

**US Withdrawal From Afghanistan: Implications for India and
Pakistan**

By

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DEDICATION

With utmost devotions, I dedicated my whole work to my beloved and affectionate parents, sisters, brothers, friends and Respected staff of International Relations Department who have always been source of my encouragement, knowledge, illumination and wisdom for me, whose pray and guidance showed me the right path and made the blessing of Allah shower on me.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronyms	Abbreviation
ANDSF	Afghan National Defense Security Forces
ANASTU	Afghanistan National Agricultural Sciences and Technology University
ACB	Afghanistan Cricket Board
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CARS	Central Asian Republics
CE	Chief Executive
EAM	External Affairs Ministers
EU	European Union
FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
GWoT	Global War on Terror
HICDP	High Impact Community Development Projects
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISAF	International Security Assistance Forces
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
IS	Islamic State
ICCR	Indian Council of Cultural Relations
IAF	Indian Afghanistan Foundation
IEDs	Improved Explosive Device
INR	Indian Rupee
ITEC	Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation
IARI	Indian Agriculture Research Institute
ICC	International Cricket Council
IT	Information Technology
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization

NWFP	North West Frontier Post
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SPA	Strategic Partnership Agreement
TTP	Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan
U.S	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
USAID	U.S Agency for International Development
UN	United Nations
WoT	War on Terror

ABSTRACT

The US invaded Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks and it spent almost two decades to combat terrorism and Al-Qaeda network with heavy military, logistic and financial investment; however, the tough military resistance posed by the Taliban and fragile political environment prevalent in Afghanistan undermined the US strategic ambitions. Resultantly, the US withdrew from Afghanistan and Taliban returned to power. Like much deliberated implications of Afghan invasion by the US, its withdrawal too has serious implications for different stakeholders, especially India and Pakistan. The US withdrawal from Afghanistan has indeed changed the geo-political and geo-strategic outlook of these two main regional actors in Afghanistan. This research dissertation therefore focuses upon the implications of US departure from Afghanistan for both Pakistan and India. It is argued that, with US withdrawal might negatively impact the Indian penetration into Afghanistan's political, economic, social, and cultural arenas achieved through heavy investment if Taliban maintain tough stance towards India. On the contrary, Pakistan, apparently comfortable with the Taliban regime might accrue benefits from revival of Taliban in Afghanistan. While Neorealism has been applied as research theoretical framework; interpretive research philosophy, inductive approach, case study strategy and qualitative method of research has been adopted to elaborate the phenomena comprehensively and holistically. The data collection was made through extensive study of relevant books, research articles, magazines and official reports. This research summarizes the important findings and proffers the recommendations for policy makers.

Introduction

Afghanistan is strategically, culturally, geographically and politically, one of the most significant countries in South Asia. Although it is a landlocked country in the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and Middle East but still its geopolitical and geo-economics significance make it prominent in international politics. Owing to its geostrategic significance, Afghanistan always remained an attraction for the great powers like Britain, Soviet Union and United States of America throughout its history. Similarly, its neighbors in general and India as well as Pakistan in particular had been engaged in making friendly foreign relations with Afghanistan

Indian foreign policy for Afghanistan had always been governed by Kautilya's Doctrine which states that, "every immediate neighbor country is a foe and the foe's enemy is a friend", so India had been maintaining and executing hostility policy against Pakistan via Afghanistan. Alongside demonstration of animosity towards Pakistan, India through its influence in Afghanistan wanted to gain fulfillment of its political and economic interests and to get easy access to energy rich Central Asian States. Thus, India always wanted to increase its influence in Afghanistan and at the same time decrease Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan achievement of its greater design of proving itself as a great power of South Asia. In military strategy, Indian military objective is to confine the strategic depth of Pakistan and resultant encirclement of Pakistan from both sides; such Indian greatest hegemonic desire has always been the biggest threat for Pakistan. Thus, the

nature of Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan had predominantly been shaped by the Doctrine of Strategic Depth.

India seized the opportunity of United States of America's invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 for fulfillment of its design and to forge brotherly relations with Afghan government. Karzai who was sharing much allegiance to India, as he received much of his education in India showed natural inclination towards India. Having gained much hold, India continued to rejoice its much-extended influence in Afghanistan during the turbulent period of Unity government administered by President Ashraf Ghani and Dr Abdullah. Since 2001, India assisted Afghanistan in developmental and reconstruction work and donated worth \$ 3 billion in economic aid; thus, it became fifth largest donor to Afghanistan globally and top donor regionally. India helped Afghanistan in education sector, health, construction of roads, bridges, construction of electricity transmission lines, women empowerment, and vocational training etcetera. India further enhanced its relations with Afghanistan by signing a strategic Partnership Agreement in October 2011. This agreement was first in its kind which Afghanistan had ever signed with any foreign country. This agreement provided India to advance its efforts in enhancing Afghan National Army's (ANA) capabilities, which became a source of greater antipathy and security threat for Pakistan. As claimed by Pakistan, India was funneling terrorism from Afghanistan across the border in Pakistan's restive areas of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. India engaged Pakistan in western border, in order to divert its focus from Kashmir issue. Internationally, Indian influence in Afghanistan also suited to United States of America as India became the main actor to limit Taliban, Pakistan, and China's influence in Afghanistan.

India and Pakistan, the two major powers of South Asia had real complex history. Since the partition of sub-continent, both India and Pakistan had been in turmoil due to the unfair

demarcation of the territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The territory has been marked as the International disputed territory in United Nation Security Council (UNSC) in 1948¹. Afghanistan has been the epic center of attraction not only for US but for India and Pakistan as well. It is the country which is being used as a gateway to Central Asia and the only accessible silk route for trade and commerce.

The US invasion of Afghanistan of 2001 was the retaliation to 9/11 attacks, conducted by Al-Qaeda, targeting the twin towers in America. The invasion was actually the US initiative of grand strategy of “War on terror” with the support of its allies. The Bush doctrine provided the path to entrance of US troops in the region. The purpose of initiating the War on Terror (WoT) was to contain the spread of terrorism in Afghanistan. However, it was not only limited to Afghanistan only. Pakistan had also been affected from the international terrorism. Therefore, the US invited Pakistan for its assistance in terms of providing basis to run the operation smoothly and to combat Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan but USA demands were not fully accepted. On the contrary, India extended all sorts of cooperation and initiated so many developmental initiatives in Afghanistan with a clear purpose of strengthening US-Indo bilateral relations and also Indo- Afghan bilateral relations.

The US sustained its presence in Afghanistan with the support of North Atlantic Treaty Organizations (NATO) since 2001 on the pretext of curbing or eliminating the spread of terrorism. But, the efforts of nation-building and peace could not become successful and finally US decided to leave Afghanistan after Joe Biden took over. Indeed, the 9/11 incident had provided the opportunity for entrance of US troops into the Afghanistan region to have the close watch of the activities taking place in Central Asian and South Asian regions, particularly

¹Kashmir internationally recognized disputed territory: Chinese envoy’, India today, 2019. Retrieved on 4th/11/2019 from <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/kashmir-internationally-recognised-disputed-territory-chinese-envoy-1578474-2019-08-08>

referring to Chinese policies. Finally, after the Doha agreement between US-Taliban and the fall Ashraf Ghani government, USA completely withdrew its forces on 30, August, 2021. A new government has been installed in the Afghanistan under the leadership of the Taliban.

As mentioned before that India and Pakistan have been induced in a hefty competition in Afghanistan. A new door has opened for India and Pakistan vis a vis Afghanistan after the US withdrawal. A new government has been established in the Afghanistan under the leadership of the Taliban. As the US has packed up and has left all guns blazing, India and Pakistan will have to adjust to this new reality. There are a lot of repercussions and implications which India and Pakistan might be facing after US withdrawal.

The US withdrawal decreased Indian influence in Afghanistan. It has brought serious repercussions for India's investment and presence in Afghanistan. Consequently, the revival of Taliban has left little room for India in Afghanistan. Such as, it decreased India's trade with Afghanistan and also created hurdles in the way to get her access to Central Asian states. Similarly, it stalled India political and diplomatic influence over Afghanistan. Further, the US quick withdrawal from Afghanistan has generated serious security threats for India.

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan has proved a blessing of disguise for Pakistan. Post 9/11, the Indian influence in Afghanistan had posed serious threats for Pakistan. She assisted and trained various separatists and terrorists groups against Pakistan. However, the revival of Taliban in Afghanistan stalled the Indian strategies to disintegrate Pakistan. On the other side, it can create different political, social and security issues for Pakistan.

Statement of the problem

Since the partition of the sub-continent, predominant influence in Afghanistan has remained a bone of contention for arch-rivals, India and Pakistan and both the states had been pursuing foreign policy of influential edge over one another. After 9/11, in the presence of the United States of America in Afghanistan, India had vigorously pursued soft power diplomacy in Afghanistan to impair the role of Pakistan in Afghanistan and was leaving no stone unturned to declare Pakistan a cherished state for sponsoring terrorists. To Indian fortune, the fall of Taliban at the hands of United States of America, who had devotion towards Pakistan negatively impacted Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan. Further benefiting from American and Pro-Indian Afghan Governments' influence, India in past two decades made huge investment in Afghanistan to solidify its relations with Afghanistan and fulfill its anti-Pakistan politico-military strategy. However, The United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan has changed the geo-political and geo-strategic outlook of the region especially with respect to the two main actors India and Pakistan. This vital being new aspect has been under researched. This exploratory research shall explore the implications of United States of America's withdrawal and its connected developments for both Pakistan and India.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To evaluate the US withdrawal policy from Afghanistan.
2. To examine the implication of US withdrawal for India.
3. To analyze the implication of US withdrawal for Pakistan.

Literature Review

Afghanistan has an important geo strategic location. Owing to its importance it has always remained in the lime light. Different countries and major powers over the times have invaded Afghanistan and the history witnessed that no state or power had been able to overcome Afghanistan. As stated earlier, the Afghanistan is located on one of the most important geographical locations of the world. Providing a way to the Asian belt which extends to the central Asia and then the Europe, Afghanistan is a key route if the trade and other related activities are taken into account.

In the recent history, USSR invasion Afghanistan failed at the hands of Mujahedeen with all-out supported of USA, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. USSR instead bringing Afghanistan under its control itself got disintegrated. The departure of USSR from Afghanistan did not leave stability in Afghanistan; rather it got trapped into civil war. Qandeel Siddique stated out the fact that the Afghanistan did not face any time of stability as the civil war broke out. Though, the Afghanistan enjoyed a brief time of peace when the government of the Taliban was formed but the unfortunate event of 9/11 changed the game for the Afghanistan once again and brought it back to the conflictual path.

As it is stated in the international politics that, 'there are no permanent enemies and friends', USA, who once supported the Taliban or the Mujahedeen back in the Cold War in their fight against USSR tried to flush out the same allies in 2001 from Afghanistan. Ultimately, USA dismantled Taliban's Government and established another government of its choice, thus creating an altogether new dynamic situation in Afghanistan.

Nasrullah ali stated in his article that with the withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan they left behind a feeble, fragile, and embattled Afghan government under President Ashraf Ghani to manage an uncertain and unstable political environment. The situation on the battlefield did not favor Afghan security forces, as their own capacities could not compensate the withdrawal of US and NATO forces, leading to the recent fall of Kabul. Now, with the Taliban having control over the country, they are looking for a global acceptance from the regional and global powers. To get the global acceptance, especially from the US, Taliban leadership will have to make sure that Afghanistan's soil is not used to threaten the security of the United States and its allies as agreed by both actors in the Doha Accords². However, it is too early to say if the Taliban will be able to gain global acceptance and legitimacy. In any case, there will definitely be countries willing to work with them. For instance: China has already expressed its desire for maintaining friendly relations with them.

Frederic Grare (2006) in his articles "Pakistan- Afghanistan relations in the post-9/11 era" puts forth the fact that the Afghanistan has been one of the major playgrounds for Pakistan and India in the recent times. He denotes the fact that a game between Pakistan and India started in the third state, Afghanistan in the last 2002. It was the time when the US had finally washed out the government of the Taliban. Pakistan and India had different opinions about the governments and how the process must go on. What is important to note in this element of the work is the fact that Pakistan and India were the allies of the US in the war against terror. But one of the most fascinating elements about the dynamics of Pakistan and India is that both the states had

² Nasir ali , ' Withdrawal of US Forces from Afghanistan'" PRIF BLOG. 20,august,2021

convergent interests in Afghanistan. In this literature review, a detailed analysis will be provided in which some of the historical events and the concerned analysis will be put forth for Pakistan and India.

