years ago, and that formed communities in the area were among the earliest in the world. An important site of early historical activities, many believe that Afghanistan compares to Egypt in terms of the historical value of its archaeological sites. ¹² The country sits at a unique nexus point where numerous civilizations have interacted and have often fought. It has been home to various people through the ages, among them the ancient Iranian people who established the dominant role of Indo-Iranian languages in the region. At multiple points, the land has been incorporated within large regional empires, among them the ‘Achaemenid Empire’, the Macedonian Empire, the Indian ‘Maurya Empire’, and the Islamic Empire.

Afghanistan was a graveyard of various empires, thus the ethnic diversity of Afghanistan is considered as a historical product. And during the conquest by various empires different ethnic groups and race inhabited in Afghanistan which resulted in such diverse society as it is known now as in Afghanistan. In such diverse society which has multiple ethnic groups, the concept of nation and nationalism is very complicated and obscure in political terminology. Therefore, even in the long run, Afghans have never succeeded in establishing a nation. Each individual in Afghanistan is obtaining their identity from their own tribe or Qaum rather than the nation.

It is true that, behind their ideological and political commitment, most Afghans remain loyal to their grassroots identity groups. Any leader is suspected of promoting the interests of his own group, even if he is the most committed political worker. These horizontal connections have always been at work, even during the worst period of revolution and war. This traditional segmentation also entails a specific pattern of exercising leadership.
(Gutman 1989: 72)

¹¹ The Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) was a Bronze Age civilization (3300–1300 BCE; mature period 2600–1600 BCE) mainly in the north-western regions of South Asia, extending from what today is northeast Afghanistan to Pakistan and northwest India. Along with ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, it was one of three early civilizations of the Old World, and of the three, the most widespread

¹² Baker, Aryn / Ai Khanoum (2009). Afghanistan: A Treasure Trove for Archaeologists. [Online: Web] Accessed 17 June, 2017. URL:http://www.orientalthane.com/history/news_2009_10_14_B.htm

The traditional leaders from distinct ethnic groups have always used propaganda as a political tool against the other ethnic group, which increased the social cleavages between ethnic groups and complicated the process of nation-building in Afghanistan. Therefore, the Afghans have never succeeded to establish strong relations with each other to build a foundation for nationalism.

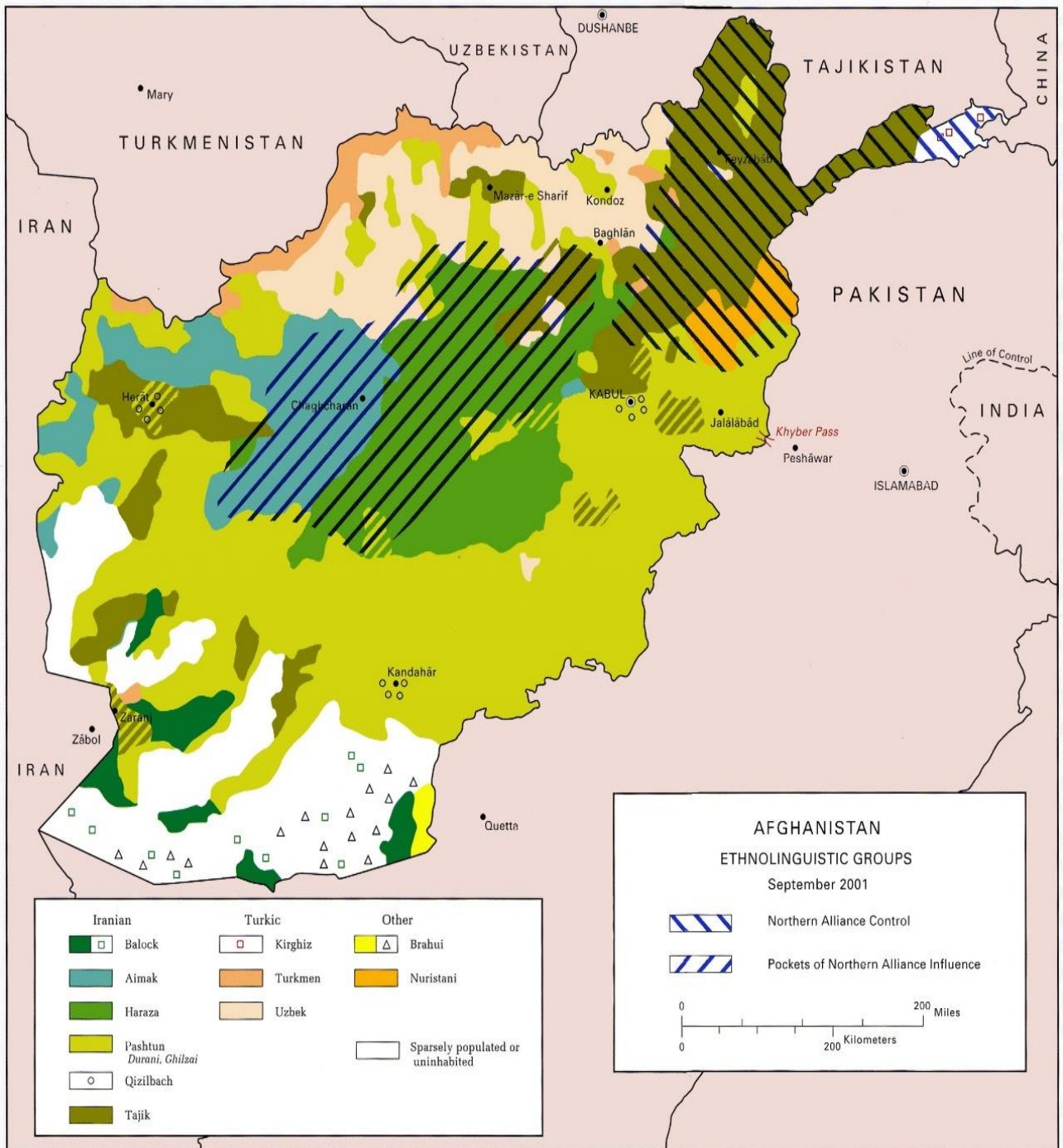


Figure III: Ethnolinguistic Groups in Afghanistan (2001)

Source: US Army Ethno linguistic map of Afghanistan.

URL: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bb/US_Army_ethnolinguistic_map_of_Afghanistan_-_circa_2001-09.jpg

The Failed Process of Nation-building in Afghanistan

Ernest Gellner, a distinguished scholar who worked on 'nation' and 'nationalism', believes fundamental historical change as a transformation from one kind of organization and culture to another, rather than is a process of gradual evolution. He writes

Nationalism as theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundary within a given state a contingency already formally excluded by the principle in its general formulation should not separate the power holders from the rest. (Gellner 2006: 2)

Ernest Gellner's works is more focused on 'ethnic' and 'ethnic boundary'; According to him, the 'ethnic' and 'ethnic boundary' has a significant role in the process of nation-building and nationalism. But, in the case of Afghanistan, the concept of ethnic and ethnicity differs from group to group. Groups such as the Tajiks, Pashtuns, Hazaras, Aymaqs, Uzbeks, Baluchis, Tasmania, Pasha, and Nuristanis do not designate symmetrical entities. A Pashtun is not only a Pashtu speaker but someone with a tribal identity. 'Tajik' has a more restricted meaning than 'Sunni Persian speakers', because not all Persian speakers refer to themselves as Tajik. 'Hazara' bears more of a religious signification (to be a Shia) than an ethnic one. It was quite impossible, before the war, to define the ethnic groups as homogeneous and symmetrical entities which could be conceived in political terms (Gutman 1989: 72).

Therefore, in such a fragmented society, like Afghanistan, the vision of a nation or nationalism always seems challenging and obscure. On the other hand 'ethnic boundaries' is considered as a substantial factor in the process of nation building. The ethnic boundary among ethnic groups in Afghanistan is detached, the geographical boundary is cross cut by distinct identity groups, for instance, in the north of the country, which is mostly dominated by Tajiks while the south is more Pashtun-populated, and the central part is dominant by Hazara which is known as 'Hazarjet'. Hence, in Afghanistan, ethnic, language, religion and boundaries have become more essential and an indispensable part of social life for survival and getting the better opportunity. Apparently, nationalism has always been fielded in Afghanistan and social cleavage among various ethnic groups getting wider day by day. Accordingly, the idea of a nation has been hijacked by various ethnocentric social groups and as a result, each individual has become more loyal to their own ethnic groups rather than a nation as an Afghan. Every

Afghan, at every level, blurts their ethnical identity, and even all those political parties which exist in Afghanistan is based on ethnic and *Qaum*. Even such ethnic binary was evident among the ‘Mujahiden’ who were fighting against USSR, leaving a vacuum of power which exacerbated ethnic wars (1992-1996).

Accordingly, the term ‘ethnic war’ for conflicts that happened during 1992-1996 is more suitable than ‘civil war’ as each militant group who was involved in fighting belonged to specific ethnoreligious groups and was fighting against particular ethnic groups. Even behind their political demands, *Quam* motives exist, so it is not surprising that till today such disintegration and discrimination exists. The report by the International Crisis group which was released in April of 2017 based on the interview with Afghan’s National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) personnel, members of parliament, political party leaders, civil society activists, journalists, business leaders and Western diplomats and security officials approved that ethnic minority were still discriminated against based on their ethnicity.

