

**PAKISTAN'S AFGHAN POLICY IN THE POST-COLD  
WAR ERA:  
THE REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

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**CERTIFICATE**

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**THIS WORK IS DEDICATED TO THE COURAGEOUS PEOPLE OF  
AFGHANISTAN**

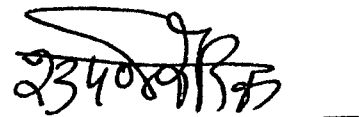
## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This dissertation seeks to study Pakistan's Afghan policy in the post-cold war era and its regional ramifications. During my research process, I accumulated many academic and personal debts. My foremost thanks go to my learned supervisor, Dr. Uma Singh. Her wisdom, erudite rigor and valuable suggestions and comments on the topic inspired me throughout this investigation. I am also indebted to Prof. Kalim Bahadur, Prof. S.D. Muni, Prof. Muchkund Dubey, Prof. Kanti Bajpai and Prof. Dawa Norbu who have encouraged me and made incisive comments on my topic. My special thanks go to Prof. Omansky, Dr. Goga Hydayatov, Dr. AG Rawan Farhadi who spared their valuable time to have exhaustive discussions with me.

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## **PREFACE**

Pakistan's Afghan policy during the period of this study has assumed a marked characteristic due to its larger regional objectives. The post cold war era almost created a power vacuum in the region which prompted Pakistan to arrogate to itself the authority to decide the fate of Afghanistan and project itself as a power to be reckoned with in the adjoining Central Asian region and the Muslim world. With the assumption of the new role, Pakistan was able to rekindle the dwindling interest of the U.S. in South Asia and create new challenges for the regional powers like Russia, India, and Iran.

By controlling Afghanistan, Pakistan wanted to dominate the trade routes between Central Asia and the Indian Ocean. The American and the Pakistani interests in the region found a remarkable convergence. The American investments in the Central Asia needed a safe outlet to the world market. In the absence of a safe route for the oil and gas pipelines through Chechnya, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran, Pakistan's attempt to provide an alternative route through Afghanistan was the most attractive option. For Pakistan it was an opportunity to entice the U.S. and get the necessary aid for its starved economy. This triggered Pakistan's ambition to such an extent that it radically altered its Afghan strategy and created Taliban to capture Kabul. This newfound interest of the U.S. in Pakistan eventually resulted in the Hank Brown amendment, which removed the sanctions imposed earlier.

Washington and Islamabad were using the Afghan situation to influence Central Asian politics and isolate Iran in West Asia. It was also an attempt by Pakistan to marginalise Iranian influence in the Afghan politics. Thus, Pakistan created a new role for itself in the regional politics.

The main objective of this study is to analyze the regional implications of Pakistan's Afghan policy during 1991-97. An attempt has been made to study the attitudes of Pakistan's towards the Central Asian, South Asian and West Asian States in reference to Afghanistan. Pakistan's efforts to dominate the Central Asian trade routes, its ambition to marginalise Iran and reduce its utility as a trade partner and establish itself as a leader of the Sunni world is studied.

Pakistan's objective to create a strategic depth vis-a vis India by controlling Afghanistan is examined. By attempting to create an Islamic state in Afghanistan, Pakistan wanted to demonstrate its capacity to create a separate Islamic state in Kashmir and thereby fuel the separatist movements in India. Thus the Afghan factor in Pakistan's India policy is investigated.

## **Chapters**

### **Chapter 1. Pak-Afghan Relations- Historical Background.**

This chapter provides the panoramic eye-view of the background of the bilateral relations between these two neighbours. These relations have been bedeviled by many issues, such as Pakhtunistan, Non-alignment, Soviet- American rivalry, the Communist coup in Afghanistan, the presence of Mujahideen in Pakistan and some other domestic factors are dealt with in this chapter.

Pakistan's long-term and short-term objectives in Afghanistan have been discussed at length in this chapter. Apart from studying the strategic, economic and political imperatives of Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan, the ethnic, domestic and regional compulsions of Pakistan have been examined.

## **Chapter 2. Pakistan and the Taliban.**

In this chapter an attempt has been made to study the phenomenon of Taliban and its linkages with Pakistan's foreign policy. The assumption that Taliban are the creation of Pakistan has been examined thoroughly.

The role of Taliban and their perception by the international community shall be assessed.

The origin of Taliban, their sources of support, their successes and failures and their future in Afghanistan has been examined. Taliban and their practice of Islam and its impact on the neighbors has been studied.

## **Chapter 3. The Geostrategic Dimensions of Pakistan's Afghan Policy : Implications for Central Asian States and Iran.**

A study has been conducted into the responses of the Central Asian states towards Pakistan's role in Afghanistan. Iranian responses to the developments in Afghanistan have been studied in depth. The questions regarding the spread of fundamentalism, terrorism, narcotics trade, politics of 'energy' and economic aspects are looked into.

## **Chapter 4 India as a Factor in Pakistan's Afghan Policy.**

The Indian responses to the Afghan crisis and Pakistan's reaction to it has been studied in this chapter. The concept of strategic depth, in Pakistan's policy vis-a-vis India is looked into. The consequences for India of Pakistan's post cold war Afghan policy have been studied.

## **Chapter 5. Conclusions.**

On the basis of the above chapters broad conclusions are presented in the last chapter.

## Survey of the Literature

**Barnett R. Rubin, The Search for Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State, (New Heaven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), The Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the International System ( New Heaven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995) and “Women and Pipelines: Afghanistan’s Proxy Wars”, International Affairs, 73, 2, 1997, pp. 283-96.**

In both these books and the article, the developments in Afghanistan in post-cold war period are dealt with. Afghanistan has been considered as a failed state, whose fate was decided by the shifts in the international and regional power configuration.

The state of Afghan society, women, children and the politics of oil pipeline in Afghanistan after the advent of Taliban is discussed in the article. International response to Taliban is also highlighted.

**Esposito, John and Voll, O. John, Islam and Democracy ( New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996). This book provides a deep insight into the relationship between Islam and Democracy in general apart from throwing light on the Pakistani Islam in particular. The comparative role of Islam in foreign policy making of various Islamic states is dealt with adequately in this book.**

**Grassmuck, George et al, Afghanistan : Some New Approaches ( Michigan : University of Michigan, 1969). This book provides an ethnic history of the Afghans. It**



is a comprehensive documentation of Tribal groupings in Afghanistan, their lifestyles, customs, traditions and their political activities. It traces the process of modernization of Afghanistan, its relations with other states and also throws light on the Afghan art and literary traditions. A chronology of events and a specialized bibliography in this book are a useful guide for any research work on Afghanistan.

**Klass, Rosanne ed., Afghanistan: The Great Game Revisited ( New York: ~~Freedom~~ House, 1987).** This book is helpful in understanding the geo-strategic rivalry of USA & USSR in the region during the period of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The book contains systematic documentation of the human rights record of Afghanistan along with the political narration.

**Sreedhar ed., Taliban and the Afghan Turmoil :The Role of USA, Pakistan, Iran and China, (New Delhi : Himalayan Books, 1997).** The book is a compilation of timely articles regarding the question of Taliban. The articles are quite informative. The rise of Taliban, their advancement towards Kabul and their victory is discussed in the book. A detail account of the Taliban arsenal, their support base and involvement of external forces is highlighted in the book. It throws light on the Pak-Afghan relations and its ramifications on the region and vice-versa. Iranian factor in the Afghan scenario is dealt with at length. History of Indo-Afghan relations and a need for an Indian initiative in Afghan crisis is discussed.

**Weinbaum, Marvin G., Pakistan and Afghanistan: Resistance and Reconstruction (Lahore : Pak Book Corporation, 1994).** This book has dealt with the complexities of the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The author has tried to examine the nature of Afghan resistance, its sense of pride and nationalism. The book presents a

useful analysis of the impact of Afghan crisis on the region in general and on Pakistan in particular. The focus is on the lack of a coherence in the policy of Islamabad which led to fragmentation of Afghan society. The problem of refugees, their repatriation and peace initiatives are discussed at length. The Central Asian responses are also dealt with.

### **Hypotheses**

Pakistan created Taliban to wield influence in Afghanistan as well as project itself as the leader of the Islamic world.

Pakistan's political goal in Afghanistan is to gain a strategic depth vis-à-vis India.

### **Methodology**

An historical and analytical methodology is used to conduct this study. Objective study of the questions, issues and other related facts is undertaken. All printed literature-books, journals, newspaper reports, articles and information is used as primary and secondary sources. As not many books have appeared as yet on the topic much of my work based on the information available from the newspapers, periodicals and journals.

Attempts to cull out primary information and authentic views by interviewing the experts of the region and the visiting Afghan and Pak diplomatic dignitaries have also been made.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Most of the studies on the subject are either focussed on the Afghan crisis or the agony of the Afghans. Some scholars have examined the Afghan crisis from the international peace

perspective, some have viewed it in terms of rise of fundamentalism, yet some others have looked at it in terms of Super Power game.

In this study, an attempt has been made to analyze Pakistan's Afghan Policy from regional perspective.

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## **CHAPTER :1**

### **Pak-Afghan Relations: Historical Background**

The most convoluted scenario witnessed in the Afghan region in the post-cold war era has its roots in the history of Pak-Afghan relations and the Super Power rivalry in the region. Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan crisis and its impact on the adjoining regions can not be studied in its entirety without having a broad overview of the historical background of Pak-Afghan relations.

The partition of British India in 1947 led to emergence of Pakistan on the eastern borders of Afghanistan. The question of Pushtun nationalism and Durand Line resurfaced in a more vigorous manner. The Pushtuns living in the North West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P.) and Afghan leadership never accepted the legitimacy of Pakistan nor did they treat Durand Line as an international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>1</sup>

Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, leader of the Khudai Khidmatgars opposed the inclusion of the N.W.F.P. into Pakistan as planned by the British. He demanded a separate homeland 'Pushtunistan,' for the Pushtuns. To create a third state after partitioning British India was not acceptable to the British. The Muslim League outrightly rejected this demand of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan as it contradicted the two nation theory. Therefore, the Pushtuns of N.W.F.P. were left with no option but to join Pakistan, though the Khudai Khidmatgars boycotted the referendum held to decide the fate of N.W.F.P.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Oalf Cairo. 'The Pathans' ( Karachi: Oxford University Press. 1996.ed.9th) p.431.

<sup>2</sup> ibid.. p.432.

The Afghan claims on Pakistan's territory and open support to the Pushtun demands led to internationalization of the Pushtun problem. The Afghan sympathy towards the Pushtun nationalists was only a pretext, as alleged by Pakistan, to pressurize Islamabad to provide a land transit route to port of Karachi or to create an Afghan corridor to port of Makran in Baluchistan.<sup>3</sup> Access to a sea port was a pressing necessity for landlocked Afghanistan.

There were historical basis of Afghanistan's claim over Pushtunistan. The Pushtuns had been living on either side of Durand Line for centuries and the area was a part of the Durrani Dynasty before the British conquered it. Therefore, there was a kind of convergence in the demand of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan for a Pushtunistan and the Afghan territorial claims. It was alleged that Kabul was interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan.<sup>4</sup> Conceding to the Pushtun demands would have led to wider social upheavals within Pakistan. Encouraging Pushtun nationalism would have given fillip to the Bengali and Baluchi separatism.

With the direct involvement of Afghanistan in the Pushtun problem it became necessary for Pakistan to look for extra regional support to handle the problem. Afghanistan had internationalized the Pushtun question by opposing Pakistan's entry

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<sup>3</sup> Mujtaba Razvi, 'The Frontiers of Pakistan: A Study of Frontier Problems in Pakistan's Foreign Policy' (Karachi: National Publishing House Ltd., 1971) p.145

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

into the U.N. in 1947<sup>5</sup>. This created deeper suspicion among the policy making circles of Karachi, who started treating Afghanistan as the extension of the communist Soviet Union in the region. With India as an adversary in the east and Afghanistan as an irridentist state in the north Pakistan moving towards the West.

The relations between these two neighbors were severely affected after the Afghan raids in frontier region of Pakistan in September 1950. Open support to Pushtun Nationalism by King Mohammad Zahir Shah and Afghan Prime Minister Mohammad Hashim Khan through public speeches in favor of Pushtun demands at a 'Jashan' celebration in Kabul in August 1950, was an open declaration of the Afghan claims. Afghan raids were severely condemned by Pakistan and it demanded a British guarantee on the Durand Line.<sup>6</sup>

A pliant state like Pakistan and Afghanistan created the right opportunity for the U.S. to initiate it's mediation for resolution of the conflicts between the two neighbors. Despite several attempts of the U.S. to bring about a solution to Pak- Afghan discord, Afghanistan remained stuck to its position on Durand Line and the Pushtun question. This discouraged all efforts of reconciliation between the neighbors.

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<sup>5</sup> VedPratap Vaidik, "Afghanistan Mein Soviet-Ameriki Pratispardha" (New Delhi: National Publishing House, 1973) p . Also see, Kalim Bhadur, 'Pakistan's Policy Towards Afghanistan', in K.P.Mishra, ed. "Afghanistan in Crisis" ( New Delhi: Vikas, 1981) p.89.

<sup>6</sup> op.cit..Mujtaba Razvi, p.154.

However, the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan improved marginally during the early years of the 50's as the trade and transit took the front seat. An access to Karachi was essential for Afghan goods to reach the international markets. A possibility of a breakthrough was very much visible, but Pushtun question flared up once again when General Mohammad Ayub Khan promulgated the 'one unit scheme' for Pakistan's administration in early 1960's.<sup>7</sup> It forced Punjabi domination over the Pushtuns, who along with fellow Baluchis and Bengalis deeply regretted this move. It was maintained by Pushtuns that Ayub took this decision at the behest of the U.S..

Merger of N.W.F.P. with the western unit coincided with Pakistan joining CENTO.<sup>8</sup> Under a bilateral agreement the U.S. was provided base facilities at Badber near Peshawar. It was a step widely criticized by the Pushtuns. Afghanistan too had its security concerns. The Pushtoon question flared up again. The Pushtuns with fellow Baluchis and Bengalis opposed Ayub's decision. In fact it this 'one unit scheme' became the basis of active Bengali separatism in Pakistan. Afghan Prime Minister Sardar Mohammad Daud, who was main advocate of Pushtun nationalism, took a hardline approach in his policy towards Islamabad. Active support was given to Pushtun nationalists and demonstrations were held all over Afghanistan. Burning of Pakistani missions in Kabul and Jalalabad created unprecedented tensions between

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<sup>7</sup> Mehtab Ali Shah. 'Foreign Policy of Pakistan: Ethnic Impacts on Diplomacy 1971-1994' (London: I:B Tauris. 1997) p.169.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*



both neighbors.<sup>9</sup> The diplomatic ties between Islamabad and Kabul ruptured in August 1961. The trade and transit stopped completely. The U.S.S.R. created almost an airbridge between Moscow and Kabul to sustain Afghanistan in its one of the gravest crises. These developments brought Kabul closer to Moscow. This added to vulnerability of Pakistan. The relations of both these neighbors were getting sucked into power game of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Eventually it was Turkish initiative that helped in negotiating a settlement between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Trade and transit facilities were restored. The relations were normalized but suspicion persisted.

Failure of talks between Sardar Mohammad Naim and Ayub Khan, was a blow to the fragile relationship of Pakistan and Afghanistan in 1960's. Subsequent raids by the Afghan 'lashkars' on Pakistan's territory, forced Pakistan to brake its diplomatic ties with Kabul once again in 1961.<sup>10</sup> It was followed by closure of Pakistani Missions in Kabul; and Jalalabad. Trade and transit blockade was also imposed forcing Kabul to use Soviet routes and Iranian channels to supply its goods to international markets.

Flaring up the Pashtun issue in late 1960's had its implications for internal politics of Afghanistan. Daud himself being champion of Pashtun cause raked up a national debate that had its effects on the Afghan minorities. Rigid stand of Daud on the Pushtun agenda gained him more enemies than friends in Kabul. With the deterioration

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<sup>9</sup> op.cit..Mujtaba Razvi, p.159.

<sup>10</sup> ibid. p.153.

of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan in his first tenure in general and in 1961 in particular, it became necessary for King Zahir Shah to remove Daud from the Prime Minister's position.

With Daud's dismissal in 1963 an era in Afghan politics ended. Democratic inter-regnum of 1963-73 brought about reorientation of Afghanistan's Pakistan policy. Daud's removal marked the end of hostilities between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It was Iran, who mediated the settlement between the two neighbors. As result of Tehran talks of 1963 the diplomatic relations were re-established.<sup>11</sup>

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan reached near normalcy during Democratic inter-regnum. Kingh Zahir Shah had adopted a much more moderate policy towards Pakistan. In fact neutrality of Afghanistan in the Indo-Pak conflict of 1965 was the turning point in Pak-Afghan relations. The relations between these two neighbors improved considerably. The trade and transit flourished. Pakistan too moderated its policy towards Afghanistan . More confidence than suspicion existed on the either side in dealing with each other. It was a period when economics took precedence over the acrimonias issues of Durand Line and Pushtunistan. Pakistan along with Afghanistan placed these issues on the backburner and ignored the traditional differences. Settlement of all the other border issues with China and Iran

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<sup>11</sup> op.cit..Ved Pratap Vaidik. p.188.

were yet another move of Pakistani diplomacy that forced ignorance on the Durand Line issue with Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup> The need to build economic ties was more important as the Indo-Pak conflict of 1965 had its impact on the economies of both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Peaceful political relations were a pre-requisite to promotion of trade and developmental programs.

Internal crisis and rise of Bengali separatism once again flared Pushtun question in the domestic politics of Pakistan in late 1960's and early 1970's. The creation of Bangladesh after Pakistan lost the Indo-Pak war of 1971, the repressive attitude towards Baluch movement by the military leadership of Pakistan exposed the weakness of Pakistani state. Failure of the political process in Baluchistan and the resignation of the National Awami Party (NAP) government in N.W.F.P. gave a new lease of life to the Pushtun question.<sup>13</sup> Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's failure to handle internal problems coupled with continued dissidence of Wali Khan leader of the National Awami Party, had its effect on Pak-Afghan relations. It was alleged that Afghanistan was extending its support to the Pushtuns.

The seizure of power by Sardar Daud in July 1973, marked the beginning of yet another phase in Pak-Afghan relations. The Pushtun question was raised once again as Daud proclaimed it to be the only matter unsettled between the two states.

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<sup>12</sup> op.cit., Mehtab Ali Shah, p. 171.

<sup>13</sup> ibid., p. 172

Pak-Afghan relations after Daud's return to power in 1973 were conditioned by increasing involvement of extra regional powers. Daud himself came to power with the support of Parcham and Khalaq<sup>14</sup>-the leftist organization in Afghanistan, who had links with Moscow. Increasing Soviet interest in Kabul was alarming for Pakistan. Vulnerability of Pakistani leadership after its dismemberment in 1971 added to Islamabad's insecurity. According to the Pakistani academicians Afghanistan was able to profess its views over Durand Line and Pushtunistan in the international forums and add insult to Pakistan's injury.<sup>15</sup>

Continued Afghan sympathy to the Pushtun's almost led Pakistan and Afghanistan to an armed conflict in 1974-75. It was timely intervention by Iran which averted all such possibilities.<sup>16</sup> Iranian involvement was very much guided by its own national interest, as Iran could not afford an ethnic spillover in its border areas. Secondly, Iran was looking for regional economic cooperation with Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. Possibilities of trade with India through land transit via Pakistan was an important objective for Iran. The Afghan interest found common grounds with the Iranian interests. Therefore, Kabul accepted Iranian mediation. It was a regional power

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<sup>14</sup> Sayeed Quaaem Reshtia. 'The Price Of Liberty: The Tragedy of Afghanistan' (Rome: Bardi Editore. 1984). p.40

<sup>15</sup> op.cit., Mujataba Razvi, p.159.

<sup>16</sup> Kalim Bahadur. 'Pakistan's Policy Towards Afghanistan'. in K.P. Mishra. "Afghanistan in Crisis" (New Delhi: Vikas. 1981)p.92.

equation and balance of power objectives that drove all- Pakistan Afghanistan and Iran to negotiate a settlement.

Saur revolution in Afghanistan in April 1978<sup>17</sup> changed the entire complexion of Pak-Afghan relationship in particular and politics of the region in general. It was a left wing takeover in Kabul which was preceded by a right wing regime of General Zia-Ul-Haq at Islamabad who had staged a coup against Bhutto in 1977.<sup>18</sup> These changes in governments and leadership in the either side of the Durand Line had its impact for the adjoining regions. The Iranian interests were at stake. Pakistan perceived itself to be surrounded by communist satellites India and Afghanistan on its eastern and western borders. Soviet support to Kabul and increasing involvement of the U.S. and China in the regional politics was disturbing the balance of power in the region.

In Pakistan, Zia regime was unpopular and was not able to handle demands of Pushtuns and Baluchs. Repeated attempts to pacify the Baluchi and Pushtun nationalist failed to yield adequate results forcing Zia to seek support of the right wing, Jamait-i-Islami. Internal measures like lifting of ban on NAP and dissolution of the Hyderabad tribunal failed and military's attempt to quash the Baluch uprising in concert with the Iranian forces backfired in terms of further straightening of Baluchi resistance.<sup>19</sup> In

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p.93.

fact the Saur revolution of Afghanistan became a source of inspiration for all Baluch and Pushtun nationalists. This fueled the deterioration of Pak-Afghan relations.<sup>20</sup>

There was hardly any change in the Pushtun policy of the new leadership in Kabul. They too gave moral and material support to Pushtuns and Baluchs. Zia adopted an interventionist policy towards Kabul. The Khalq Democratic Party of Afghanistan government in Kabul was as weak and unpopular. There was widespread resentment among the Afghans regarding the policy options of KDPA government. Modernization policy<sup>21</sup> of KDPA government in Kabul, conflicted with the traditional ethos of the Afghans. This alienation forced several Afghans to leave Afghanistan and take refuge in Pakistan. This opportunity was fully exploited by Zia to implement his interventionist policy. The rebel Afghan groups were formed by active refugees and they were given moral and material support by the Pakistani authorities to organize their activities. Support of Jamait-i-Islami was already available to Zia to adopt such an aggressive policy.