During Soviet Union's influence in Afghanistan, India remained engaged in making friendly ties with Communist governments of Afghanistan foisted by Soviets. Christine Fair (2010) in its report "India in Afghanistan and beyond: Opportunities and constraints" opined that India made several agreements and protocols with United States of America pro-soviet regimes in Kabul. From 1979 onwards until 1992, different events constrained India in making close relations with Afghanistan.³As Frederic Grare (2006) in his article "Pakistan- Afghanistan relations in the post-9/11 era" talked about civil war of Afghanistan in 1992, which made internal split between Pakistani backed Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and all other parties. During this civil war, India supported whosoever opposed Pakistan. On Taliban's accession to power in 1996, India became solid supporter of Northern alliance against Taliban.⁴

The historical shift in India's foreign policy came in 2001 with the attack of United States of America on Afghanistan after 9/11 incident. Muhammad Ishaque Fani (2005) in his article "Pakistan's foreign policy: Challenges and opportunities after 9/11" talked about Indian foreign policy shift in Afghanistan in post 9/11 period. He says that India fully and unconditionally cooperated with United States of America on its war against terror to portray India as a great power of South Asia and strategically significant for United States of America in this war.⁵Umbreen Javaid and Tehmina Aslam in their research "Growing Geo-economic and Geo-

³Christine Fair, "India in Afghanistan and Beyond: Opportunities and Constraints" The Century Foundation, 2010.

⁴Frederic Grare, 'Pakistan Afghanistan Relations in the post-9/11 Era' Carnegie Papers, 2006.

⁵Muhammad IshaqueFani, 'Pakistan's foreign policy: Challenges and opportunities after 9/11' Pakistan Horizon, 2005.

strategic Interests of India in Afghanistan: Implications for Pakistan” “highlighted Indian support to Bonn process and provision of financial, diplomatic and political aid to Afghanistan. According to Sharma (2009), India has become 5th largest donor of Afghanistan globally and top donor regionally since 2001. India revisited its foreign policy towards Afghanistan after fall of Taliban on United States of America’s invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. They adopted strategy of confinement of Pakistan from every side by opening consulates in western and northern parts of Afghanistan.⁶

Gareth Price (2013) in article “India’s Policy towards Afghanistan”- presented the trade volume between India and Afghanistan, which was witnessing continuously increase since 2001. He noted that trade volume between the two countries increased from \$80 million in 2001 to \$280 million in 2010. India was fifth largest importer of Afghanistan and twenty per cent exports of Afghanistan were directed towards India.⁷

Javaid. A (2016) in his research “Indian Influence in Afghanistan and its Implications for Pakistan” stated that, after United States of America invasion in 2001, India developed not only the diplomatic relation but also offered intelligence support to Afghanistan. India also appreciated coalition government in Afghanistan. In 2007, India supported Afghanistan in becoming eighth SAARC member. Hamid Karzai’s visit to India and signing of three memorandums of understandings were also observed in 2006. It paved the way to the strengthened ties of Afghanistan with India.⁸

⁶UmbreenJavaid and Tehmina Aslam, ‘Growing Geo-economic and Geo-strategic Interests of India in Afghanistan: Implications for Pakistan, Lahore, Journal of Political Studies, 23, no. 2 (2016).

⁷Gareth Price, ‘India’s Policy towards Afghanistan’ Chatham House, 2013.

⁸UmbreenJavaid and RameeshaJavaid, ‘Indian Influence in Afghanistan and its Implications for Pakistan’ Lahore, 2016.

Indian objectives in Afghanistan were vast in nature, but the basic objective of Indian influence in Afghanistan to stem Islamabad in gaining strong foothold in Afghanistan. Harsh V. Pant and Avinash Paliwal (2019) in a newspaper article “India’s Afghan Dilemma is Tougher than Ever” argued that Indian involvement in Afghanistan was motivated by a desire to limit Pakistan’s influence in Afghanistan because of the United States of America about India’s being alienated and marginalized in the region and falling prey to Pakistani- inspired terrorism.⁹ India deems itself great power of region, so it is necessary for India to have a sway in its backyard. Qadar Bakhsh Baloch and Abdul Hafeez Khan Niazi in the article “Indian Encroachment in Afghanistan: A New Imperialism in the Making” opined that India wanted to gain the trust of United States of America, thus become hegemon in South Asia.

Shireen Mushtaq in Journal of Political Studies, Special Issue, 2018, “The Proximity of United States of America-Indian Interest in Afghanistan and Its Implication on Pakistan” concluded that both India and US had same aims and motives in Afghanistan. These aims were to control Afghanistan’s oil and gas reserves and counter China’s political and economic interests in Central Asia through Afghanistan. Limiting Pakistan’s influence in Afghanistan and cutting its ties with Taliban and denying Pakistan’s rhetoric of strategic depth. India was seeking strong foothold in Afghanistan for closely monitor separatist movements in Baluchistan and water crisis situation in Pakistan for exploiting these issues to sabotage Pakistan’s security fabric. Destabilization of CPEC project by organizing terrorist attacks in Baluchistan and pressurized China to stop funding these projects.¹⁰

⁹ Harsh V. Pant and AvinashPaliwal, “India’s Afghan Dilemma Is Tougher Than Ever,” FP, February 19, 2019.

¹⁰ Shireen Mushtaq“The Proximity of Us-Indian Interest in Afghanistan and Its Implication on Pakistan” [Journal of Political Studies](#), January 1, 2018.

Zahid Shahab Ahmed and Stuti Bhatnagar (2007) in Article “Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations and the Indian Factor” opined that India was looking at Afghanistan, as an opportunity to gain economic benefits from its resources and use Afghanistan as a transit route to access Central Asia.¹¹ Avijeet Kumar Biswas (2019) in his research “Indo-Afghan Relationship and the Pakistan Conundrum” in International Journal of Research in Social Sciences opined that India had assisted Afghanistan in Small Development Projects in agriculture field, vocational training and rural development. He further indicated that that India had engaged in training Afghans on Indian soil and also deployed paramilitary forces in Afghanistan to guard its diplomatic services and construction workers. According to Pubby, (2015), India delivered four Mi-24 attack helicopters to Kabul.¹²

Pakistan always had severe security concerns with the greater involvement of India in Afghanistan. It frequently raised voices against Indian nefarious intentions in Afghanistan against Pakistan. Owing to the historic enmity towards Pakistan, India had always been engaged in instigating Pashtun nationalism against Pakistan in Pashtun dominated areas straddling with Durand line. Larry Hanauer and Peter Chalk (2012) in article “India’s and Pakistan’s Strategies in Afghanistan: Implications for the United States and the Region”. He opined further that, Indian influence in Afghanistan would lead to an emergence of concept of “Pashtunistan” in the area straddling both countries and would give rise to unrest and instability in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It would encourage the issue of sanctity of Durand line.¹³

¹¹Zahid Shahab Ahmed and Stuti Bhatnagar, ‘Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations and the Indian Factor’ Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, 2018.

¹²Avijeet Kumar Biswas, ‘Indo-Afghan Relationship and the Pakistan

¹³Larry Hanauer and Peter Chalk, ‘India’s and Pakistan’s Strategies in Afghanistan: Implications for the United States and the Region, Rand, 2012.

India supported Afghanistan with latest weapons, which was again a source of threat for Pakistan, as these weapons could be used against Pakistan anytime on the directions of India. Iram Khalid (2011) in Research” The New Great Game in Afghanistan: Role of India (A Pakistani Perspective)” opined that India procured US \$8 million worth of high-altitude equipment to Afghanistan in 2011.¹⁴ However, as the US had withdrawn from Afghanistan, a space has been created in which all the states will try to adjust in. Vikas in his article Afghanistan: The Taliban's victory will test India, and peace in South Asia, stated the fact that with the withdrawal of the US from the Afghanistan and entry of the Taliban as the unified rulers of the Afghanistan has taken a toll on the government of India. He further stated that after the US, India has been the second largest contributor in the Afghanistan. Vikas also pointed out the fact that the new government in the Afghanistan will accept India with open arms if India is willing to follow the path provided by the Taliban¹⁵. As the history suggested, India and the Taliban have found it really hard to get along with each other. What the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan meant for India and Pakistan was also highlighted in the article published by the Economist; similar repercussions as were experienced in the past between Taliban and India have been pointed out. Many other authors and political analysts have also pointed and stressed on the notion that the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan meant that India has to start over from the point zero. And it appeared very much true as well because the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan meant Pakistan - Taliban closeness.

It was pointed out by Vikas in his article ‘Afghanistan: The Taliban's victory will test India, and peace in South Asia’, that the only way that India could come near to the government of the

¹⁴Iram Khalid,” The New Great Game in Afghanistan: Role of India (A Pakistani Perspective)” South Asian Studies, 26, no.2 (2011).

¹⁵ Vikas; “ Taliban victory; test for India [carnigaa india 24; march 2021.

Taliban in Afghanistan was with the help of financial muscles¹⁶. He shed light on the element that Afghanistan was very weak economically. Thus, there was a requirement of a lot of financial capital to be injected in the country. Thus, Vikas suggested that India could win over the Taliban and get a fair share of the deal if they trusted the leadership and went on with the financial input it had been injecting since the arrival of democracy in the Afghanistan. Vikas also stressed on the fact that India would face some social, political and most importantly economic implications. The Indian administration had invested a lot in the Afghanistan during the governments of Ashraf Ghani and Hamid Karzai. However, the withdrawal of the US from the Afghanistan had changed the situation for India quite dreadfully¹⁷. The economic implications might not have a lot of impact back home for India but there were very bright chances present that all the Indian investments might go in vain too.

Another implication which carries a lot of importance for India was about security. The article, “Indo-Afghan Relationship and the Pakistan Conundrum” covers some security implications for India if the things did not go well. It was important to understand the issue of Kashmir as had been highlighted on various fronts by the leadership of the Taliban. The leadership of the Taliban was very angry on the abuses carried out by the Indian Army in the region¹⁸. At many occasions, the Taliban had stated out very clearly that they would not tolerate the inhumane behavior of the Indian government with their Muslim brothers and sisters in Kashmir. Thus, it was believed that India might face some security issues as the Taliban had taken control of the Afghanistan.

¹⁶ Vikas; “ Taliban victory; test for India [carnigaa india 24; march 2021.

¹⁷ Vikas; “ Taliban victory; test for India [carnigaa india 24; march 2021.

¹⁸ Harsh “Indo Afghan relations and the Pakistan condrum 2011

On the political front, the Taliban leadership had weakened the position of the India. The strained relationship between Taliban and India had created a deadlock between the two entities. In such occasion, the Taliban had been willing to talk to India but they had made it very clear to India that the Taliban would not allow any nation to bully them or to let them allow to use their land against any nation. Thus, Indian forces and management who had invested billions in the last two decades to indulge a strategic depth in Afghanistan might get puffed in thin air. Therefore, the presence and emergence of the Taliban in the region as the new player would have far fetching and long-reaching political impacts on India.

On the other hand, Pakistan and Afghanistan have maintained sweet and sour relations over the years with enormous ups and downs. Pakistan and Afghanistan relations have faced a major dent when the government of the Taliban was dethroned in 2001 and a newly elected government was pushed in by the USA. Time passed by and Pakistan and Afghanistan have become friends and enemies over the years. Afghanistan-Pakistan Ties and Future Stability in Afghanistan by Elizabeth Threlkeld and Grace Easterly pointed out the importance of Pakistan in wake of the US withdrawal from the state of Afghanistan. Elizabeth Threlkeld and Grace Easterly opined that three situations could prevail. First, a civil war can induce in Afghanistan; Second, all the stakeholders in the Afghanistan could merge in a negotiated settlement; and Third and the most important of all was the emergence of the Taliban as the unitary force in Afghanistan. Elizabeth Threlkeld and Grace Easterly mentioned that the role and implications for Pakistan in all the scenarios was very important to understand¹⁹. Ali in his article ‘Withdrawal of US Forces from Afghanistan: Security Implications for Pakistan’ put forth the fact that where Pakistan might get

¹⁹ Elizabeth Threalkeld and Grace Easterly. ‘Afghanistan-Pakistan ties and the future stability in Afghanistan. August, 12, 2021. United states institute of peace.

some relief from the fact that Indian influence in the region would decrease, a lot of security implications from the external and internal forces could emerge²⁰. Hence, Withdrawal of US Forces from Afghanistan: Security Implications for Pakistan were real and just like Ali, many other authors have pointed that Pakistan must plan accordingly to deal with in such situation.

The article ‘Withdrawal of US Forces from Afghanistan: Security Implications for Pakistan’ by Ali tried to elaborate the implications for Pakistan based on certain scenarios. Just for an example, security implications for Pakistan would emerge if Pakistan was not able to sustain the Indian influence as the US had withdrawn from Afghanistan. Second most important security implication for Pakistan was internal. Many authors and security advisors have pointed out the possibility that security implications for Pakistan will increase as the US had gone from Afghanistan. A lot of religious identities and whole lot of people in Pakistan have been adamant followers of the Taliban. As the religious and political ideologies meet and converge with each other, security implications for Pakistan might enhance socially, and most important in terms of security and economics. Withdrawal of US Forces from Afghanistan: Security Implications for Pakistan by Ali also presents the fact that security implications for Pakistan will have different dimensions. One of the examples he quoted was of the rise of sectarian violence in Pakistan. As it is evident that different actors have enjoyed the rise of the Taliban. But it comes as a combination of various security implications for Pakistan. It is due to the very reason that Pakistan might have to deal with different factions like of Maulana Abdul Aziz who aims to bring a similar sort of governance system like of the Taliban in Pakistan. Previously, he has presented a lot of security implications for Pakistan and to this date, the state of the Pakistan has not been able to counter the his influence / narrative.