Even where the agreement is being implemented, notably on appointments to senior civil and military posts, both sides are sticking the government and security agencies with allies, mainly on ethnic grounds, with Ghani favoring fellow Pashtuns and Abdullah fellow Tajiks. The resulting perception of discrimination within excluded communities, particularly Hazaras and Uzbeks, exacerbated by the lack of consultation, including on development programs, is contributing to a widening ethnic and regional divide. (International Crisis Group 2017)

In fact, at every level, there is a sense of solidarity against outsiders, but also a rivalry with symmetrical groups- a fact which plays a major role in local politics. (Gutman 1989: 72). Therefore in Afghanistan, each person is loyal to their ‘ethnic’ and *Qaum*, and ethnic is of one the most important characteristic of social identity and as well as politics. Overall, in Afghanistan, ethnic groups have overlapping cultural traits. These may include language, religion, moral values, customs and ceremonies, economics and livelihood. Another way to look at diversity in a country is to look at the languages the people speak. Languages may cross ethnic boundaries, for example in Afghanistan, Dari is a common language to many of the different ethnic groups in the country. It crosses the ethnic and cultural boundaries of these different groups.¹³ Everyone, at least in the countryside belongs to a *Quam*, but not necessarily

¹³ Barracks M (2003) ‘*Afghanistan: an introduction to the country and people*’. Afghan Digital Libraries. p.10

to a tribe, tribes are to be found only in the south. Everyone has an ethnic identity, but ethnicity does not have the same meaning for the different groups (Gutman 1989: 71). In such a diverse society the dream of being a nation will remain only an idea.

The Fall and Rise of State in Afghanistan

The first attempt of state building was by Abdur Rahman Khan in 1880 from a Pashtun ethnic group, who consolidated the other ethnic minorities under the supremacy of one ethnic group, which was Pashtun, and other ethnic groups were outcaste. Abdur Rahman Khan Government was dominated by Pashtuns and this custom continued since the last monarch. Abdur Rahman Khan's rule was brutal and absolute based primarily on coercion and backed by an elaborate spy network, which earned him the title of 'Iron Amir'. And similarly, his reforms were largely *ad hoc*, confined mainly to Kabul, and did not constitute a countrywide program for change and development. His foreign policy efforts could not counter the Anglo-Russian rivalry, in particular, the creeping British advances, sufficiently to enable him to achieve full sovereignty for Afghanistan in its domestic and foreign affairs (Saikal 2004: 38).

In early 20th century, Abdur Rahman Khan attempted to establish a modern state in Afghanistan by using coercion and military force to unite all ethnic groups under a central government which had the base in Kabul. Meanwhile, the domination of political power by one ethnic group has accelerated the hostility between Pashtuns and other ethnic groups. Perhaps, the later intergroup conflict of 1992 in Kabul was the result of such fragmentation and disintegration of the non-Pashtun group from political power. Non-Pashtun ethnic groups are still disturbed by their historical memory, they always remembered that they were treated as a second class citizen in Afghanistan. Therefore, other ethnic groups especially the Persian speakers have always dreamed about changing the political leadership in order to balance the political power in Afghanistan. The claim made by other ethnic groups is that they were not treated as an equal citizen and even their identities were subsumed under the shadow of the dominant group. But the Pashtun pretends that they are the only indigenous people of Afghanistan, but there is no such census report and historical texts to prove the claim.

The Afghan monarchy has managed to survive up to 1970, until Mohammad Daoud Khan¹⁴ overthrew monarchy of his first cousin Mohammad Zahir Shah and declared himself as the first President of Afghanistan. Daoud Khan's government was considered as an authoritarian government. He was the president of Afghanistan from 1973 until his assassination in 1978 as a result of the Saur Revolution. Saur revolution was led by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The PDPA was a socialist party, established on first January 1965. With the help of PDPA Mohammed Daoud Khan, seized power from his cousin Zahir Shah and established the Republic of Afghanistan. But eventually, Daoud Khan turned to a strong opponent of the socialist and communist party of Afghanistan. He had started dismissing PDPA politicians from high-ranking jobs in the government. This led to uneasy relations with the Soviet Union. In 1978, the PDPA with the help of the Afghan National Army seized power from Daoud Khan in what is known as the Saur Revolution.

The PDPA in 1978 successfully ousted Daoud Khan from power by a military coup and established a new government under the leadership of Nur Muhammad Taraki.¹⁵ Prior to the arrival of Soviet troops, the PDPA took power after a 1978 coup, installing Nur Muhammad Taraki as the President. The party initiated a series of radical modernization reforms throughout the country which were deeply unpopular particularly among the more traditional rural population and the established traditional power structures. The government vigorously suppressed any opposition and arrested thousands, executing as many as 27,000 political prisoners. Anti-government armed groups were formed, and by April 1979 large parts of the country were in open rebellion. Later on the uprisings, along with internal fighting and coups within the government, the People's party leader were also not trusting each other which led the Soviets to invade the country on the night of December 24, 1979, sending in some 30,000

¹⁴ Sardar Mohammed Daoud Khan or Daud Khan (July 18, 1909 – April 28, 1978) was the Prime Minister of Afghanistan from 1953 to 1963, and later became the first President of Afghanistan. He overthrew the Musahiban monarchy of his first cousin Mohammed Zahir Shah and declared himself as the first President of Afghanistan from 1973 until his assassination in 1978 he governed of Afghanistan.

¹⁵ Nur Muhammad Taraki (15 July 1917 – 14 September 1979) was an Afghan politician and statesman during the Cold War. Taraki educated at Kabul University, after which he started his political career as a journalist. But later he became one of the founding members of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and was elected as the party's general secretary at its first congress.

troops and toppling the short-lived Presidency of People's leader Hafizullah Amin. The Soviet–Afghan War lasted over nine years from December 1979 to February 1989. Insurgent groups known as the Mujahedin fought against the Soviet Army and as well as with the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan military during the Russia's invasion and even after the withdrawal of Russian troops. Almost two million civilians were killed and millions of Afghans left the country to take refuge in Pakistan and Iran. This war can be considered as a part of Cold War.

Mujahedeen (1987-1989)

Different military groups from different ethnic groups, who have fought against USSR troops in Afghanistan, have entered Kabul for sharing political power and making coalition government in 1992, but unfortunately, the coalition among them did not last long and civil war broke out in Afghanistan which devastated the country. The Afghan Mujahedeen or Afghan insurgents began to receive massive amounts of aid and military training in neighboring countries of Pakistan and China, paid for primarily by the United States and Arab monarchies in the Persian Gulf.¹⁶ Throughout the 1980s the US, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and China armed and trained Afghan Sunni resistance groups, while Iran did likewise with Shia ones. The Pakistani intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) was reported to be the major foreign operational organization on the ground with the Afghan resistance. It was primarily responsible for delivering the weapons purchased from China and Egypt with funds reportedly provided by the US and Saudi Arabia and transported to Pakistan by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). After 1985 the US reportedly delivered aid 'unilaterally' to certain commanders, such as Ahmad Shah Massoud, Abdul Haq, Jalaluddin Haqqani, and Amin Wardak.

The Mujahedeen were recruiting fighters from tribal areas, and as well as from refugee camps in Pakistan for doing Jihad against Russia in Afghanistan which is considered a Holy War in Islam. It has been emphasized that

As long as the Mujahedeen were fighting Soviet troops, the Afghan war was considered a jihad, a holy war against invaders and infidels. An East-West

¹⁶ "interview with Dr Zbigniew Brezezinski" (13/6/97) [Online: Web] Accessed on 20 March, 2017.

URL: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/Soviet-Afghan-war>.

dimension was added when the Reagan administration decided to apply the 'roll-back' policy to Afghanistan, even if the Mujahedin's did not wait for US support to start their struggle against the communists and the USSR .
(Gutman 1989: 71)

During the Soviet invasion, hundreds of Afghans flee the country and seek refuge in Pakistan. A number of them became the fountainhead of Jihad against the Soviet Union. A large number of young Afghan men from refugee camps joined thousands of volunteers from across the Muslim world, especially Arab countries to fight back against USSR troops. There were different military groups from the distinct ethnic background, which emerged under different names during the Russian invasion. Perhaps one of the most persistent and often most effective militant groups, however, was under the command of Ahmad Shah Massoud.¹⁷ Massoud came from an ethnic Tajik, Sunni Muslim background in the Panjshir valley of northern Afghanistan, who instead fought the Soviets from a redoubt in the Panjanshīr River valley 'commonly known as Panjshēr valley', Northeast of Kabul. Massoud was among those commanders affiliated with the Islamic Society, one of the most influential Mujahedeengroups, headed by an Alzhar-trained scholar, Burhanuddin Rabbani.¹⁸

Among other Peshawar-based parties were Abd al-Rasul Sayyaf's militant Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan under the name of *Ettihād-e Eslāmī Barā-ye Āzād-e Afghānistān* or *Etihad*, which derived its support largely from foreign Islamic groups, and three other parties headed by the same traditional religious leaders, including the most pragmatic of the Mujahedeenparties, the National Islamic Front *Mahāz-e Mellī-ye Eslāmī*, led by Ahmad Gailani. The other party, perhaps the most rigid group from Pashtun ethnic group, who received material support from Pakistan ISI was *Hezb-e Eslāmī*; loyal to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Separate from the Peshawar front of Sunnite parties was an ethnic Shia resistance

¹⁷ Ahmad Shah Massoud, was an Afghan political and military leader. He was a powerful military commander during the resistance against the Soviet occupation between 1979 and 1989 and in the following years of civil war.

¹⁸ Burhanuddin Rabbani, was one of the earliest founders and movement leaders of the Mujahedin in the early 1970s, right before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. He served as the political head of the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (UIFSA), an alliance of various political groups who fought against the Taliban in Afghanistan. His government was recognized by many countries, as well as the United Nations.

group among the Ḥazāra, which received strong support from Iran under the leadership of Abdul Ali Mazari (Hilali 2005:25).

When 'Jamiat Islami' commander, Ahmad Shah Massoud, forged an alliance with Uzbek militia boss, Abdur Rasheed Dostum, the pro-Babrak Karmal 'Parchamis', it was mainly, considered an opposition against Pashtun dominance in Afghanistan. In retaliation, Hizbe Islam, Chief Gulbadin Hekmatyar joined hands with fellow Pashtuns from the rival Khalq faction, the Communist Party. Islamic ideology was quickly replaced by pragmatic deals that could strengthen one's chance of capturing power.¹⁹ Even the ethnoreligious differences were distinguishable among Mujahiden. For instance, 'Hazara' military group was backed by Iran because they are the follower of the same sect of Shia Islam, and the other Sunni militant groups were supported by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan because of their religious harmony.