Failure of Zia- Taraki Summit in 1978, was largely due to later's rigid stand on the question of Durand Line and Pushtun problem. The relations were worsened with the

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<sup>20</sup> op.cit..Mehatab Ali Shah. p.92.

<sup>21</sup> ibid.

overthrow of Noor Mohammad Taraki on 15th September 1979<sup>22</sup> and the takeover by Hafizullah Amin after Amin's domestic policy further alienated common Afghans and triggered a massive outflow of refugees to adjoining regions of Pakistan and Iran. This added to the strength and muscle of rebel groups operating from Peshawar.

The closing years of 1970's witnessed growing American interest in the South Asian region. With establishment of a communist regime in Kabul the American policy making circles concluded that focus on this region was essential as the Soviet influence was growing speedily. It was beginning of the direct involvement of the Super Powers in the region.

The Soviet army marched into Kabul and Babrak Karmal's government was installed on 27th December 1979. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was a 'godsent' opportunity for General Zia and for Pakistan.<sup>23</sup> A direct involvement of Moscow in Afghanistan gave Pakistan an opportunity to become the 'Frontline State' and helped Zia to consolidate his position in the internal politics of Pakistan. Soviet presence in Afghanistan was perceived as a direct threat to the security of Pakistan. Zia had few options to exercise- (A) Pakistan accepts the Soviet domination of Afghanistan and learn to live with Soviet presence in its immediate neighborhood. (B) Pakistan remains non-aligned and gain support of the West. Saudi Arabia, Iran and other Muslim

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid*.p.93.

<sup>23</sup> Jyotsna Bakshi. 'Pakistan's Geopolitical Game Plan in Afghanistan'. in *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* Vol.1 No.2. July-September.1997..p.35.

countries to counter a possible Soviet action in Afghanistan. (C) Pakistan remains non-aligned and gains Iranian and Chinese support and persuades India to collectively have a regional approach towards Afghan crisis. (D) Pakistan aligns itself with the West and get the American military assistance and the Saudi Arabian funding to strengthen itself and assist the Afghan rebels. Zia exercised the last option and Pakistan aligned itself with the West. Zia was able to exploit the Soviet action in Afghanistan to invite maximum possible military assistance from the U.S. and secured economic aid from the Saudi Arab in the name of Islamic solidarity. Pakistan became important for the U.S. in its strategic calculations. Pakistan used this opportunity to improve its relations with the U.S. The relations between Pakistan and the U.S. had reached the lowest ebb since 1971 on the question of nuclear weapons. Zia was able to refuse the offer of Carter administration of a U.S. \$ 400 million aid package as “peanuts”.<sup>24</sup> Later Zia accepted the offer from the Regan administration for the U.S.\$3.2 billion to be given to Pakistan over a period of six years, equally divided in military and economic assistance. Zia was able to internationalize the Afghan crisis by giving a call at the Organization of Islamic countries (OIC) against the Soviet Union of a brutal aggression on Afghanistan . It was at the initiative of Pakistan that an extra- ordinary session of the Islamic Foreign Minister’s Conference was held in July 1980 in Pakistan, the agenda to expel Afghanistan from the membership of the OIC. Recognition to Babrak Karmal’s

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<sup>24</sup> op.cit. .Kalim Bahadur. p.99.also see Marvin.G. Weinbaum ‘Pakistan and Afghanistan :Resistance and Reconstruction’ (Lahore:Pak Book Corporation.1994)p.18.



government was to be denied. All economic aid to Afghanistan was to be suspended till the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Afghanistan was isolated in the Islamic world. Subsequently, another session was called to review the situation in Afghanistan in summer of 1980. Disputes among the members over the inclusion or expulsion of Afghanistan from membership emerged. This led to failure of the IFMC and Pakistan's initiative. At the domestic level too, Zia faced opposition from PPP leader Nusarat Bhutto who accused him of using Afghan crisis to seek foreign aid on the one hand and buttress his own position as the leader on the other.<sup>26</sup> International initiatives by Pakistan, particularly those at the OIC and the U.N. and its open tilt towards the U.S. were ample proof of its unwillingness to arrive at regional the solution of the Afghan crisis. The fear of Indian prominence in the event of a regional solution to Afghan crisis was very much present in the Pakistan's perceptions. Pakistan never wanted India to take any initiative because of its perceived sympathy for the Babarak Karmal regime in Kabul.

The year 1979 was marked with a vigorous external involvement in the Afghan crisis. Besides Soviet Union Iran, China, the U.S., Saudi Arabia got involved in the Afghan crisis directly. Each of these states had its own national and strategic interests to serve in Afghanistan.

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<sup>25</sup> op.ct..Kalim Bahadur.p.98.

<sup>26</sup> ibid.

The U.S. perceived Pakistan to be the next target of the Soviet Union. It had to be a natural ally of the U.S. in the region to check any further growth of the Soviet expansionism. Loss of Iran as an ally had caught Washington unawares and the Islamic revolution in Iran was detrimental to the U.S. interests in the West Asia. This brought Islamabad much more closer to Washington. Therefore, an improvement in the U.S. - Pakistan relations was inevitable. This eventually helped Pakistan to become frontline state.<sup>27</sup>

Iranian interest was limited. The question of the refugees was important to Tehran. Nearly 1.5 million refugees had crossed over to Iran. Most of these refugees were Shi'a Hazaras from Herat.<sup>28</sup> Though Iran was fighting the war with Iraq but its interests in Afghanistan were equally significant. The demands of Shia Hazara refugees were to be defended by Iran. Iran was cautious enough to give only limited support to Afghan rebels. Iran itself was undergoing change. The religious leader, Ayatullah Khomeini was consolidating his position after the revolution. He was confronted with several pro-Shah elements and organizations like the 'Tudeh' who received open encouragement from Moscow.<sup>29</sup> Existence of such organizations within Iran and the Soviet presence in Afghanistan was a threat to the Iranian revolution. Therefore,

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<sup>27</sup> Gowar Rizvi, 'The Role of External Powers in Afghanistan : Towards Chaos or Political Solution?' In The Iranian Journal of International and Affairs. Special on Afghanistan , 1991.p.60

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, pp.564-65.

<sup>29</sup> Johan Marriam, 'Shi'ite Resistance', in Grant.M.Farr and John.G.Marriam eds. "Afghan Resistance: The Politics of Survival" ( Lahore: Vanguard Book,1988) p.91

Iranian interests in Afghanistan were limited yet vital for its national security. It was logical for Iran to coordinate its efforts with Pakistan to prevent possible expansion of the Soviet influence in the West Asia and South Asia. Support to the Afghan rebels was extended to express solidarity with the Islamic cause and to play an important role in the OIC. Another inherent objective of Iran to take active interest in the Afghan crisis was also to project its radical Islam in Afghanistan and to influence the Soviet Central Asian Islamic republics.

Like Iran, China too had its concerns over the developments in Afghanistan. Soviet action and the Afghan crisis was criticized by Beijing extensively and full support was extended to Islamabad. It was feared in Beijing that after Kabul, Islamabad and Tehran could be targeted by Moscow. With India as a close friend Moscow would be able to encircle China and it would be a direct threat to Chinese security. These factors collectively influenced Chinese decisions to cooperate with Islamabad.

Saudi Arab bankrolled the entire Pakistani initiative of assisting the Afghan rebels. Saudi interests in Afghan crisis was influenced by the developments in Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. <sup>30</sup>The success of the Iranian revolution created a parallal voice in the Islamic world vis-a-vis Saudi Arab as the leader of the Muslim world. Zia's Islamisation drive and active initiatives at the OIC was boosting the image in the Islamic World. Saudi Arab was continued its policy of pouring in funds to promote the

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<sup>30</sup>op.ct.Gowar Rizvi, p.565.

Afghan rebels, which would serve its twin objectives e.g. bolstering its image in the Islamic world and ingratiate the U.S. establishment.

The Soviet direct involvement in Afghan crisis was a result of its own policies towards Afghanistan in the past. Since, the beginning of 1970's the Soviet interests in the Afghan politics was rekindled. Sardar Daud came to power in 1973 with the support of both Parcham and Khalq.<sup>31</sup> Daud's attempt to wriggle out of Moscow's grip in the last days of his second term was an embarrassment to Moscow.<sup>32</sup> Moscow's continued support to Parcham and Khalq after the Saur revolution and the disability of both the parties to provide effective leadership to Afghanistan - the failure of Taraki and Hafizulla Amin- was damaging the image of the Soviet leadership as the credibility of such assistance was questioned. Instability in Afghanistan, Islamic revolution in Iran and emergence of Zia with his pseudo Islamic regime in Pakistan was of grave concern for Moscow as it feared that it would have its effect on the Soviet Central Asian region. Moscow could not overrule the possibilities of an American military strike on Iran during this period. This would have brought the U.S. influence at the door step of the U.S.S.R. It was necessary for policy makers of Moscow to embark upon the course of a direct Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Sayed Querashi Rahista. 'The Price of Liberty. The Tragedy of Afghanistan' (Rome: Bardi Editore, 1984)p.40.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Johan. G. Marriam. 'The Chinese Connection' in Grant.M.Farr and John. G.Marriam eds. "Afghan Resistance: The Politics of Survival" ( Lahore: Vanguard Book, 1988)p.73.

Zia's Afghan policy was two fold, on the one hand Pakistan wanted to appear to be the honest broker of peace in Afghanistan and on the other it was assisting the Afghan rebels. Either way it was exploiting the Afghan crisis to it's own advantage.

One of the main concomitants of Zia's Afghan policy was the establishment of Inter Service Intelligence agency (ISI), which become the right arm of the establishment to coordinate it's efforts with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the U.S. and to funnel American aid to the Afghan rebels. Improvement of relations with the Muslim countries and building new ties with China were other objectives of Zia. During Zia's period the relations between China and the U.S. improved on their own. The Washington-Islamabad- Beijing nexus became active to contain the Soviet advance in the region.

Zia played an important role in the OIC. At the 1984 summit at Casablanca he played a key role in the readmission of Egypt to OIC and, in doing so, reminded his fellow heads of the government that the organization represents the entire Muslim community and not just the Arabs. Zia's initiative in the OIC and UN were directed at getting the necessary support of the Islamic World for its efforts for the Afghan peace.<sup>34</sup>

Egypt had played a crucial part in arms shipment to Pakistan. The U.S. who had created this route to traffic arms to Pakistan. It was using Arab money to buy Egyptian arms and supply them to Pakistan to reach the Afghan rebels. Egypt was chosen for

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<sup>34</sup> Pakistan file of Library of Congress-internet.

this task as it had the large supply of aging Soviet weaponry. Secondly, over the years Egyptians had developed the manufacturing units of spare parts and ammunition. These weapons were very useful for the Afghan rebels as they could consume the ammunition captured from the Soviet deserters. It was an attempt to drain out the Soviet Union and make its efforts costly in Afghanistan.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, Zia defended strongly the inclusion of Egypt in the OIC.

China was yet another major external supplier of weapons to the Afghan rebels. The Chinese weapons like the anti-aircraft guns and rockets were made available to the Afghan rebels. It was through the Wakhan corridor the Chinese weapons reached Peshawar. Soon after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the U.S. defense secretary Harold Brown visited Beijing in January 1980 and entered into an agreement with China to permit the overflights on the Chinese territory for the American planes carrying supply of weapons destined for Afghan resistance. China was requested to join in a joint operation but this proposal was not accepted.<sup>36</sup>

The Americans purchased LMGs from Turkey and over 100 million rounds of ammunition to be supplied to the Afghan rebels. A French connection also existed. It was reported by the Afghan refugees that French were delivering weapons to the Afghan rebels in Herat in exchange of rubies. General Abdul Rashid Dostum, the chief

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<sup>35</sup> John G. Merriam, 'Afghan Resistance : The Politics of Survival' (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1988) p. 80.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

of Jumbish-e-Milli was the recipient of these weapons. It was reported that stringer missiles were given to the Afghan by the French.<sup>37</sup>

During 1983, some 10000 tones of weaponry was transferred to Pakistan based Afghan rebels. The level rose to whopping 65000 tones in 1987.<sup>38</sup> The autonomy given to ISI was tremendous. The ISI used to receive the weapons from all the suppliers at Karachi, Makran, and Peshawar and transported them to Peshawar based rebel groups, who then would reach these weapons to their flied commanders in Afghanistan. The responsibility of the CIA was just to procure weapons and deliver them to Pakistan but the real task was of the ISI who had the responsibility of keeping record of weapons received and distributed. It is alleged by many observers of Afghanistan that only a limited supply was made available to Afghan rebels. Rest of the weaponry was sold in the open markets by the authorities. It is maintained by several arms experts that the U.S. turned a nelson's eye on the pilferage of these weapons even by the Afghan Rebel leaders. They too, sold these weapons in the open Bazars. The proceeds from these sales were then used to maintain their convenient lifestyles. ISI was also involved in helping the rebel leaders to sale these weapons in the open markets. ISI was involved in traing the Afghan rebels in the seven camps established in Peshawar and Quetta.

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<sup>37</sup> Sreedhar, "Taliban Arsenal. in Sreedhar ed. "Taliban and the Afghan Turmoil: The Role of USA, Pakistan, Iran and China ( New Delhi: Himalayan Books.1997)p.61.

<sup>38</sup> Brigadiar Mh. Yusuf and Maj. Adkin eds. . "The Bear Tarp: Afghanistan Untold Story".( Lahore:Jung Publishers.1992)pp.117-18.aslo see Marwin.G.Weibaum. " Pakistan and Afghanistan : Resistance and Reconstruction" ( Lahore: Pak Book Corporation.1994)p.36.

These camps had trained nearly 80000 rebels by 1987.<sup>39</sup> Pakistani army volunteers joined as instructors and observers. They trained the rebels and if necessary reached the front positions and fought with the field commanders.<sup>40</sup> It is, however, important to note here that ISI by this time had become a powerful organ of the Establishment and was enjoying virtual autonomy under Zia in its functioning.

Apart from funneling American aid to Afghan rebels ISI gave preferential treatment to the right wing fundamentalist political outfits. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Afghan commander leading 'Hizbe-i-Islami' was the main favorite of ISI. Jamat-e-Islami and its cadres performed the task of distribution of relief among the Afghan refugees. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar had earned the distinction of a hardline fundamentalist fighter with efficient organization capabilities. He was popular among the Afghan youth, who saw him as their source of inspiration. It was Hekmatyar along with 'Jamat-i-Islami' and 'Jamat-i-Ulema-Islami' party worked closely with Zia regime to establish Madarsas in the N.F.W.P. and Baluchistan. It made Hekmatyar popular among Afghan refugees and he got the necessary political mileage out of this. Hekmatyar received 20%-25% of the total American aid given to Pakistan. 'Hizbe-i-Islami' also received aid from Libyan leader General Gaddafi. Hekmatyar's forces were able to hijack aid

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<sup>39</sup> op.ct.. Brigadier Mh. Yusuf and Maj. Adkin eds.pp.117-18.

<sup>40</sup> ibid..p.117.



and weapons going for the other groups. By an estimate a total of the U.S.\$ 500 million worth of aid was seized by Hekmatyar.<sup>41</sup>

Other rebel leaders had their own support base and each had their linkages with the external players. Abdul Rasul Sayyaf was a leader of a moderate nature and had his connections in the Arab world. The volunteers from all over the Islamic world, specially from Sudan, Libya, Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, Arabia, Burma, Philippines and Indonesia joined Sayyaf's group.<sup>42</sup>

Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, a theologian was the leader of 'Jamait-i-Islami'. Jamat was one of the largest groups. Rabbani was a leader of the coalition of Tajiks and groups based in Panjshir and the northern regions. Known for his consensus and coalition building abilities, Rabbani was a leader of moderate nature.<sup>43</sup>

Sibagtullah Mujaddadi, a traditionalist leader with modest organizational abilities had the support base in the rural Afghanistan. Tribal groups had great respect for Mujaddadi. Mujaddadi's organization was known as 'Jabh-e-Nejat-e-Melli-e-Afghanistan', primarily organized around family members and clan.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Marvin. G. Weinbaum. 'Pakistan and Afghanistan : Resistance and Reconstruction' ( Lahore: Pak Book Corporation, 1994)p.36.

<sup>42</sup> ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Asta Olesan. 'The Mujahedeen and Islam'. in Asta Olesan. "Islam and Politics in Afghanistan" (Surrey : Curzon Press, 1995)p.285.

<sup>44</sup> ibid.



'Harkat-i-Inqalab-i-Islami', was led by Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi. It was the largest group, with Afghans from all segments of Afghanistan. A good orator and charismatic figure with moderate organizational capabilities, Nabi has the support of Pakistan and the Islamic fundamentalist parties and groups of the N.W.F.P..<sup>45</sup>

Sayyid Gailani and his 'Mahaz-i-Melli-i-Islamiye-e- Afghanistan's' support base is limited to the tribal groups. Gaillani enjoyed support of the West and some the U.S. Conservatives support this rebel group.<sup>46</sup>

Mawlawi Yunis Khalis, An Islamist was educated in British India, is a Pushtun from Nangarhar. He has a moderate ideology, believes in the rule of Ulema and is anti-Shi'a. He is supported by ISI and is supplied weapons by China. His men are known for their ferocious ability to fight.<sup>47</sup>

Among these Afghan resistance groups there is yet another grouping of Hazara Afghans, who in the wake of the Afghan crisis had taken refuge in Iran. They represent the Shi'a minority of Afghanistan. In comparison to Peshawer based rebel groups these groups are relatively small and support base is weak. Their level of effectiveness is less

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<sup>45</sup> Rubin. R. Bennett. 'International Aid, War and National Organization', in Rubin .R. Bennett. "Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the International System" (New Heaven, C.T. Yale University press, 1995)pp.208-209.

<sup>46</sup> ibid.

<sup>47</sup> ibid.

than adequate. The arms and money continue to flow for them from Iran, China, and Egypt.<sup>48</sup>

'Harakat-Islami-e- Afghanistan' is led by Sheikh Asif Mohseni. It is a revolutionary group backed by Iran. 'Shawara-i-Inqalab-i-Ittifaq-i- Afghanistan' is headed by Sayyid Behishti. He Represents the Shi'a clerical establishment. 'Sazman-i-Nasir-i-Islami' is another group of Shi'a Hazaras with a decentralized leadership led by young educated Islamist radicalists, enjoying direct financial and tactical support from Iran.<sup>49</sup>

Ahmed Shah Masood was the leader of Afghan settled in Panjshir valley, known for his abilities of military and civil organization. He had the support of all the Afghan settled in an around the Panjshir valley. He, is a Tajik and had strong connections in the Western world. In exchange of rubies, sapphire and other precious and semi-precious stones with the French he secured his arms supply. His Tajik origins were the basis of his alienation with ISI and CIA.<sup>50</sup> An obsession for the Pushtuns in the Afghan resistance movement led ISI not to accept Masood as an important factor in Afghanistan.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> John. G.Marriam. 'Egyptian Connection', in Grant .M.Farr and John. G. Mariameds.. "Afghan Resistance: The Politics of Survival" (Lahore:Vanguard Books.1981)p80.

<sup>49</sup> op.ct.Asta Olsan. "Islam and Politics in Afghanistan" p.285.

<sup>50</sup> Uma Singh . 'Afghan crisis:Regional Implications & Impact on Pak Policy', Occasional Papers "Afghan Factor in the Central Asian Politics". 1994. Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation

<sup>51</sup> ibid.

The element of favoritism for Pashtuns<sup>52</sup> in Pakistan's Afghan policy created cleavages in the social construct of Afghan resistance. It led to alienation of the Iran based Shi'a Hazara groups. This created the predominance of the Peshawer based Afghan groups in the entire resistance movement. Hekmatyar became the most dominant force amongst the Peshawer based groups. These sectarian divisive tendencies in the Afghan groups was also created complications in the Pak-Iran relations. For Iran, it was necessary to defend the interests of the Shi'a Hazara Afghan. It had its fears about the sectarian policy of Islamabad towards latter's own Muslims which might get extended to Afghanistan too.<sup>53</sup> Another fallout of the Pakistan's uneven policy towards these rebels was increasing violence and clashes between Shi'a and Sunni living in N.W.F.P., Sind and Punjab.

Zia's Afghan policy was geared to assist the Mujahedeen. Continued war in Afghanistan resulted in massive inflow of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. By an estimate nearly three million refugees had entered Pakistan in 1979-80 alone. Large numbers of refugees kept on pouring in the Pakistani camps as the fighting continued between rebels and the communist Afghan forces. The young men joined the armed training

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *op.ct.*, Gowhar Rizvi, p.515.

groups. Women and old took up all the other vocations like teaching, nursing and sewing etc. <sup>54</sup>

Further, Pakistan gave free access to all Afghan refugees to move to all the cities of Pakistan. It was seen as a generous policy of Gen. Zia. Presence of refugees was exploited by Zia to the maximum. Apart from the military aid, humanitarian assistance from abroad also arrived for them. American and Saudi assistance was already available, besides the aid received from international agencies like International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and UNHCR. The French human rights agencies also joined these assistance programs. UNHCR supported initially 45% of the entire burden and Pakistan fixed the U.S.\$12 per head as aid for Afghan refugees.