²⁰ Ali “ Withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan; security implications for “ 20,aug, 2021. Brief blog

Lastly, the economic implications for Pakistan might become helpful in times to come. One of the major and core economic implications for Pakistan could be the emergence of trade route. It is a well-known factor that Afghanistan presents a trade route which can be used by Pakistan to provide and boost their exports the Europe and expanded markets of the Central Asian Republics (CARs). Therefore, with the emergence of the Taliban as the forerunners of the Afghanistan, who have been very adamant supporters of Pakistan, economic implications for Pakistan seem bright for the foreseeable future.

Research Questions

The above stated research objectives have been pursued through exploring answers to following research questions:

1. What circumstances led USA to completely withdraw from Afghanistan?
2. How would US withdrawal from Afghanistan impact India?
3. How would US withdrawal from Afghanistan impact Pakistan?

Theoretical Framework

Afghanistan has been in the footholds of the great powers for a very long time. The core aim of all the major powers had remained the same to attain hegemony in the international arena and fulfillment of their respective state interest(s) making norms irrelevant. Thus, the theoretical framework that applied on this research is Neorealism.

“Neorealism is an outgrowth of traditional balance-of-power (or “realist”) theories of international relations and was first elaborated by Kenneth Waltz in his book “Theory of International Politics” in 1979. Its primary theoretical claim is that in international politics, war is a possibility at any time. Neorealism or structural realism is a theory of international relations that emphasizes the role of power politics in international relations, sees competition

and conflict as enduring features, and sees limited potential for cooperation. The basic tenets of neorealism enable the systematic approach to studying shifts in state behavior.

States want to ensure their survival considering it as a prerequisite to pursue their respective goals. This survival is thus the primary factor conditioning their behavior and development of offensive military potential for foreign invasions and increases their relative power. With lack of trust in other states, a state guards against relative losses of power, which could enable opposing state(s) to threaten its survival. Such lack of trust, based on uncertainty, is the security dilemma faced by all states.

The states desires and their relative abilities create relative power constraints for each other, which results into a 'balance of power', shaping of international relations. The states can balance power through internal and external balancing. For internal balancing, states grow their individual economic and military capabilities and for external balancing these states enter into alliances to counter powerful states and alliances.

Kenneth Waltz also pointed out in his theory of Neorealism that, the distribution of the power in the international arena is not based on any guiding principle or means. Rather the unequal power distribution in the international arena paves path for the anarchy. States tend to expand their power capabilities. The role of the military becomes exponentially important in neorealist approach because states feel insecure when another state flexes their military muscles. Thus, anarchy prevails when one state in response of the other state indulges into power struggle and increasing their power to gain the implicit and explicit national aims and interests for the states.

The Afghan history is full of activities influenced by theory of Neorealism. Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Afghan Mujahideen's operations optimally supported by USA, Pakistan and Saudi

Arabia against Soviet Union, withdrawal of Soviet Union could be explicitly defined through theory of Neorealism. The post-cold war events in Afghanistan where an internal conflict took place between various ethnic groups in Afghanistan prompted the use of violence; according to the theory of Neorealism, it was presence of anarchy in the structure. Such an anarchy paved path for the different non-state actors to build on the power struggle. Different actors present in the anarchic system struggled to enhance their respective power and capabilities; thus became wary of the other groups and extended their respective power and capabilities. Thus, a deadly and bloody civil war broke out and the end result was emergence of the Taliban and then they ruled for more than six years on Afghanistan.

The theory of Neorealism applied to the invasion of Afghanistan of Afghanistan by USA. It also applied to the alliances made by different states with USA in its operations against Taliban in past two decades and even the role played by Pakistan and India in persuasion of their respective objectives and interests

Lastly, the emergence of the Taliban and withdrawal of the American forces can also be represented by theory of Neorealism. According to the theory, the anarchic system will give room to the power struggle between various internal and external groups. A new power struggle will emerge in the context of the Afghanistan where key players like India and Pakistan will try to outsource each other, using the inherited capabilities and keeping the national interest of each country in mind. With the US going out, India and Pakistan remain the two stakeholders of the situation in Afghanistan. India and Pakistan have their own national interests, the anarchy and the unequal distribution of power in the structure will pave a rough patch for India and Pakistan and all the other groups who might try to get their hands on the power.

Research Methodology

This study adopted an interpretive research philosophy, inductive approach, case study strategy and qualitative method of research to understand the phenomena comprehensively and holistically. The research has been conducted through analytical readings of articles, journals, opinions and books. This study mostly relied on the credible databases, such as IEEE, Science Direct, Google Scholar, and study of peer-reviewed journals. Moreover, optimum utilization of University's online library account was made to access reliable study material. The adoption of qualitative research method and inductive approach helped great deal in obtaining answers of the research questions through an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Significance of Research

The sudden and never expected takeover of Afghanistan by Taliban not only surprised the entire world but rather traumatized the USA; forcing withdrawal of its forces in haste. Many of the short term and long-term objectives of USA are at stake and many US Allies; especially India is in the state of shock. This research is extremely significant as it found answer to pressing unanswered questions. It highlights USA continued stakes in Afghanistan and the tug of war between Pakistan and India in pursuance of their respective interests in war-torn country. Owing to its geostrategic location, resources and proximity to oil rich Middle East and resourceful Central Asian states, Afghanistan shall continue to be a point of keen interest for the region and world alike. This research would provide an immense insight for academia to comprehend the post United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan and its implications on Pakistan and India. This study will be helpful for the policy makers to mitigate the concerns of insecurities of Pakistan against India in Afghanistan and help them for better cooperation in all related fields.

Core arguments

It is argued that, with US withdrawal might negatively impact the Indian penetration into Afghanistan's political, economic, social, and cultural arenas achieved through heavy investment if Taliban maintain tough stance towards India. On the contrary, Pakistan, apparently comfortable with the Taliban regime might accrue benefits from revival of Taliban in Afghanistan.

Delimitation

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan has enormous implications for regional and global players in Afghanistan; however this study delimits itself to the identification and analysis of the implications for India and Pakistan only. Other researchers may work on the implication of US withdrawal from Afghanistan on other stakeholders.

Organization of Chapters

This research has been divided into chapters in keeping with the research objectives and research questions to create a comprehensive understanding of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and its implications for both India and Pakistan. The introduction included a brief overview of the whole research plan along with its conceptual and theoretical framework.

Chapter One, "An Overview of US-Strategic Interests in Afghanistan From 1979 to post 9/11" explained the historical background of US-Afghan relations; especially US- Afghan engagement over five decades in pursuance of US strategic interests. This chapter also appropriately elaborated the US objectives during the crisis of cold war. This chapter discussed US role in failure of USSR, its forced withdrawal from Afghanistan and resultant disintegration. The chapter ends with elaboration of US post-cold war policy towards Afghanistan, rise of

Taliban and downfall of Taliban first regime in Afghanistan. It elaborates post-9/11 developments in Afghanistan.

Chapter Two, “US Withdrawal from Afghanistan” discussed the factors which led to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. This chapter also elaborated the US withdrawal strategy from prolonged and cost prohibitive war. The last part of this chapter elucidated on the victory of Taliban in Afghanistan.

Chapter Three, “US withdrawal from Afghanistan and its implications for India” discussed the Indian strategic objectives in Afghanistan being one of the major stakeholders in the region. The pre, as well as post 9/11 relations of Indian government with Afghan governments have been explained. The great Indian investment in collaboration with US Sponsored Afghan governments to undermine Pakistan’s influence in region in general and Afghan in particular has been linked to the serious implications resulting from US withdrawal from Afghanistan and return of Taliban in government.

Chapter Four, “US withdrawal from Afghanistan and implications for Pakistan” the strategic interests of Pakistan in Afghanistan and different ups and down faced by Pak-Afghan relations. Pakistan by virtue of its location, vis-à-vis Afghanistan remained the most affected country by all activities in Afghanistan. Like US presence in Afghanistan affected Pakistan, its withdrawal would surely influence Pakistan too. This chapter elaborated in detail the opportunities offered and challenges opened for Pakistan.

In the end, the study summarized important findings and recommendations.

Chapter 1

An Overview of US-Strategic Interests in Afghanistan

1.1.A historical overview of US-Afghan Relations

The US-Afghan relations date back when US recognized Afghanistan in 1921 and diplomatic relations began in 1935.²¹ The US had shown no interest in Afghanistan during the pre-cold war era. The significance of Afghanistan was realized by the US during the cold-war era, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) had an expansionism in the region as well in Afghanistan. The Cold War between the USSR and the US took a lot of countries in its stride and Afghanistan was one of them.

Afghanistan possessed a lot of natural resources. Historically, Afghanistan and the US had never enjoyed amicable relations but when the USSR invaded the Afghanistan in 1979 and had set up its own government under the communist leadership of the country, the US became worry of the domino effect. If one country fell to the communism, the others will follow the suit was the main assumption based on which US decided to intervene in Afghanistan²². There were two major objectives that the US wanted to gain in Afghanistan. First, the US wanted to stop the spread of the communism in Afghanistan. Secondly, the US wanted to take the revenge of Vietnam where it sustained a heavy defeat from the hands of the USSR. US came to the support of Afghanistan in 1979 against the Soviet expansionism in the country²³. US in order to support the Afghanistan

²¹ Fact Sheet, 'U.S relations with Afghanistan', Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, (2021). Available at <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-afghanistan/>

²² Fact Sheet, 'U.S relations with Afghanistan', Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, (2021). Available at <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-afghanistan/>

²³ Mason, M. C. (2008). No Sign until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier.

and to resist USSR ideology of communism were successful in throwing the Russian forces. Actually, the United States was involved all the way back in the 1950s. Afghanistan was going through a series of modernizing projects, and it attempted to really build into a modern nation state under the two subsequent leaders; first, king Zahir Shah, and then followed by his cousin who overthrew him, President Muhammad Daoud Khan right in the midst of the cold war.

Both the US and Soviet Union were involved in Afghanistan namely through infrastructure developments. The US worked on the Helmand Valley project, which was an irrigation project and agriculture project about building dams in southern Afghanistan. On the other side the then USSR connected Northern Afghanistan to Kabul through the Salang Tunnel. It had been funneling a significant amount of money from the 50, and 60s onwards. However, the US militarily involved in Afghanistan after the USSR intervention in 1979. The 9/11 attacks on Twin Tower changed the whole world scenario and it impacted US foreign policy toward Afghan politics the most. Death of more than 3,000 people was not only claimed but its blame was apportioned to Al-Qaida and its accomplices the Taliban in the attacks. The victims belonged to more than 80 different nations, from many divergent races and faiths²⁴. The attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center shocked the whole world in general and United States of America in Particular. The then US president George W. Bush had taken a stern stance and warned the world community to take revenge of those heinous attacks As Al Qaeda was made responsible for the attack, and it existed in Afghanistan under the leadership of Osama bin Laden; thus, in order to eliminate the evil of terrorism and to take revenge of the attacks, US

²⁴ The 9/11 commission report

launched the Global war on terror. USA invaded Afghanistan on 7, December 2001²⁵. The incident of the 9/11 attacks brought the change in the world order.

The Al-Qaeda claimed to attack US twin towers as revenge against US following policies.

- i. US support to Israel against Palestine.
- ii. US harsh policy towards Muslims in Somalia.²⁶

It is important to note that the 9/11 attacks had brought the US to a literal state of shock. Majority of the US people USA as a state could not be touched by anyone. However, the US government became alert after 9/11 attacks. Therefore, the Bush administration decided to combat Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Within few months, the US had pushed the Taliban administration out of power in Afghanistan through invading and fighting.

1.2. The Invasion of Afghanistan of 1979 and the Cold War Politics

As soon as the Soviet government entered the Afghanistan, the US felt that all the countries will fall to the evil ideology according. CARs were already under the influence of the Soviet states, and the Afghanistan fell as well; therefore, the US decided to counter the USSR. The US had no direct link or route towards Afghanistan, thus the collaboration and partnership was the only option open to USA. The US took Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on-board and they decided to counter USSR through Mujaheddins.

²⁵ President George W. Bush, 'The Global War on Terrorism: The first 100 days', U.S Department of State. Available at <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/wh/6947.htm>.

²⁶ Gaetano Joe Ilardi, 'The 9/11 attacks-A Study of Al-Qaeda's use of intelligence and counterintelligence', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 32 (3) (2009). Available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10576100802670803>.