However, the traditional segmentation of society has not disappeared and is now expressed through the new political structures. Local, tribal and ethnic identities still play a role among both Mujahedeencommanders and refugees, as well as in the political parties, including the Mujahedeengroups and the Kabul Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA)' (Gutman 1989: 70). As a result, Najibullah the last President of the Communist Party resigned from power and handed the power over to the seven-man council to open the way for a peaceful transition, and that was the end of the Communist Party in Afghanistan. There were seven Jahdi groups, who were fighting against Russian troops and Najuballah government, almost all the major ethnic groups had their own militant groups, and their leadership was in exile in other countries like Iran and Pakistan.

When the Russians withdrew their troops from Afghanistan, the central government didn't last longer and finally in January 1992 when the Russian government ended its aid to the Najibullah government, the Mujahedeens were still receiving support from Pakistan. After Najibullah's government handed over the power the Mujahedeens made an Interim government for two months under the leadership of Hazart Sibghatullah Mujaddidi. It has been observed that the 'Islamic state of Afghanistan under the President ship of Mujaddedi chairman of the Islamic interim council formally took over the power in Kabul on April 28, 1992, from Najib regime.'²⁰

¹⁹ 'Mujaddadi victory appears phoney'(1993), Public Opinion Trend, Analyses and news service Afghanistan Series, 18(1): p. 115.

²⁰ 'Mujaddadi goverment takes over power in Kabul'(1992), Public Opinion Trend, Analyses and news service, Afghanistan Series,VOL.17, No 27, ,p.280

The Mujahedeen aim was to establish an Islamic government. Mujaddidi, who was elected as the head government for two months after which he transferred power to Burhanuddin Rabbani from Tajik ethnic groups in keeping with the Peshawar accord.

In April 1992, Ahmad Shah Massoud's, the political and military commander during the resistance against the Soviet occupation, allied with Sayyid Mansor's Ismailis²¹ and former Communist General Abdul Rashid Dostum's forces, captured Afghanistan's major air force base Bagram, seventy kilometers North of Kabul. Senior Communist Generals and officials of Najibullah administration acted as a transitional authority to transfer power to Ahmad Shah Massoud's alliance. The Kabul interim authority invited Massoud to enter Kabul as the new Head of State but he held back and ordered his forces to position to the north of Kabul, and did not enter the capital until a political solution was in place. He called on the senior party leaders based in exile in Peshawar to work out a political settlement acceptable to all sides and parties (Saikal 2004: 214).

Meanwhile, other Mujahedeen⁹ factions started to advance towards the capital city Kabul from different side; Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's from *Hezb-e Islami* occupied the South, while Abdul Rasul Sayyaf's, the leader of *Ettehad-i Islami* from the West, Abdul Ali Mazari's the leader of *Hezb-e Wahdat* from 'Shia' community Persian speaker from the West. Kabul was surrounded by various warlords from different ethnic groups, who were hostile to each other for a long time and after the collapse of the state, conflict seemed inevitable among them. Though the international community in the form of the 'United Nations' and most Afghan political parties have agreed to appoint a legitimate national government through an elite settlement among the different resistance parties. Afghan political party political leaders were meeting in Peshawar and drafting an agreement for a peaceful transition but the military situation around Kabul was tense among the internal commanders.

While Massoud supported the Peshawar process of establishing a broad coalition government inclusive of all sides, Hekmatyar from Pashtun ethnicity, who sought to become the sole ruler of Afghanistan stating, 'In our country coalition government is impossible because, this way or another, it is going to be weak and incapable of stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan.'

²¹ (Sayed of Kayan) is the leader of a Hazara-Ismaili Shi'a Muslim community centered in Baghlan Province of Afghanistan.

(Saikal 2004: 215). Massoud tried to convince Hekmatyar to not enter Kabul before any political agreement; Massoud stated that

All the parties had participated in the war, in jihad in Afghanistan, so they had to have their share in the government, and in the formation of the government. Afghanistan is made up of different nationalities. We were worried about a national conflict between different tribes and different nationalities. In order to give everybody their own rights and also to avoid bloodshed in Kabul, we left the word to the parties so they should decide about the country as a whole. We talked about it for a temporary stage and then after that, the ground should be prepared for a general election.

(Nojumi 2002: 112)

A recorded radio communication between the two leaders showed the divide as Massoud asked Hekmatyar: 'The Kabul regime is ready to surrender, so instead of the fighting we should gather. ... The leaders are meeting in Peshawar. ... The troops should not enter Kabul, they should enter later on as part of the government'. Hekmatyar's response was 'We will march into Kabul with our naked sword. No one can stop us. ... Why should we meet the leaders?' Massoud answered, 'It seems to me that you don't want to join the leaders in Peshawar nor stop your threat, and you are planning to enter Kabul ... in that case, I must defend the people.' (Grad 2009: 310)

At that point, even Osama bin Laden, the most well known al-Qaida leader, who had worked extensively with Hekmatyar in Peshawar, urged Hekmatyar to 'go back with your brothers' and to accept a compromise with the other resistance parties. (Gutman 2008) But he never approved Massoud as the Defense Minister and Rabbani as head of the government. Actually, Hekmatyar never agreed to a non-Pashtun's rise as a leader. He was confident that he would be able to gain sole power in Afghanistan. On April 24, 1992, the leaders in Peshawar agreed and signed the Peshawar Accord for establishing the post-communist Islamic State of Afghanistan. The Defense Ministry was given to Massoud while the Prime Ministership was given to Hekmatyar, but Hekmatyar refused to sign. With the exception of Hekmatyar's from *Hezb-e Islami* party, all other parties were unified under this peace and power-sharing accord in April 1992. But Hekmatyar denounced the new administration as 'communist'. It was indeed the case of Dostam and various Generals from the Najibullah era that had emerged as prominent figures in Mujahedeen government, but the wider allegation was preposterous as most members of the old communist elite had fled the country. (Maley 2002: 98)

The Peshawar accord²² faced a number of fundamental challenges. After peace talks between Massoud and Hekmatyar on May 25, 1992 the government initially agreed to name Hekmatyar as the Prime Minister but the agreement collapsed in less than a week, when President Mujaddidi's plane came under rocket fire as he returned from a trip to Islamabad on May 29. Mujaddidi claimed that both Hekmatyar's forces and former agents from the Najibullah government had conducted the attack and that Hekmatyar had earlier threatened to shoot down his plane.²³

Hekmatyar, who resented Massoud's appointment as the Defense Minister, resorted to the strategy of spoiling. Hekmatyar was a classic example of what Stephen J. Stedman has called 'total spoilers'. This refers to an individual, who sees the world in all or nothing terms and often suffers from pathological tendencies that prevent the pragmatism necessary for compromise settlements of conflict (Maley 2002). It was August 1992 that Hekmatyar ordered their group *Hezb-e islami* to launch a rocket attack on Kabul where over 1000 civilians were killed. And Rabni denounced him as the enemy of the state and a dangerous terrorist who should be expelled from Afghanistan. That was the exact moment, the starting point of civil war and ethnic conflict in Afghanistan in the absence of a state what Walliam Maley called this period 'distrust and manipulation in the absence of a state'. The level of this distrust was too high, especially between Massoud from Tajik ethnic group and Heykamatyar from Pasthun ethnic group and even among other minor ethnicities who were involved in jihad against Russia occupation.

In Hekmatyar case, the explanation was largely pathological as Stalin once remarked 'I trust no one, not even myself' and there was a definite echo of this in Hekmatyar's approach to the world. In the case of Massoud, the explanation was more rational. Trust is a product of expectations and Heykamatyar had given Massoud excellent ground to be wary for killing his commanders in 1989. (Maley 2002: 201) On the other hand, the tension arose between *Hezb-e Whahdat* from Shiite, Hazara ethnic group, who were backed by Iran and *Ittehad*, a Sunni

²² The **Peshawar Accord** was a peace and power-sharing agreement establishing the post-communist era of the Islamic State of Afghanistan. It was signed on 24 April 1992 by all the major Afghan anti-Soviet resistance parties except for the *Hezb-e Islami* of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

²³ 'III. The Battle for Kabul: April 1992-March 1993'. Blood-Stained Hands: Past Atrocities in Kabul and Afghanistan's Legacy of Impunity (Report). Human Rights Watch. July 6, 2005.

party which was supported by Saudi Arabia. Initially, the fighting broke out and *Hezeb –e Whadat* occupied West of Kabul which is a Hazara dominant area in Kabul, Massoud's in the North; Dustum from Uzbek minority occupied Bala Hissar and Meranjan hill; and Sayyaf's military group from Pashtun ethnic occupied Paghman area. (Maley 2002: 202)

The government power was in the hand of Tajik group with other allies of other ethnic groups. Ahmad Shah Massoud form alliance with Abdul Rasul Sayyaf's from *Ittehad-i Islami* forces against Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's from *Hezb-i Islami* and Abdul Ali Mazari's from *Hezb-e Wahdat*, militias in the densely Hazara populated Afshar district in west Kabul. Both the coalition between Mujahedeen militant groups was based on their political position, but each ethnic was fighting under their own military structure. Therefore, most of the coalition was fragile; a series of wars have been fought between the distinct militant groups in Kabul which cause hundreds of civilian casualties. Perhaps, the most deadly battle was fought, when the *Hezb-e Wahdat* and the *Ittehad-i Islami* had been involved in a systematic abduction campaigns against civilians of the 'opposite side', a pattern *Ittehad* continued in Afshar. There is no single reason as to why conflict happened between *Ittehad* and *Hezb-e Wahdat*. In fact, the 'conflict that arose between *Ittehad* and *Wahdat* forces was not surprising. There was high tension between *Wahdat*, who were predominantly Shi'a Muslims, and the Sunni *Ittehad* faction, whose members follow an ultra-conservative Islamic creed, *Wahabbism*, which views Shi'ism as heretical (Human Rights Watch 2005:209).