Refugees presence and intermingling with the local population brought about demographic changes in Pakistan's N.W.F.P., Baluchistan and Punjab. Introduction of Afghans in the labor market became a burden for Pakistan as it led to shrinking job opportunities for Pakistani population. Several social and economic problems emerged as refugees almost took over the transport industry of Pakistan. Trucking business was totally under the control of the Afghans, who were ferrying weapons and other goods from Karachi to Peshawar and vice-versa. Cities like Peshawar and Karachi

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<sup>54</sup> Katherin- Haward- Marriam. "Afghan Refugees Women and Their Struggle for Survival.in Grant.M.Farr and John .G. Marriam "Afghan Resistance: The Politics of Survival" ( Lahore: vanguard Books, 1980)p.113.

were totally under the control of the Afghan laborers and workers. The presence of Afghan refugees also created food shortages in Pakistan.<sup>55</sup>

It is alleged by some of the Pakistani academicians that refugees have brought with them the 'Kalashnikov Culture'<sup>56</sup> and strengthened the drug Mafia in Pakistan. Through out 1980's Afghan rebels were supplied weapons by ISI. Small weapons were leaked more often into the local bazars of N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan. Arms were ferried back by Afghans, who in exchange of essentials sold these weapons. Drug trafficking flourished in Pakistan as it became the largest supplier of drugs to the western world. Drug cartels started openly operating in frontier regions of Pakistan due to the alliance between the Afghan, Iranian and Pakistani drug barons. It is reported that mobile laboratories were functional in Pakistan. Simple technology was imported from Iran and raw material was purchased from the Helmand valley in Afghanistan. Political and security protections were provided by the Pakistani drug barons who were the real beneficiaries of this flourishing trade. Tribal areas were becoming rich in Pakistan as they had the complete control over this trade. Drug production and trafficking guaranteed the U.S.\$32.5 million annually as estimated by the National Development Finance Corporation of Pakistan.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>op.ct.. Mehtab Ali Shah, p. 185.

<sup>56</sup> The word Kalashnikov Culture is coined by Mushahid Hussain, depicting the spread of arms and violence in Pakistan, where Kalshnikov rifle is mostly commonly used weapon.

<sup>57</sup> op.ct..Marwin.G. Weinbaum,p. 145.

Pakistan participated extensively in the international exercises for establishing peace in Afghanistan . It's participation was guided by the following objectives. (A) withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan; (B) resettlement and repatriation of Afghan refugees;(c) to establish a pliant government in Afghanistan and (settlement of the Durand Line problem). These objectives were based on gross miscalculation and mis-interpretation of Afghan crisis by Pakistani policy makers as understood by some writers like Weinbaum, who in his work *Pakistan and Afghanistan : Resistance and Reconstruction* writes, “ for many Pakistani there exists a strong tendency to simplify Afghan conflict- once named merely as an artifact of the cold war and then interpreted all too realy as mere tribal rivalries”.<sup>58</sup> The Pushtun issue had always been existing as a factor in the Pak- Afghan relations and always an attempt was made to establish linkages between Indian support and the Pushtun problem. An overestimation of Mujahedeen's capabilities by Islamabad was its undoing on several occasions.

Peace negotiations for Afghanistan began in early 1980's. Pakistan had already taken initiative in the OIC. But little was achieved. Failure of these initiative was attributed to lack of cohesion in the policy and difference of opinion among the OIC members. Eventuly in June 1982 proximity talks began between Pakistan and Afghanistan, these

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<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, p.103.

were brokered by the U.N. special representative for Afghanistan, Diego Cordoviz.<sup>59</sup> Afghan rebel groups, much to their disagreement, were kept out of these negotiations.

The suspicion of continuation of pro-Moscow government in Kabul even after withdrawal of the Soviet forces loomed large in the calculations of Zia. It would have not helped Zia in settling the age-old issues with Afghanistan and would have proved Pakistan's efforts a futile exercise.

Withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan, was extremely sensitive matter for Moscow. It was detrimental to global image of the Soviet Union as a Super power and at the domestic level it would have invited wider criticism. A withdrawal was to be accompanied by the continuation of the Soviet influence in Kabul. This meant that a communist regime was to continue to function in Afghanistan, even after the Soviet withdrawal. Rigidity at both the ends forced the negotiations to drag on for nearly five years.<sup>60</sup>

By 1987, war in Afghanistan had become very costly for Moscow. Soviet relations with the Muslim world were at stake due to continued killings of Muslims in Afghanistan. Option of withdrawal was now in favor of Moscow in its global calculations. Gorbachov administration would have got an opportunity to negotiate

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<sup>59</sup> Rubin.R. Bernett . 'Structures of War and Negotiations'. in Rubin .R. Bernett. "The Search for Peace in Afghanistan : From Buffer State to Failed State"( New Heaven: Yale University Press 1995)p.40.

<sup>60</sup> op.ct..Marvin.G. Weinbaum. p.104.



disarmament with the U.S. with better strength. Relations with China could be improved. The Asian Security plan could be renegotiated with China and Iran. Moscow's decisions of withdrawal from Afghanistan would have helped it to reduce the U.S. influence in the West Asia.<sup>61</sup>

Peace negotiations were equally important for Pakistan. Continued conflict in Afghanistan was creating disturbance in Pakistan. Refugees and their involvement in each and every sphere of domestic politics of Pakistan was generating social and political tensions. Zia was faced with the democratic demands of the people. Economy of Pakistan was burdened by Zia regime's assistance to Afghan resistance. Low record of Human rights, flourishing drug trade and increasing sectarian violence, were detrimental to Pakistan's relations with the West and the Islamic world. The U.N. initiative to involve the Afghan rebels in peace negotiations was not acceptable to Pakistan.<sup>62</sup> Therefore it was gradually becoming necessary for Pakistan to negotiate a settlement with Moscow. It was the American mediation that eventually helped Pakistan and the U.S.S.R. to negotiate a settlement for Afghanistan.

Pakistan wanted involvement of Mujahedeen in the interim government to be established after the Soviet withdrawal. It was understood in Pakistani policy making

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<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>62</sup> V.D. Chopra, 'Geneva Accord and After', introduction and ch. 1 (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers) p13.

circles that involvement of Mujahedeen in the interim government would ensure a Mujaheden takeover of power in Afghanistan ultimately. Zia was once again overestimating the abilities and solidarity of the much divided Afghan resistance groups. Another perception of Pakistan was that Najibullah government after the Soviet withdrawal was bound to get crushed under its own weight and therefore Peshawer based Mujahedeen alliance was to be the natural successor of the communist regime in Kabul.

Finally, Islamabad and Moscow signed the Geneva Accord on 14th April 1988. This agreement formalized the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Afghanistan over next 18 months. The U.S. and the U.S.S.R. both guaranteed that all support, moral and material, to Afghan warring sides shall be stopped immediately. All shall work in coordination for establishment of peace in Afghanistan.

The Soviet withdrawal began in April 1988 itself. A political understanding was essential between Kabul and Afghan rebel alliance settled in Pakistan. Infighting among the rebel groups after the loss of the 'cause' weakened their strength and a dilemma in Pakistan's Afghan policy set in. Political solution was not arrived at due to failure of cohesion among the Afghan rebels to negotiate with Najibullah. ISI was not able to delink itself with Afghan militancy. Its policies remained unchanged. Military establishment was uncompromising as it wanted a military solution to the Afghan

problem.<sup>63</sup> They still had the ambition to defeat Najibullah and establish Mujahedeen led government in Afghanistan. Pakistan's intentions were to continue to support the Mujahedeen volunteers to seek out a military solution. Islamabad's intentions were already surmised by Moscow. While sticking to the Geneva commitment Moscow continued its withdrawal from Afghanistan, but at the same time left its hardware in the custody of Najibullah, so that the government in Kabul could be well prepared to face any eventuality. Indirectly, both sides were violating the Geneva spirits.<sup>64</sup> But the maintenance of status quo was important for Moscow and even Washington had similar intentions. With the Soviet absence from the region and changing global dynamics, the U.S. wanted to wash its hands off the Afghan muddle.

In these circumstances Pakistan was left alone to handle the Afghan crisis. Ojhari<sup>65</sup> incident in the first week of April 1988, was a major blow to ISI activities. The entire supply for the spring offensive by the Afghan rebel groups was blown up in one go. This incident was followed by the sudden demise of Gen. Zia in a plane explosion on the 17th August 1988. With Zia, Gen. Akhtar also died. It removed yet another hardliner from the political scene, forcing Islamabad to adopt much more moderate policy towards Afghanistan. ISI got the new head, Hamid Gul, a relatively younger officer, who like his predecessors adopted independent policy towards Afghanistan. He

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<sup>63</sup> op.ct..Brigadier Mh. Yusuf. p.218.

<sup>64</sup> ibid..p.217.

<sup>65</sup> ibid..pp.222-23.

orchestrated the Jalalabad offensive of Afghan rebels and was responsible for the Jalalabad fiasco. Inability of Afghan rebel groups to capture Jalalabad and their defeat at the hands of Najibullah's forces was a considerable embarrassment to Islamabad. Najibullah emerged as an able leader of the Afghans and was able to prove his strength as a ruler of Kabul. Jalalabad fiasco entailed Hamid Gul's dismissal by Benazir government. It marked the removal of the last key player of Zia's Afghan policy.<sup>66</sup>

Pakistan's Afghan policy didn't change after Zia's death, as successive governments continued to follow similar goals. The main goal of Pakistan was to establish a pliant regime of Mujahedeen group in Kabul. Najibullah came out strong to thwart all efforts of Mujahedeens to oust him. Hekmatyar emerged as the most powerful warlord and was extended full support by ISI. Hekmatyar continued to shell Kabul. Meanwhile ISI forged links also with Rashid Dostum who was operating from the north of Afghanistan. It was an attempt to weaken the Kabul regime, by encircling it from the north and south. Najibullah was drained of his resources by continued fighting with Hekmatyar forces in the south.<sup>67</sup> Supplies from the Soviet Union were declining, making it difficult for Najibullah to hold fort. The final blow came when Moscow gave in to the demands of the Mujahedeen groups demands of participation in the Afghan government. Najibullah was eased out by ailing Moscow, just before Soviet Union

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<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Rubin, R. Bernett. 'The Fragmentation of Afghanistan : State Formation and Collapse in the International System' ( New Heaven : Yale University Press,1995)p.271

disintegrated. Peshawer Accord<sup>68</sup> was signed in 1992 April. Under the provisions of this accord Mujahedeen led government was to be established in Kabul and guarantees were extended by Pakistan, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

With Sibgatullah Mujaddadi the first mujahedeen led Islamic government came to power in Kabul in June 1992. It was an accomplishment of sorts for Pakistan as it had succeeded in installing a Islamic government in Kabul. It was not the end of crisis for Afghanistan but it was beginning of yet another phase of hostilities among the warring factions. Hekmatyar neither participated nor accepted the Peshawer accord. He continued to shell Kabul. Iran based Shi'a groups too opposed Mujadaddi's government. Excessive pressure from these groups forced Mojaddadi out of office. Rabbani became the President of the Afghanistanin 1993. This transfer of power was considered most peaceful in Kabul after the death of Ahmed Shah Abdali. In fact Mujaddadi had hardly any real power to transfer.<sup>69</sup>

Rabbani, like his predecessor too was confronted by Hekmatyar, who by now had turned belligerent. Continued fighting between Hekmatyar's forces with Rabbani's generated ethnic pressures in Afghanistan.<sup>70</sup> Pakistan made no attempts to check Hekmatayar's repeated attempts to seize power in Afghanistan. Iran and Saudi Arabia were suspicious of cultural tensions that were building in Afghanistan . A

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.* p.226.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.* p.273.

reconciliation between Rabbani and Hekmatyar was impossible. It was due to a collective mediation efforts of Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia the Islamabad Accord was signed.<sup>71</sup> According to the agreement Rabbani was continue as President and Hekmatyar was to join this Islamic government as Defense Minister.

Pakistan's Afghan policy witnessed its litmus test at the hands of Hekmatyar and Rabbani, as none of them adhered to Islamabad accord. Hekmatyar never wanted to settle for less than total power in Afghanistan. Rabbani on the other hand took to independent policy towards India and Iran, thereby marginalising Pakistan's ambitions. This virtually reduced Pakistan's efforts into a futile exercise. This disillusioned the Pakistani establishment.

To sum up, Pak- Afghan relations were never cordial. They began on a antagonistic note and saw several ups and down in the last five decades. Pushtun question , Durand Line and trade & transit were the main contentious issues that conditioned their relations.

However, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 Pakistan became the frontline state and got involved in internal affairs of Afghanistan. Pakistan invited cold war dynamics to this region. It entailed wider participation of Super Powers and regional players in the Afghan crisis.

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<sup>71</sup> ibid.p.274.

Much of what is happening in Afghanistan today is a result of Zia's policy towards Afghanistan. It has its political and social implications for Afghanistan, adjoining regions and for internal politics of Pakistan.

## **CHAPTER:2**

### **Pakistan and the Taliban**

Pakistan's Afghan policy witnessed a marked shift in the post cold war era. The creation of the Taliban<sup>1</sup>, an alternative force to replace the Mujadeen and the capture of Kabul by them gave birth to a new political and strategic scenario in the South and Central Asia.

The necessity of such a shift in Pakistan's Afghan policy was the outcome of the developments taking place in the South Asian region. Pakistan's Afghan policy received a major setback after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. in 1992. With the dwindling of the Super Power rivalry in the South Asian region, Pakistan lost the status of the 'Frontline state' as it had outlived its utility for the U.S. strategic interests in the region. Growing U.S. disinterest in the region was the result of Pakistan's inability to control its internal problems<sup>2</sup> and the lukewarm support to the American initiative in the Gulf crisis.<sup>3</sup> Bennett Rubin maintains that, "Inclusion of the Mujahedeen for symbolic support to the U.S. led contingents....., was a prospect", which recieved, "objections from the radical Mujahedeen groups and Pakistani military officers including Chief of Staff Mirza Aslam Beg".<sup>4</sup> Beg deeply resented cutting of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Taliban' is plural of the word 'Talib', which in Persian means a student receiving education in a Madarsa

<sup>2</sup> Ahmed Rashid, 'Drug Overdose' in Far Eastern Economic Review, (Hong Kong) 15 December, 1994, p.24.

<sup>3</sup> Agha Shahi, 'Pakistan's Security Commitment' Defence Journal, September 1991, p.33.

<sup>4</sup> Bennett Rubin, 'The Search of Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State' (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1995) p 112. writing for use of Afghan Mujahedeen forces in Gulf War efforts



aid to Pakistan. Further, it was alleged that Pakistan was supporting the fundamentalist terrorist who were spreading terror in the West and it was also involved in increasing drug trafficking around the globe<sup>5</sup>. With a poor human rights record Pakistan was bound to face the wrath of the U.S., who had not only imposed sanctions on Islamabad but was close to declare it a terrorist state. Torn between its internal problems, Afghan responsibility and the American disengagement, Pakistan found itself in a hapless situation. A reorientation of Pakistan's Afghan policy was necessary.

For the first time, since, 1979 Pakistan had to deal with Kabul, independent of America and without the fear of the Soviet interference. The continued fighting in Afghanistan among the Mujahedeen groups disillusioned Islamabad considerably. Hekmatyar's belligerence and Rabbani's assumption of independent role further marginalised decade long ambitions of Pakistan.

The Power vacuum created due to absence of the Super Power rivalry in the region gave Pakistan the opportunity to arrogate to itself the authority to decide the fate of Afghanistan and project itself as a regional power to be reckoned with. These ambitions of Pakistan received a major boost once the Central Asian states came into existence<sup>6</sup>. As perceived by the policy makers in Islamabad the predominantly Muslim

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<sup>5</sup> Ikmal Haq, 'Pak-Afghan Drug Trade: Historical Perspective' in Asian Survey, (California) vol. xxxvi, no. 10, October 1996.

<sup>6</sup> P. Stobdan, 'Looking Towards Central Asia', in Strategic Analysis (New Delhi) November 1933, vol. xvi, no. 8, p. 1

population of these states for the projection of Pakistan's Islamic ideology<sup>7</sup>. The Central Asian States opened up new markets and gave new opportunities to Pakistan. This necessitated a change in Islamabad's Afghan policy as Afghanistan was an important link for Central Asian trade<sup>8</sup>. ISI, the Army and political leadership of Pakistan had realized the indispensability of the Afghanistans trade routes which were to connect Central Asian markets to Pakistan's ports. By controlling Afghanistan, Pakistan wanted to dominate the Central Asian trade routes<sup>9</sup>.

Pakistan tried to pursue six important objectives through its policy towards Afghanistan in the post cold war era. Firstly, gaining control over Afghanistan. Secondly, expanding its strategic profile in Central Asia. Thirdly, clamouring for the leadership of the Islamic bloc. Fourthly, refurbishing its dwindling alliance with the U.S.A. Fifthly, creating a strategic depth vis-à-vis India and sixthly, solving its internal problems or atleast use Afghanistan as diversionary factor.

These objectives were to be fulfilled by the new force, the Taliban. The Taliban were a group of students who come together as a reactionary force against the failures of the Mujahedeen groups in establishing peace in Afghanistan. They had organized themselves to fight the Afghan civil war to the end. Taliban were the children of

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<sup>7</sup> ibid.p.2.

<sup>8</sup> ibid.p.3.

<sup>9</sup> K.Subermaniam, Islamic Taliban. in Economics Times( New Delhi) Tuesday, 17 October 1991.

'Jihad'<sup>10</sup> and Afghan resistance years, who had received limited and traditional education imparted in *Madrasahs* of Baluchistan and the N.W.F.P. They are bound by the ideology of Islam and have strong linkages with Pakistan. It was the Deoband school of Islamic thought that had influenced the religious training of these students. Deoband tradition is a form of conservative orthodoxy which is very much reflected in the ideology that guides Taliban.<sup>11</sup>

It was ISI and Army of Pakistan who had helped in creation of Taliban as a militia force, but the guidance of Nasirullah Baber the then Home Minister of Pakistan was readily available to them. According to Ahmed Rashid, "the Taliban had been created, launched and armed by Pakistan in order to fulfill the government's 'manifest destiny' of opening of trade route with Central Asia."<sup>12</sup>

A dilemma persisted whether Taliban could replace Mujahedeen or not?<sup>13</sup> The ISI continued to debate and question the ability of Taliban as a militia force. However, it was on the persuasion of Naseerullah Baber and JUI that Taliban received support of ISI. The ISI that transformed the nature and character of the Taliban and formulated the strategy for their advance towards Kabul. The all Pushtun character of Taliban was a plus point which won the favor of ISI and Military. The ISI provided the ex-Afghan

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<sup>10</sup> 'Jihad' is term means holy war.. also see. Owais Tohid. Jihad at Home'. The Herald (Karachi) December 1997, p.65.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmed Rashid. "Pakistan and the Taliban. in William Maley ed.. "Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban" ( Lahore: Vanguard Books. 1998). p. 75.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*. p.86.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*. p.85.

soldiers, technicians and war experts to Taliban. A limited military support was also extended to Taliban, this included ammunition for large calibre and artillery shells.<sup>14</sup>

Apart from the students of *Madrasahs*, Talibs, Taliban as a group comprises of leadership and rank and file drawn from former Mujahedeen groups<sup>15</sup>. It is maintained by several scholars that the former 'Parchami' and 'Khalqi' commanders also joined hands with the Taliban. Some of the Taliban 'Askar-e- Mazdoor', the paid mercenaries<sup>16</sup>. Many of the Talib's are affiliated with Mohammad Nabi Mohammad's 'Harkat-e-Enqalab-e-Islami'<sup>17</sup>. Pushtuns of secular origins also constituted the rank and file of Taliban. Taliban have also accounted the 'Kandhari Pai Luch' brotherhood, a secrete society, which had been involved in anti-modernist disturbances at the instigation of conservative clerics in Kandhar since 1959<sup>18</sup>. Armed Pushtuns of the northern Afghanistan have also joined the ranks of Taliban, making it a formidable force<sup>19</sup>. Apart from the Afghan recruits, Taliban as a group have got the human and financial resources of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia<sup>20</sup>. Financial assistance to the Taliban

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<sup>15</sup> Anthony Davis. 'How Taliban Became a Military Force?' In William Maley ed., "Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban" (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1998), p.55.

<sup>16</sup> As said by Dr. V.P. Vaidik in a seminar on 'Afghan Crisis', On 16.10.1996, at IIC New Delhi.

<sup>17</sup> op.cit., Anthony Davis, p.55.

<sup>18</sup> ibid p.15., also see Louis Dupree, "Afghanistan", (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) p.537.

<sup>19</sup> op.cit., Anthony Davis, p.55.

<sup>20</sup> Shreedhar, 'The Taliban Factor in the Ongoing Afghan Civil War', in Strategic Analysis (New Delhi) January/February 1997, p.1465.

has also, come from private sources. "One line of thinking is that Taliban is not getting any money from any government, but the rich oil sheikhs".<sup>21</sup> They are making large donations to the *Madrrsas*. These *Madrassas* are inturn funding the activities of the Taliban. These *Madrassas* are not accountable to anybody. It is also reported that "from time to time", there were occasions when, "Pakistani authorities diverted some of the money received from the agencies like the UN", to support the Taliban movement.<sup>22</sup> It is maintained by several scholars that like Mujahedeen Taliban too are trained by Pakistani officers, ISI intelligence network and volunteers from army<sup>23</sup>. The political parties like 'Jamat-e-Ulema-i -Islam' led by Maulana Fazur Rehman gave ideological support as well as helped in recruiting Pakistani Islamic fundamentalist students to fight for the cause<sup>24</sup>.

The leadership of the Taliban is largely constituted by the Afghan Mullahs. The supreme leader of the Taliban, Maulvi Mohammad Ummar, is a middle aged cock-eyed man. He belongs to the Urozgan province and by birth he is a Nurzai Durrani Pushtun.<sup>25</sup> Maulvi Pasani, is the Chief justice and Maulvi Abbas heads the local

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *op.cit.*, Anthony Davis. pp. 76-77. also see. Ramimullah Yusufzai. "Here Comes the Taliban". *Newsline* (Islamabad) Februray 1995. p.28

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, also see. Ramimullah Yusufzai. "Here Comes the Taliban". *Newsline* (Islamabad) Februray 1995. p.28. also see Owais Tohid. 'The New Recruits,' *The Herald* (Karachi) December 1997. pp.67-68.