Pakistan had its own motives in Afghanistan. Zia-ul-Haq, the former military dictator of Pakistan was very much worried about the fact that if the USSR established its hold in the Afghanistan, the next country it would be targeting was Pakistan²⁷. Although the assurances were provided to the Pakistani leadership that the Soviet Union had no intentions of playing a role in Pakistan, the increasing distrust became the major reason that Pakistan joined the US.

US supplied all the weapons and arms to Afghan Mujahideen through Pakistan. It was the duty of the Pakistan government that these arms and supplies reached in the hands of the freedom fighters. In the merged area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (EX-FATA), some training camps were established for the freedom fighters²⁸. They were provided with arms and ammunition. Other than this, all the professional and tactical training was provided to Mujahedeen by ISI. In the end, the Saudi Arabia was responsible for aiding all the projects. Thus, the alliance of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and US paved a way for the US to enter in Afghanistan.

Many authors have pondered upon the fact that the main mission of the US in Afghanistan was to counter the communist agenda that was prevailing in Afghanistan. The US had tasted a bitter defeat against the Soviets in Vietnam. For this particular reason, when the Afghanistan was invaded by the USSR, the US found a golden opportunity to equal the scores²⁹. Apart from this very reason, the US did not want Afghanistan to become the communist state as it could further

²⁷ Sunawar, D. L. (2016). Regional Security Complex Theory: A Case Study of Afghanistan-Testing the Alliance. *JSSA*.

²⁸ Sunawar, D. L. (2016). Regional Security Complex Theory: A Case Study of Afghanistan-Testing the Alliance. *JSSA*.

²⁹ Mason, M. C. (2008). No Sign until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier. *International Security*.

spread to other states around it. Therefore, it became pertinent for the US to counter and contain the spread of communism.

It is a well-known fact in the international arena that super powers always stay in the global game. If there were more than one hegemon present in the international arena, both of them would try to impose their own will and decisions on the global world. Thus, a similar sort of situation took place during Cold War. It is a well-known fact that the United States wanted to contain the USSR, thus it pursued global hegemonic agenda. Therefore, the United States exploited the opportunity to become the trusted leader of the world. Other than this, the United States also wanted to rule out the USSR to sustain its hegemony and rule. The domino affects where it was stated that when the one country falls a prey to the communist agenda, the other neighboring state falls as well. Therefore, the United States wanted to contain it by enhancing the agenda for the global hegemony.

1.3. Disintegration of USSR and US Post-Cold War Policy in Afghanistan

As soon as the Soviet Afghan war came to an end, all the aid and support that was provided to the freedom fighters (Taliban) was stopped. The US stopped aiding the Afghans after its objectives were achieved. Moreover, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia also stood at the shores as the power struggle in Afghanistan came to new heights. An estimate about the US Afghan relations post 1979 can be taken into account by the fact that Afghanistan was fuming in the fire of the civil war, yet the US did not mediate or intervene. Most importantly, an element which is very much viable to understand is the fact that USSR was disintegrated and there was no particular reason for the US to stay in the Afghanistan and manage things. Thus, the US decided to pack up and the ultimate result that came or what can also be called as the aftershocks was a civil war in Afghanistan.

1.4. Emergence of War Lords and Rise of Taliban

The Russian support for spread of the communist government in Afghanistan was the core reason for the collapse of the central rule in the country. Central power was replaced due to resistance of the local commanders; thus, resulting in the emergence of the warlords in Afghanistan. After the US left the country, the warlords in Afghanistan tried to gain individual power. It is a well-known fact that there were numerous warlords in Afghanistan who got direct aid from the US and then they fought Red army. But as the US had gone, the warlords in Afghanistan tried to loop over each other and tried to establish their own local rule in the areas of their influence. Thus, this is how the warlords in Afghanistan emerged.

The political parties of Mujahidin after being victorious have failed to make consensus for forming the new central government in Afghanistan after the collapse of Soviet Union. The complete hold of the country had fallen into the hands of the warlords. The warlords later on were termed as the emergence of Taliban, with its original stated goal of ending the warlords and civil strife that ravaged the country.³⁰ Taliban were successful in extricating warlords from the majority of the places of Afghanistan. State institutions were not built by them by replacing the structure of warlord era. For maintaining cohesion, the Taliban developed a new form of political structure while separating it from the warlords of the Mujahidin era. To rally the movement, the Taliban created a de jure super-commander whose obedience became a religious duty, that is, the Emirate. This controlled the various groups of warlords, who wielded de facto unlimited power. Establishment of emirate was considered as a fruitful strategy for dealing with military solidity

³⁰ Haroun Rahimi, 'Lessons from Afghanistan's history: How not to fix a failed state', The Diplomat. Available at <https://thediplomat.com/2021/10/lessons-from-afghanistans-history-how-not-to-fix-a-failed-state/>.

and its prevention. The value of Political core of emirate was accepted and respected. It was claimed as “the obedience of the fighters to their commanders, and the obedience of the commanders to the Commander of the Faithful.”³¹ The Taliban government or emirate had maintained two main cores the military cohesion and a brand of justice. This was the exclusion of any other ordinary functions of government and at the cost of all forms of personal freedom.

1.4.1. Crisis of Taliban First Regime

The first regime of the Taliban had to face a lot of issues and difficulties especially in those areas which were not under them. They had to face massive resistance from opponents. Ahmad shah was one of the major opponents of the then Taliban. He aggressively encountered the Taliban. Specifically in economic terms as the Taliban were not able to control the economy. The total structure of economy of Afghanistan under the Taliban was based on drugs and illegal means. Moreover, as the law and command on the national level was not professional and influential means. It faced a lot of difficulties while controlling the areas not in their direct control. The then Taliban regime was opposed due to their radical ideology. They dealt their opponents through violence activities. As according to the UN report Taliban carried systemic massacres against civilians, as, there had been 15 massacres accidents between 1996 and 2001³².

1.4.1.1. Economic Crisis

The first regime of the Taliban was faced enormous issues but the most challenging was the failed economy. One of the major reasons that Taliban had to face was the economic deficiency because of the war that lasted for last eleven years. When the first regime of the Taliban took

³¹ Ibid.

³² UN report 2001 about violence in Afghanistan

over the country, the roads were destroyed and the infrastructure was damaged to the extent that it could not be used for any purpose. There were very many reasons that prompted the economic issue in the first regime of the Taliban. Many authors have pointed out that the Taliban was not professional and they did not know what to do with the economy. All the money that came to the Taliban was from some specific resources. For example, Taliban earned money from the trade of opium or other drugs like weed. Moreover, the Taliban did try to loot the public property as they were finding it hard to deal with the economic situation. Similarly, the illegal trade and smuggling was also a mean to grab money.

1.4.1.2. US Sanctions on the Taliban

The Taliban faced a lot of sanctions from the international as well as from the US for several reasons. For example, one of the major reasons that the US imposed sanctions on the Taliban was due to their harsh and strict interpretation of the religion. The US imposed sanctions on the Taliban by putting out the fact that Taliban was not able to comply to the international rules and regulations. Thus, US imposed sanctions on the Taliban and it also did not accept the government of the Taliban. The UN Security Council first imposed sanctions on the regime for harboring al-Qaeda in 1999 and expanded the sanctions after 9/11. They targeted Taliban leaders' financial assets and banned them from most travel. The Security Council also imposed an arms embargo on the Taliban. The United States and the European Union maintained additional sanctions.

1.4.1.3. Human Rights Violations

It is also claimed that the Taliban had committed a lot of human rights violations. When the regime took over the majority of the country, one of the things they did was of human rights

violations. There were numerous occasions when the regime was accused of committing the human rights violations. For example, the Shia community that lived under the rule of the regime faced harsh conditions and severe human rights violations. Moreover, some of the major human rights violations that were committed by the regime included the use of harsh methods for the public executions. Secondly, human rights violations implemented the hard-core version of the religion which also provided air to human rights violations. Other than this, the regime of the Taliban did not allow any other state or third party to support starving children and people in the dire state which also accounted for human rights violations.

1.4.1.4. Stripped Women from Jobs

It is important to note that the Taliban did not only commit very harsh accounts of the human rights violations but they stripped women from jobs. As some of the religious scholars had the point of view that women must not be allowed outside to do any kind of job, the Taliban firmly acted upon it and banned the women from even going outside of their homes without the presence of any male counterpart. So, this is how the women were stripped off their jobs by the Taliban and several other restrictions were also imposed on the women.

1.4.1.5. Safe heavens of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan

Al Qaeda in Afghanistan was also present and the regime knew about the fact. The presence of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan was one of the major reasons that a lot of countries and states around the world did not accept and pondered upon the legitimacy of the Taliban. Moreover, the Al Qaeda in Afghanistan was provided safe heavens despite knowing the fact that this group has done several terrorist activities which has impacted the whole world.

1.5. Downfall of Taliban Regime

The relations of the US and the Taliban had seen major ups and downs. The US played an anchoring role when it came to the establishment of the Taliban. But as soon as the US interests were fulfilled, it came back from the Afghanistan leaving behind all the weapons and ammunition that it had provided them. The tables turned against the Taliban when the US intended to take them in the firing line. For example, the government of the Taliban was never supported by the US. Although different members of the American Senate met and the leaders of the Taliban went to the White House, but the Taliban were never supported on any diplomatic front by the American. The situation of the 9/11 made it clear that the Taliban had become the enemy number one for the US. Finally, after the twin tower attack the US toppled the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

1.6. Twin Towers Attack and US Invasion of Afghanistan 2001

The 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers shook the US and the entire world. Resultantly, Operation Enduring Freedom began on October 7, 2001; which was supported by numerous allied countries stretched from United Kingdom to Australia, and to Japan. The Taliban had been forced to surrender in major cities³³. The world had responded with an unprecedented coalition against international terrorism. In the first 100 days of the war, President George W. Bush increased America's homeland security and built a worldwide coalition that:

- Began to destroy al-Qaeda's grip on Afghanistan by driving out the Taliban from power.

³³ US Department of state "The Global War on Terrorism: The First 100 Days" 2001 to 2009 report.

- Disrupted al-Qaeda's global operations and terrorist financing networks.
- Destroyed al-Qaeda terrorist training camps.
- Helped the innocent people of Afghanistan recover from the Taliban's reign of terror.
- Helped Afghans put aside long-standing differences to form a new interim government that represents all Afghans – including women³⁴.

On October 7, 2001, the then US President announced that the United States had begun military action in Afghanistan. The initial strikes were against al-Qaeda terrorist training camps and Taliban military installations. In addition to military action, the United States and Coalition allies provided humanitarian aid to the citizens of Afghanistan. The coalition had achieved broad military success while putting fewer than 3,000 U.S. ground troops on the ground in Afghanistan. The U.S. military had shown a lightning quick ability to adapt to a distant, harsh and ever-changing battlefield. In some cases, U.S. troops are conquering terrorists by welding together 21st Century technology with 19th Century tactics. Troops had chased terrorists on horseback while using mobile phones and global positioning systems to pinpoint targets for the Air Force. Bombers used 21st Century targeting technology, and laser-guided and GPS guided smart bombs to destroy specific targets, including centuries-old caves used as terrorist headquarters³⁵. The United States used a military facility in Guantanamo Bay, as a detention facility for terrorists. In early 2002, the White House released a fact sheet on the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. Detainees were to be tried under military commissions. These commissions were struck down by the Supreme Court in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, after which the United States Congress passed the Military Commissions Act of 2006. Moreover, when the

³⁴ US Department of state " The Global War on Terrorism: The First 100 Days" 2001 to 2009 report.

³⁵ Matt Bai." The Framing Wars" ,New York Times Magazine july, 2006.

Bush stated that any state was either with us or against us, it became clear that the US was going to curb the terrorism all and for once. The war on terror included narrowing down the terror operations of the non-state actors. It also included the finding out of the terrorist groups' facilitators to halt their operations. Iraq became another major target of the US war on terror in few years. In 2002 and early 2003, the United States began exerting pressure on Iraq to follow through on its commitments to improve human rights, release prisoners, break ties with terrorists, and destroy weapons of mass destruction. President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell each addressed the United Nations regarding the dangers of Saddam Hussein's regime and its refusal to disarm. On March 19, 2003, the efforts culminated in military operations to remove Saddam Hussein from power³⁶.

1.6.1. US Objectives in Afghanistan

The long-standing war between the peace seekers and the terrorists rejuvenated after the U.S invasion of Afghanistan in response to 9/11 episode. It has been two decades that US was trying to eradicate the threat of terrorism from Afghanistan. U.S in order to eliminate terrorism and to protect American values and interests in the region mustered a global effort branded as Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). This was initiated to dismantle the terrorist sanctuaries in Afghanistan especially Al-Qaida and its facilitators Taliban. After a comprehensive air campaign to dislodge the terrorist strongholds, U.S ground troops faced some serious challenges during the successful implementation of its operations eventually supported by NATO troops. The American and NATO led global effort in Afghanistan to counter terrorism was named as International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF). The following were the main objectives of the US in Afghanistan.