Human Watch reported that days after Hekmatyar was first driven out from Kabul, the predominantly Sunni-Pashtun *Ittehad* forces under Abdul Rabb al-Rasul Sayyaf and the predominately Shi'a-Hazara *Wahdat* forces under Abdul Ali Mazari began skirmishing in West Kabul, shooting rockets at each other and engaging in street battles. Each sought to dislodge the other from various neighborhoods or government buildings which each force occupied. The battles, taking place in the midst of a dense civilian setting, predictably caused a high number of casualties and led to widespread destruction of civilian homes and infrastructure. (Human Rights Watch Report 2005:211) A Health worker in a hospital narrated the horror of everyday life after the fighting started in West Kabul, 'What can I say? What I saw in those days I can never forget. Hundreds of people were wounded when they fought every time they fought. The hospital would be full of patients, overwhelmed; we couldn't treat everyone who was brought there. People were dying in the halls. People would not get treatment. There were dead bodies everywhere, and blood. When the fighting was very bad, and we couldn't transport anyone

anywhere, there would be dead bodies in the hospital for weeks at a time. . . .Whenever the journalists came, they would ask the same questions: How many rockets hit? How many were killed? How many were injured?’ That's all they were interested in. I saw dead bodies in the streets, and everywhere, all around west Kabul. In the hospital, there were so many dead bodies, and because of the fighting, people could not come to take away the bodies (Human Rights Watch Report 2005).

The other battle was fought in 1993 when the then new allies shaped against the Rabani government. The main damage to come from I January 1994, on that day a new alliance called ‘*Shura-I Hamahngi*’ (council of coordination), consisting of Hekmatyar, Dostum from the Azbek ethnic , and *Hezeb-e Wahdat* from Hazara, with Mojadiddi as a loose associate, launched a huge rocket and artillery attack on the capital (Maley 2002: 203). The final chapter of this struggle took place in 1995. Human rights researchers have documented massacres of a large number of civilians carried out on the orders of senior faction leaders. According to existing reports, some armed groups *Hizb-i Wahdat* and *Ittihad* took civilians hostage during episodes of fighting. Many of those were detained and ‘disappeared’. Individual commanders of all of the armed factions detained people for the purpose of extortion.²⁴

Earlier in 2004, the other Jahidi group was busy fighting with each other in Kabul, the Taliban militant under the name Taliban movement had advanced in the southern part of the country and occupied the Kandahar province. It was perhaps the most extremist version of *jahidi* militant group. Taliban backed by Pakistan ISI, succeeded in occupying most the southern part of Afghanistan and reach near Kabul in 1994. The country was in chaos, people were tired of fighting and bloodshed, and therefore most of the Pashtun-dominant area welcomed the Taliban group and supported them to the maximum to have a sense of peace in their life. But it turns out that they were not more than a puppet of other countries, especially Pakistan. And once again the hope to establish peace in Afghanistan remained a distant dream.

Taliban Regime 1994-2001

In 1992, when the state collapsed and Mujahedeen took over power in Kabul, and the civil war started between different ethnic groups, the Taliban rose from southern part of the country.

²⁴ <http://www.flagrancy.net/salvage/UNMappingReportAfghanistan>.

Taliban movement originated from *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam*; which were religious schools for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* was not only a religious school but they were also involved in training the politico-religious force. Even during Mujahedeen this school had a good potential for recruiting fighters to fight against the Red army of USSR. Most of the Jahidi leader from *Hezb-i Islami* and ‘Taliban’ were educated in these schools. The Taliban's extremely strict and anti-modern ideology has been described. Under the Taliban regime, Sharia law was interpreted to forbid a wide variety of previously lawful activities in Afghanistan. These prohibitions included pork, alcohol, music, and many types of consumer technology such as television, filming, and the Internet as well as most forms of art such as paintings or photography. Men were forbidden to shave their beards, and women were prohibited from accessing education and work.

In the beginning, the Taliban numbered hundreds, were badly equipped and low on munitions. Within months, however, 15,000 students arrived from the Madrassas in Pakistan. The Taliban's first major military activity was in 1994, when they marched northward from Maiwand and captured Kandahar City and the surrounding provinces, losing only a few dozen men. When they took control of Kandahar in 1994 they also took over a border crossing at Spin Baldak and an ammunition dump from Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. In the course of 1994, the Taliban took control of 12 of 34 provinces not under central government control. Taliban held power in Afghanistan and enforced a strict interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law of which the international community and leading Muslims have been highly critical. Finally, on September 26, 1996, as the Taliban with military support by Pakistan and financial support by Saudi Arabia prepared for another major offensive, Massoud ordered a full retreat from Kabul to continue anti-Taliban resistance in the Hindu Kush Mountains instead of engaging in street battles in Kabul. The Taliban entered Kabul on September 27, 1996, and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Many analysts like Amin Saikal described the Taliban as developing into a proxy force for Pakistan's regional interests (Amin 2006: 352).

The Taliban largely consisted of students recently trained in Madrassas in Pakistan. Under the leadership of ‘Mohammed Omar’, the movement spread throughout most of Afghanistan, sequestering power from the Mujahedin warlords, and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in 1996 and the Afghan capital transferred to Kandahar. It held control of most of the country until being overthrown by the American-led invasion of Afghanistan in December 2001 following the September 11 attacks.

Conclusion:

It is very important to know the dynamism of ethnic tensions among the social groups in Afghanistan in order to understand and analyze the intergroup conflicts in Afghanistan from 1992-1996. There are not much documentations from this period, lapse of security deter professional journalists and reporters to stay in Kabul. There are two main sources which are more reliable and are based on first-hand data, i.e., the Human Rights Watch reports and POT 'Public Opinion Trend, Analyses and news service, Afghanistan Series'. In Kabul and another side of the country many battles were fought in this period among different ethnic groups, in fact, the ethnoreligious binary and even language and other differences drove them to such a level to kill one another. For instance, the conflict between *Ittihad-i Islami* by the leadership of 'Abdul Rasul Sayyaf's' from Pashtun ethnic group, and *Hezbe-e Wahdat* from Hazara community was about ethnic and religious differences. Abdul Rasul Sayyaf comes from an extreme Sunni sect of Islam which does not believe and consider Shia as a Muslim. Notably, the Hazara also has the same prejudices against the Sunni. The religious and ethnic background always matter in Afghanistan, especially when it is about struggle and survival. During the intergroup conflict, every group was fighting under the label of their own ethnoreligious identity.²⁵

When the Taliban took the power and reoccupied Kabul using the Sharia law, it was a complete denial of human and woman rights. Shari law was completely practiced based on male domination, it was the worst time for women, I clearly remember that how Taliban brutality ruled the country, the women were not allowed to go outside, the girls schools were shut down all over the country. The man evils were ruling the country, the people were soulless body who were moving for their survival, no electricity, no TV, no music and the absence of women in the public sphere. During Taliban, no one was safe because there was no rule to protect one, the minority were completely forgotten and forced to leave the country. One of this minority was Afghan Sikh community who were forced to leave Afghanistan for India during this time. With consideration, different theory about social identity, ethnicity and religion this studies confirmed the involvements of ethnoreligious identity as social identity in the conflict of 1992-1996, the existing lectures show that Afghanistan has a diverse social structure, which influence social identity. Social identity is a multidimensional social factor in Afghanistan and it is

²⁵ Dorrnoro.G.(2007).Kabul at war(1992-1996): state, Ethnicity and social class. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic journal*.pp5.

manufactured from different factors like ethnicity, religion, language and region, these factors categorized the social groups. The political leader who was known as mujahedeen used the ethnicity and religion as political tools to provoke this ethno religious groups toward each other for their political purpose.

Although, there is no doubt that monopolization of political power by Tajik community also had an essential role in the conflict of 1992. One of the other social factors which hugely influence the conflict of 1992, is prejudices and stereotyping of discrimination. When a society developed and divided under the different identical category, consciously or unconsciously the member of a group develop a negative attitude toward out-group, which escalated the conflict. In Afghanistan, among different identity groups, the concept of prejudices and stereotyping against other community still exist, and it is not only limited to ethnicity but also includes religions, languages, regions and physical features. Therefore there is no doubt that testimony of prejudice and stereotyping, is the consequence of the social identity which turns to symptoms of conflict, not only in Afghanistan but everywhere social groups exist with the different identity the violence and conflict have exist. But ‘Anthropological and political studies of violence have often reified the phenomena, treating violence as characteristic or category that is either present or absent, destructive and constructive in any society’ (De 2004:3).

CHAPTER 3: ETHNIC IDENTITY AND BOUNDARY

Ethnic boundary:

Ethnicity and boundary are interdependent. They are not static but fluid concepts which are evolving from time to time; and they always co-exist along with each other. An ethnic group always draws boundaries for its existence. As Smith argued

Hence, an ethnies may persist, even in the case that it is long divorced from its homeland, through an intense nostalgia and spiritual attachment. Thus, the territory is an integral aspect of ethnic identity, as it represents the origins and the past of the group living in it or being attached to it, as well as its struggles to conquer it. In this way, it becomes a holy ground, or a sacred land of our forefathers, our kings and saints. (Smith 1991: 23)

It allows us to think critically about how boundary maintenance is unproblematic and that it follows from the isolation which the itemized characteristics imply: racial difference, cultural difference, social separation and language barriers, spontaneous and organized enmity. This also limits the range of the factors that we use to explain cultural diversity: we are led to imagine each group developing its cultural and social form in relative isolation, mainly in response to local ecologic factors through a history of adaptation by invention and selective borrowing. This history has produced a world of separate peoples, each with their culture and each organized in a society which can legitimately be isolated for description as an island (Barth 1969: 17). T. K. Oomen (1992) defined that nation as the outcome of ethnic and territories. That is, if and when an ethnies is a cultural collectivity that is outside its ancestral territory actual (e.g. European Jew) or imagined (e.g. gypsies). (Oommen 1992: 36).

Ethnic boundary is more dependent on culture and culture boundaries are always limited with specific territories. There is no doubt that ethnic in its broader sense includes culture. Two factors which have always affected the boundary and ethnic are colonization and emigration, since both changed the shape of ethnic and boundary in the past. Barth (1969) and his collaborators observed that how the boundaries between two ethnic groups are maintained even though their cultures might be indistinguishable and even though individuals and groups might switch from one side of the boundary to the other. Barth's approach to ethnicity thus no longer

resembled an exercise in Linnean taxonomy but in social ecology. Ethnic groups have always wish to expand their boundary to dominate other culture under their own supremacy and have access to more resources, the same theory is true about colonization. In such a situation, conflict is inevitable among different ethno-religious groups.