<sup>25</sup> *op.cit.*, Shreedhar. p.1465.

administrative body<sup>26</sup>. Other leaders of the Taliban movement are Mohammad Gaus, Mohammad Abbas, Mohammad Hassan, Maulvi Wakil Ahmed. Each of these Taliban leaders use the title of Maulvi or Maulana, making a distinction between themselves and their followers<sup>27</sup>.

The Taliban had made deeper links with the trucking Mafia and drug lords of Pakistan. Tribal groups of FATA regions and provincial governments in Baluchistan and N.W.F.P. lent effective support to the activities of Taliban<sup>28</sup>. The trucking and drug Mafia based in Baluchistan and N.W.F.P. was looking for a change in the character of the Afghan resistance<sup>29</sup>. This was a result of their grievances against the Afghan Mujahedeen who had disrupted their income by intercepting their traditional smuggling ties with Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup> These Mujahedeen groups also blocked the expansion of smuggling trade from Quetta-Chaman to Iran and Central Asia.<sup>31</sup> The Taliban were seen as an effective alternative to the Afghan Mujahedeen groups. They, therefore, became the new receivers of the aid from these Mafia groups. By an estimate of The Central Board of Revenue, Pakistan lost 3.5 billion rupees that equals to U.S.A.\$ 87.5 million in customs revenue in the year 1992-93, 11 billion rupees that equals to U.S.A.\$275 million during 1993-94 and 20 billion rupees that equals to US\$ 500

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *op.cit.*..Anthony Davis, pp.76-77.

<sup>28</sup> *op.cit.*..Ahmed Rashid, p.77.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

million during 1994-95.<sup>32</sup> In a study prepared by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics it was estimated that the smuggling trade had an annual turnover of almost one third, that is 100 billion rupees of the estimated black economy of 350 billion rupees.<sup>33</sup>

Provincial governments of Baluchistan and N.W.F.P. in Pakistan have also extended support to Taliban.<sup>34</sup> In early 1980's a permit system was introduced by federal government in Pakistan, this was to be used by provincial traders to buy goods and then sell them to Afghan groups.<sup>35</sup> Taliban like their predecessor's allowed the provincial governments to make best use of these permits.<sup>36</sup> Further, Taliban in their pursuit of reaching Kabul had increased the possibilities of higher volume of trade by the permit holders. It would have led to unprecedented growth of trade. This gave the provincial trading class an opportunity to use their permits extensively. This in turn generated shortages in Pakistan's domestic economy.<sup>37</sup> At the same time a wider bargaining option was visible to the provincial governments who used Taliban's presence to negotiate better deals with the center.

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<sup>32</sup> Ahmed Rashid. 'Nothing to Declare'. Far Eastern Economic Review. (Hong Kong) 11 May 1995, p.30.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *op.cit.* Ahmed Rashid. 'Pakistan and the Taliban, p.83.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

Afghan crisis was the only hindrance for establishing new trade routes between Pakistan and Central Asia. Successive Pakistani governments were desperate to open this route. Cash strapped economy, pressures from the IMF and World Bank, day to day shortages and increasing burden of Afghan refugees was a drain on Pakistan's economy. Central Asian trade was essential to secure the growth of a declining Pakistani economy. Taliban were to secure this route for Pakistan by conquering Kandhar and Herat. It would have opened the first route to Central Asia that was to be guaranteed by Taliban. Therefore the first task that was assigned to Taliban was to advance in the southern Afghanistan.

The first campaign of the Taliban movement began in August 1994,<sup>38</sup> when they tried to open the traditional overland route to Central Asia. The Taliban got involved in the localized fighting. Taliban gave protection to Pakistani convoy that was moving towards Central Asia.<sup>39</sup> This convey of trucks was intercepted near Kandhar by the local warlords.<sup>40</sup> The Taliban accomplished their task of providing safety to the convoy and they did so by fighting the local warlords<sup>41</sup>. This rescue operation was swift and short-lived.

Followed by the rescue operation was the attack on Spin Boldak armory by the Taliban.<sup>42</sup> The fall of Spin Boldak gave Taliban the opportunity to seize the largest

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<sup>38</sup> op.cit..Sreedhar. p.1467.

<sup>39</sup> ibid.

<sup>40</sup> ibid.

<sup>41</sup> ibid.

<sup>42</sup> op.cit..Anthony Davis. p46.



ammunition depots. These arms were primarily in custody of Hekmatyar's forces<sup>43</sup>. Taliban victory gave a new turn to the Afghan crisis. It marked the injection of a new militia force in Afghanistan. Afghan warlords deeply resented the victory of the Taliban. They accused Pakistan for the creation of the Taliban and introducing a new factor in the Afghan crisis. Response of the Rabbani government towards the victory of the Taliban was soft. Kabul at that time was also courting Taliban<sup>44</sup>. However, the southern commanders of the Afghan government in Herat were suspicious of the Taliban and their larger ambitions in the region.

Meanwhile, General Nassirullah Baber, the then Home minister of Pakistan adopted shuttle diplomacy between Islamabad, Peshawar, Kabul, Kandhar, Mazar and Central Asian capitals to make sure that Afghan groups and Central Asian states shall cooperate in opening up the trade route between Pakistan and central Asia via Afghanistan.<sup>45</sup> His prime concern was to secure the Western aid for the upgradation of the Trans Afghan highway. It is reported that an aid worth U.S.A.\$ 300 million was to be given to Pakistan by the West for the upgradation purposes.<sup>46</sup> On 20th October 1994, in an effort to secure the proposed aid package, Baber, took a delegation of Islamabad based Ambassadors of Russia, U.S. , China, Korea and Italy to Quetta, Kandhar and Chaman for the review of the situation.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> op.cit.. Sreedhar, p.1467.

<sup>44</sup> op.cit.. Anthony Davis, p49.

<sup>45</sup> op.cit.. Anthony Davis, p49.

<sup>46</sup> ibid.

<sup>47</sup> ibid.

Fall of Kandhar, in November 1994 was the next important victory of the Taliban. Kandhar was an important city and a new force like Taliban could seize it out of the hands of warlords was remarkable feat of this student militia. But at the same time questions were raised by the most Afghanistan watchers that how could a student militia named Taliban could fight a full war with the Afghan warlords? <sup>48</sup> The Taliban were using the most modern equipment like heavy artillery shells, APCs and shoulder fired rockets.<sup>49</sup> It was claimed by the Taliban that these were the weapons which were captured by defeating the enemies. It was argued that without the tactical support of Pakistan or the logistics support given by ISI and army of Pakistan, Taliban could not achieve what they had.<sup>50</sup> Pakistan negated any nexus with the Taliban, as the initial response to these questions was negative.<sup>51</sup>

However, the truth remained that ISI was supporting the activities of the Taliban. The first admission was made by the former Chief of ISI, Lt. Gen. Hamid Gul, who told the international press that the Taliban, “are actually a phoenix who have returned to be the real masters of the Afghan chess board”.<sup>52</sup> By February 1995 the Taliban had gained control over Kandhar, Zabul, Helmund, Uruzgan, Gazni, Paktia and Paktika.<sup>53</sup> The fatigued and war ravaged armies of the local warlords gave way to the Taliban’s advances in the southern Afghanistan. The Taliban received little or no resistance in

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<sup>48</sup> Aabha Dixit, writing a report on Afghan crisis in Pioneer New Delhi

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *op.cit.*, Sreedhar, p.1467.

these regions, as all the local war lords were less equipped. Rabbani government was facing the challenge of Hekmatyar, Dostam and now the Taliban who had emerged as a major force in southern Afghanistan.<sup>54</sup>

By 12 February 1995 the Taliban forces, had reached the outskirts of Kabul.<sup>55</sup> Pitched battles were fought between the Taliban and the forces loyal to Kabul. The first offensive of the Taliban was checked by the Government forces as Ahmed Shah Masood's forces, pushed back the Taliban.<sup>56</sup>

Facing defeat in the first offensive on Kabul, the Taliban moved towards Herat. The offensive on Herat was equally taxing for the forces of Taliban as they were met with stiff resistance by the Afghan commander Ismail Khan.<sup>57</sup> Taliban were able to enter Herat region after weakening of Ismail Khan, who lost control due to defection of his own rank and file.<sup>58</sup> After defeat Ismail Khan deserted Herat and took refuge in Iran.<sup>59</sup> This proved disastrous for the Rabbani government as Taliban made their way into this strategic region. Rabbani government airlifted supplies and forces to defend Herat.<sup>60</sup> For the first time, since 1992 such heavy fighting was witnessed in Afghanistan. Nearly for three days Taliban forces continued to fight with the

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<sup>54</sup> Ahmad Rashid, 'Turn of the Tide: Rebel Forces Squeeze Rabbani From Three Fronts' Far Eastern Economic Review ( Hong Kong) 21 September, 1995, p.23.

<sup>55</sup> Ahmed Rashid, 'The Day of the Taliban' The Herad ( Karachi) October 1996, p.68.

<sup>56</sup> op.cit., Anthony Davis, p.49.

<sup>57</sup> ibid.

<sup>58</sup> ibid.

<sup>59</sup> op.cit., Ahmad Rashid, p.23.

<sup>60</sup> op.cit., Anthony Davis, p.49.

government forces and eventually overpowered them<sup>61</sup>. After capturing Herat, the Taliban had taken full control of thirty provinces of southern Afghanistan including six provinces near Kabul.<sup>62</sup>

Failures of the Taliban in their offensives on Kabul and earlier in Herat raised questions about their ability to perform the task assigned to them by ISI.

Summer of 1995 saw a relative scaling down of offensives by the Taliban. It was perhaps the interval brought about by the failures of the earlier missions of the Taliban.

It is reported that this was the period when the re-enforcement were sent to the Taliban.<sup>63</sup> A recruitment drive began to increase the size of the Taliban's rank and file.

Talib's studying in the *madrassas* of Pakistan were sent to join the Taliban and fight the '*Jihad*' in Afghanistan.<sup>64</sup>

Kabul came under offensive once again in the autumn of 1995, it was the last battle fought before the onset of the winter.<sup>65</sup> Eastern and the southern flank of the city were totally under the gunfire for several days. Massood's forces were the prime target of the Taliban offensive.<sup>66</sup> Fighting on the Eastern flank of the Kabul was intense and the

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<sup>61</sup> op.cit. Ahmad Rashid. 'Turn of the Tide: Rebel Forces Squeeze Rabbani From Three Fronts', p.23.

<sup>62</sup> ibid.

<sup>63</sup> op.cit.. Sreedhar. p.1467. also see Sreedhar. "Taliban and Afghan Turmoil: The Role of USA, Pakistan, Iran, China" (New Delhi: Himalyan Books, 1997).

<sup>64</sup> Owais Tohid. 'The New Recruits.' The Herald (Karachi) December 1997. pp.67-68.

<sup>65</sup> op.cit.. Ahmed Rashid. 'The Day of the Taliban' p.66.

<sup>66</sup> ibid.

Taliban were able to reach the outskirts of Afghan Capital. “ Taliban infantry backed by some (But Sufficient) armor and intense artillery barrages captured the Village of Band-e-Ghazi and Khord Kabul” near Pul-e Charkhi.<sup>67</sup> They were within the three kilometer radius of Kabul. The most distinct feature of this offensive of the Taliban was that they fought as military force and amateur fighters were the once who faced death. It was a well planned and effectively executed mission, that brought them closer to Kabul. Setting of winter stopped the fighting. Kabul was surrounded but was not conquered. Taliban came out as a organized force, with high moral and were waiting for the summer offensive. Ahemad Shah Masood’s forces were fatigued fighting the unrelenting Taliban. Dramatic advances of the Taliban was a major setback for Masood’s force. By the end of November 1995 government forces and Masood’s men were able to restrict the Taliban’s advance to the outskirts of Kabul .<sup>68</sup>

Rabbani government was facing the worst crisis of it’s tenure. Pakistan’s involvement in promoting the Taliban was criticized by Kabul. The Afghanistan ambassador to the UN, Dr.A.G. Rawan Farhadi, said that, “ Pakistan had propped up the Taliban to destabilize the Government in Kabul”.<sup>69</sup>It was treated as Pakistan’s direct interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Advance of the Taliban and Kabul’s seize was deeply resented.

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<sup>67</sup> ibid.

<sup>68</sup> op.cit.,Anthony Davis. p49.

<sup>69</sup> interview with Dr. Ravan Farhadi on 9th April 1996. New Delhi.

Afghan Foreign Minister Mohammad Gafoorzai maintained that, "We know that the Taliban would defeat Masood's men and enter Kabul within three weeks, if they had planned a summer offensive in May-June 1996".<sup>70</sup> They were looking towards all the neighbors and India to take an initiative at the regional level to establish peace in Afghanistan.<sup>71</sup>

27th September 1996, Kabul fell to the Taliban.<sup>72</sup> The summer offensive of the Taliban was successful as it defeated the forces of Masood and Hekmatyar. Masood was not able to stop the offensive of the Taliban as a counter offensive could not be planned.<sup>73</sup> He lost the crucial period of winter and early summer, January to March 1996.<sup>74</sup> In deciding the plans to check the Taliban, confusion between Hekmatyar and Rabbani government weakened Masoods plans. Hekmatyar was worst hit by the Taliban onslaught on Kabul. He had lost all his key places to the student militia and was forced to cooperate with Rabbani government to fight against the common enemy the Taliban. But lack of effective coordination between him, Masood and Rabbani. resulted in the failure of Masood. However, Masood had clear advantage over the Taliban as his forces were flushed with funds and the tactical support by Iran and Russia was continuously available. In contrast, the Taliban forces were facing the bitter winter and

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<sup>70</sup> interview with Gafoorzai on 9th April 1996. New Delhi.

<sup>71</sup> ibid.

<sup>72</sup> op.cit..Ahmed Rashid. 'The Day of the Taliban' October 1996, p.66. also see J.N. Dixit "Back to the Dark Ages" .Outlook (New Delhi) 9 October. 1996. p.32.. Reports of Asian Age 28th September 1996.

<sup>73</sup> op.cit..Anthony Davis. p49.

<sup>74</sup> ibid.

were frustrated from prolonged battle for Kabul. Unlike the Masood's forces Taliban forces were not used to fight prolonged battle. They thrived on the swift and flash strikes.

Several factors helped Taliban to seize Kabul from the hands of Masood's forces. First, they had planned their strategy in the most effective way. The option of taking Kabul after defeating Hekmatyar's forces in the east and engaging Masood's forces was clearly in their favor.<sup>75</sup> Capturing Sarobi and Pul-e-Charkhi with a overwhelming speed gave no chance to Masood to maneuver his forces.<sup>76</sup> Secondly the tactical support extended by Islamabad went clearly in favor of the Taliban. According to Anthony Davis, "Covert Pakistani support for the Taliban can be conferred as fundamental..... Various players in Pakistan, official and non- official, have been involved in backing the Taliban, the pre-eminent role is played by the ISI's Afghan Bureau."<sup>77</sup> The Afghan Bureau of ISI helped the Taliban in gathering the necessary intelligence and plan its offensive, spare parts, ammunition, weapons and new vehicles were given to the Taliban in order to act swiftly.<sup>78</sup> All supplies were trucked to Afghanistan.<sup>79</sup> The artillery force, communication networks and air force back up was given by the ISI. Thirdly, warweariness of Masood's forces and their

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<sup>75</sup> ibid.

<sup>76</sup> ibid.,p.46.

<sup>77</sup> ibid.

<sup>78</sup> ibid.

<sup>79</sup> ibid.

discomfiture to fight along side Hekmatyar's forces in an attempt to save Kabul enfeebled their entire counter attack.

The victory of the Taliban brought entire southern Afghanistan and Kabul under the control of the militia propped by Pakistan. It ousted Mujahedeen groups from Kabul. Rabbani and Masood took refuge in the Panjshir valley.<sup>80</sup> The cleavages among the Afghan groups got consolidated in their territorial control of Afghanistan. Northern Afghanistan was under the control of the Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum. The Pushtun Taliban controlled the southern Afghanistan, Hazara and Malick Phalwan controlled the Western Afghanistan.

The introduction of the Taliban and their subsequent success in Afghanistan added a new dimension to the Afghan crisis. The Pushtuns were now fighting the non-Pushtuns.<sup>81</sup>

Dostum being an Uzbek was getting the support of Uzbekistan.<sup>82</sup> Masood being Tajik was getting tactical support of the Tajiks.<sup>83</sup> Seizure of Kabul by the Taliban, therefore, doesn't mean an end to the violence in Afghanistan. The warlords sitting in Mazar-e-Sharif, Badakshan, Panjshir and Faizabad could unite against the Taliban.<sup>84</sup> Afghan

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<sup>80</sup> op.cit..Ahmed Rashid. p.66.

<sup>81</sup> Zahid Hussain. 'Diplomatic Blunder: Pakistan's Premature Recognition Backfires as the Taliban Retreat From Mazar-e-Sherif' in News Line (Islamabad) June 1997.p.49.

<sup>82</sup> Ahmed Rashid. 'Grinding Halt: Taliban Students May Suffer Serious Setback'. in Far Eastern Economic Review( Hong Kong) 18 May 1995.p.24.

<sup>83</sup>  
<sup>84</sup> J. N. Dixit. "Back to the Dark Ages" . Outlook (New Delhi) 9 October. 1996. p.32.



crisis had the history of shifting alliances and changing military equations. While the Taliban were moving towards Kabul it was Hekmatyar who joined hands with Rabbani.<sup>85</sup> It was Iran, Russia and some Central Asian States that had helped forging an anti-Taliban military alliance among Uzbek war lord Dostum, Tajik commander Masood and Karim Khailli.<sup>86</sup> Taliban on the other hand brokered peace with Dostum and Khailli, so that they are not surrounded by three military forces in their next attempt to capture Kabul. Pakistan had engineered this move.<sup>87</sup> After the fall of Kabul it was Dostum who made an alliance with ousted forces of Rabbani and Masood.<sup>88</sup> Taliban were able to capture Kabul but they were surrounded by opposing groups. It was the victory of the Taliban that had helped in coming together of the former enemies into an alliance that desired to fight against a common enemy- the Taliban. After, entering Kabul, the first act of the Taliban was the brutal murder of the former President Najibullah. Najibullah had taken refuge in the U.N. compound after he stepped down in 1992.<sup>89</sup> He along with his brother Ahmedzai was dragged out of the compound, tied to a jeep and brought to the Ariana square. They both were hanged publicly on the 26th September night.<sup>90</sup> This brutal murder of the former President send the message that the Taliban are a ruthless organisation and they could go to any extent.

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<sup>85</sup> Ahmed Rashid. 'An Uncertain Alliance', in Outlook (New Delhi) 5 June 1996, p.34.

<sup>86</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai. 'Shifting Alliance' in Outlook (New Delhi) 30 October, 1996, p.26.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai. 'After Kabul? What?', Outlook (New Delhi) 23 October 1996, p.34.

<sup>89</sup> *op.cit.* J. N. Dixit. "Back to the Dark Ages" , 9 October, 1996. p.32.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*

Followed by the murder of Najibullah was the imposition of several decrees by the Taliban leadership on common Kabulis. Men were forced to sport a beard and were to pray five times a day. Women were domesticated as restriction on their activities were imposed.<sup>91</sup> They had to wear 'burka'<sup>92</sup> and could not follow their profession.<sup>93</sup> Teaching, nursing and all women oriented activities were restricted. Children were prohibited from listening to music and dancing.<sup>94</sup> In the name of Islam and Shariat, the Taliban were attempting to bring about a mosque centered society. Their advent as rulers of Kabul was seen as an onset of medievalism in Afghanistan.<sup>95</sup>

This open violation of the Human rights in Afghanistan by the Taliban was internationally criticised. "The United Nations then Secretary general Boutros-Boutros Ghali issued a stern warning to the Taliban saying that it's policies of discrimination against Afghanistan concern, "could have severe repercussions on the ability of the U.N. to deliver programmes of relief and reconstruction".<sup>96</sup> "The annual UN appeal for Afghanistan in October 1995 called for \$124 million in emergency contribution from the Western donors, but contributions totalled only \$53 million by

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<sup>91</sup> op.cit.,Ahmed Rashid. 'The Day of the Taliban' October 1996. p.66. also see op.cit., J. N. Dixit. "Back to the Dark Ages", 9 October, 1996, p.32; Nancy Hatch Dupree 'Afghan Women under the Taliban' in William Maley ed., "Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban" ( Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1998).p

<sup>92</sup> 'Burka' is a gown, worn by women in Islamic states. It covers them from head to toe.

<sup>93</sup> op.cit.,Ahmed Rashid. 'The Day of the Taliban' October 1996. p.66. also see op.cit.,J. N. Dixit. "Back to the Dark Ages".9 October, 1996, p.32.

<sup>94</sup> ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ahmed Rashid. 'Auster Begining: Taliban Fundamentalists Crackdown Endangers Aid' in Far Eastern Economic Review( Hong Kong).17 October 1996,p.19.

<sup>96</sup> ibid.

September". According to Nicholas Burns spokesman of the U.S. State Department," Taliban directions tend to generate international isolation which would deny Afghanistan the international assistance its so badly needs after so many years of war". In Afghanistan many relief organisations have stopped functioning because of lack of aid and manpower. Most of these aid relief programmes were run by the women, who are now subjected to domestication and nearly 1.2 million people out of 400000 million population of Kabul were dependent on these aid programmes.