³⁶ US national archives report 2003.

The first and foremost American objective in Afghanistan was to minimize the threat of terrorism from the country by dismantling the Al-Qaida and its facilitator networks. Afghanistan had served as a key arena for Washington's multi-faceted security interests in South Asia. Since the Soviet pull-out in 1991, international support for the regional players continued for controlling power dynamics in Afghanistan. Legitimacy for the US intervention in Afghanistan developed in the backdrop of GWOT for toppling Taliban regime (1996 to 2001). Earlier, the grounds for such an intervention were provided in August 1998 by al-Qaeda's assault on the American embassies in Nairobi and Tanzania. In retaliation, the US launched cruise missile attacks on Afghanistan from the Arabian Sea, prior to 9/11³⁷. However, the US plan for physical control of Afghanistan cooked up earlier than the attack on Twin Towers in New York. Another, U.S objective to prevent any terrorist attack on its allies, from the Afghanistan soil had also not reached to its final success.

Similarly, Retention of military bases could allow the US corporate sector to rely on the Pentagon's strategic support in the resource-rich Central Asia³⁸. The excuse of countering radical extremism offers a unique opportunity for the US to maintain a strategic presence along with China's backyard. The domestic drive of procuring energy security and international stability were the US dual exogenous compulsions to maintain a strategic presence in Afghanistan. Another important aspect of importance to U.S interests in the region is to ensure that the instability in Afghanistan did not adversely affect the nuclear stability in South Asia in a way that it can threaten the security of nuclear weapons in the region. Moreover, Afghanistan had

³⁷ Jean Charles Brisard and Guillaume Dasquie, *Forbidden Truth: US-Taliban Secret Oil Diplomacy, Saudi Arabia and the Failed Search for Bin Laden* (New York: Thunder Mouth Fresh/Nations Book, Trans., 2002), 17.

³⁸ Sumera Imran "Sino-US Involvement in Afghanistan" Author (s) Source: *Strategic Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Autumn 2019),

also become a hub of proxy wars between regional powers to gain influence in the country due to its important geo-strategic location.

1.7. Challenges to US and WOT in Afghanistan

The foreign policy of the US had been increasingly divergent, vis a vis Afghanistan over the years. The Bush administration was adamant to increase the supply of troops to Afghanistan. When the administration of Barack Obama came, a notion was set in that the supply of the troops must be increased. Therefore, in the first tenure of Barack Obama, he went raging all the guns on the Taliban and other affiliated groups in the Afghanistan. The quantity of the troops of the US and NATO supplies increased manifold. But a strong resentment was seen in the general public of the US against the enhancement of the war in the Afghanistan. The motives like make America great again pushed the motive to call back the American troops on the home soil. Therefore, some instances took place where the American administration decided to minimize the role of the American army in the Afghanistan. The combat role of the troops was slowly and gradually shifted to support role in the Afghanistan. A change in narrative has been observed in the American stance, vis a vis the Afghanistan. The income of the financial support has decreased over the time. The action of the troops in the Afghanistan has decreased since 2014. Many international and foreign affairs experts had sorted out the fact that it seems that the US was fed up from one of the longest wars in which it had lost a lot of its resources. Some other political analysts had hinted upon the fact that the Afghanistan had become a lost cause for the US. As soon as Donald Trump came in, the motive of the US in the Afghanistan became quite clear. The main aim that Donald Trump was pursuing to engage in dialogue in Afghanistan with all the stakeholders to carry out a safe and secure exit from the Afghanistan. With a lot at the stake in the Afghanistan, the only option that seemed viable to the former President Trump was

to get on board with the major parties involved in the conflict. The US led war in Afghanistan became a big challenge for USA over the time.

1.7.1 America's Longest War

The United States longest war in Afghanistan, more than 2,300 U.S. military personnel had lost their lives and more than 20,000 had been wounded. At least half a million Afghans, government forces, Taliban fighters, and civilians had been killed or wounded. Washington had spent close to \$ 2.313 trillion on the war³⁹. America faced many challenges while achieving its interests in Afghanistan and the major challenge was no clarity of victory against the elimination of terrorism. However, at the end Taliban once again came into power in Afghanistan on 15, August, 2021.

1.7.2. Failure of Sustainable Policies

The US drawdown policy came because of its failure in her sustainable policies. U.S administrations failed to provide the guaranteed and sustainable policies for securing Afghanistan and making it a prosperous country. US policies in Afghanistan were limited up to the war on terror in order to thwart the terrorism from Afghanistan and its boundaries. Changes in American polices had been observed after the announcement of US president to exit from Afghanistan.

³⁹ Foreign Affairs magazine “How the Good War Went BadAmerica’s Slow-Motion Failure in Afghanistan” April 2020

1.7.3. The Chinese Factor

Another most important factor that played a vital role in the US drawdown policy was China. It was estimated that the Chinese economy would surpass the US economy in the coming times. The US had lost much economic competitiveness to the China and concurrently, China had managed to close the gap. The global hegemony of the US was threatened and due to this very factor, the US decided to save resources for their use elsewhere. Some independent observers also suggested that the US had spent more than \$ 2 trillion on the war in Afghanistan. Almost all the presidents after the George Bush had indicated that the US war in the Afghanistan must come to an end being cost prohibitive. Donald Trump even pointed it out clearly that it was not the responsibility of the US to indulge into state or nation building in the Afghanistan.

1.7.4. Obama Administration and the Decision to Drawdown in Afghanistan

President Obama outlined a plan to withdraw thirty-three thousand troops by the summer of 2012. The then president Obama second tenure polls showed a record number of Americans did not support the war, and Obama faced pressure from lawmakers, particularly Democrats, to sizably reduce U.S. forces in Afghanistan⁴⁰. After the surge troops left, an estimated seventy thousand U.S. troops are scheduled to stay through at least 2014. Obama confirms that the U.S. was holding preliminary peace talks with the Taliban leadership. With reconciliation in mind, the UN Security Council splatted sanctions list between members of al-Qaeda and the Taliban, making it easier to add and remove people and entities.

1.8. U. S Taliban Peace Talks

The peace talks between Taliban and the U.S began in 2018 while formally took place in February 2019. The peace talks were held in Doha Qatar. U.S special envoy named as Zalmay

⁴⁰ .Diplomat magazine “ the war in Afghanista” 2021, October

Khalilzad and the Taliban representative named Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar held the conversation after the U.S presented its proposal for withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan. In return, the Taliban was asked to block the support from the international terrorist groups operating from Afghanistan's soil.⁴¹ President Trump still favored the withdrawal of some the troops from the aforementioned country. The special envoy to Khalilzad argued that United States would insist that the Taliban agree to engage in intra-Afghan dialogue on the country's political structure as well as a ceasefire. It was unclear whether Trump would condition the withdrawal on these terms.

1.8.1. Peace Process

Peace talks between the Taliban and the U.S took place in September 2019. The talks broke soon after the announcement by the special envoy to U.S Zalmay Khalilzad while stating that agreement between the two had been reached "in principle" between the top leadership at both ends.⁴² The U.S special envoy and Taliban's Baradar formally signed peace deal between the Taliban and the U.S on February 29, 2020. The deal enforced the way for the complete withdrawal of U.S troops in Afghanistan and the guarantee for refraining from any terrorist activity from the Afghanistan soil.⁴³ The deal insisted for the intra-Afghan talks on immediate basis. Thus, the deal did not call for an immediate cease-fire between the Taliban fighters and the U.S troops. The fighters continued to carry out several attacks on the Afghan Security Forces. Thus, U.S forces had staunchly responded.

⁴¹ Shereena Qazi, 'We want war in to end: Afghan talks kick off in Doha,' Al- Jazeera, February 25th, 2019.

⁴² Start, 'The U.S war in Afghanistan', Council for Foreign Relations. Available at <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

⁴³ Ibid.

1.8.2. Intra Afghan Peace Talks

Intra Afghan talks were held in September 12th, 2020 at Doha Qatar. The representative of the Afghan government, Taliban and the civil society had a direct meeting after the gap of twenty years. During their opening remarks, both sides express their desire to establish peace in Afghanistan and to create a foundation for Afghan society after the withdrawal of US troops. The government was pushing for a ceasefire while the Taliban reiterate their call to rule the country through the Islamic system.⁴⁴ However, final the Taliban forces entered to Kabul on 15, august, 2021, and got the control of the country.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Chapter 2

US Withdrawal from Afghanistan

2.1. The US Withdrawal

The national and global circumstances led US to leave Afghanistan ultimately. The financial crunch, the cost of lives, the moral burden of the soldier's families and the tough target of fighting and defeating Taliban exhausted US political elite to withdraw. The then US president Donald Trump stated in February, 2019 that he would extract the US from the endless war via table talks with Taliban. The first attempt of the peace talks with Taliban failed in September 2019. However, the Trump administration restarted peace talks with Taliban, and finally both the parties signed a peace deal in February, 2020. In the deal it was decided that the US would drawdown its military personnel from thirteen thousand to Eight thousand and withdraw from five bases within 135 days and complete withdrawal of its forces would be made by ist, May, 2021. The same was further extended till September 2021.

In 2019, the then president of USA, Donald Trump put forth that he will be pulling out his country from one of the "endless war" that his country had been fighting for long. To make sure that the US forces find their way out of Afghanistan, the most secure face saving was to take on board the Taliban through peace-dialogue. The first blow to the peace deal came when the connection between the US authorities and the Taliban broke out in September 2019. The major reason is still unknown but it is important to know that the talks restarted and this time, it was announced that the deal has been signed between the US authorities and the Taliban. Therefore, the deal put forth that the US will withdraw the total force from 13000 to mere 8600⁴⁵. Other

⁴⁵ The guardian, US withdrawal from Afghanistan. 29, February, 2020

than this, it was also agreed that the US will vacate around five bases in around 135 days⁴⁶. The deal finalized that the US will withdraw all of its forces from Afghanistan till 31st may, 2021. Some other agreements were also made between the US and the Taliban. For example, the Taliban agreed upon the fact that the US forces will not be targeted in Afghanistan by the Taliban or by any other affiliated group. The deal was called as US-Afghanistan Joint Declaration⁴⁷. In this deal, a political settlement was made between Taliban and the US authorities. It was jotted down in the deal that the Taliban and the US authorities will be under the permanent ceasefire until the complete withdrawal.

On the other side of the picture, an intra-Afghan dialogue summit was also taking place whose main aim was to bring an internal political settlement in the country. The political settlement was aimed between the Taliban and the then Afghan government. The aim of negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government was to solve the issue of governance in Afghanistan once the US forces pull out of the country. But unfortunately, no conclusive talks were held between the Taliban and Afghan government and the negotiations ended up with no conclusion.

The withdrawal of U.S troops began after announcement of the U.S defense Secretary Christopher C. Miller in November 2020. The first batch of around 2500 troops withdrew in Mid-January 2021. The scenario further changed after Joe Biden from Democratic Party coming into mainstream politics of USA. The Biden's administration advocated complete withdrawal from Afghanistan. The plan for complete withdrawal was released while mentioning the complete withdrawal by September 11, 2021. President Joe Biden in April 2021 stated that "It's

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ United States institute of Peace march 2020

to end America's longest war."⁴⁸ He further asked for assisting the Afghan security forces and for the provision of the support to the peace process.

Joe Biden and Donald Trump had a lot of political contradictions and foreign policy differences, but when it came to the issue of Afghanistan; both the opposite poles seemed to attract each other on withdrawal from Afghanistan. Where Donald Trump insisted on the fact that the Afghanistan must be left with their own people, Joe Biden implemented the decisions and finally, the Afghanistan was left with its own people, without any interference from the external agencies or actors. After coming into power of Joe Biden has taken the oath of presidency; the Afghanistan has been swiped from the agendas. Many political analysts have stressed on the fact that Joe Biden must have shown some seriousness while handling the issue of Afghanistan. Major chunk of criticism that he received was due to hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan without any way forward. Though, it was obvious that the Taliban and majority of the people of the country wanted the US complete withdrawal from Afghanistan. But the withdrawal from Afghanistan came into cross fire from a lot of experts when the Taliban were able to clean sweep city after city and province after province. Where Joe Biden made it clear that withdrawal from the Afghanistan would not impact the troops holding ground in Afghanistan. He stated that the Taliban will face heavy resistance if they try to take Kabul. In the same interview, Joe Biden concluded that the US withdrawal from Afghanistan meant the business has ended there. However, the real business of the US in Afghanistan came into end when Taliban took control of the Kabul in the mid of August, 2021. Consequently, the US completed its withdrawal on 30,

⁴⁸ Joe Biden, 'Remarks by Joe Biden on the End of Afghan war in Afghanistan',. Briefing Room, Whitehouse August 31, 2021. Available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/08/31/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-end-of-the-war-in-afghanistan/>.