Among the ethno-religious groups in Afghanistan the ethnic boundary is very clear; Central part is dominated by Hazara ethnic group, which is called 'Hazarajat' in the local language, while the North has mostly Tajiks and Uzbeks population, and in the South the dominant community are Pashtuns. Mostly these ethno-religious groups are living with each other in peace and harmony in big cities of Afghanistan like Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat, and Mazari Sharif. But the boundary of every ethnic groups are visible in remote areas and even in the Capital Kabul. Ethnic boundaries are ostensible among ethnic in Kabul, though West of Kabul is occupied by Hazara, North Kabul by Tajiks and South and East by Pashtun. These territories are very important for ethnic groups in Afghanistan, still they ethnic groups are not flexible with each other especially after civil war of 1993. Therefore ethnic boundary among the ethnic groups are considers are seen to be measure safety. And most of the time it also contributes to the intergroup conflict in Afghanistan, for instance, the Problem of 'Kochi' from Pashtun tribe with Hazara 'Shia' community is not only about ethnic and sects, but also it about boundary and territories, which every years it takes humanitarian causality from both side because of territory and boundary.

The Three Dominant Theories of Ethnic Identity

Classical thinkers have been often criticized for not paying sufficient attention to ethnicity and nationalism issues as substantial sources of social identity, social relation, and manipulation of power, though they are assertive about religion in many cases. Classical thinker's idea were revolving around the rise of capitalism, on how social relations will be effected in a capitalist society. The basic concern for Marx was 'social relation', he argued that 'social relation' will reduced to a materialistic kind of relation. Apparently, this process will end up with exploitation which creates false consciousness.

this would be the spine of Marx's theory of exploitation, the idea of false consciousness, the assumption that those who had power would use everything in their control to disguise the velocity of their avariciousness and present a face to those exploited which was philanthropically just. Falls

consciousness is the voluntary acceptance of exploitation as socially legitimate. (Visvanathan 2011: 70)

Though Marx was not much concerned about ethnic and ethnic identity specifically which creates conflict, but he narrowed down the nature of conflict based on controlling resources and power relation. He argued whoever monopolized the power used for his own purpose and used it for his own class or ethnic purposes, which always creates conflict.

Unlike Marx, Weber devoted a little more attention to race and ethnicity and even offered a definition that endures ‘ethnic groups’ as those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration (Skrentny 2008). Weber’s work was highly concerned about ‘social action’ in interpretive ways. He believed that human action have diverse dimensions which can be interpreted by scholars as sets of social behaviour. Weber classified even the types of behavior which make sense for observer but generally he believed that

Understanding and explanation go together. Such clarity or verifiable accuracy, which Weber describes as certainty in understanding can either be rational or mathematical, or it can be emotionally empathic or intuitively or artistically sensitive. The first is best explained in mathematic or music, the second in the everyday relationships of human beings. (Visvanathan 2011:39)

For Weber ‘everyday relationship of human being’ is located at the center of his idea. The human was an actor and action always carries meaning. He believed that only a fair observation will help human knowledge to make it possible to understand and interpret human action as social act. Weber’s primary focus was on the subjective meanings that human actors attach to their action in their mutual orientations with specific socio-historical contexts. However, scholars have hypothesized that norms tied to religious identities affect economic outcomes, but among all it was Weber, who argued that Protestantism encouraged capital accumulations and a strong work ethic, thus leading to the rise of capitalism. Moreover, it were classical thinkers who laid the base for a better understanding of social relations and social action, that even today our knowledge is much influenced by them.

There are three dominant theories that exist about ethnicity and ethnic identity, which explains the ethnicity in its varied manifestation. For a better understanding of ethnic identity and ethnic conflict, it is important to understand the views of these three theories: primordialist, constructivist, instrumentalist. During the German Romanticism the primordialism emerged with the argument contending that nations are ancient and natural phenomenon.

Primordialist ideas were based, that each of us belong to one and only one ethnic group, that group membership remains fixed over a lifetime, and it is passed down intact across generations. War begins and ends, states grow and die, economies boom and crash, but through it all, ethnic group stay the same. (Chandra 2012: 1)

The second theory, the instrumentalist theory, perceives ethnicity as neither inherent in human nature nor intrinsically valuable. Ethnicity is perceived as a strategic basis for coalitions that are looking for a larger share of scarce economic or political power and so it is a device for restricting resources to few individuals. The instrumentalist theory argues that it is rational for parties to organize along ethnic lines depending on the benefit it brings to them. Given that many ethnic conflicts and civil wars happen in relation to opportunities for primary commodity predation. They argued that greed is stronger than grievance as a strong cause of ethnic conflict. (Williams 2015: 148) The instrumentalist concept of ethnicity is more or less similar to the idea of Marx, when he described how economic scarcity leads social groups to categorize themselves in a social class. The instrumentalists also have the similar argument but in terms of ethnicity unlike Marx. They look at ethnicity as a kind of strategy for social groups to maintain their economic resources and control of political power.

But unlike instrumentalists and primordialists the constructivist perceives 'ethnic identity as a socially constructed and fluid entity that can be formed through various means including conquest, colonization or immigration. Ethnic groups are recognized to be social construction with, as Williams quoted Posner 'identifiable origins and histories of expansion and contraction, amalgamation and division' (William 2015: 149). They are fluid and originate within a set of social, economic and political processes. Constructivists argued that each society has a historically constructed master cleavage and narrative that political entrepreneurs can manipulate. Therefore, for constructivist ethnicity is thus flexible, subjective and changes with inter-ethnic interactions and its purpose is to reinforce and perpetuate social differences for specific goals. And ethnic conflict, consequently, is the product of concrete historical processes

and these influences in history affect relations between ethnic groups causing hostility between them thus explaining the politicization of ethnic identities (Williams 2015: 149).

There is no doubt that every theories has its own limitation and each of one of them are just a reflection of social facts. Social groups' identities overlaps over time and the current ethnic is the outcome of social, political, and regional factors. It is not that we are not familiar with those ethnic groups which exist in Afghanistan but the diversity of ethno-religious groups in this country makes it difficult to understand every social groups and their interrelation specifically. But the evidences shows that conflict of 1992-1996 was about the domination of political powers by those elite who used ethnic and religion to turn these identity groups towards each other. In January, 2015 an article was published by Journal of Experimental Political Science under the title *Social Identity and Voting in Afghanistan: Evidence from a Survey Experiment*. There are three contributors in this article from Pittsburgh University, and the survey experiment was part of a nationally representative public opinion survey which was conducted in 8,620 households across all the 34 Afghan provinces in November 2011. The objective of the survey experiment was to explore how *qawm*, which is the base for social identity and affiliation, affects individual perception of politicians running for a fictitious local elections. They used these three theories, primordial, constructivist, and instrumental perspectives, as the base for their analysis. 'The results here support perspectives suggesting that social identity of candidates have ambiguous or unanticipated influences on voter perceptions in local elections. We find that in an experimental setting of a local election, *qawm* does not appear to have the predicted effect' (Jochem, T. 2015: 49). But the claim made by this research finding shows the non-rejection of the possibility of ethnic voting in Afghanistan.

But the striking question still exists as to what or to which extent do we know about ethnic groups in Afghanistan. In case of Afghanistan, such survey experiment is not much reliable because of various reasons. Afghanistan is a heterogeneous society with diverse culture, language and ethnic backgrounds which makes it difficult to understand social identity as an outcome of a single factor, as multi social factors are involved in the process of social identity. For instance one of these factors is religion which influence social identity along with ethnic or *Quam*, there are two main sects in Afghanistan, Shia, which have mostly Hazara followers and Sunni which is followed by other minorities. But there are other small minorities living inside these two sects but they have always differentiated themselves from other groups on the basis of the ethnic or affiliated sects, like Syed, Asmali and others.

Absence of Nation and State in Afghanistan

Currently we are living in the century of technology and information explosion, which have led to the creation of many nation states around the world and most specifically in South Asia. The rise of 'Nation State' in the region after the Second World War have once again put ethnicity at the center of attention among social scholars. Nationalism and ethnicity have unbreakable bond, in most of the cases ethnic relations accelerated the process of nation. Not to deny that other factors like language, territory, and culture hegemony plays a significant role in process of nation building. Nationalism and ethnicity have never died as part of an absolute traditional order but both are part of a modern set of categorical identities, which invoked by elites and other participants in political and social struggles.

In this contemporary era state and nation seem to be complex concept for analysis. Every nation and state in the world have their own historical background for its existence and experienced their state of nationhood in distinct way different from the others. State and nation are two debatable terms as it seems that Nationalism regulates the different identical groups under a political sovereignty. 'Nationalism, in particular, remains the pre-eminent rhetoric for attempts to demarcate political communities, claim rights of self-determination and legitimate rule by reference to 'the people' of a country' (Calhoun 1993: 211).

Moreover, it is the obligation of the state to protect its citizen from outsiders and geared up the process of nation building in order to enhance coherence, harmony and peace among different ethnic groups. Ernest Gellner argued that nation, like states, are contingency but not a universally necessity. The question of nation-state and state still exist regarding which one came first, but the literature shows that nation exist first, then nationalist movement arose for their sovereignty and leads to the creation of nation-state to meet the demand. Gellner observed that

Neither nations nor states exist at all times and in all circumstances moreover, Nations and states are not the same contingency. Nationalism hold that they were destined for each other; that either without the other is incomplete and constitutes tragedy. But before they could become intended for each other, each of them had to emerge, and their emergence was independent and contingent. (Gellner 2006: 6)

The concept of nation and nationalism is the manufacture of modern age, as human beings imagine itself as a nation then they follow state conformity. Benedict Anderson (1983) argued that the origin of national consciousness only became possible with the emergence of capitalism. Anderson wrote ‘what, in a positive sense, made the new communities imaginable was a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relation (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity’(Anderson 1983: 43). Anderson’s findings are convincing as they are based on historical facts which originated over the period of time with the help of print-capitalism, and that is a nation. He took his idea of the imagined community beyond, and argued that it is not necessary that all members of a community meet each other personally but rather they are imagining each other. He emphasized the fact that the nationalism is a manufactured consensus which is highly influenced by human situation and the developing print-capitalism, ‘the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation’(Anderson 1983: 46).