Governance of Kabul was an easy task for the leadership of the Taliban. Much of their experience of governance of Kandhar was used to consolidate their rule in Kabul. After initial hesitance the Kabulis started adhering to the 'diktats' of the Taliban.<sup>97</sup> Peace and continuation of normal life was the basis for the acceptance of the Taliban rule in most of the war torn Afghan provinces.<sup>98</sup> Taliban gave a sense of security, normal life and extracted a price that any Afghan was ready to pay so long as it brought peace to them.<sup>99</sup>

Taliban's advent in Kabul was an unexpected development for most of the neighboring countries. India, Iran, Russia and the Central Asian States. Each of these neighboring countries had the fear of a fundamentalist spill over in their territories.<sup>100</sup> The possibilities of an advancement of Taliban military expeditions to the north of Oxus

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<sup>97</sup> Steve Le Vine, 'Peace or Prosecution', Newsweek(California) 14 October 1996.p.34.

<sup>98</sup> ibid.

<sup>99</sup> ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai, 'Back to the Islamic Veil' in Outlook ( New Delhi) 16 October 1996.p.32.also see Anthony Spaeth, 'Peace that Terrifies' Time( New York)14 October 1996.p.30.

could not be ruled out. Dramatic events of 1996 September triggered a series of regional initiatives for establishment of peace in Afghanistan . Russian President Boris Yeltsin called for a special meeting of the Central Asian states and Russia at Almaty on 4th October 1996.<sup>101</sup> Developments in the South of the Central Asian borders had sent shock waves to Kremlin. In the Almaty meet , “ Though there was a disagreement on the severity of the threat” but the conference ended on the note of confidence of any further entanglement in Afghan crisis.<sup>102</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and the Tajik President Imamli Rakmanov announced that the strengthening of the security at the Afghan- Tajik border was essential.<sup>103</sup> Under the agreement of collective security amongst the Commonwealth of Independent States it was concluded that any threat to anyone from the South shall be a common threat to all.<sup>104</sup>

Iran was critical of developments in Afghanistan. It accused Pakistan, the U.S.A. and Saudi Arab to be hand in glove in creation and promotion of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Teheran convened a regional conference for peace in Afghanistan on 29-

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<sup>101</sup> Ahmed Rashid. ‘Auster Begining: Taliban Fundamentalists Crackdown Endangers Aid’ in Far Eastern Economic Review( Hong Kong) 17 October 1996, p.19. Also see Sophie Quin. ‘Alarm in the North: Taliban Victory Gives Moscow the Jitters’ in Far Eastern Economic Review( Hong Kong) 24 October 1996, p.30.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *op.cit.*, Sophie Quin. ‘Alarm in the North: Taliban Victory Gives Moscow the Jitters’ 24 October 1996, p.30. also see Carla Power. ‘After Kabul. Grozny?’ in Newsweek (California) 14 October 1996, p.18.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*

30 October 1996.<sup>105</sup> It was argued in this conference that all external powers should restrict their involvement in Afghan crisis and let the Afghans decide their own fate. The Teheran resolution emphasized on a broad based government in Kabul. Indian response to developments in Afghanistan was measured. Taliban's takeover of Kabul was seen as beginning of yet another phase of hostilities in Afghanistan. It was treated as the short term gain for Pakistan. New Delhi always maintained that the Taliban were a creation of Pakistan and was an instrument for achievement of the goals of Islamabad. Taliban's view towards India was conditioned by the influence of the JUI and Islamabad. Indian relationship with Afghanistan was seen in the context of communist game in Afghanistan<sup>106</sup>. Taliban like their mentors treated Rabbani as Indian agent in Afghanistan.<sup>107</sup> Traditional support to the governments in Kabul in last two decades by New Delhi was treated as Indian attempt to encircle Pakistan. The greatest problem of India, however, lies in increasing possibilities of destabilizing of Kashmir by Pakistan. The first reaction among the bureaucracy and intelligence network in India was that Pakistan could use some of the Afghan mercenaries in Kashmir. India, therefore, adopted a cautious policy towards Afghanistan. It continued to recognize the Rabbani government in exile<sup>108</sup>.

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<sup>105</sup> op.cit..Sophie Quin, 24 October 1996,p.30. also see op.cit.Rahimullah Yusufzai. 'After Kabul. What?'. 23 October 1996.p.36.

<sup>106</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai Interview with Mullah Wakil Ahmed Information Minister of the Taliban. 'We Can Have Better Ties With if India Stops Interfering?' Outlook (New Delhi)23 October 1996 pp34-36.

<sup>107</sup> ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai. 'Shifting Battelines'. Outlook (New Delhi) 30 October 1996. p.26.

The American response to the victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan was guided by the possibilities of reorientation of their South Asian policy. The Clinton Administration saw nothing objectionable in the implementation of the Islamic law by the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>109</sup> Soon after the victory of Taliban over Kabul “ in An address to the United Nations two months later, the Assistant Secretary of State for the South Asian Affairs, Robin. R. Raphal, considered to international ‘misgivings’ about the Taliban” she insisted on that the Taliabn should be ‘ acknowledged as an indigenous’ movement that had demonstrated staying power”.<sup>110</sup>

The American reaction proved the point that the Taliban were a group that was created by ISI with the help of CIA and funding of the Saudi Arab. It was just a change from Mujahedeens to an Islamic Fundamentalists, who were to serve the American purpose in the region. The question that arisis here how could the Americans directly or indirectly support the fundamentalists in Afghanistan ? Perhaps the energy politics of Central Asia put an veil over the anti-Islamic fundamentalist rhetoric of the Washington.

The instability in Afghanistan and the rise of Fundamentalist Taliban as the rulers of Kabul generated new challenges for most of the neighboring countries. The possibilities of ethnic destabilization and Islamic fundamentalist spill over was

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<sup>109</sup> Richard Makenzie. ‘ The United states and the Taliban’ William Maley ed., “Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban” ( Lahore: Vanguard Books. 1998).p p91.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid*.pp.91-92.

maximum in Central Asia and Iran. This gave birth to a debate that whether the Taliban are fundamentalist or traditionalists or are they totalitarians?<sup>111</sup> To treat the Taliban as simple fundamentalist is difficult. The simple definition of fundamentalism is been given by John .O.Voll that is ‘ active affinity of a particular faith that defines that faith in an absurelevant and totalitarian manner’,<sup>112</sup> Fundamentalist always presume that religion separate to that of society.<sup>113</sup> Strict adherence to the religion by all and use of state structure to enforce the religious identity.<sup>114</sup> Taliban as a group reflect an image composed of fundamentalist, traditionalist and totalitarian entity. Looking at the leadership of the Taliban one finds it to be a fundamentalist group. Personification of the Mohammad Omar the leader of the group as ‘Amir -al- Mommen’ who uses the ‘Khirqā-e-Mubarak’ as a” source of symbolic legitimate of his authority’.<sup>115</sup>

The traditionalist element in the Taliban group is very much visible. Their assimilation of the ‘Kandhari Pai Luch’ elements to their fold reflects that they are anti modernist. They believe in sticking to the old Islamic traditions and want to have a mosque centered society. Strictly adherence to Islamic code and denouncing of the ‘Pushtunwali’<sup>116</sup> is one of the primary targets of the Taliban.

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<sup>111</sup> William Maley, ‘ Interpreting the Taliban’, William Maley ed., “Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban” ( Lahore: Vanguard Books. 1998),p17.

<sup>112</sup> ibid.

<sup>113</sup> ibid.p. 18.

<sup>114</sup> ibid. 19.

<sup>115</sup> ibid. pp. 21-22.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Pushtunwali’ means the traditional Pushtune code.

Punishments like dismembering of limbs, public lashing , hanging in public shows the brutality of the Taliban, who are totalitarian in their approach in implementation of what they consider should be the code of conduct of civilized existance in Afghanistan. But the difference in the totalitarianism of the Taliban and the western understanding of the world is that the former is ruling in a state where all institutions of the state have degenerated.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, the Taliban cannot be strictly considered totalitarians. In totality, the Taliban as a group are a complex mix of fundamentalism, traditionalism and totalitarianism, whose aim is to wipe out the past Afghan identity and history and rebuild Afghanistan according to their own perception of Islamic tenets.

The violent attitude adopted by the Taliban in governance of Afghanistan has earned them more enemies than friends in the international community. The formal recognition to their government has been difficult to come by the neighboring states and the world at large.

In order to get the necessary recognition by the international community , the Taliban leadership tried to clarify their position. In an interview given by Sher Mohammad Tanezi Deputy Foreign Minister of the Taliban regime has said, “ The world has misunderstood us”.<sup>118</sup> He maintains that the Taliban’s existence in Afghanistan is a challenge for all the neighboring countries. Iran, according to him, is worried that if

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<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*22.

<sup>118</sup> H.I. Jafri an interview with Sher Mohammad Tanezi Deputy Foreign Minister of the Taliban. The Herald ( Karachi) November 1996.pp.72-73.



Afghanistan stabilises it would lose its importance in West Asia.<sup>119</sup> Afghanistan then would be able to provide an alternative model of an Islamic state as well as provide another route for Central Asian oil and gas to reach international markets via Pakistan.<sup>120</sup> Iran is supporting the Hazaras in Bamiyan in order to destabilize the Taliban regime in Kabul.<sup>121</sup> Rabbani, Masood and Dostum are all dubbed as the stooges of India, Russia and Central Asia.<sup>122</sup> Therefore they all shall be defeated by the Taliban. Only when this aim is achieved, the Taliban could negotiate peace for Afghanistan.

Victory of the Taliban was hailed by Islamabad as a positive development in Afghanistan after nearly two decades of civil war.<sup>123</sup> Benazir government hailed the success of the Taliban initially and later backtracking it criticized the brutal acts of the Taliban.<sup>124</sup> Pakistan is caught up in a no win situation by hailing the Taliban success in Afghanistan. It has earned Islamabad criticism from all its neighbours. The conspicuous silence of the Saudi Arab and the lukewarm response of the U.S. has pushed Pakistan into a corner to face all the allegations.

Pakistan achieved a few limited gains by installing the Taliban in Kabul. It succeeded in getting rid of Mujahedeen from Kabul, demonstrate its ability to create an client Islamic regime in Afghanistan and secure the possibilities of trade with Central Asia.

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<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *op.cit.*..Anthony Pearce. p.21.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*

Further, Pakistan was able to rekindle the U.S. interest in the region. The Hank Brown amendment was the reward Pakistan got. Much of the burden of the Taliban movement, now onwards was to be shared by the Saudi Arab, as the task of bringing entire Afghanistan under the control of the Taliban remained unfinished.

The next step for the Taliban, after consolidating its position in Kabul was to attack Mazar-e-Sharif and all the other northern strongholds of Northern alliance. The battle for Mazar-e-Sharif was the battle for controlling entire Afghanistan. Taliban began their march towards the north in the winter of 1996.<sup>125</sup> Their thrust towards the North raised alarm in the Central Asia, Russia and Iran. These nations feeling the danger of the Taliban's success in the North put their weight behind Dostum led Northern Alliance.<sup>126</sup> It is reported that large quantities of Russian weapons were made available to Dostum at Mazar.<sup>127</sup> Iran too has lent support to Dostum from the Mashad airbase.<sup>128</sup> Tehran took to shuttle diplomacy in the Central Asian capitals exploring the possibilities of a cease fire.<sup>129</sup>

The Taliban launched a major offensive on Mazar-e-Sharif in the month of May 1997.<sup>130</sup> To reach Mazar-e-Sharif the Taliban had to cross the Bamiyan province, or

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<sup>125</sup> Sreedhar, 'Messup at Mazar-e-Sharif', in Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved eds., 'The Afghan Turmoil: Changing Equations', (New Delhi: Himalyan Books, 1998) p.36.

<sup>126</sup> Ahmed Rashid, 'Hanging Fire', Far Eastern Economic Review (Karachi) 10 October 1996, p.17.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>130</sup> *op.cit.*, Sreedhar, p.36.

they could make their war through Parvan province , or through Balghis provine.<sup>131</sup> Neither of these routes were easy to take. The Shi'ite of Hizb-e-Wahadat-e-Islami of Karim Khalili who controlled Bamiyan.<sup>132</sup> A passage through Bamiyan meant defeat of Hizb forces and covering of 10,700 feet Shebar Pass.<sup>133</sup> The Shi'ite group of Hizb were against the advance of the Taliban and they had not forgotten the brutal murder of their leader Abdul Ali Mazari in 1995 by the Taliban<sup>134</sup>. Therefore a passage through Bamiyan was not a easy proposition for the Taliban forces.

Despite such consolidated position Mazar-e- Sharif fell on the 25th may 1997.<sup>135</sup> Taliban forces entered Mazar with the support of Mallik Pahalwan who had earlier defected from 'Joombesh'.<sup>136</sup>

The fall of Mazar-e- Sharif was a result of infighting in the camp of Dostum. 'Joombesh' was the group founded by Dostum along with Abdul Rasool Pahalwan. Differences between Rasool and Dostum appeared 1993 onwards. Rasool was opposed to the Rabbani government. Secondly, it was Rasool who had brokered the alliance of Hekmatyar with Dostum in January 1994.<sup>137</sup> Dostum's inclination of signing truce with Rabbani increased his differences with Rasool. These differences took ugly

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<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> see report. ' Taleban Seize Dostum's Town' of Khaleej Times( Dubai) 25th May 1997. vol.xx. no.40. p.1.

<sup>136</sup> 'Joombesh' was the name of Dostum's organisation.

<sup>137</sup> *op.cit.*..Sreedhar. ' Messup at Mazar-e-Sharif' . p.37.

turn in the early 1996. Situation worsened when Rasool was assassinated on 25th March 1996.<sup>138</sup>

Mallik never overcame the death of his half brother Rasool. He remained with Dostum but the suspicion continued. An plot to assassinate Dostum was unearth by his men and the possibilities of Mallik's involvement triggered a rift. Taliabn took advantage of this rift and persuaded Mallik to join hands. On 15th may 1997, Mallik signed a deal with the Taliban and defected from 'Joombesh'.<sup>139</sup>

The joint operation of the Taliban and Mallik began on 19th May.<sup>140</sup> Mullah Abdul Razaq crossed Murghab river bridge at Bala Murghab. By 20th May Parvan was under the fire of the Taliban.<sup>141</sup> Farsayab was lost on the 21st May<sup>142</sup>. Dostum fled to Uzbeckistan on 24th May.

It was 25th May 1997 at 0630 GMT Mazar-e-Sharif fell.<sup>143</sup> Eighty percent of the Afghanistan was under the control of the Taliban.

Dostum's failure in the North weakened Masood in the Panjshir valley as Salang highway also came under control of the Taliban due to defection in his ranks.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Sreedhar. ' Messup at Mazar-e-Sharif', in Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved eds., " The Afghan Turmoil: Changing Equations", ( New Delhi: Himalyan Books,1998)p.39.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.* p.40.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> see report. ' Taleban Seize Dostum's Town' of Khaleej Times( Dubai) 25th May 1997, vol.xx, no.40. p.1.

<sup>144</sup> *op.cit.*..Sreedhar. ' Messup at Mazar-e-Sharif', p.39.

Amongst the first reactions some of the Afghanistan watchers said that almost entire Afghanistan was under the control of the Taliban. Samina Ahmed of Islamabad Institute of Regional Studies maintained “ I think it will become, very, very , difficult not to recognize the reality on the ground”, “ But on the other hand its going to be equally difficult to say that we recognise the Taliban without Taliban conceiding a certain degree of autonomy and representation to others within Kabul”.<sup>145</sup>

Just within 24 hours of Mazar-e-Sharif's fall Pakistan gave recognition to the Taliban as the rulers of Afghanistan.<sup>146</sup> This announcement was followed by appointing of Aziz Khan as Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan<sup>147</sup>. He was later send in the day to Mazar-e-Sharif to oversee the final takeover of the North by the Taliban.<sup>148</sup> Saudi Arab and U.A.E. were persuaded by Islamabad to reconize the Taliban.<sup>149</sup>

No one in Pakistani establishment have thought of even dreamt of the events that took place on the 28th May in Afghanistan. The fargile alliance between Mallik and the Taliban gave way.<sup>150</sup> Contradictions appeared in the alliance in the very biggining , Mallik realised that he shall not be given autonomy and freedom as enjoyed by Dostum

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<sup>145</sup> see report. ' Taleban Seize Dostum's Town' of Khaleej Times ( Dubai) 25th May 1997, vol.xx, no.40, p.1.

<sup>146</sup> Zahid Hussain. ' Diplomatic Blunder: Pakistan's Premature Recognition Backfires as the Taliban Retreat From Mazar-e-Shereif' in News Line (Islamabad) June 1997,p.49.

<sup>147</sup> ibid.

<sup>148</sup> ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ahmed Rashid. 'Jumping the Gun'. The Herald (Karachi), July 1997,p.60.

<sup>150</sup> op.cit..Sreedhar. ' Messup at Mazar-e-Sharif' p.39.

and he was not ready to play second fiddle to the Taliban.<sup>151</sup> This resulted in dissolving of the alliance that was followed by fierce fighting between Malik's men and the Taliban forces.

The second mistake that became the undoing of the Taliban forces was that they tried to disarm the Hazara's in Mazar-e-Sharif.<sup>152</sup> Hazara's fought back and the Taliban forces were surrounded on both the sides. Taliban lost to Malik's forces, they lost Maulana Mohammad Ghaus, who was killed<sup>153</sup>, nearly 600 Talibs died and 3000 were taken prisoners<sup>154</sup>. Pul-e- Khumri was recaptured by the northern alliance and Masood captured Jabul-o-Siraj.<sup>155</sup> Taliban were stuck in Mazar as Salang highway was bombed by Masood. Taliban advances in the North were repulsed by 30th May 1997.<sup>156</sup> Taliban's failure in Mazar-e-Sharif was an embarrassment for Islamabad. Pakistan had shot itself in its own foot by recognising Taliban. It had exposed the loopholes of Pakistan's Afghan policy.

Islamabad further, discredited its Afghan policy by declaring that 'an agreement was signed between Malik and the Taliban on 5th June 1997 that promises autonomy to

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<sup>151</sup> Ismail Khan. 'Reversal of Fortune'. Newsline (Islamabad) June 1997.p.50.

<sup>152</sup> Ahmed Rashid. 'Afghanistan : The Importance of Being Hazara.'. The Herald (Karachi) 1997. p.86.

<sup>153</sup> op.cit., Sreedhar. ' Messup at Mazar-e-Sharif 'p.39.

<sup>154</sup> ibid.

<sup>155</sup> ibid.

<sup>156</sup> ibid.

Malick and he shall be the supreme leader of the north.' Malick any such deal with the Taliban.<sup>157</sup>

Pakistan faced isolation and distrust at the regional level. Pakistan's relations with Iran took a different course. The Central Asian States and Russia could not accept the promotion of fundamentalism by Islamabad and India too had its security concerns.<sup>158</sup> This left Islamabad isolated in the regional politics, as there were no takers of its Afghan policy.

Islamabad's Afghan policy came under severe criticism by the national politicians. Hasil Benjo the PNP, MNA leader from Baluchistan held 'Pakistan responsible for the destruction of Afghanistan'.<sup>159</sup> Sardar Ataullah Mangel leader of Baluchistan National Party warned that 'the Taliban would act independently of Pakistani interest and posed a threat to Baluchistan'.<sup>160</sup> A. Ali Khan, of ANP in national assembly spoke that 'the Taliban posed threat to Pakistani society. He said that the government is trying to divide Afghanistan on ethnic and linguistic lines'.<sup>161</sup> Siddique Konju PML leader broke party lines and said 'that the recognition of the Taliban was far too hasty'.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Ahmed Rashid. 'Jumping the Gun'. The Herald(Karachi) July 1997.p.60.

<sup>158</sup> *ibid.* also see *op.cit.*.. Sophie Quin. 'Alarm in the North: Taliban Victory Gives Moscow the Jitters' 24 October 1996.p.30. *op.cit.*.. Ahmed Rashid. 'Auster Beginning: Taliban Fundamentalist Crackdown Endangers Aid'. 17 October 1996.p.19.

<sup>159</sup> Zahid Hussain. 'Diplomatic Blunder: Pakistan's Premature Recognition Backfires as the Taliban Retreat From Mazar-e-Shereif' in News Line( Islamabad) June 1997.p.49.

<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.*

Internally, extensive involvement of several ministries, specially Home and External affairs, Army, ISI, Drug Mafia, Trucking Mafia and the provincial governments fractured the decision making process of Islamabad.<sup>163</sup> This added to weakening of Pakistan's defense of its Afghan policy in the post cold war era. Secondly Pakistan never had the capability to support the entire exercise of the Taliban.<sup>164</sup> Strained by the burden of the Taliban initiative Pakistan leadership faced hardship as internal economy was in crisis. Thirdly rise of the Taliban as a radical fundamentalist force had its implications for the volatile situation within Pakistan as they became a source of inspiration for most of the dissident groups within Pakistan<sup>165</sup>. The Taliban had a wider following in Pakistan than in Afghanistan and in long run it could generate wider contradictions within Pakistan.

Islamabad was to see the worst- differences appeared between the Taliban and Islamabad over later decision to sign an agreement with Turkmainistan and UNCOAL to built a pipeline through Afghanistan, without involving the Taliban. Taliban deeply resented this and signed a separate deal with Bridgas.<sup>166</sup>

Pakistan got into damage control exercise after the mess-up on Mazar and gas deals. Gohar Ayub Pakistan's Foreign minister took to shuttle diplomacy to clarify

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<sup>163</sup> op.cit..Ahmed Rashid. 'Pakistan and theTaliban' pp77-82.

<sup>164</sup> ibid.

<sup>165</sup> ibid.p88.

<sup>166</sup> op.cit.Ahmed Rashid. 'Jumping the Gun'. July1997.p.60.