August, 2021 through an ultimatum issued by Taliban of serious consequences, if the US did not left completely.

2.2. Factors Responsible for the US Withdrawal

The United States of America initiated the process of withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2020. Some of the major factors which contributed and are responsible for US withdrawal are discussed as following.

2.2.1. Financial Implications

The US has spent over 3 trillion dollars in the war against terror in Afghanistan over the years. In the past 20 years, an increasing bill has been presented to the authorities of US which had become leverage on the United States. Besides sustaining the security forces present in Afghanistan, USA was providing the resources to run affairs of Afghanistan. The accumulative figure of per year expenses of the United States in Afghanistan stood at around 40 to 50 billion dollars.⁴⁹ Many governments in United States for example under the leadership of the Barack Obama or under the Donald Trump also insisted on the fact that US had been spending trillions in the war. Thus, this proved out to be an enormous figure for the United States authorities. It can be estimated that the United States authorities nearly spent 2.313 trillion dollars⁵⁰. It can be evaluated that the United States spent 300 million dollars every day for 20 years in Afghanistan⁵¹. So, there is no even debate present that the war in Afghanistan has proven out to be very expensive for America. The taxpayer of the United States had not been very happy about the fact as well that a huge chunk of the money was diverted towards the endless war in

⁴⁹ Watson institute international and Public Affairs, US costs for the war in Afghanistan, 2001 to 2021.

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

Afghanistan. So, it became a strong reason for US that the war in Afghanistan had become a financial burden for her.

2.2.2. Longest War in the US History

The United States invaded Afghanistan in late 2001 to destroy al-Qaida, remove the Taliban from power, and remake the nation. On Aug. 30, 2021, the United States completed a pullout of troops from Afghanistan, providing an uncertain punctuation mark to two decades of conflict. At 7,262 days from the first attack on Afghanistan to the final troop pullout, Afghanistan was said to be the United States' longest war⁵². US lost 2425 military personnel and more than twenty thousand soldiers had been injured in the war. Moreover, USA spent round about 2 trillion dollars on war in Afghanistan. Consequently, in the start of Enduring Freedom Operation in Afghanistan, US had overthrown the Taliban first regime and also killed the leader of Al-Qaeda Osama Bin Laden in 2011. However, USA did not eliminate the so-called terrorists what it claimed in the start of the invasion of Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan, like many other wars before it, began with optimistic assessments of a quick victory and the promise to rebuild at war's end. Despite Bush's warning of a lengthy campaign, few thought then that would mean decades. But 20 years later, the United States did not get its core objectives in respect of war on terror. Thus, it became one of the important factors for the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

2.2.3. Outcome of the US Presidential Elections 2020 and Changes of US Administration

The outcome of the United States presidential elections had its impact on fate of the presence of US in Afghanistan. The main candidate in the United States presidential elections, Joe Biden

⁵² Neta c "Calculating the costs of the Afghanistan War in lives, dollars, and years" Irp 2021

clearly said that he will be working hard to make sure that the United States pulls out of Afghanistan as soon as possible. The main priority of Biden focused on the element that domestic conditions of United States require more attention than any other external topic. As soon as the Americans selected Biden as their president, he made it very clear in his speech that the interest of United States is to come out of the long going war in Afghanistan. In one of his speeches, he said that the aim of the United States was never meant to be the nation builders in Afghanistan. It became clear from the policies and the initial steps that the United States felt no longer threat from any group like the Taliban or the Al Qaeda. Thus, the United States indulged into a peace deal to make sure that no such threat was present. Joe Biden also stated out that the conflicts going in Afghanistan had been an internal issue and it's time for the United States to pack up the bags and leave the country ⁵³

2.2.4. Less Outcome of the War on Terror

After 9/11, U.S.A along with other global players pledged for bringing perpetrators to book. War on terror was the result of such pledge. The conflict emerged when the Taliban government did not agree with the notion that they should hand over Osama Bin Laden to US authorities. Thus, the US decided to take the matter in their own hands and due to this very reason, the US invaded the Taliban government and Afghanistan after the attacks of 11th September 2001. It is important to state that the Taliban government did not have the resources nor the facilities to face and counter the repression from the US forces. Thus, the Taliban leadership thought that it would be wise to wage war in a way that suits them. So, the Taliban leadership made it to the south side of Afghanistan, in the mountains and just aside the Pakistani border from where the Taliban leadership waged their war. However, the

⁵³ The White house briefing room , 08,july,2021

objective of the US in Afghanistan remained quite consistent over the period of time. The US wanted to wipe out the roots of terrorism and the ideologies such as the Taliban leadership which have been fueling them that resulted in an unfortunate event of 9/11. It can also be observed by the fact that President Bush within few months, declared that the Taliban leadership have been pushed back in Afghanistan and the US has defeated the terror sponsoring group for the time being.

Similarly, in the start of his tenure the then President Donald Trump followed his two last predecessor but in 2019 he started dialogue with Taliban. Whereas, Joe Biden, out rightly focused on withdrawal as he was convinced of no outcomes from this longest war and efforts in Afghanistan in all the terms. Hence, it is not wrong to say that war on terror left horrible consequences in terms of displacement, human rights violation, militancy, changing political situation and many such problems.

2.2.5. Domestic and International Criticism

The US 20 years' war in Afghanistan had been criticized largely at domestic and international level. Public opinion is one of the most important internal determinants of foreign policy of every sovereign state and to USA too. Thus, in US foreign policy making decisions it makes an important role. In US mostly people opposed the Afghan war⁵⁴. Such as, the pew research conducted a survey about US war in Afghanistan, in which 72 % Americans opposed the war. More than half of the US population wanted the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan.⁵⁵ Similarly, according to the US today Gallup survey, "after the killing of Osama bin laden 60% Americans think that the US has finished its work and its forces should be

⁵⁴ George, A willful blindness, published in guardian, 11, march, 2003

⁵⁵ Pew research survey 2016.

brought home⁵⁶. Thus, all the domestic opposition of the war in Afghanistan compelled the US policy makers to withdraw its forces from the country.

Moreover the external criticism on US war in Afghanistan played main role in the withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan. Majority of the states opposed the US military engagements in Afghanistan, such as 18 out of 25 states say that the US and NATO should withdraw their troops from Afghanistan⁵⁷. Similarly, the world emerging great powers like China and Russia considered US presence in Afghanistan as a serious threat for them. Moreover, various NATO member countries were in favor of continuation of war in Afghanistan. Such as in 2010, 32 out of 47 NATO members were in favor of withdrawal of their troops from Afghanistan⁵⁸. Thus, all these factors contributed in the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

2.2.6. Failure of the US and NATO Mission

The day when the government of Taliban was able to defeat the US and NATO backed army in Afghanistan, it was the time when final nail in the coffin of efforts of these two entities took place as well. The national army of Afghanistan, which on paper seemed very strong and it equipped with modern arms and guns funded and provided by the US failed to move the government of Taliban. The claims made by the US and NATO were done and dusted when the Taliban entered Kabul and there was no resistance from the national army of Afghanistan and ISAF forces. The process for which the US and NATO stayed in Afghanistan for over 20 years puffed in thin air in matters of weeks. It is important to note that the government of Taliban now controls more than 95% of the area in Afghanistan with exception of few areas. It is believed by many political and international scholars that the government of the Taliban is a proof that the

⁵⁶ Ibid 2009

⁵⁷ Ibid 2017...

⁵⁸ Ibid 2011

US and NATO have failed miserably in Afghanistan. The failure of the US and NATO can also be evaluated by the fact that the president Joe Biden declared that the Taliban will not be able to cease Kabul in near future because the national army is well manned and well equipped. But many have presented their point of view on Joe Biden that his foreign policy when it comes to Afghanistan has been disastrous. Other commentators have also said that the sudden removal of forces of the US and NATO from Afghanistan has shown that they have made Afghanistan a playing field for their forces. Many have stated out that this is the downfall of Western form of power in the world. Thus, no matter what is claimed by the officials of the US and NATO, the end reality is that the US and NATO had to break a deal with a group after which they had entered in 2001.

2.2.7. The Changing Global Dynamics

The changing global dynamics became one the most significant factors for the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. After the USSR disintegration the world shifted from bi- polarity to uni- polarity and US became the sole great power in the world. However, in the last two decade it is observed that the U.S had been very adamant in enhancing the pressure on regional as well as the global competitors like China and Russia. But China and Russia have been working closely in different forms and alliances where both, are trying to build up the case against the pressure of US. The main mission of China and Russia seems like to put a full stop to the global hegemony of the US and to revoke the status of power that US enjoys. However, the U.S has pulled out of Afghanistan and now it seems evident that it would be going after the alliances of different states which have been challenging the global agenda of U.S. more likely, countering China and Russia on different fronts.

2.2.8. Internal Afghan Complications

The Afghan society is not homogenous. There are different sections and segments present in the society. The Afghan society is fairly distinctive on the political, social and economic grounds as well it makes Afghan society a heterogeneous society. This can be called off as one of the primary reasons that any government finds it very hard to control the highly polarized society. The US forces also tried to negotiate with different sections of Afghan society but it will not be wrong to state that the US failed. The capacity and the issues of each segment of Afghan society are different and it is near to impossible for any government to sort them out without any assistance from the leaders of different factions of Afghan society. Therefore, the writ of the government on such elements of the Afghan society is weak and the government cannot control or impose their rule on them. The same multicultural and multi- ethnic bifurcated society of Afghanistan became a hard task for USA.

2.2.9. Diverting Focus from Central Asia to the Asia Pacific

It will not be wrong to state that China has taken an advantage of the absence of United States from the global stage and its over engagements in Afghanistan. It is pertinent to mention that the United States had been so much indulged in the war of Afghanistan that it have missed the indication that China has extended its economic and diplomatic influence around the world. China has been very vocal on the Asia Pacific front and it was very much necessary for United States to counter the agenda of China. Therefore, it was cardinal for the United States that focus must be subsided from one end. So, the United States has been bolstering the alliances and its game in the region. For example, the United States has shown its navy presence in Asia Pacific region. Japan has become one of the proponents of the United States in the region when it comes to China. Hence, it was not viable for United States to have the confrontation on two fronts. The

think tank of the United States also claimed the fact that the war in the Afghanistan cannot bring any viable result for United States⁵⁹. Therefore, it is necessary to divert the resources on the end which matters the most, which is China and the Asia Pacific region.

2.3. US Withdrawal Strategy

2.3.1. Protection of US and Its Ally's Diplomats

The US administration devised a strategy that by which it was put forth that around 650 military force personnel will stay in Afghanistan after the complete removal of the forces from the country. It was thought by the US administration that these people will stay behind for the protection of the embassy and other consulates of US in Afghanistan. Moreover, another reason of deploying 650 members by the US administration was to provide protection to Kabul airport. But the Kabul airport had been in direct control of Turkey under the NATO support program since 2015. Following US withdrawal, the increasing tensions prevailed and it was unclear in the minds of US administration that if they could stay in the country even after the proposed deadline of 31st August or not. John Kirby, the spokesperson of the US administration of state department made it very clear on 12th of August in a media conference that there are no indications that if the US administration planned to stay behind after the 31st or not. But it proved out that all of the US administration left the country because Taliban had made it firm that no foreign forces should stay in Afghanistan after the proposed date as mentioned in the deal.

2.3.2. Assistance for the Afghan National Security Forces

It is cardinal to state that the US administration had been supporting the Afghan National Security Forces over the 20 years. The structure of the Afghan National Security Forces was developed by the US when they had the utmost control in 2002-2003. It was decided by the US

⁵⁹ Special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction report August 2021

that they will provide assistance to the Afghan National Security Forces even after they have departed from the Afghanistan. Other than this, help from some other means like that of the logistics and financial support would be provided to the Afghan National Security Forces. But as the things stand, the Afghan National Security Forces was not able to put a resistive show against the Taliban. The Taliban's insurgency proved very hard for the Afghan National Security Forces to control. Thus, the Afghan National Security Forces dropped the weapons just after the US completed its adventure in Afghanistan.

2.3.3. Counter Terrorism Strategies

The US has left the country, but the President Biden has also stated that the US will make sure that Afghanistan will not become a terror sponsoring state once again. So, the counter terrorism strategies of the US have a lot of importance when the US is not present in Afghanistan. It is viable to put down that the US has some options. For example, the US can establish its bases in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan. But many analysts have stated that it will not be easy for the US to establish their bases in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan. It is due to the very fact that Russia has considerable focus and control over Uzbekistan, Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan. Thus, many analysts have pointed that there are very less chances that any of the Uzbekistan, Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan will provide the US a space to establish the bases even for controlling and keeping an eye on activities in Afghanistan. Pakistan has already shown a white flag to the US authorities that they cannot acquire land in Pakistan to keep an eye on Afghanistan. But the US authorities have given a statement in the past that it may be difficult for the US authorities because Afghanistan is quite far away geographically from the US. But an option for the US authorities lies in their bases in Persian Gulf. The heavy presence of the US authorities like the US air force and US navy can prove to be instrumental for the US authorities.