The tie between ethnicity and nation is unbreakable. While there are countries which were created on the basis of ethnic relations there are other countries as well with various cases where nation created the state and simultaneously, on many occasions, state manufactured the consensus of a nation. But both processes was not successful in the case of Afghanistan as there was no central government to evoke the sentiments of nationalism. And there was no cultural hegemony which existed to rebuild a nation because Afghanistan is not a homogeneous society but rather heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, culture, sects of Islam, and language.

The communists in Afghanistan had never managed to build stable political institutions to codify and regulate relations among the groups and create national identity to seek for nationalism, but the anti-communist movement against Red troops of Soviet Union evoke the sentiment of nationalism among different ethnic groups in Afghanistan. The authoritarian leadership of the communist regime did not prove successful in creating a civic identity for dealing with the ethnic individual ones effectively. As a result, the process of transition toward a multiparty democracy caught Afghanistan with a weak central authority, its people organizing themselves into political parties along the line of ethnic identity and ethnic boundaries.

A year after the communist withdrawal conditions were ripe for ethnicity to emerge as a dominant source of social and political cleavage. From that point on, ethnicity was used

instrumentally by the political elites to further their interests who needed to mobilize large followers to support their political goals. In this power struggle, ethnicity and religion became a very useful tool in the hands of the political elites. At the same time ethnic and religion also became a distinguishing feature, in the sense that the various ethnic groups identified themselves with their own ethnic community and sect, which excluded the rest. After the Najibullah government collapse attacked from the Mujahedeen, ethnicity and religion became a matter of contrast which excluded the groups that did not share the same ethno-religious identity. Such a diverse society like Afghanistan for being one nation is unimaginable, especially after this thirty years civil war which puts social cleavage in high alert among this ethno-religious groups.

The political domination on the one side and oppression of the minorities on the other side gave hands to gather and led Afghanistan toward fragmentation rather than a nation. State always look after nationalism as motive to bring coherence among inhabitants of a region or a country, but only among the population which have the same historical memory or have compatible culture. But in the case of Afghanistan there were no strong central government since Daoud Khan when he abolished monarchy in Afghanistan. In absence of a state and nation in 1992, the conflict seemed inevitable among this ethno-religious groups. The Political leader used vacuums of power and set out this ethno-religious groups for a deadly battle, and caused the death of millions people of life, Many innocent people died under the label of ethnicity, religion and language.

Identity Discourse in Afghanistan

There are three bases for social identity in Afghanistan, *quam*, which means same origin, *watan*- homeland and *Mazhab* - 'sect'. There are different sects of Islam present in Afghanistan. Therefore, religion is one of the bases for social identity in Afghanistan, for instance, Sunni, Shia, Ismailia and several another sects. It developed a different identity. Perhaps religion is even more fundamental, not only in the sense of external confrontation with non-Muslim, but as the basis for the evolution for the code of conduct of fellow Muslims. And the same discourse can be true in the case of identity; religion not only could be a base of identity inside the community but also a source of identity outside of the community as well. *Quam* is one of the other determinant for social identity in Afghanistan which is based on ethnicity. It is understood with cultural sense and it always refers to those who have a similar

culture, custom, and lifestyle and blood relation. The third determiner is *Watan* which means homeland, a place which ethnic group can exist, a territory

It is also often a sacred land, the land of our forefathers, our lawgivers, our kings and sages, poets and priests, which makes this our homeland. We belong to it, as much as it belongs to us. Besides, the sacred center of the homeland draw the members of the ethnic to it. (Smith1991: 23)

The heterogeneous social structures of Afghanistan, makes Afghanistan a very diverse country in nature in terms of culture, language, religion and ethnicity. The perfect example was given by Mousavi (1998), who considered Afghanistan's ethnic diversity as a chinese box which has boxes each inside other in term of culture, ethnicity, and language. There are other smaller minorities which survive inside other bigger minority, and they have their own territory with homogeneous culture and customs. This heterogeneity of culture, language, ethnicity, and religion was also observed by Barfield (1979).

Conflict and violence often have a religious dimension whether they occur between adherents of different faith traditions or rivals within a faith tradition. Religion may play a role as a marker of identity, a mobilizing device, a basis for rationalizing violent behaviour or a source of values on which to base peace-building and reconciliation. The relationship between religion and other key actors, especially with the state, is complex. Religious leaders may play important role in instigating or preventing violence and in either sustaining bad feeling or attempting to prevent such an occurrence. The various organizational forms associated with religious traditions may provide a basis for mobilization, humanitarian assistance during emergency, assistance in longer term recovery and building peaceful (or confrontational) relationships in the long run.

Religion is considered as an important element of a common culture in one region or in a country. Religious affiliations becomes a significant marker of ethnicity and religious symbols, and religious rituals and institutions are used to activate aggressive nationalistic feelings for the promotion of political agendas. It is always has a potential for aggression and conflict, because religion has followers of its filth, who identify themselves separately from other religion or other sects. The differentiation in terms of the various religious affiliations creates distinctive customs, rituals and beliefs which shaped everyday life of the social groups. But religion not only leads to conflict and violence, it is also capable of bringing peace and harmony among different ethnic groups under one ideology and across political boundaries. In reality,

religion is not static but is constantly being reconfigured. Despite the absence of a universal definition it is possible to identify some broad and common ways of understanding religion. The 'substantive' approach looks at the content of religion, that is, key scriptures, theologies, bodies of doctrine, and values and beliefs enshrined in them.

Complementary to this is the 'functional' approach, which highlights what religion 'does' to people, such as providing them with sources of identity, morality, law and order, or by linking into communities. But what other purposes can religious groups serve while shaping their community based on a specific identity? The purpose lies with the individual and group to fulfil their social identity needs with their religious content. In all their multifarious expressions and dimensions, the world's religion answers to every individual need for a sense of belongingness socially, sometimes geographically, cosmologically, and temporally. Religious meanings define the contours of the broadest possible range of relationship to self; to near and distant ones; friendly and unfriendly; to the non-human world; to the universe; and to God, or that which one considers ultimately real or true. No other repositories of cultural meaning have historically offered so much in response to the human need to develop a secure identity.

However, religion has the ability to construct identity and form in the early days of human life to categorize social groups under religious labels, and when the dynamic of identity existed the probability of violence and conflict becomes implausible. Competition is very likely as a necessary condition to the eruption of intergroup conflict. The powerful ability of religion to serve the identity-related needs of individuals and groups and the special role identity dynamics play in the production and escalation of intergroup conflict together may help explain why so many conflicts occur along religious fault lines.

Afghanistan is an Islamic country in which almost all of the population are followers of Islam, except for a few numbers of Sikhs who are living in the capital city of Kabul and other cities, and they are hugely discriminated. The rest of the population are divided between two sects of Islam, 'Shia' and 'Sunni'²⁶. The majority of the population are 'Sunni', which include three major ethnic groups Pashtun, Tajik, and Uzbek, and the 'Shia' population are mostly from the Hazara community and other minority groups who are converted. There are other smaller sects

²⁶ The Sunni majority got their way, as Abu Bakr became the first Caliph and successor of the prophet, but the most crucial difference between Shia and Sunni Muslim is the importance that Shiites give to Ali, whom the Sunni do not recognize as being the prophet's rightful successor.

of Islam existing within this two sects. Sectarianism plays a significant role in intergroup conflict in Afghanistan, Thomas Barfield described that the two dominant sects which exists in Afghanistan always consider themselves as better Muslim than the other sects. It is such a deep revelation by Barfield but even he is awestruck that such high level ethno-religious diversity still exist in Afghanistan. But there is no doubt that in the conflict of 1992 the role of religion was remarkable, even the Taliban and ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) which is the update version of those religious fundamentalists were fighting in Afghanistan against USSR troops. In last decade even conflict is shifted from ethnic more toward religion.