Islamabad's view on developments in Afghanistan. Prime minister Nawaz Sharief visited Tehran to pacify Iran.<sup>167</sup>

By recognising the Taliban, Pakistan exposed itself as the creator and promotor of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. It proved that the Taliban were a means to Pakistan's wider ends in Central Asia in particular and the entire region in general.

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<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*

### **Chapter 3.**

#### **The Geostrategic Dimensions of Pakistan's Afghan Policy : Implications for Central Asian States and Iran.**

One of the major factors which brought about radical shifts in Pakistan's Afghan policy in the post cold war period was the alluring possibilities of trade and transit through Afghanistan with the Central Asian states.

A political solution to the Afghan crisis was much suited to Islamabad's post-cold war foreign policy. It would have helped Islamabad to gain regional support and cooperation from Iran and the newly emergent Central Asian states to negotiate peaceful settlement of the Afghan crisis. Therefore, Pakistan promoted Mujahedeen alliance in Peshawar to replace Najibullah in Afghanistan.

Mujahedeen were installed in Kabul in 1992 as a result of the political settlement for Afghan peace.<sup>1</sup> Weakening of Soviet Union as a Super Power helped Islamabad negotiate the transfer of power in Kabul. Ailing Moscow lent support to demands of the Mujahedeen groups and Najibullah offered to step down.<sup>2</sup> Establishment of Mujahedeen in Kabul marked the beginning of a new era in Afghan politics and it was, in a way, success of Pakistan's Afghan policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Bennett R. Rubin. "Afghanistan After Cold War", in Bennett R. Rubin. The Search for Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State (New Haven. CT: Yale University Press. 1995)pp. 126-128.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

But this development in Afghanistan threw up new challenges for Islamabad and other neighbors of Afghanistan.

For the new rulers of Afghanistan the question of legitimacy was very important.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly they were faced with the task of nation building. The continued fighting between warring factions had ruined the state structure in Afghanistan, Mujahedeens had to deal with a whole generation of Afghans who had lived in a 'state of war'. The ethnic complexion of Afghanistan was equally complex and had strong external linkages. This involved the neighboring countries in to the internal crisis of Afghanistan and thwarted the possibilities of consolidation of power in Kabul. Mujahedeens' task was to become even more difficult owing to the continued factional infighting. The concept of power sharing by rotation among the groups had its own flaws.<sup>4</sup> It neither gave the government a democratic basis of existence nor it gave legitimacy. In an ethnically complex society of Afghanistan the concept of Islam as a binding force failed miserably.<sup>5</sup> The social existence of the Afghans was based on ethnic identities and tribal values rather than Islam.<sup>6</sup> Weakening of the Mujahedeens led governments in Kabul due to continued fighting attracted wider involvement of the external powers in the Afghan crisis.

Ethnic stratification of power in Kabul between Pushtuns and non-Pushtun became wider. Rabbani's governance of Kabul was seen as the dominance of Tajiks on

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<sup>3</sup> Ralph Magnus and Eden Naby, 'Beyond War: Afghanistan in Post-Cold War Central Asia', in Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx and Mujahid (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 1998)p161.

<sup>4</sup> ibid, p.162.

<sup>5</sup> ibid.

<sup>6</sup> ibid.

Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> Hekmatyar's repeated attempt of wresting power out of Rabbani's hands was seen as Pushtun ambition to dominate Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> This triggered serious implications for the neighbors of Afghanistan.

Iran had traditionally supported the Hazara minority in Afghanistan. Its concerns over the fate of the Hazara Afghans in the evolving power sharing and governance of Afghanistan was natural.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the Central Asian states in general and Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in particular, had their interest deeply involved in Afghanistan. Ethnic minorities in northern Afghanistan had strong ethno-cultural bonds with the Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens in Central Asia.<sup>10</sup> Weakening of Mujahedeen governments in Kabul inspired these groups in Afghanistan to come closer to external powers. In the north Afghanistan's Northern Alliance was led by Uzbek leader Rashid Dostum who had the open support of Uzbekistan and even Turkey was assisting him.<sup>11</sup> Dostum being a powerful leader had good administration in the area between Mazar-e-Sharif and Kunduz. By controlling this vital area, Dostum had complete command over the trading depot of north Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup> The transit route to Central Asia was manned by the warriors of Dostum's 'Joombish'. Dostum's power in the north was a challenge to Rabbani government in Kabul. At sometime it was of

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<sup>7</sup> ibid.p167.

<sup>8</sup> ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved, "The Afghan Turmoil" ( New Delhi: Himalayan Books, 1998)p.77

<sup>10</sup> Ralph Magnus and Eden Naby, "Beyond War: Afghanistan in Post-Cold War Central Asia", in Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx and Mujahid" ( New Delhi: Harper Collins, 1998)pp.167-168.. also see Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved, "The Afghan Turmoil" ( New Delhi: Himalayan Books, 1998)p.77

<sup>11</sup> ibid.

<sup>12</sup> ibid.

considerable importance for Central Asian states to have Dostum's confidence to explore the future possibilities of trade and transit through Afghanistan. Mazar was an independent economic enclosure with considerable political and strategic importance within Afghanistan and in the adjoining Central Asia and Iran.<sup>13</sup> Being a minority Uzbeks in Afghanistan had their own difference with Kabul. Assistance from external powers helped them to square their differences with the government in Kabul.

The Tajik interests in Afghanistan were tremendous. Masood being a Tajik had support of the Tajik government as well as the Tajik opposition.<sup>14</sup> In early nineties Tajikistan witnessed a civil war. Involvement of Afghan Tajiks in the Tajik civil war complicated the political scenario of the region.<sup>15</sup> It is reported that Afghan mercenaries were fighting along the Tajik opposition fighters who were opposing the domination of Moscow backed government in Dushanbe.<sup>16</sup> The revival of the Islamic politics in Tajik civil war and involvement of Afghan mercenaries thwarted all prospects of peace in the region.<sup>17</sup> Rabbani's attempt to bring about a reconciliation between the warring sides in Tajikistan in 1992 did not yield results.<sup>18</sup> Fluid situation in the north of Afghanistan was additional strain on the Rabbani government. It became a great challenge with the expansion of Tajik nationalist ideology to Afghanistan. The involvement of Afghans in Tajik civil unrest gave signals of a possibility of emergence of a bigger Tajikistan which

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 176-179.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

would have the territory of Afghanistan included.<sup>19</sup> Similar overtures were evident from rise of Uzbek nationalists in neighboring Uzbekistan.<sup>20</sup>

Ismaili's of Wakhan border had developed strong relations with coethnic in Tajikistan. They like the other minority groups decided to develop an independent political setup for themselves. Instability within Afghanistan and Tajik civil war gave them the opportunity to formulate their own agenda and political identity.<sup>21</sup>

Difficulties for Rabbani government were ever increasing. More than the internal disturbances it was external involvement in Afghanistan that created law and order problems. Stability and peace within Afghanistan became a difficult task to achieve. Lack of political legitimacy and political instability further fragmented Afghanistan on ethnic lines. This gave opportunity to Uzbek and Tajik nationalists to aim at balkanizing the Afghan territories with the ethnic minorities living in these regions.<sup>22</sup> Fresh territorial dispute were in the offing with the Central Asian states. These had common features with the territorial disputes between Kabul and Islamabad over the Durand Line.

Perpetuation of the Afghan civil war and its transformation into ethnic crisis had wider impact on Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia. All these neighbors of Afghanistan are multi-ethnic states and possibility of ethnic unrest in these nations could not be ruled out. The Afghan crisis was becoming source of inspiration for the minorities of Iran

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* p.166.

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and Pakistan.<sup>23</sup> Iran was faced with the questions of Baluchs and Kurds who were up in arms against their marginalisation by Teheran. Pakistan had similar problems in Sindh and Baluchistan.

Afghan crisis also became center of Islamic politics in the region. Pakistan played its Islamic card quite efficiently. Islamabad used Afghan crisis to attract the attention of the Central Asian states. To gain a regional support on the Afghan policy Pakistan initiated the proposal of expansion of ECO<sup>24</sup>. At the Teheran summit of ECO in 1992 at the initiative of Islamabad, Central Asian states were included into the membership of ECO<sup>25</sup>. This expansion of ECO brought the newly emergent states of Central Asia closer to other Islamic countries of the region. The concept of a 'Islamic bloc' and ECO as a regional grouping of this bloc was mooted.<sup>26</sup> Islam and economics became the two factors for these states to come together under the ECO umbrella.

Central Asian states got international recognition as part of a regional grouping for the first time after their independence. ECO gave them an option to drift away from the stronghold of Moscow<sup>27</sup>. Secondly, Islam being common factor among the members of ECO it was easier to cooperate for common benefit by the newly independent states of

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 176-179.

<sup>24</sup> P. Stobdan, 'Looking Towards Central Asia', in Strategic Analysis (New Delhi) November 1933, vol. xvi, no. 8, p. 1

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, also see Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Political Economy of the Three Asias" in Swords and Plough Stones The Bulletin of Progress in Hans Cartel Disarmament and International Society, vol. x 1996-97.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

Central Asia. However, it was Kirgizistan and Kazakistan which were influenced by the Islamic resurgence<sup>28</sup>. Islam had played a key role in the internal politics of these states. However, in nearly all these Central Asian states Islam as a factor was limited to their internal matters only. The nationalism based on resurgent Islam was a symbol of emancipation from communist clutches.<sup>29</sup> But external projection of Islam was limited to building better relations with the neighboring states. Therefore overtures from Iran, Pakistan and Turkey were welcomed. In regard to Afghan crisis, the most visible concern of Central Asian states was the restriction of all possibilities of ethnic or religious spillovers in to their own territories.<sup>30</sup> Hence, they all came close to other neighboring countries under ECO. The aim was to have a regional approach to settling Afghan crisis and use the opportunity to explore all possibilities of trade and transit under the garb of Islamic commonality.

Afghan crisis became the focal point for these countries to come close to eachother. This had its positive impacts in each of these states too. Iran had its interests in Afghanistan and Central Asia. A radical Islamic approach could not help Teheran to achieve its interests in Afghanistan and in Central Asia.<sup>31</sup> In Afghanistan it was the Hazara ethnic dimension that was important for Teheran. In Central Asia it was to be a moderate Islamic approach that was essential to have economic gains. Therefore,

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *op.cit.*..Ralph.Magnus and Eden Naby.p.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*.. Rajesh M. Basrur. "Conceptualising the Three Asias" in Swords and Plough Stones The Bullitin of Progress in Hans Cartel Disarmament and International Society vol. x 1996-97.

<sup>31</sup> *op.cit.*..Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved. p.88.



Hashim Rafsanjani adopted a moderate approach towards the Islamic radicalism within Iran and invested in Central Asian developmental programs. It was oil and gas sector and infrastructural development programs of Central Asian states that received maximum Iranian investment.<sup>32</sup> The growth of its clout in Afghanistan and Central Asian states was important for Tehran to have a distinct identity in the 'Islamic bloc'. After Zia's death Pakistan too took to democratic path.<sup>33</sup> Radical Islamic principals were replaced by the democratic principle. Rightist forces JUI and JI participated actively in the political process and fought elections<sup>34</sup>. Their role became democratic and at the sametime, they promoted Islamic ideology. Pakistan's Afghan policy was formulated by successive governments in Islamabad keeping in view their political affiliations with these rightist parties. Continued Afghan crisis and emergence of Central Asian states was used by Islamabad to strengthen its position in OIC and ECO.

Saudi Arab saw in Iran a rival, whose increasing influence in Central Asia was to be contained.<sup>35</sup> To promote its own Islamic identity in Central Asia and Afghanistan, Saudi Arab funded Islamabad's initiatives for settlement of the Afghan crisis. Peace in Afghanistan was necessary for opening of trade and transit between Central Asian states and Pakistan through Afghanistan. It was to give an alternative to the Iranian routes for Central Asian states.

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *op.cit.* Ralph.Magnus and Eden Naby.pp 171-172.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

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Trade, transit and politics of energy became the basis of power struggle in Central Asian region for Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. Afghanistan became the gateway to Central Asian states. In the post cold war era Pakistan's Afghan policy was guided by the economic opportunities that emerged with the independence of Central Asian states.<sup>36</sup> Pakistan realized its ability to provide the shortest route for Central Asian states to trade with the international markets.<sup>37</sup> Peace in Afghanistan was necessary for Afghan highways to be used as transit routes for Central Asian goods to reach Karachi. Unrest in Afghanistan was the main obstacle in achieving these goals for Islamabad.

Pakistan established its formal relations with the newly emergent states of Central Asia by sending a delegation of 26 persons under the leadership of Sardar Asef Ali, the then Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in December 1991 to the capitals of Central Asia.<sup>38</sup>

During the visit of the delegation several proposals of joint developmental programs between Central Asian states were signed. Infrastructural development projects, electricity, oil and gas projects and tourism sector were given priority by Pakistan.<sup>39</sup>

Pakistani delegation established a working group with Kirgizistan and Kazakistan to

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<sup>36</sup> op.cit..P.Stobdan. p.1

<sup>37</sup> ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Hafez Malik. " New Relationships Between Central and Southern Asia: Regional Politics of Pakistan" in National Development and Security Quaterly Journal.( Rawalpindi) Vol. I. Nov. 1992.p85.

<sup>39</sup> ibid.pp.86-87.

explore the possibility of linking these states with the Pakistan through Karakoram highway and Xianging region of China<sup>40</sup>. Uzbekistan was offered 30 million US dollars worth of aid. A land transit through Afghanistan was also assured to Tashkent. Tajikistan was given the offer to export electricity to Pakistan<sup>41</sup>. Turkmens were given the option of selling their oil and gas to Pakistan by piping it to Baluchistan.<sup>42</sup>

Pakistan was offering to open the southern-eastern routes for the Central Asian oil and gas to reach international markets. Afghanistan was to provide the routes through Kandhar, Herat, Mazar and Jalababad.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, controlling Kabul directly or through a puppet government was necessary for Islamabad. This route was to be the shortest and cheapest as compared to others. By an estimate only 1.2 billion US dollars worth of investment would have been enough for building the pipeline through Afghanistan.<sup>44</sup> This pipeline would have linked the South Asian markets to Central Asia. But all these agreements between Pakistan and the Central Asian states were dependent on the stability and peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan's interests converged with that of the Central Asian states. Pakistan's outlet was important for the Central Asian states as it gave them an alternative to Moscow's pipeline network to reach international markets<sup>45</sup>. Russian network was based in the north of Central Asian states. This route was feasible if the Turkmain oil and gas network could be expanded

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<sup>40</sup> ibid.

<sup>41</sup> ibid.

<sup>42</sup> ibid.

<sup>43</sup> ibid.

<sup>44</sup> ibid.

<sup>45</sup> 'A Caspian gamble' A Report in The Economist, (New York)7th February 1998. pp10-11.

and linked with the Russian network. It entailed a investment worth 2 billion US dollars of investment.<sup>46</sup> The route of this network was to pass through the disturbed areas of Azerbaijan and Chechniya.<sup>47</sup> Building and operation of this network was entailing all sorts of many political strings, that undermined the independence sought by the Central Asian states. Secondly Pakistani option gave the Central Asian states to effectively bargain with Iran the transit costs of their oil and gas and restrict all possibilities of influences from their radical Islamic neighbor. However, the Iranian route in the west was informally functional as the political interests of US restricted the possibilities of investment in this pipeline network.<sup>48</sup> In fact whatever trade was taking place was at the initiative of Turkmen with Iran. In this regard they had signed the deal of constructing a rail link in 1992 itself.<sup>49</sup> Though this rail link became functional in 1996 but so far only limited flow of goods is taking place.<sup>50</sup>

The eastern option with China was equally weak. China had proposed to build a 2000km pipeline through Xinjiang region at the cost of 3.5 billion US dollars.<sup>51</sup> The project was only at the MOU stage in 1996.<sup>52</sup> The Central Asian states needed to export oil and gas immediately and use the proceeds to develop their infrastructure and achieve self sufficiency. President Niyazov had 'piped the dreams' of converting

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<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Sreedhar, "Taliban and the Afghan Turmoil: The Role of USA, Pakistan, Iran and China ( New Delhi: Himalayan Books, 1997)p.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> 'A Caspian gamble' A Report in The Economist, ( New York) 7th February 1998. pp10-11

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

Turkmainistan into 'Kuwait' of Central Asia.<sup>53</sup> The ground reality was opposite to the dreams of the Central Asians. The possibilities of exporting oil from Northern routes and Western and Eastern routes was a distinct dream and was guided by the Russian and American interests. Therefore, Pakistan's propositions of trade and transit were very much attractive for Central Asian states, because they promised a route independent of Super Power pressures.

For Pakistan, Central Asian trade was important for its own economic development and growth. Absence of US assistance had weakened the economic development process in Pakistan and the burden of Afghan responsibility was a tremendous drain on Pakistan's economy.<sup>54</sup> Projecting itself as a safe outlet Pakistan was able to influence Central Asian states, rekindle American interest in the region and offset Iran in West Asia. Afghanistan became the key for the Central Asian markets and Pakistan became the master of the key by projecting itself the sole arbiter of Afghan peace.

The first noticeable change in Pakistan's Afghan policy was replacement of Hekmatyar with a new force, the Taliban. This had a dramatic impact on the Afghan politics. Taliban were created to fight the Afghan war till the end. Removal of Hekmatyar was a result of his inability to deliver the results. His attempt to militarily overpower Rabbani government failed miserably and were an embarrassment to Islamabad. Moreover, Hekmatyar was not in the good books of the U.S., who had accused him for training the terrorists to spread violence in the West.

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *op.cit.*..P.Stobdan. p. 1

The Taliban group were to serve several interests of Pakistan in Afghanistan. Firstly, were to fight the war till the end and establish peace in Afghanistan. Secondly, they were to establish a Pushtun dominated government in Kabul and transform Afghanistan into a Islamic state. Thirdly, they had to secure trade routes through Kandhar, Herat, Kunduz and Mazar-e-Sharif to facilitate trade with Central Asian states. Achievements of Taliban were to impart Pakistan with the status of a dominant power in the region and establish its credentials.

Emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan gave new dimension to Afghan crisis. New alignments emerged within Afghanistan. The Taliban became the common enemy of all the other groups who were earlier at war with each other. Hekmatyar came closer to Rabbani and started exploring possibilities of better relations with northern warlord Rashid Dostum.<sup>55</sup> Many channels of understanding were opened within the Afghan groups to check the advance of the Taliban towards Kabul. In fact Dostum became closer to Hekmatyar and later their joint efforts helped in easing tensions with Rabbani.<sup>56</sup> This finally culminated in coming together of Rabbani and Dostum. It is reported that the Uzbek President Ismail Karimov brokered peace between Rabbani and Dostum.<sup>57</sup> Involvement of Uzbekistan was primarily meant to restrict the possibilities of an advance of the Taliban to north of Amu Darya into Uzbek

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<sup>55</sup> Amin Seikal, 'The Rabbani Government 1992-1996' in William Maley ed., "Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban" (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1998), pp40-41.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, 41.

territories.<sup>58</sup> Dostum and his control of northern Afghanistan was to be used as a buffer against the Taliban advances to the north of Afghanistan.

Advent of the Taliban in Afghanistan and their subsequent victory on Kabul on 26th September 1996 generated tremendous anxiety in Central Asian states, Russia and Iran.<sup>59</sup> The Taliban victory of Kabul violently bifurcated Afghanistan into two halves. One was in the north close to Amu Darya and the other in the south and the east. The former was controlled by the Northern Alliance supported by Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and the later was held by the Islamic militia supported by Pakistan. The ethnic divide between the majority of Pashtuns and the rest of Afghan minorities was evident in Afghan civil war, which had wider implications for Central Asian states and Iran.

The Taliban victory forced a regional realignment. Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Krygizitan 'expressed deep concerns' over the developments in Afghanistan and take over of Kabul.<sup>60</sup> Russia like other neighboring states was surprised on the flash victory of a student militia over Kabul.

Traditionally Moscow had helped the government in Kabul. Limited support was extended to Rabbani government to check the possibilities of advance of the Taliban, however, a direct involvement into Afghanistan was ruled out by Moscow.<sup>61</sup> Though

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<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *op.cit.* Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved, pp.100-102.

<sup>60</sup> Sophie Quin-Judge, 'Alarm in the North', in *Far Eastern Economic Review* (HongKong) 24 October 1996, p30. also see the report 'Taliban Offensive May Spark Cross Border Reaction' in *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 9 April 1997, p.15.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*

indirect support to Rabbani, Masood and Dostum was assured through Tajikistan and Uzbekistan<sup>62</sup>. It is interesting to note here that the Russian support was assured to the Northern alliance in exchange of disengagement of Masood's men from the Tajik civil war<sup>63</sup>. It is reported that Tajik opposition had developed healthy relations with Masood when the civil war broke out in Tajikistan. Masood had the sympathy of the government of Dushanbe too<sup>64</sup>. But his assistance to Tajik opposition, who were waging war against Moscow backed Government in Dushanbe was not acceptable to Russia.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, Russian support to ousted forces of Masood was subjected to the condition of disengagement of Afghan Tajiks from the Tajik civil war. Further, Moscow brokered peace with in Tajikistan and deployed its forces on Tajik-Afghan border to ensure the security of the Central Asian 'underbelly'.<sup>66</sup>

Developments in Afghanistan had a wider impact on Central Asian states. Uzbekistan shared a long border with Afghanistan, the traditional interest of Tashkent in Afghanistan was aligned with the fate of the Afghan Uzbeks led by Dostum. Uzbekistan like other Central Asian states "feared the dominance of Afghanistan dominated by the Pushtun-Fundamentalist Taliban".<sup>67</sup> The Taliban forces were to face the resistance of Uzbek war lord Dostum in the North Afghanistan. They could have

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<sup>62</sup> *ibid.* also see Sreedhar and MahendraVed, "The Afghan Turmoil" ( New Delhi: Himalayan Books, 1998)pp.101-102.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Anthony Hymn. ' Russia, Central Asia and the Taliban' In William Maley ed., "Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban" ( Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1998),p.107.



maintained better relations with Dostum and stopped advances towards the north. An offer of power sharing with Dostum in North would have helped the Taliban politically but it was against their ideological principals of ousting all and establishing Pushtun dominated Islamic state of Afghanistan. Hence the Taliban continued to fight in Afghanistan and moved towards North. Dostum received aid from Uzbeks who wanted to use him as a buffer between themselves and the Taliban. Ismail Karimov, Uzbek President underlined how vital was the role of Dostum's forces in the northern Afghanistan.<sup>68</sup> He declared that "Dostum defends a very important sector in which in essence defends the north of Afghanistan from the arrival of the Taliban. If we really want to prevent a further escalation of the war, if we want the war currently under way to end, for the parties to the conflict to sit down at the negotiating table including the Taliban, then we must do everything possible so that nor Dostum can be held on to the Salang(tunnel)".<sup>69</sup> It is reported that Uzbekistan provided artillery equipment, aircrafts, fuel and technical support to Dostum's forces to contain the advances of the Taliban<sup>70</sup>. However, Goga Hydayatov, the former advisar to the President of Uzbekistan maintained that the President Islam Karimov did not helped Dostum directly as this would have invited Afghan refugees and many other problems. He further maintained that the borders of Uzbekistan are closed to Afghan refugees and they are fully secured by the Uzbek army.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*,p.108.