2.4. Revival of Taliban in Afghanistan

The victory to Taliban came after a twenty-year-long military presence of US and the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in form of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The cost put by the US in entire arrangement, including developing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), stabilizing the Afghan government, paying the contractors and logistics, was evaluated to be around 2.313 trillion USD⁶⁰. The conflict devoured hundreds of thousands of soldiers' lives⁶¹. In the end, the two decades' mega structure of the US, the ISAF and the Afghan Regime to stabilize Afghanistan defiled within three months to Taliban offensive. The Taliban achieved its military victory using hybrid tactics. The militant group had used unconventional means and other means such as diplomacy, political maneuvering, social media, and social relations to achieve its political ends. Moreover, the continuous miscalculation of the Afghan Regime is a crucial element of its military victory.

2.4.1. The Return of Taliban Regime: Methods and Strategies

2.4.1.1. Taliban conventional Means for Victory

The conventional means are “the activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency” with an objective to coerce, disrupt, or coup a government or occupying power by operating through a covert, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area⁶². The Taliban used a wide variety of unconventional tactics. From various reports it revealed that the Taliban organized several military training camps to train its fighters in Afghanistan's rural and remote areas. In an interview, a Taliban fighter revealed that the militias 're-training occurs after every

⁶⁰ Watson institute international and Public Affairs, US costs for the war in Afghanistan, 2001 to 2021.

⁶¹ Ellen Knickmeyer, “Costs of the Afghanistan War, in Lives and Dollars,” AP NEWS (Associated Press, 17 August, 2021), <https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-business-afghanistan43d8f53b35e80ec18c130cd683e1a38f>.

⁶² “Unconventional Warfare (UW): About,” USSOCOM Library, <https://jsou.libguides.com/unconventionalwarfare>.

four months⁶³. The training covered small-arms proficiency, utilization of improvised explosive device (IEDs), firing from moving vehicles, and guerrilla tactics. Terrorist tactics, such as clandestine violence on civilians and intimidation through targeted assassinations of pilots and high-rank officers, kidnappings, night letters, and death threats to prominent civil society leaders, were its long-term strategies that had weakened the Afghan national security forces (ANDSF) and the credibility of the Regime⁶⁴. The fighters were also trained to use conventional tactics such as massed assaults and multi-pronged attacks. Intelligence activities of the Taliban's were vigorous and accurate. They had logistical support throughout Afghanistan. The accuracy of intelligence helped the Taliban during its guerrilla attacks. Criminal activities, such as drugs smuggling, protection rackets, kidnapping for ransom, were undertaken by the Taliban to generate money for its fighters' sustainability⁶⁵.

2.4.1.2. Non-Conventional Methods of Taliban Expansion

2.4.1.2.1. Diplomatic Tactics

The most critical element of the Taliban's victory was the Doha Agreement (also known as the Afghan Peace Deal), as it formed the ground to launch the offensive. On 29 February 2020, Doha Agreement was signed between the Trump Administration and the representatives of the Taliban. It stipulated the condition upon which the Americans would leave Afghanistan. The deal implicitly declared the legitimacy of the Taliban as a stakeholder and the government and security forces inept at managing the state. The deal signaled the end of Ashraf Ghani's Regime

⁶³ BBC report September 2019

⁶⁴ "Taliban Use Traditional Afghan Method of 'Night Letters' to Intimidate," The Economic Times, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/taliban-use-traditionalafghan-method-of-night-letters-to-intimidate/articleshow/85795913.cms>

⁶⁵ Person and Jonathan Landay, "Profits and Poppy: Afghanistan's Illegal Drug Trade a Boon for Taliban," Reuters (Thomson Reuters, August 16, 2021), <https://www.reuters.com/world/asiapacific/profits-poppy-afghanistans-illegal-drug-trade-boon-taliban-20>

in Afghanistan, making it difficult for the Regime to maintain unity in the counterinsurgency campaign.

2.4.1.2.2. Political Strategies

The Taliban was undoubtedly seeking the support of the warlords rather than eliminating them because it wanted to maintain stability in the northern region. In the past, it had offered many warlords to join the Taliban. Many warlords surrendered to the Taliban during the offensive without a fight, indicating the possibility of back-channel political settlements. For instance, Ismail Khan, popularly known as the lion of Herat, has joined the Taliban after his quick surrender. Mohammad Karim Khalili had shown little resistance to the Taliban before surrendering. It was unclear whether their surrender was a political negotiation or not. In late August 2021, media reports suggested that Abdul Rasheed Dostum and Atta Muhammad Noor are also planning for negotiation with the Taliban. The Taliban also have an imperative to negotiate with these two because they are influential warlords in the region of Mazar-e-Sharif, one of the critical cities in the north and the gateway to Uzbekistan⁶⁶.

2.4.1.2.3. Social Media Used as a Tool of War

The Taliban members were no longer simply the bearded-turban wearing fiends from the 1990s because now almost every Taliban fighter has a smartphone in his pocket. They used smartphones to take videos every time they captured any ANA outposts. These videos circulated in Afghan social media and reached other soldiers who assumed the army's defeat from the mighty Taliban. In some videos, the surrendering soldiers were embracing and getting cash from

⁶⁶ FP Staff, "Who Are Atta Mohammad Noor and Abdul Rashid Dostum? Why Do They Want a Peace Pact With Taliban?," Firstpost, 30 August, 2021, <https://www.firstpost.com/world/whynegotiations-with-atta-mohammad-noor-and-abdul-rashid-dostum-are-imperative-for-taliban9923651.html>.

the Taliban militias⁶⁷. Such video gave the impression to the viewers that they and their families would be fine if soldiers renounced the Afghan army. These videos surfaced at the same time when assassinations of Afghan air force pilots and high-rank officers were happening, which exacerbated the impact of these videos. The Taliban captured more places as the propaganda videos floodlit the surrenders as peaceful and jovial. Hence, the soldiers watching these videos surrendered without firing a single bullet on the Taliban fighters

2.4.1.2.4. Social Interactions of Taliban

Taliban has adapted its strategy according to various local conditions and exploited the ethnic divides in the country. The dynamics of social relations vary in rural and urban areas. In the rural and Pashtun dominated areas, the support for the Taliban is the highest. In the urban areas of Afghanistan majority people do not support Taliban. The Taliban has exploited the three societal problems in Afghanistan: First, the Pashtuns. They form 42 per cent of the population⁶⁸. They always felt alienated from the central government, which they believed was unfairly influenced by non-Pashtun leaders and only upheld their interests. Second, the public were not happy with the attitude of ISAF and the ANDSF. Earlier, the ISAF and Americans were regarded as Mehman. In a decade, the term changed to Dushman, and they were seen as colonisers. Third, people are deeply frustrated by and frightened of the insecurity created by the absence, fecklessness, and corruption of the government's institutions at the local level. Since 2006, the Taliban has systematically destroyed the local administrations at the district level and eliminated

⁶⁷ “Gravitas: 5 Videos That Show How the Taliban Is Taking Control of Afghanistan,” YouTube (YouTube, 23 June, 2021), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bz9pnAz9S5U>

⁶⁸ Amna Puri-Mirza, “Afghanistan: Share Population by Ethnic Group 2020,” Statista, 20 August, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1258799/afghanistan-share-of-population-by-ethnicgroup/#:~:text=As%20of%202020%2C%2042%20percent,is%20currently%20around%2033%20million.>

people's contact with the administration. In such isolation, the Taliban pushed people to accept its system of justice and order.

2.4.1.3. Weak Ashraf Ghani Government and Feeble Afghan National Security Forces

The politicians and army commanders siphoned off soldiers is a widely known fact. However, it was not only the lack of pay and insufficient supply of food. At the time, it was the ammunition they needed but not received to fight against the Taliban. Among soldiers, the prevailing feeling was that they were not protected and adequately supplied by the government in Kabul. Because of all these factors, desertion was a massive problem for the ANA. Despite being aware of desertion rates, the ISAF, the US, and the Afghan government never addressed the problem. The role of the Air force was to keep the Taliban at bay by bombing runs, surveillance and supply at remote locations. The Air force had some of the up-to-date Black Hawk helicopters and other aircraft from the US that could have given the edge over the Taliban as it did not have any air power. The Biden Administration proceeded to pull out all the Americans, including contractors and logistics that the Afghan air force relied upon for operations⁶⁹. The withdrawal created a challenge as the air force did not have the skills, technicians or means to repairs these aircraft. The assassinations of pilots increased the desertion rate in the Air force, which further weakened the state of the airpower of the ANDS.

2.5. The New Taliban

Many have stated that the hardcore ideology of the Taliban has been converted into a soft core policy seeking a legitimate power center. There are different indications given by the Taliban themselves that the Taliban have changed quite a bit from the last time. For example, the Taliban

⁶⁹ Paul McLeary, "Biden Is betting big on Afghanistan's Air Force. but Their Problems Continue to Grow.," Politico (Politico, 23 July, 2021),

have become more aware about the political and the presence of the international structure around them. A prime example of this fact from the Taliban can be crux out from the formation of the political office in Doha. To the surprise, the political conference was attended by the representatives of many different states. Thus, such aspects showed that the Taliban have polished their stance over the year and this time, the Taliban have done their homework. Another major development in the Taliban is of the use of modern means. The spokesperson of the Taliban has also said during the interview that this time, the Taliban have learnt from their mistakes which they have done in the past. The group knows that how this country should be lead and the Taliban are not against the notion of modernism. The leadership of the Taliban can be observed on the local as well as on the international media, giving interviews and giving answers to the queries of international reporters in English language is something which people and the international world did not anticipate. Other than this, the Taliban seems to hold a very soft stance against the women as well. In the previous rule of the Taliban, women were oppressed and the liberty and freedom were snatched from the. But this time, the Taliban have promised that all the equal rights will be provided to women living under the rule of the Taliban.

Chapter 3

US Withdrawal from Afghanistan and Implications for India

3.1. Historical Overview of India-Afghanistan Relations

The relations of India and Afghanistan initiated back in the era of Cold War, when the Indian government recognized Afghanistan during 1970s. India had fully supported USSR to overthrow Taliban regime from Afghanistan. It also became the largest donor to aid the government against the Taliban supported by USA. Afghanistan is a mountainous country with attractive geographic location. It would not be wrong to highlight that the Indian support to Afghanistan was only Pakistan centric and also to bow the seeds for regional supremacy.

In 2004, when Hamid Karzai elected as Afghanistan's President, he focused on cordial Indo-Afghan policy.⁷⁰ The Karzai regime wished to seek closer ties with India. Both the countries enforced for strengthening bi-lateral strategic partnership, paving the way for Indian influence in Afghanistan.⁷¹ The US also was pleased to have allowed India to continue its development activities in Afghanistan, but US also gave a clear notion to India that it will not take any step related to security concern isolating Pakistan.⁷²

The relations of India and Afghanistan had nurtured over the years. Different governments and regimes had come in Afghanistan, and the nature of relations of India with them had changed

⁷⁰ Carlotta Gall, 'Election of Karzai declared official', New York Times, November 4th, 2004.

⁷¹ Ron Synovitz, 'Karzai seek stronger ties with India as tension with Pakistan rise', RFE October 4th, 2011. Available at https://www.rferl.org/a/karzai_afghanistan_india_pakistan/24348104.html.

⁷² Summit Ganguly, 'India's role in Afghanistan', CIDOB Policy Research.

too. But in the past 20 years since there was a democratically elected government present in Afghanistan, the relations between India and Afghanistan have been carved up. The political, diplomatic, commercial, and military relations of both the states had been perfect. This chapter deals with Indo-Afghan diplomatic, military and economic engagement and how US withdrawal from Afghanistan created risks to heavy Indian investment and interests in Afghanistan.

3.2. Post 9/11, India Objectives in Afghanistan

The most important Indian objective though remained to be the countering Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan, yet Delhi maintained an elaborate list of its objectives in Afghan; the pressing Indian strategic objectives in Afghanistan include:

Prevention of Indian Centric Attacks: One of the main uses of Afghanistan by India was to keep Afghanistan safe from Pakistan state sponsored radical attacks in India or on the investment that was made by India in Afghanistan. The ambassador of India also pointed out the fact that Indian investments in Afghanistan were at risk of Pakistani militancy. The base of this point was the Lashkar e Taiba attacks on Mumbai that Indian authorities claimed were conducted from Pakistan via Afghanistan⁷³.