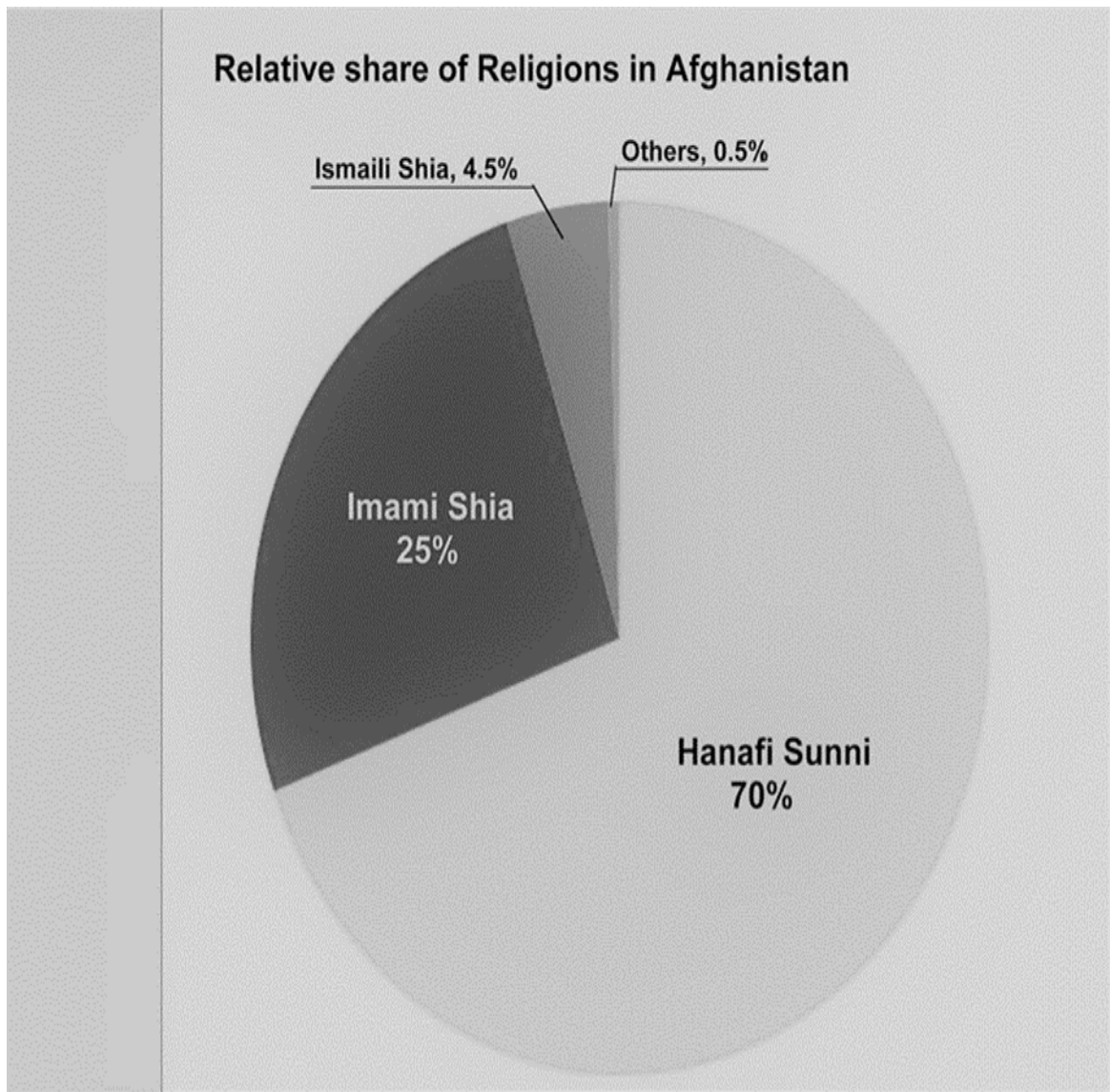


Figure IV: Religion in Afghanistan

Source:

Dr. Michael Izady URL:http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Afghanistan_Ethnic_summary_sm.png

Sectarianism in Afghanistan

Religion is a wide ranging topic which is beyond the scope of this study but the aim of this section is to look at the two sects of Islam which exist in Afghanistan, in terms of contrast and difference as a potential which can contribute to conflict. In literature, religion is a cultural system which designates behaviours and practices, world views, texts, sanctified places, ethics, or organizations that connect humanity to the supernatural or the transcendental. Religion connects humanity to, what anthropologist Clifford Geertz has referred to as, a cosmic order of existence. (Geertz 1993: 90) Afghanistan is an Islamic state where majority of the population are followers of Islam. There are many sects of Islam that exists but the two major sects are 'Shia' and 'Sunni' which are also the dominant sects. Majority of the Afghans follows Sunni sect of Islam.

Zoroastrianism originated in this region between 800-1800 BCE which is now called Afghanistan. It started from North Balkh and the founder Zoroaster lived and died in this region. Along with Zoroastrianism the other religion which was popular was Buddhism. Buddhism and Hinduism entered into Afghanistan when the Indian Maurya Empire control the southern part of Afghanistan. For millennia these three religions were practiced and had many followers in Afghanistan. Bamyán in Afghanistan was also the centre of Buddhism where the biggest Buddha had existed but unfortunately destroyed by the Taliban. There were many temples belonging to Hinduism and Zoroastrianism but these have been destroyed over time. However, there are archaeological evidences that proved their existence. But there was a turn in the history of the region by the 7th century which jeopardized the existence of these religions in Afghanistan.

In the 7th century, the Rashidun Caliphate Arabs entered the modern-day Afghanistan after decisively defeating the Sassanians in the Battle of Nihawand. Following this colossal defeat, the last Sassanid Emperor, Yazdegerd III, became a hunted fugitive. He fled Eastward deep into Central Asia. In pursuit of Yazdegerd, the Arabs chose to enter the area from North-Eastern Iran and thereafter into Herat where they stationed a large portion of their army before advancing towards the rest of Afghanistan. The Arabs exerted considerable efforts towards propagating Islam amongst the locals and majority of the people became Moslems since then. And Islam became the predominant religion in Afghanistan. Majority of the Afghan Muslim population are Sunni Muslims, which represent a branch of Islam that came through the *khalifah*, which started with Abu Bakr, who was the first Muslim ruler after the Prophet

Muhammad. The Sunni Muslim accepts Abu Bakr as a righteous and rightful *khaliph*. Shi'a is the minority Muslim population in Afghanistan, Shi'a Muslims believe that the prophet had appointed his son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib instead of Abu Bakr (Merrill, L., Paxson, D., & Tobey, T. 2006: 4). But Abu Baker took over the power unlawfully, which was the segregation point between Shia and Sunni not only in Afghanistan but also in every other Muslim countries. Sectarian violence between the two major sects of Islam, Shia and Sunni, has occurred in countries like Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Lebanon, etc. This violent conflict has roots in the political turmoil arising out of differences over the succession to power after Prophet Mohammed. However, both sects in Afghanistan have a close connection but their relation has not always been smooth and peaceful. During three decades of war many people have died in the name of religion in the country.

The Shia minority has been politicized in the aftermath of the Iranian Islamic revolution, which was led by Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Afghan's Shia community influenced by notable Mullahs, who were trained in Iran and Iraq, for example Abdul Ali Mazari, Mohammad Mohaqiq, Karim Khalil contributed in increasing the cleavage between the sects generating increased tension in relation to Sunni. (Roy 2002:7)

During 1960, the new generation from Sunni sects have returned from Al-Azhar in Cairo, where they came under the influence of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Most of them were became Professors in Kabul University, for eg, Gholam Nyazi, Borhanuddin Rabbani, and Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf), they started recruiting from University students to make an Islamist Parties in Afghanistan. All these religious group leaders from both sects, Shia and Sunni, later became warlords during the conflict of 1992-1996.

The war against the Soviets exacerbated the ethnic polarization that was always present. In April 1992 Kabul was taken by a loose coalition of non-Pashtuns (Tajiks with Masood, Uzbeks with the former communist General Dustom and Shi'a Hazaras under Sheykh Mazari). This was seen by many Pashtuns as a repetition of the take-over of the capital by the Tajik Bacha-ye Saqqao in 1928, the only example of non-Pashtun leadership since the creation of the Afghan state in 1747. During the bloody civil war that followed, the Hizb-i slami, despite Pakistani support, has been unable to

retake Kabul, even if it succeeded in destroying the city through intense artillery and rocket fire. (Roy 2002: 6)

In Afghanistan not only ethnic as social identity created the conflict in 1992 but the sects also played an important role in that conflict. The Shia are mostly Hazara who are living in the central part of Afghanistan, which is called *Hazarajat*. The other Sunni sects which comprised mostly of Pashtun, Tajik and Uzbek are living in the South, East and West. Both sects are hugely influenced by their religious beliefs which led them to discriminate against each other, which accelerated the conflict among religious identity groups during 1992-1996. Even the ISIS is an outcome of radical group who targets Shia community in Afghanistan.

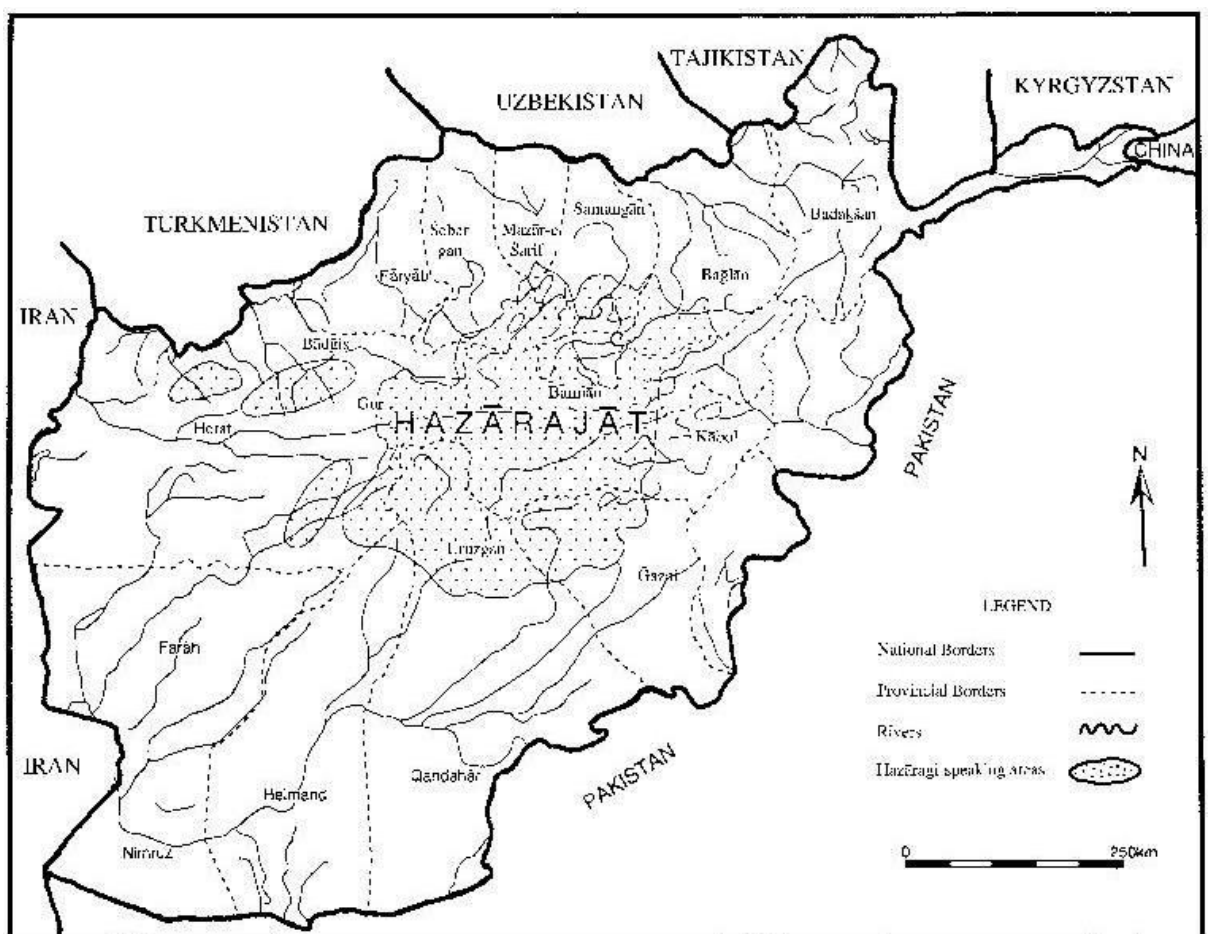


Figure V: Hazāragi-speaking areas in Afghanistan

Source: Adapted from Mousavi, 1998, p. 68.