<sup>71</sup> An interview with Goga Hydayatov on 9.06.1998.

Turkmenistan had historical links with Afghanistan. Developments in Afghanistan became a security concern for Turkmenistan. Turkmain extended sympathy to the ousted forces of Rabbani government.<sup>72</sup> Turkmain interests in Afghanistan were linked to the fate of the minority of Afghan Turkmain who were traditionally subjects of the Pushtun overlords.<sup>73</sup> Advent of the Taliban as new rulers of Kabul endangered the fate of this minority. Relations with Ismail Khan were carefully nurtured by the Turkmain and fall of Herat to the Taliban was of great concern for Turkmainistan, which was dependent on Russian forces for the security of its own borders with Afghanistan.<sup>74</sup>

The immediate response of Iran on the developments in Afghanistan was best reflected in the opinion of the Iranian President Hashim Rafsanjani “ We have repeatedly advised the Afghans that war is not the right way to solve their problems, but unfortunately they donot let go”.<sup>75</sup> Iran had several reasons for being concerned over the developments in Afghanistan. The Taliban militia force was not only manned by Pushtuns but was also anti-Shia. This deeply threatened the fate of the Shia minority of Hazaras living in Central Afghanistan and Herat region. Iran had traditionally supported the cause of Hazara Afghans who had been living as refugees in Iranian territories. Iran had no links with Kabul after Rabbani’s ouster by Taliban. Fall of Herat was yet another blow to Iranian interests in Afghanistan. Assistance to the anti-Taliban forces was totally cut off. Iran could only use Ismail Khan, who had taken

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<sup>72</sup> op.cit..Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved.pp.93-94.

<sup>73</sup> ibid.

<sup>74</sup> ibid.

<sup>75</sup> ibid.,p.83.

refuge in Iran and his smuggling network to aid Rabbani's resistance against the Taliban. These developments in Afghanistan had their impact on Pak-Iranian relations. Their relations have turned sour and the process of degeneration had set in.

**Almaty summit:** An emergency meeting was called at Almaty on the 4th October 1996, soon after the fall of Kabul.<sup>76</sup> This meeting was attended by the four Central Asian States's Presidents and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and their security staff.<sup>77</sup> The agenda of the discussion was the advent of the Taliban and possibilities of its advance beyond Afghanistan into Central Asian states. A strong warning was issued to the Taliban.<sup>78</sup> It was maintained that "the flame of war is approaching the borders of the CIS, and this creates a direct threat to the national interests and security of these states and of the CIS in general and destabilizes the regional and international situation. We declare that any activity which undermines stability on the borders with Afghanistan is unacceptable. Such activity, no matter who is responsible or, it, will be regarded as a threat to the common interests and (.....) will met with an appropriate response".<sup>79</sup>

Alexander Lebed maintained, "Their plans include making part of Uzbekistan including Bukhara- one of Islam's holy places part of the Afghan state. They will join with the Tajik opposition leader, Sayed Naizi. They share the same faith. They will

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<sup>76</sup> op.cit., Sophie Quin-Judge, 'Alarm in the North', p30.

<sup>77</sup> ibid.

<sup>78</sup> op.cit., Anthony Hymn, p.106.

<sup>79</sup> ibid.

then sweep away our border posts'.<sup>80</sup> Lebed strongly stated that "the Taliban challenge needs to be crushed" at once. He called for Russian aid to the Taliban's Afghan rivals.<sup>81</sup>

Russian mass media reported extensively on the developments in Afghanistan. Their prognosis was full of alarm and reflected the anxiety of the Russians. 'Krasnaya Zveda' the Russian Defense Ministry Newspaper gave the headlines "the veil of Russian women. We could have to that if the army continues to be senselessly weakened".<sup>82</sup> These headlines were followed by the pictures of 'Burka' clad women super-imposed on a Russian street.<sup>83</sup> The Newspapers further, opined that the change in the power in Kabul was reflection of the "series of gaps in Russia's Asia policy" and inadequate intelligence in both Russia and other CIS states.<sup>84</sup> The civilian analysts have maintained for several years that "the real threat to Russia is from the South".<sup>85</sup> 'Possiskoian Gazeta' viewed that the advance the Taliban beyond North of Afghanistan would force withdrawal of Russian forces from Tajik borders.<sup>86</sup> It was reported on 1st October, 1996, "The Taliban's success and their promotion of an Islamic state are significantly changing the geo-strategic situation in Central Asia and this was directly affects the Russian interests..... Faced with the threat, the

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<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*.p.108.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *op.cit.*.Sophie Quin-Judge.p30.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Anthony Hymn, 'Russia, Central Asia and the Taliban' In William Maley ed., "Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban" (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1998).p.106.

President of former Soviet Central Asia observed that the threat from below could be repulsed by Moscow. But it could be that something else would happen: for example a successful northern advance by the Taliban. There it would become difficult to hold the Tajik border on the river Panjdeh, and at worst we might have to quit the Central Asian republics".<sup>87</sup>

A review of the Afghan problem by collective Security council of the CIS was done and it was decided that any threat from the South to any of the Central Asian states shall be considered as threat to all and if it is necessary a joint action shall be taken.<sup>88</sup>

The main thrust of all the Central Asian states and Iran was on maintenance of a status quo in Afghanistan after the fall of Kabul. All of them had their security concerns and resentment over the advent and advance of fundamentalist Taliban in Afghanistan. To restrict the advance of the Taliban to the north of Oxus become a common goal of the neighbors of Afghanistan.

After Kabul, it was Mazar which was targeted by the Taliban militia. Battle for Mazar was to overthrow all resistance groups in Afghanistan and establish their own supermacy. It would have brought entire Afghanistan under the control of the Taliban whose authority could not be challenged.

The Taliban advance to the north was greeted by Pakistan, Saudi Arab and Turkmainistan.<sup>89</sup> It was seen as a move towards stablising Afghanistan as a safe

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>88</sup> *op.cit.*, Sophie Quin-Judge, p30.

<sup>89</sup> *op.cit.*, Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved, p.

corridor for export of oil and gas. Saudi sponsored consortium of Delta+UNOCAL+Gazprom eagerly awaited the stabilising of Afghanistan to build the pipelines in the south-eastern Central Asia. The American oil and gas company UNOCAL had invested nearly 2 billion US dollars in the Central Asian gas pipeline projects and these investments were stuck because of unavailability of safe and economically viable route and outlets to international markets.<sup>90</sup>

Offensive on Mazar began in winter of 1996 itself but the real fighting broke out in the summer of 1997. Mazar fell to the Taliban on the 26th May 1997 due to infighting in Dostum's camp.<sup>91</sup> Crumbling of Mazar and failure of Dostum to resist the Taliban advance in the north Afghanistan sent shock waves to Central Asian states and Iran. But the victory of the Taliban remained shortlived as the events of 28th May onwards changed the entire scenario in Afghanistan's northern battlefields.<sup>92</sup> The Taliban victory was repulsed by the counter offensive of Malik's men and Hazaras of north. Northern alliance though within a fragmented framework had successfully ousted the Taliban from Mazar.<sup>93</sup> In the shifting sands of Afghan crisis it was Pakistan who was caught unawares. Islamabad had recognised the Taliban as rulers of Afghanistan as soon as Mazar fell. Pakistan paid dearly for this blunder.

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<sup>90</sup> Ahmed Rashid, 'Pipe Dreams' in Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong) 10 April 1997, pp. 27-28.

<sup>91</sup> see report, 'Taliban Seize Dostum's Town' of Khaleej Times (Dubai) 25th May 1997, vol. xx, no. 40, p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Sreedhar, 'Messup at Mazar-e-Sharif', in Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved eds., "The Afghan Turmoil: Changing Equations", (New Delhi: Himalyan Books, 1998) p. 37, also see Zahid Hussain, 'Diplomatic Blunder: Pakistan's Premature Recognition Backfires as the Taliban Retreat From Mazar-e-Shereif' in News Line (Islamabad) June 1997, p. 49.

Strong reactions came from Central Asia, Russia and Iran. Central Asian states had their suspicions about the Pakistan's intentions in Afghanistan. Events of May 1997 confirmed their fears and Islamabad's Afghan policy came under serious objection by the Central Asian states.

Pakistan was isolated at the regional level. Gauhr Ayub , the Foreign Minister of Pakistan had to take to Central Asian capitals to explain the position of Islamabad on the developments in Afghanistan.<sup>94</sup> The July 1997 mission was to gain support Central Asian states on Afghanistan. In the Turkmain Capital Ashkabad Niyazov government took a neutral approach towards the Afghan issue. Ayub's proposals of Afghan peace had a mild response from Turkmain and similar responses were given by the other states in the region.<sup>95</sup>

In the one to one meeting with the President Rakhmanov of Tajikistan, Gauhr Ayub was told that the Tajik disapprove of the developments in Afghanistan. Erkin Rakhmantullaev, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan maintained that his President cleared that the idea of holding a conference on Afghanistan was " a good idea, but it should be held at a place where the participation is total. Also it was best organised by the U.N."<sup>96</sup>

Kazakh Foreign Minister Tokeav maintained that " we have come to the conclusion that the Taliban should be recognisable from the international dimension..... " But,

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<sup>94</sup> Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved. 'Central Asia: Shadow Over the Silk Route'. in Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved eds., " The Afghan Turmoil: Changing Equations". ( New Delhi: Himalyan Books.1998)p.103.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*p.104.

“We still have diplomatic relations with Rabbani. We still follow the policies of the UN and do not recognise the Taliban regime.”<sup>97</sup> Tokeav further said that a recognition to the Taliban could be given only if “the process must start from two directions. Rabbani and the Taliban must come together and all other forces must unify”.<sup>98</sup> Regarding the proposals of holding a conference for Afghan peace Tokeav maintained that Islamabad is not the venue and that this conference should be held under the auspicious of the UN in New York.<sup>99</sup>

In order to save itself from the spill over effects of Afghan crisis, Uzbekistan refused shelter to Afghan refugees fleeing Mazar.<sup>100</sup> Even Dostum was not given refuge and he had to go to Turkey. Uzbekistan denied the Pakistani reports that Dostum had flown to Tashkent after fall of Mazar.<sup>101</sup> This was confirmed later by the reports coming from Turkey that Dostum was in Turkish capital and not in Tashkent.<sup>102</sup>

Russian reaction was very measured. Moscow maintained that the developments in Afghanistan were generating grave security concerns for its adjoining regions. Russian responsibility had increased tremendously and it had to continue with deployment of its forces on Tajik-Afghan border.<sup>103</sup> This entailed continued Russian presence in Central Asia and latter's dependence on the former for its security.

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<sup>97</sup> *ibid.* pp. 104-105.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> An interview with Goga Hydayatov on 9.06.1998.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, also see report, 'Taleban Seize Dostum's Town' of Khaleej Times (Dubai) 25th May 1997, vol. XX, no. 40, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *op.cit.*, Ralph Magnus and Eden Naby, p194.



Iranian reaction was even more critical on the developments in Afghanistan. Teheran see through at the game of Saudi Arab-US- Pakistan to isolate Iran in West Asia and marginalise its role in Afghanistan.<sup>104</sup> Saudi Arab was accused of using Pakistan's services to establish a Islamic militia in Afghanistan to counter Iran and gain ideological access to relatively secular Central Asian states.<sup>105</sup> It was ironical that the radical forces in Iran were replaced by the moderate forces in the general elections of 1997 at that time radical fundamentalist Taliban were gaining control of Afghanistan.<sup>106</sup> Teheran was moderating projection of Islamic values in Central Asian states and Pakistan was promoting radicalism through the promotion of the Taliban. As far as American interest was concerned it was the necessity of an outlet for its investment in Central Asia, Washington wanted to fuel Islamabad's ambitions in Afghanistan. This was against the Iranian interests in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Teheran was in a better position to negotiate peace in Afghanistan as it always aimed at unified Afghanistan unlike its neighbour Pakistan. Iran had better relations with nearly all the Afghan groups as compared to Pakistan and others. In fact a school of thought in Iran maintained that Teheran should keep its option open with the Taliban. that is if the Taliban are able to bring peace in Afghanistan than they should be given the opportunity.<sup>107</sup> Peace in Afghanistan brought by anyone was to be welcomed by Teheran as it reduces the pressure of refugees and instability on the borders of Mashad

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<sup>104</sup> op.cit., Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved, pp.77-78.

<sup>105</sup> ibid.

<sup>106</sup> ibid.

<sup>107</sup> ibid, pp.85-86.

region.<sup>108</sup> This reflects the objectivity of the Iranian intelligentsia, who were able to assess Afghan crisis and its ground realities more comprehensively than their counterparts in Pakistan.

However, the Taliban leadership has accused Iran for supporting anti-Taliban groups<sup>109</sup>. It is alleged that Teheran does not want a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan because it would prove detrimental to the Iranian interests in Central Asia. If Afghanistan becomes peaceful, all the pipelines could be built through the Afghan route and Iran would lose its leverage.

But this view of the Taliban is in complete contrast to the genuine Iranian initiatives for peace in Afghanistan in the past. Moreover, Iran so far does not have the capacity to supply entire Turkmain gas and oil to the international markets.<sup>110</sup> Additional capacity pipelines have to be built. Therefore, Afghanistan stands better chances as yet another route for selling oil to the world by Turkmainistan.

Pakistan's Afghan policy in the post-cold war era has not only had grave political and strategic implications for the Central Asian states but it fueled the oil politics in the region. American and Russian interests clashed and a new 'Great Game' began in the region. The production of oil and gas and its transportation and selling became the key points of competition. This competition or power struggle did not remain in the domain

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<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

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<sup>110</sup> *op.cit.*..Ahmed Rashid, ' Pipe Dreams' pp.27-28.. also see Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved eds.. " The Afghan Turmoil: Changing Equations". ( New Delhi: Himalyan Books.1998)pp.112-121.

of political entities only, but even the multi-national companies like Bridas and UNOCAL also got involved into the battle of settling the Afghan problem.<sup>111</sup> The traditional power struggle amongst the states now became the part of the MNC's competition, who were emerging equally powerful entities.

Argentinian company Bridas was the first MNC which had invested in the Turkmainistan's oil and gas projects.<sup>112</sup> In 1992 Bridas chairman Dr Carlos Bulgheroni took the decision to stake claims for Turkmain oil fields.<sup>113</sup> Bridas was taking a huge risk by investing into the Turkmain oilfields. The plan was to explore these oilfields and then transport the oil and gas through Afghanistan. Bridas was competing with the American giant UNOCAL who had similar plans. However, none in the management of the Bridas knew that the simple business decision taken by them was going to be of international political importance and that they would not only earn profits but also gain international publicity.

Bridas was awarded the Yashlar oil field and Daulatabad gas block to explore in 1992 and later Keimer oil block of the West Turkmainistan was handed over to them in 1993.<sup>114</sup> Turkmainistan had gas reserves of 800 billion cubic meters at Yashlar.<sup>115</sup> It needed accessible markets and Pakistan was the target. On the March 16th 1995

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<sup>111</sup> Bridas is an Argentinian Multi-national Company. UNOCAL is an American Multi-National Company also see Ahmed Rashid. 'Power Play' in Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong) 10 April 1997, pp.27-28..

<sup>112</sup> op.cit..Ahmed Rashid. 'Pipe Dreams' pp.27-28.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*p.27.

Benezir Butto the then Prime Minister of Pakistan and President Niyazov of Turkmainistan and Bidas agreed upon to prepare a feasibility report.<sup>116</sup> Bidas planned to build a 1300 km pipeline between Daulatabad oil block and Sui in Pakistan. This idea was sold to Pakistan and Turkmainistan by the Bidas Chairman.<sup>117</sup> This pipline had to pass through Kandhar, Herat and reach Sui where Pakistan's pipeline network originates.<sup>118</sup> Bidas hoped that in future this pipeline could be extended to India, which was a potentially large market for Turkmain gas.

Afghan civil war camouflaged the entire plan of Bidas. Bidas Chairman started negotiating with the warlords in Afghanistan to allow the construction of the proposed pipeline.<sup>119</sup> An agreement in this regard was signed between Kabul government then led by Rabbani and Bidas. The duration of this agreement was thirty years.<sup>120</sup> Simillar agreements were signed with the Taliban and the Northern warlords.<sup>121</sup> Bidas was getting sucked into the internal politics of Afghanistan for the success of its ambitious pipeline project. Bidas was now competing with UNOCAL-Delta combine at one hand and on the other it was compiting with the political intrests of the Afghan groups and regional powers in the 'Energy politics' of the region. By 1995 Bidas project in Turkmainistan became operational and the plans to go ahead and build the Afghan

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<sup>116</sup> *ibid.* p.27.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Ahmed Rashid. 'Taliban Rule' in Far Eastern Economic Review ( Hong Kong) 10April 1997, pp.32-33.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

pipelines were in final stages.<sup>122</sup> UNOCAL at that time negotiated a separate deal with President Niyazov and signed an agreement on the 21st October 1996.<sup>123</sup> This agreement was signed by UNOCAL, Turkmain and Delta oil company of Saudi Arab to build a pipeline from Daulatabad to Multan in Pakistan through Afghanistan.<sup>124</sup> A consortium was made under the leadership of UNOCAL with 70 % stake, Delta was given 15%, Russian company Gazprom was given 10%, Turkmenrogaz was given 5% stakes.<sup>125</sup> The proposed gas pipeline was to be 1500km long and was to pass through Afghanistan and reach Pakistan's west coast.<sup>126</sup>

UNOCAL moves in Turkmainstan violated the Bidas agreements with the Turkmain.<sup>127</sup> Bidas filed a case against the Turkmain-UNOCAL project.<sup>128</sup> Battle began and Bidas took to diplomacy. It first negotiated a deal with the Kazakistan government and bought over the rights of their oil and gas sector and pipeline network that was privatised in 1995.<sup>129</sup> Bidas checkmated UNOCAL moves in Turkmainistan by taking over the exit route of Turkmain gas to Central Asian states.<sup>130</sup> The judicial victory in January 1997 gave Bidas an edge over the UNOCAL game plan in Central Asia.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, Bidas was able to take the Taliban in Afghanistan into their confidence. They negotiated deals with the Saudi Arabian firm Ningharco and gave

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<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *op.cit.* Ahmed Rashid, 'Pipe Dreams' 10 April 1997, pp.27-28.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*

them 50% stake in a new venture.<sup>132</sup> It was the close relations of the President of Ningarno with Prince Turki which helped Bidas to broker a deal with the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Taliban allowed Bidas to open its office in Kandhar.<sup>133</sup>

These advances of Bidas destabilised the balance set up by UNOCAL in Central Asia. They too adopted similar tactics to attract the attention of the Afghan groups. Delta went on to hire the services of Charles Santos, a former UN official to win over the Taliban.<sup>134</sup> UNOCAL set up its own team of consultants consisting of Robert Oakley, who had played an important role in negotiating peace in Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad an academician on Afghanistan and Gerald Boordan an expert on oil projects to negotiate with Russia and Pakistan for the Afghan pipeline.<sup>135</sup>

Prospects of materialising these projects were a new development in Afghan politics. It was a healthy development as it brought about the possibilities of reconstruction of Afghanistan and establishing peace. Pipelines would have become new lifelines of economic reconstruction in Afghanistan. They would have given revenue to the Afghanistan and employment to the Afghans. Secondly all the revenue generated from oil trade could be used in reconstruction of Afghan economy, where a political settlement was easy to reach with the flow of money. Thirdly, oil companies and other multinational would have invested in the Afghan mineral resources which were so far not explored. This would have brought foreign investment into the war torn economy

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<sup>132</sup> op.cit. Ahmed Rashid. 'Taliban Rule' 10 April 1997, pp.32-33.

<sup>133</sup> ibid.

<sup>134</sup> ibid., p.32.

<sup>135</sup> ibid.

of Afghanistan. The UN as an organisation would have found more financial help to pursue its various operations in Afghanistan. However, this picture remained only a dream due to continued fighting among the Afghan groups. This was largely attributed to the weakness of Pakistan's Afghan policy.

Pakistan's Afghan policy remained within the limited framework of establishing a puppet Islamic regime in Kabul and the use of Afghan highways for trade and transit with the Central Asian states. Islamabad's policy makers never saw the possibilities of using the opportunities in Central Asia to settle Afghan crisis once for all. Pakistan would have still benefitted and able to achieve the respect which it always craved for. Settling of Afghan crisis would have eased pressure on its economy. Secondly, Pakistan's ports would have always been used as outlets by any Afghan government to sell the Central Asian oil and gas. Thirdly, Pakistan could have become an effective partner in development of the Afghan economy. This would have helped Islamabad to build better relation with Kabul and also gain the benefits of Afghan reconstruction process.