Prejudice and Stereotyping in Afghanistan

In this contemporary era there are various theories on social conflicts which hugely influence our understanding. Some theory asserted that racism, prejudice and stereotyping kind of discrimination have a huge influence in creating conflict and hostility among social groups.

Such perception of threat by the 'self' of the enemies, whether real or imagined, has real consequences as it affects their behaviours and attitudes. The arguments here is that shared ideas are derived from the roles that state represents in the system, which follows that these shared ideas can be transformed if there is a change in the position of the 'self' and the 'other'. (Rihmo 2014: 95)

It has been observed that a member of a social group develop a negative idea towards the out-group to justify its membership in a social group and show its loyalty to the group. Anthony Giddens argued that 'Conflict theories, by contrast, are concerned with the links between racism and prejudice on the one hand and relationship of power on the other.'²⁷ However, racism and prejudice have a substantial role in creating conflict according to the conflict theory as well.

Intergroup prejudice includes the negative emotions and irrational beliefs one group has concerning other groups (again, by repeating 'group' a special effect is achieved), and as thus is linked to ignorance and hatred. It is much more than that, however. In fact, it also functions as a social assumption according to which innate and unavoidable roles exist for each group. This assumption leads to material or symbolic forms of sanction for anyone stepping out of these roles. This extension of the intergroup prejudice concept requires a consideration of more subtle factors concerning the refusal to build affective ties with members of certain groups who do not fit the roles provided for them'.(Jiménez-Matarrita 2008: 125-126)

The implicit assumption being that the more we know about why individuals become attached to their in-groups the more we will understand why they come to dislike or derogate out-groups, which cause conflict among social groups. The basic assumption is that the formation of in-

²⁷ Giddens, Anthony(2006) *Sociology*, published by polity press, Cambridge.uk,pp. 496.

groups and in-group identification arises independently of attitudes toward out-groups. Attachment to in-groups is presumed here to be the primary process fundamental to individual survival and well-being (Ashmore, Richard D. et al. 2001).

Social psychology always consider group behaviour within their scope of study; it defines conflict as some sort of incompatibility of goals, beliefs, and attitudes. They argued that individual as a part of a social group always develop certain social behaviours, which are also symbolic and convey meaning thus, and as the behaviours initiated by the agent identities occur and proceed in interaction there is a flow of symbols 'action' and meanings 'response'. To an extent that these meanings are shared, such flow of symbols and meaning serves to validate and reinforce existing symbols and names in the situation. (Burke, P.J., and Stets, J.E., 2009:3)

The notion of prejudice and stereotyping has been widely used in the history of humankind, but though they both are used in the same context they still have different nature. Prejudice is usually referred to an opinion or an attitude held by a member of one group toward the other member groups. Prejudice is a preconceived views often based on hearsay rather than on direct evidence and are resistant to change even in the face of new information, people may harbor favorable prejudices about a group with which they identify themselves and negative prejudice towards the 'other'.

In studying identity as the explanatory variable for threat perception, it is important to emphasize that identity is a social construction where the 'self' derives its meaning from the significant 'other'. The categorization of 'self' and the 'other' leads one to favour one's own in-group positively over the out/other group. Hence based on the identity construction, there is a prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviour towards material capabilities of the out-group. Images. (Rihmo 2014: 97)

Prejudice has an individual base which is influenced by our personality and a social base which penetrates us by membership in society or social group. It can be grounded in stereotypes, fixed and inflexible characterization of the social group. Prejudice is also used to increase our self-image and our group status to which we belong. We have the tendency to have the need to increase our self-image by discriminating and holding prejudiced view against the out-group, which we do not belong. Therefore, we divided the world into 'them' and 'us' through this social categorization. Giddens (2006) said that if prejudice is describing attitudes and opinions of the people then discrimination can be referred to the actual behaviour towards the 'other'.

Discrimination is an activity disqualifying a member of one group from opportunities open to other.

The other very important factor which is involved in developing prejudice is social situation itself. Prejudicial behaviour is rooted in individual personality. And while we are talking about an individual we should consider the Freudian approach in order to understand an individual personality. There are primitive emotional needs, there are needs to avoid punishment and keep the good will of the social group, and there are needs to maintain harmony and integration within the self. But on the other hand, stereotype mostly contain a grain of truth and it is simply a mechanism of displacement in which feelings of hostility or anger directed against objects that are not real origin of those feelings.

Prejudice is directly linked to discrimination. To discriminate is to limit the essential opportunities and choices of a minority as compared to the dominant group. It may be triggered by individual and situational causes, but more than anything it is due to structural causes. Discrimination is maintained by conformity to discriminatory norms that put up social barriers to intergroup contact and come from historical conflicts and oppressive institutions such as slavery or apartheid. (Jiménez-Matarrita, A. 2008: 126)

The concept of prejudice and stereotype existed among social groups in Afghanistan. Since ethnicity and sectarianism are the bases of social identity, prejudice and stereotype as a social tool to discriminate in Afghanistan are also influenced by this two factors. Exclusively all ethnic groups are involved in the process of developing in-group love and out-group hate, it is not only limited to ethnic but also includes religion too. Therefore, prejudice and stereotyping of discrimination are assumed as an active potential for the conflict of 1992 in Kabul. Because for long time the minority groups have discriminated in Afghanistan.

6. CONCLUSION

Social conflict is a multi-dimensional phenomena, there is no single theory to explain enough the origin and dynamics of social conflict in-depth, although each of these theories have significant contributions for understanding the phenomena. Even though all are limited in their explanatory, predictive and prescriptive ability mainly as a result of their implicit bias towards the origin of social conflict. The conflict can be broadly described as an expression of the heterogeneity of interests, values and beliefs, that arise when new formations or social group are generated by social changes which came up as an inherited social constraint. By asserting that conflict is an intrinsic and inevitable aspect of social change we can examine conflicts in terms of habit and choice. It is an oversimplification to imply that understanding conflict and conflict resolution requires bypassing approaches relying on rational choice that privilege state-actors focusing only on competing material interests and hard power.

According to self-categorization theory, which is a long-standing idea in social psychology human as an individual always affiliate themselves with norms and categories, with different types of social categories. Human as ‘social self’ always survives in groups, a social group which have a certain set of norms and behaviours, and it always categorizes the social group under different titles. Each person belongs to multiple social categories such as religion, gender and occupation which have its own set of norms. Behaviour in a given moment is more powerfully affected by the norms of categories that are salient than the norms of categories that are not salient (Benjamin, Daniel J. et al 2010). There is no doubt that ethnicity, religion, and territory are the substantial base for social categorization and social classification and that the social classification have a material and social reasons. The same theory is applicable for Afghanistan where the people classified themselves by their social identity which are affiliated with different social factors.

Afghanistan is a forgotten land and a barely seen place and its geographical structure gave birth to a variety of social groups which have co-existed for hundreds of years. For a long time till 1973, its political institution was monarchy in nature where monarchs was ruling the country, people were hardly involved in politics. But when Cold War started between the two blocs (East and West), Afghanistan was seen as a strategic location for both sides (Former Soviet Union, United States and their allies). This led the Former Soviet Union to send their troops to invade Afghanistan. The USSR occupation evoked national sentiment of the Afghans to stand

against the Former Soviet Union and fought, on the other hand it also led to the creation of Mujahedeen with backup from Pakistan and United States. After Najuballah government Mujahedeen took the power in Kabul, but immediately it was followed by a civil war. Different ethno-religious groups were involved in this conflict which devastated the country.

Since the collapse of the communist regime until 2001 there were no stable government in Afghanistan. In the absence of a central government there was anarchy in the country from 1992-2001, and ethno-religious identity became an important rationale for survival. Hundreds of innocent people were massacred in the name of religion, ethnicity and language. Apparently in Afghanistan the distinct ethno-religious groups are distinguishing themselves apart from the others based on religious sects, ethnicity and language. Therefore, it provides an opportunity for political and religious leader to use religion and ethnic identities for their political purpose and provoked the various ethnic groups for conflict.

After the fall of communism in Afghanistan a kind of an oligarchic government was shaped. During the conflict of 1992-1996, Afghanistan political elites took advantage of symbolic power that ethnic and religion offered them and used it as a tool for pursuing territorial, political and economic objectives. Thus, ethnic identity and religious identity still have the base for political mobilization in order to claim territories and power in Afghanistan. According to social identity theory, identity competition plays a central and important role in the escalation of intergroup conflict besides economic and political factors. In this study, the literature shows that in case of Afghanistan, the role of social identity was paramount.

For a long-time the political power was in the hands of one dominant ethnic group while other minorities were excluded from power. Such deprivation led minorities to seek refuge in the confines of their own ethnicity and religion and also defined themselves in those terms. Although the studies do not deny that there were many factors behind the conflict of 1992 but it remains certain that the main reason was about the fair distribution of political power. On the other hand, for minorities it was also a claim for their social identity as every ethnic wanted a fair participation in the political power, and official recognition of their religion. But the problem arose when the distribution of power was rejected by the Mujahedeen government. The other ethnic claimed that the political power is hijacked by Tajik community who have the 2nd largest population in Afghanistan. And Hazaras and Uzbeks were again excluded from the power equation. This was the starting point of conflict, when the Hazara and Uzbek leaders

announced that they were treated as second class citizens not only by the Pashtuns but also by the Tajiks who were controlling the government after communism.

My conclusion is that the ethnicity, boundary, religion, language are the dominant factors of social identity in Afghanistan and therefore, the conflict of 1992 can be described as having been influenced hugely by these social factors.

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