Continued fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance has diminished all the prospects of peace in Afghanistan. Promotion and establishment of the Taliban in Afghanistan has earned Pakistan international isolation. The events of May 26, 1997 exposed Islamabad's Afghan policy in the post-cold war period. Instead of gaining support of the Central Asian states on its Afghan policy, Pakistan has generated suspicion and isolation for itself. Perhaps the policy makers in Islamabad never paid

attention to the implications of Pakistan's Afghan policy in the adjoining Central Asian region. The pipeline projects have become mere pipedreams and Afghanistan continues to burn.



## Chapter 4.

### India as a Factor in Pakistan's Afghan Policy

The geo-politics of the region took another turn with the Soviet decision to pull out of Afghanistan in 1988. It marked an end to Cold War rivalry in South Asia and had its impact on the regional power game. Indian policy was put on defensive.<sup>1</sup> The loss of Moscow as a friend was a blow to New Delhi's Afghan policy and it lost its favorite position among the Afghans and Central Asian states.<sup>2</sup>

Pakistan got the opportunity to fully exploit Afghan crisis to its advantage. For the first time it got the free hand to exploit the situation in the region to achieve its long standing objective of emerging as a regional player and marginalise India. Islamabad took full responsibility of the continued Afghan crisis and at the same time started a 'proxy war' in Kashmir. In the low intensity- cost effective war in Kashmir, Pakistan started diverting its Afghan resources.<sup>3</sup> That is arms and ammunition that were accumulated for Afghan jihad were now diverted to Kashmiri militants.<sup>4</sup> It is reported that Afghan training camps were used to train the Kashmiri militants. Arab volunteers and even Afghans who worked as paid mercenaries were sent across to India to create internal disorder.<sup>5</sup> Islamabad was attempting to dismember India by forcing Kashmiri secession. In some academic circles this was treated as a policy of revenge by

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<sup>1</sup> Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved eds., "The Afghan Turmoil: Changing Equations". (New Delhi: Himalyan Books, 1998)p

<sup>2</sup> ibid., also see Rasul Bakh Rais, "The Vortex of Regional Power Rivalry", in "War Without Winners" (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp246-47.

<sup>3</sup> ibid.,

<sup>4</sup> ibid.,

<sup>5</sup> ibid.,

Islamabad vis-à-vis New Delhi over the earlier dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 war with India.<sup>6</sup> Here Pakistan's Afghan policy converged with its policy towards India. By perpetuating a *Jihad* in Kashmir Pakistan projected the image of the savior of Islamic values in the world. The attempt of installing a Islamic government in Kabul and creating an Islamic state of Kashmir by dismembering India Pakistan wanted to earn the position of the leader of the Islamic world.

At the domestic level Pakistani leadership has used the rhetoric of *Jihad* for Kashmir and Afghan war to serve their political interests.<sup>7</sup> Pakistan's leaders had to play the Islamic card to pacify the domestic audience as well as gain support at the regional level.

However the geostrategic role adopted by Pakistan after the Soviet pull out from Afghanistan got diminished by its actions in Kashmir. Islamabad failed miserably in mustering support for its efforts in Kashmir at regional and international level. Much to the surprise of Islamabad, Iran remained in favor of India at Geneva in 1996 over the Kashmir issue.<sup>8</sup> A limited support of the Arab world was available to Islamabad on the Kashmir Issue. In the name of Islamic solidarity lipservice was paid for the appeal of Pakistan to cut off diplomatic ties with India. Islamabad's policy towards India has remained captive of Kashmir issue, which impinges on its policy towards Afghanistan and *Jihad* monger Muslim fundamentalist warriors. For Islamabad it was a difficult

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<sup>6</sup> It was a thesis which was propounded by the Indian academician Raju Tomas. op.cit..Marvin G. Weinbaum. pp.3-17.

<sup>7</sup> In the Human Rights convention at Geneva in 1996. Pakistan had to drop its initiative on Human rights violation in Kashmir.

proposition to have healthy relations with a moderating Mujaeedeen government in Kabul, while it continued to support the militancy in Kashmir.

For India the continued crisis in Afghanistan had become a challenge in itself. Indian response to developments in Afghanistan in the post Soviet era has been lukewarm. India's continued backing of the communist regimes in Afghanistan has backfired with the collapse of the Soviet Union and has become an issue in the regional politics.<sup>9</sup> J.N. Dixit observes that India has paid the price for its policy towards Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> But it was necessary for New Delhi to have an independent stand on Afghanistan. Indian policy became defensive because of the decision of Moscow to pull out of the Afghan situation.<sup>11</sup> India still has a role in Afghanistan.

Mujahedeen leadership could not ignore India after coming to power in 1992. India could do little except recognizing the new regime in Kabul. It was the traditional line that New Delhi . The additional feature was, New Delhi gave political asylum to the family of outgoing communist President Mohammed Najibullah<sup>12</sup>.

After coming to power Mujahedeen leader, Rabbani made the first initiative in October 1992 to establish close links with New Delhi.<sup>13</sup> The Foreign Minister of Afghanistan visited New Delhi and met the Ministry of External Affairs officials. Kabul established its links with New Delhi despite the annoyance of Islamabad. The Foreign Minister of Afghanistan had expressed his apprehension over the possibilities of diversionary use

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<sup>9</sup> op.cit..Sreedhar and Mahendra Ved eds.

<sup>10</sup> ibid.

<sup>11</sup> ibid.

<sup>12</sup> ibid.

<sup>13</sup> ibid.

of the Mujahedeen resources in Kashmir at the behest of Pakistan. Firm assurances were given by him that the Afghan territory shall not be allowed to be used for anti-India activities.<sup>14</sup> This reflected the independence of Afghans, who after remaining dependent on Pakistan for so many years didn't follow their line.<sup>15</sup> Yet the fragile government of Afghanistan had its limitations in controlling the ISI activities, as Islamabad continued to use the 'Pakistan occupied Kashmir's territory to not only fuel insurgency in Kashmir but also creating disturbances in India.<sup>16</sup>

Introduction of the Taliban in the Afghan crisis was a new development in Pakistan's Afghan policy. It was the renewed attempt of Islamabad to militarily oust the undependable Mujahedeen government and establish Pushtun dominated Islamic-pliant regime in Kabul. Success of the Taliban forces in Afghanistan had projected a new security scenario for New Delhi to be cautious of the developments in Afghanistan. The danger for New Delhi is tremendous. The Taliban forces are fundamentalist warriors and are operating in Afghanistan on the instructions of Islamabad and the possibilities of their diversion to Kashmir cannot be ignored by New Delhi. Though their advent as the rulers of Kabul did not evoke a strong response from New Delhi.<sup>17</sup> After the fall of Kabul on the 26th September 1996 and killing of Najibullah elicited a non-committal response from New Delhi. The policy and the response of New Delhi to the developments in Afghanistan exposed the weakness of India's Afghan policy.<sup>18</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> ibid.

<sup>15</sup> ibid.

<sup>16</sup> ibid.

<sup>17</sup> ibid.

<sup>18</sup> ibid.

non-committal response of New Delhi came under severe criticism from intelligentsia and even political parties resented it. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) criticized the lack of foreign policy initiatives by the DeveGoda government.<sup>19</sup> It was an internal reaction within the government as CPI(M) was a part of the ruling United Front government in New Delhi. A similar response came from the Indian press which was critical of inability of the Indian government to respond to the Afghan developments. The then Foreign Minister of India, I.K.Gujral clarified India's stand that it would continue to recognize the exiled Rabbani government and ruled out early opening of the mission in Kabul.<sup>20</sup> He said that " We have not de-recognized the Rabbani government".<sup>21</sup> India continued to support the Rabbani government and made the exception for the first time in its traditional policy stand of recognizing the ruling government in Kabul. Treating the Taliban phenomenon as a passing phase New Delhi sent the message across that the Taliban are the new props of Pakistan and are the agents to guard Islamabad's interests in Afghanistan.

The Taliban's success in Kabul and later in Mazar-e-Sharif was hailed by Pakistan as success of its foreign policy. Islamabad saw its dream of achieving strategic depth vis-à-vis New Delhi being fulfilled by the Taliban. It was presumed that the Taliban shall comply with each and every demand of Islamabad and Pakistan would be able to

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

dominate the region by controlling Afghan trade routes that connected Central Asian markets to the Eastern world.

However, Islamabad's spirits of jubilation were shortlived as the Taliban faced the stiff resistance from the Northern Alliance in their northern campaigns in Afghanistan. On the other hand none of the countries of the West, Russia, China, Iran and India recognize the Taliban rule in Afghanistan. The desperation in the Taliban group to receive international and Indian recognition was tremendous. This was to be bestowed upon them the international legitimacy as the rulers of Afghanistan. But to their real dismay, the Taliban were not recognized by the international community.

Frustrated by the international response they continued their war with the Northern Alliance to control entire country. The Taliban leaders followed the line of Islamabad on India. In an interview to Rahimullah Yusufzai, the Taliban leader Mullah Wakil Ahmed, accused New Delhi of its alleged involvement in aiding and supporting the Rabbani government.<sup>22</sup> And he maintained that if New Delhi continues to support the ousted Rabbani government then normalisation of Kabul's relations with New Delhi is not possible.<sup>23</sup> He maintained that India had continued to support the anti-Jihad forces in Afghanistan ever since Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup> New Delhi, in his view, could have better relations with Kabul if it stops interfering in the internal affairs of

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<sup>22</sup>Rahimullah Yusufzai. "We Can Have Better Ties if India Stops Interfering". (interview with Mullah Wakil Ahmed, Taliban leader). Outlook (New Delhi). 23 October, 1996, pp.26-27.

<sup>23</sup> ibid.

<sup>24</sup> ibid.

Afghanistan. It is clear that the Taliban could not stand the Indian decision to support the ousted forces of Rabbani.<sup>25</sup> Secondly , Indian recognition is avidly sought by the Taliban but they want New Delhi to toe their line and accept them as the rulers of Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup>

This should spur leaves much for New Delhi to formulate an aggressive policy to bring about stability in Afghanistan. Though limited efforts were made by New Delhi to counter the Pakistan's initiative in Afghanistan. New Delhi has forged new ties with Teheran to use Bander-e-Abbas port to explore trading possibilities with the Central Asian states.<sup>27</sup> New Delhi has also funded the railway network that has just become operational between Iran and Turkmanistan.<sup>28</sup> This has reduced the utility of the Pakistan's objective of using a peaceful Afghan corridor to establish an overland route to Central Asian State. The growth of Indo-Iranian relationship has further marginalised Pakistan's attempts to propagate 'cause of Kashmir' in international fora. The gross human rights violation of the Taliban in Afghanistan by the Taliban has weakened the Pakistan's stand on Kashmir. Fundamentalism of the Taliban has created more complications within Pakistan's society. The Taliban try even to moderat their domestic policies, but still they are far away from international recognition. This has added to their frustration. This has created a new security scenario for Pakistan itself as the *Jihad* hungry, well trained Talibs pose a potential danger to the internal security

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Sreedhar, et al., Taliban and The Afghan Turmoil: The Role of USA, Pakistan, Iran and China (New Delhi : Himalayan Books,1997) .

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

of Pakistan. Islamabad did not calculate the results of what it had unleashed on other in Afghanistan could soon become its own problem.<sup>29</sup> This scenario in its immediate neighborhood calls for New Delhi to take some firm step and add teeth to its Afghan policy. If the Taliban took to an independent role for themselves in Afghanistan in line with their predecessors they would pose a direct danger to Pakistani security. That is, if the Taliban raked the age old Pushtun demand and started fermenting trouble for Pakistan, a new era of instability will start in the sub-continent. Pakistan, with its economy in shambles will not be able to fight back the demands of regional autonomy. In such a violent and volatile phase India will have to assume the responsibility of safeguarding its Kashmir but also the integrity of Pakistan. However, Pakistan is not in a mood to take India into confidence to help solve the Afghan problem.

The collapse of the state in Afghanistan is not only a loss of traditional friend sitting at the back of a neighboring country which has chosen to be inimical to India but also stifles the possibilities of opening up of new opportunities with the recently freed Central Asian States. If Afghanistan is peaceful and Pakistan has functional relationship with India, the sky would be the limit for the cooperation between Central Asia and South Asia. The enormity of the Indo-Central Asian trade would offer Pakistan double benefits in terms of transit taxation as well as its markets would get cheaper commodities from Central Asian States as well as India. A value addition could be

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<sup>29</sup> Ahmed Rashid, 'Pakistan and the Taliban' William Maley ed., "Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban" (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1998).pp77-82.



done to semi- finished products and they could be send to other South Asian markets via India. This would change the destiny of the majority of the people of Asia. Pakistan's strategic and political leverage would be manifold provided it takes a longer view of history and displays the courage to cast itself in a role, larger than life. Pakistan would gain importance by becoming a major trade center, it would give Islamabad financial resources to reduce its dependency on the West. Peace in Afghanistan and a large scale commercial activity would help Islamabad become partners in development and reconstruction in devastated Afghanistan and finally an Indo- Pak 'detente' would help the SAARC grouping to expand it activities with new vigour.

If Afghanistan disintergrates as a state than it would be difficult for Pakistan to save its own territories in the NWFP. The well armed and trained Afghan warriors, be it the Taliban or the Mujahedeen, would fight to their last for Pushtunistn. Secondly, entire Pakistani trucking industry is controlled by the Afghan refugees, who could become carriers of weapons and gurrila fighters all over Pakistan. This would lead to serious internal security problems for Pakistan. The secessionist movements in Sind and Baluchistan could flare up posing a direct challenge to Islamabad. Thirdly, disintegration of Afghanistan would bring more refugees to Pakistan and it would add to the economic burden of Pakistan, The drug trafficking and arms trade would accompany the refugees invariably. This would create a wider social disorder in Pakistan's society. If such a scenario develops, even New Delhi would be affected. It would have to deal with both a disintegrated Afghanistan and unstable Pakistan.

If Afghanistan remains stable and a broad based government comes into being in Kabul, political reality would be different, but even then there is no surity of improvement in Pak-Afghan relations. As much would depend on the nature of the Afghan government and its foreign policy. The task of nation building would be difficult for any government coming to power in Kabul. It has to satisfy and represent the interests of all the Afghan ethnic minorities only than it would have legitimacy and regional and international acceptance. In either case Kabul cannot afford to ignore New Delhi . India factor, therefore, continues to play an important role in Pak-Afghan relations.

On the other hand India cannot continue with the policy of absolving itself from the Afghan responsibility. New Delhi has to have vigorous policy initiative. India cannot opt out of the Afghan mess. As the mess might turn out to be so unmanageable that even Pakistan would succumb to its fury and ultimate brunt shall be borne by India.

## **CHAPTER:5**

### **Conclusion**

During the period of this study, Pakistan tried to pursue five important objectives through its policy towards Afghanistan. Firstly, gaining control over Afghanistan. Secondly, expanding its strategic profile in Central Asia. Thirdly, clamouring for the leadership of the Islamic bloc. Fourthly, refurbishing its dwindling alliance with the U.S. Fifthly, creating a strategic depth vis-à-vis India.

Pakistan failed in its efforts to install a friendly coalition of Afghan Mujahedeen factions in Kabul, after the Soviet troops vacated Afghanistan in 1989. The geo-political realities of the region necessitated a change in Pakistan's Afghan policy. An alternative to the Mujahedeen was to be created and the Taliban were propped up by Islamabad to replace the Mujahedeen government in Kabul. This was a marked change in Pakistan's Afghan policy. The Taliban were trained, armed and guided by the ISI. Their main task was to oust the unfriendly Rabbani government in Kabul and establish a client government. Secondly, they were to secure the Central Asian trade routes for Pakistan. Islamabad had realized the increasing geo-strategic importance of Afghanistan in the post-cold war era. Afghanistan had become the gateway to the Central Asia and hence, was the center of power struggle between regional powers like Pakistan and Iran. Pakistan had a clear advantage in Afghanistan as compared to other regional powers. Therefore, Islamabad adopted a different strategy to control

Afghanistan. The Taliban were introduced in Afghanistan by Pakistan to realise these geo-strategic objectives.

Pakistan's new initiative in Afghanistan was perceived in the beginning, though cautiously, by the neighboring Central Asian states as a lucrative option. The states of Turkmainistan, Kazakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Krigizitan perceived in Pakistan a potential trade partner, for which a peaceful Afghan corridor was a prerequisite.

At the bilateral level Pakistan made friendly overtures towards the Central Asian states.

Central Asian states were sold the idea of Afghan stability and than were presented with the proposals of investments and joint ventures. Pakistan was using all possible diplomatic methods to attract the Central Asian attention. At regional level Pakistan took the initiative to revive OIC and ECO. This was done to gain regional support on it's efforts in Afghanistan and also to come closer to the Central Asian states in a regional grouping. Therefore, Pakistan had adopted a key role for establishing peace and order in Afghanistan and maintenance of stability in the region in the post-cold war era.

The second most important aspect of Pakistan's Afghan policy in the post-cold war period was to create a subservient state in Afghanistan under the control of Islamic-fundamentalist Pushtun Taliban, who were to secure the Central Asian trade routes. This suited Pakistan's immediate strategic interests and also secured the Western investment in Central Asian states. American and Western investments in the Central

Asian oil fields were threatened due to non-availability of safe routes and Pakistan was offering the shortest route through Afghanistan.

Pushtun dominated Taliban group to offset Iranian influence in Afghanistan and marginalise Teheran's importance in West Asia. This would have given Pakistan the desired leverage in the Islamic world.

By maintaining a friendly Afghanistan in its backyard Pakistan would have also gained strategic depth vis-à-vis New Delhi. This would have helped Pakistan to promote insurgency in Kashmir and also forecloses all possibilities of opening up of a second front by Afghanistan in an eventuality of war with India. Therefore, Pakistan's Afghan policy in the post cold war period had an element of direct threat for India's national security.

The success of the Taliban in Afghanistan in capturing Kabul and nearly 2/3rds of the territory is hailed as the success of Pakistan's Afghan policy in the post cold war era. Their success in Afghanistan was used by Pakistan to influence the Central Asia states and the Islamic world. Pakistan projected itself as the savior of Afghanistan and a dominant force in the region. The limited gains of Pakistan renewed American interest in Islamabad's Afghan initiatives. US restored aid and assistance to Islamabad for pursuing its Afghan policy and US-Pak relations were refurbished. Hank Brown amendment removed all the sanctions against Pakistan.

However, this jubilation of Islamabad was shortlived because the Taliban were defeated at the hands of the Northern Alliance in the northern Afghanistan. They were

forced to retire to their own territories in the southern Afghanistan. Stiff resistance in the north Afghanistan has brought about a situation of status quo in Afghan civil war. Incoherence and inconsistency of Pakistan's Afghan policy in the post cold war era was totally exposed during the battle for Mazar-e-Sharif by the Taliban. Infact, introduction of the Taliban in Afghanistan has created an ethnic divide among the Afghans. Civil war continues to rage in Afghanistan. The political power in Afghanistan is polarized on the ethnic lines. The Pushtuns are now fighting against the non-Pushtuns. This ethnic fragmentation of Afghan civil society has failed the state of Afghanistan, which remains geographically held by Pushtun Taliban in the south and the non-Pushtun minorities in the north.

These developments in Afghanistan in the post-Soviet era have thrown new challenges for the adjoining Central Asian states like, Iran, China and India. The success of the Taliban in Afghanistan has evoked world wide criticism of Pakistan's Afghan policy because of their brutal acts of violence, murder, violation of Human Rights and marginalisation of women in Afghanistan. Islamabad is being held responsible for the rise of fundamentalist forces in Afghanistan. West is neither able to recognize the Taliban nor they are able to support Pakistan over its adventurism in Afghanistan. The possibilities of spread of fundamentalism into their own territories has generated adverse responses by the Central Asian states. Pakistan's intentions in Afghanistan have been questioned extensively. It was difficult for Pakistan to maintain its credibility

with the Central Asian states. With this all possibilities of direct trade with the Central Asian states have been in jeopardy. All pipeline dreams have evaporated.

The rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan has become a source of inspiration for many insurgency movements in the adjoining regions. Kashmiri insurgency is a case in point. They have set an example that would add to the vulnerability of the multi-ethnic neighboring states.

Pakistan's aim to gain strategic depth vis-à-vis New Delhi by controlling Afghanistan has also lost its importance because of continued instability in Afghanistan. The question of acquiring strategic depth has again, been rendered nearly irrelevant in the wake of nuclearisation of India and Pakistan.

Pakistan itself is exposed to an unimaginable danger. It cannot sustain a prolonged civil war in Afghanistan. The Taliban are stuck in Kabul, unable to gain control of the entire Afghanistan. They have become the part of the status quo. This adds to their frustration. The possibility of adoption of an irredentist posture on Durand Line and Pushtun question by the Taliban cannot be ruled out. Therefore, half baked success of Pakistan's Afghan policy and the political stalemate in Afghanistan might bomberang on Pakistan.

The future of Afghanistan remains bleak. Pakistan along with other neighbors of Afghanistan have to realise that Afghans are indomitable people. A solution to their problems can only evolve out of their internal processes. Peace in Afghanistan can only be achieved if external powers stop interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

Pakistan being involved in Afghan crisis for nearly two decades should realise the independence of Afghan mindset. Arming and assisting one group or the other has not brought an end to Afghan civil war. Disarming and humanitarian aid is more important to rebuild Afghanistan. Instead of using Afghan situation to serve their own narrow self-interests, all the powers of the region, specially Pakistan should resolve to establish peace and order in Afghanistan.



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