Undercutting Pakistan's and Militant Influence from Afghanistan: lot of Indian think tanks and mindsets have hinted on the fact that as soon as the US will leave the country, Pakistan will make Afghanistan its own territory and will install a puppet government who will work on the directions of Pakistan. Pakistan will use Afghanistan to infiltrate terror in India. Indian newspaper Mint also pointed this out as "Islamabad has an idea that once the US is gone and the Taliban will come to rule Afghanistan, Pakistan will have a chance to release fear and oppression

⁷³ CNN, Mumbai attack , 26, November, 2010

in India. To make sure that the pro-Pakistan government does not rule in Afghanistan. To stall such event, it will be the prime work for India to stabilize the country by producing an inclusive government that is based on different ethnicities. If the government of the Taliban goes under the way in Afghanistan, it will be hard for India to undermine the Pakistani role in Taliban's policy making. Indian analysts have warned on this factor too that the major role of India will be to prevent Pakistan becoming the sole judge of what might happen and what might not happen in Afghanistan.

Increased Access to Central Asia: it is important to note that both Pakistan and India require more and cheap energy resources so that they could run their respective industries. India is one of the rapidly modernizing energy markets and it is estimated that India will use 80% of its reserves by the end of the 2030.⁷⁴ The mission of TAPI pipeline project is to transit around 33 billion cubic meters gas each year through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. Pakistan might get around 15 billion cubic meters each year and India might get the same quantity. For this to happen, Pakistan and India both need stability in Afghanistan. If the factor of stability is not present in Afghanistan, TAPI project will remain stalled.

⁷⁴ "India," *World Factbook*, Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, updated November 8, 2011; Vibhuti Haté, "India's Energy Dilemma," *South Asia Monitor*, No. 98, September 7, 2006. With India's growing middle class seeking car ownership and consumer goods, sales of passenger and commercial vehicles grew 31 percent and 47 percent, respectively, in 2010 alone. Furthermore, 400 million people—one-third of the population—have yet to gain access to electricity. See "Indian Car Market Growth Second Fastest Globally," *Times of India*, January 12, 2011. See also U.S. Energy Information Administration, "India: Country Analysis Brief," August 2010b; and Raghav Sharma, *India and Afghanistan: Charting the Future*, New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Special Report 69, April 2009, p. 2.

3.3. Indian Investment in Afghanistan in Post 9/11

3.3.1. Economic Investment

India is the fifth (5th) largest donor to Afghanistan, assisting the country in developmental sector including health, education and infrastructure.⁷⁵ Indian has constructed the building of Afghanistan parliament and also provided training to its legislators. The organization named as Border Roads has built a highway of 218 kilometers long connecting the town of Zaranj near the Iranian border and stretched to Delaram in the northeast, despite suffering from the Taliban attacks on the Indian personnel.⁷⁶ The line of power transmission was also constructed by it towards Kabul and it did work on the implementation of a project related to hydroelectric in Herat at the Salma Dam (Afghanistan) worth \$180 million⁷⁷ and \$8 million worth of highly developed equipment for warfare to Afghanistan. Other than this, India also provided Afghanistan the best advisers with military experience and technicians for helicopter manufacturing from its foreign intelligence, the Raw (the Research and analysis wing).⁷⁸ The Indian efforts to develop Afghanistan have been possible due to the presence of the US troops. Given the geological vicinity and recorded linkages, India has been a characteristic exchanging accomplice for Afghanistan. It is also the biggest market in South Asia for its items. The absolute

⁷⁵ Joshi, Shashank, "Let India help Afghanistan," the guardian, december 25, 2009.

⁷⁶ Dholabhai, Nishit, "India Accomplishes Afghan Road Mission- Strategic highway survives Pakistan scare and Kabul embas- sy blast," the telegraph, July 16, 2008.

⁷⁷ Peter, tom, "India outdoes US aid efforts in Afghanistan," global Post, september 9, 2010. available at: <http://www.globalpost.com/print/5583950>

⁷⁸ Joshi, shashank, "India's Af-Pak Strategy," RUSI Journal, february/ march 2010, 155:1, PP. 20-29.

respective exchange among India and Afghanistan for CY 2019-20 was at US\$ 1.5 billion⁷⁹. While there is tremendous potential to extend two-sided exchange, the hardships on the way by means of Pakistan was a significant obstacle in growing the exchange ties. To enlarge the horizon of business in exchange to India, the Afghan government as a team with Government of India dispatched a devoted Air Freight Corridor on 19 June 2017.⁸⁰ In addition to this Air-Freight Corridor by India and Afghanistan since its initiation has seen near 1000 flights, conveying products esteemed at over USD 216 million. This has given a lift to Afghan commodities to India and has straightforwardly helped Afghan ranchers and little brokers and exporters. India and Afghanistan currently plan to grow the Corridor to different urban areas in both the nations.⁸¹

Another significant initiative which fortified reciprocal exchange was the operationalization of the Chabahar Port in December 2017, trailed by business consent to oversee port tasks in February 2018. The Port has so far took care of more than 5,000 holders shipping more than 110,000 tons of wheat and more than 2,000 tons of heartbeats sent by India as help to Afghanistan by means of Chabahar. These were conveyed to different pieces of Afghanistan and normal transportation time (barring handling time) involved was under about fourteen days. In 2019, Afghanistan delivered around 700 tons of rural and mineral items to India through the Chabahar Port, unmistakably showing the plausibility of Chabahar Port as a travel point for Afghanistan and in the end to Central Asia.⁸²

⁷⁹ India Today newspaper, 24, August, 2021

⁸⁰ Kallol Bhattaxherjee, 'India Afghanistan open air freight route': New Delhi, The Hindu, June 19th, 2017.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Bilateral Breif,' Embassy of India Kabul, Bilateral Brief'. Available at

https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Kabul_2020.pdf.

Following the achievement of the first and second release of India-Afghanistan Trade and Investment Show, named 'Section to Prosperity' in September 2017 in New Delhi and September 2018 in Mumbai, the third version of the occasion was hung on 24-26 September 2019 at Delhi. Similarly, as with the past releases, show was executed in collaboration with U.S. Organization for International Development (USAID). The occasion saw 105 Afghan organizations. Exchange worth US\$ 33.6 million was marked and US\$ 23.3 million in pre-contract arrangements were; examined.⁸³

3.3.2. Political and Cultural Engagements

Afghanistan and India possessed strong relations which are primarily due to the historic and culture ties. Relationships are based on exchanges and historical contacts among people. Indo-Afghan relations in the recent past have been further enhanced by few particular agreements that included.

- The Strategic Agreement: The Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), signed in 2011 between India and Afghanistan for enhancing bilateral relationship. The agreement aimed for the provision of further assistance to Afghanistan for rehabilitation and rebuilding of infrastructure including institutions and education⁸⁴. Moreover, the agreement also focused on enhancing the technical sites of the country for rebuilding indigenous. Afghan capacity in different areas and encourage to enrich natural resources provision of the free access to for the exports if Afghanistan in the market of India for maintaining a long-term and sustainable relationship with Afghanistan⁸⁵.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Embassy of India in Afghanistan, Bilateral brief October 2016

⁸⁵ Ibid

The high-level visits have been made between the top officials at both ends that is of India and Afghanistan. The Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendar Modi had made an official visit in 2016 to western Afghanistan for the inauguration of Salma Dam. The Indian Prime Minister and Afghanistan's President Mr. Ashraf Ghani had jointly inaugurated dam. The dam was the joint venture of India and Afghanistan, is entitle as Friendship Dam of Afghanistan and India, and before this it was, knew as Salma Dam. The Dam was built after the so many efforts and hard work of many years⁸⁶.

The building of the Dam was a collective effort of the engineers of Afghanistan and India as almost 1500 engineers worked on it even in severe conditions. It indicates the consistent effort of India and strong commitment towards the betterment of Afghanistan and maintaining relationships with it⁸⁷. In addition to this the inauguration of Stor Palace in Kabul has also been taken palace jointly while India had shown its participation through a video conferencing⁸⁸. The inauguration has been successfully conducted by President Ashraf Ghani. During the inaugural address, the Prime Minister of India reaffirmed the commitment of India to the billions of Indian people "always" to support and help Afghanistan in prosperity and Peace.⁸⁹

The inauguration ceremonies were not only limited to these two new developments. Prime Minister Modi along with his high delegation made another visit to Afghanistan on December 25, 2016. The visit was intended to have the joint meeting of Afghan cabinet that included President Ghani, the Chief Executive, Dr Abdullah Abdullah and former President Hamid

⁸⁶ Shahpur Saber, Institute for war and peace, Salma Dam , 29, February, 2010

⁸⁷ ⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Roche, ' Narender Modi inaugurates Stor Palace in Kabul through a video link', August 22nd, 2016. Available at <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/SPloFFw9hrWw5HPV8Ts3nO/Narendra-Modi-inaugurates-Stor-Palace-in-Kabul-via-video-link.html>

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Karzai. Along with this, he also pledges to inaugurate the newly constructed building of the Afghan Parliament, assisted and supported by India. The building cost was approximately INR 970 crore⁹⁰. Along with this, the Indian Prime Minister in same visit also announced the educational scholarship to around 500 Afghan students particularly those who father has martyrs of the Afghan security forces. In addition to this India also gifted four Mi-25 helicopter to the Afghan Air Force. The second Strategic Partnership Council was held in same visit, headed by the Foreign Ministers of both countries in the first quarter of 2017, along with other four working group meetings.⁹¹

The next visit has been made by President Ashraf Ghani to India on October 24th, 2017. It was a one-day meeting. The second visit to India by Afghanistan President was made on September 19th 2018 for meeting the Indian Prime Minister. he leaders of the two countries reviewed and commended the progress of the multifaceted strategic partnership between India and Afghanistan.

Moreover, both of the leaders also appreciated and showed satisfaction over the increase of the bilateral trade that had crossed the markup of US \$ 1 billion. The contentment was shown on the trade enhancement between India and Afghanistan, as per the calculation of the investment. To further cooperate and to enhance trade linkages between the two countries, determination was also expressed. Both the countries have pledge to also cooperate the Chabahar port and Air-

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ GK, ' 2nd India-Afghanistan strategic council held in New Delhi,' Current Affairs and General Studies, September 11, 2017. Available at <https://www.gktoday.in/current-affairs/2nd-india-afghanistan-strategic-partnership-council-held-delhi/>.

Freight Corridor.⁹² It was decided to deepen the 'New Development Partnership' in the areas of high-impact infrastructure projects, human resource development and other capacity building projects in Afghanistan.⁹³

When it comes to social and cultural, India and Afghanistan have good relations as well. For the social and cultural developments India has taken the following steps.

- High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP): The main reason of making these programs was to excel the development in poor regions of the Afghanistan. Around \$120 million have been distributed to different NGO working in the area of like training, wellbeing; water the board, government structures, sport offices, agribusiness and water system. Under the projects, India opened up around five different schools and colleges in the country. Moreover, in 2019-2020, more than 37 programs were carried out by India under the High Impact Community Development Project. India and Afghanistan have signed a MoU in which India will invest @80 million in the IV phase of High Impact Community Development Project.
- ICCR also provided scholarships to Afghan students. It is estimated that around 1,000 are provided to Afghan students and more are to follow.
- India offers more than 1,000 Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) spaces to Afghanistan yearly. The ITEC preparing is relied upon to address Afghanistan's need to reinforce its organization and administration at public, common and area levels,

⁹²Breif,' Embassy of India Kabul, Bilateral Brief'. Available at https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Kabul_2020.pdf.

⁹³ Ibid.

remembering through sharing encounters and specialized help for building limits of common organization and undertaking execution.⁹⁴

- Another university has been set up with the help of India. Afghan National Agricultural Science and Technology University is constructed by India.
- Many Afghan students have been studying in different Indian universities under the fellowship program. More than 50 students are completing their research in Dhanbad, India.

- Humanitarian Assistance

Some of the humanitarian help provided by India to Afghanistan is narrowed down below.

- India has helped Afghanistan in countering the global pandemic. More than 75000 MT of wheat has been provided and around 5 lac tablets of Hydroxychloroquine will be provided as well.
- Food assistance of grains and biscuits is provided to around 1.5 million school children.
- To improve food security position in Afghanistan, more than 2000 tons of pulses ;2was granted by India.
- In 2015, a Medical Diagnostic Center was established in Kabul. The Center gives most recent analytic offices to offspring of Afghanistan subsequently creating generosity for India.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Dipanjan Roy Chaudary, 'Projects in Afghanistan speak for itself: India after Trump mocks Modi' https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-rejects-donald-trumps-jibe-at-pm-modi-on-afghanistan/articleshow/67364308.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

⁹⁵ Embassy of India, Kabul Afghanistan, 'ICCR Scholarship'. Available at <https://eoi.gov.in/kabul/?0359?000>.

3.3.3. Military Engagements

The military relations between the India and the Afghanistan were close until the Taliban took over the Afghanistan. Though the correct figure is very much hard to know, but according to some independent resources, the Afghanistan's government was getting a lot of assistance when it came to the military dynamics. The Afghanistan army was trained by the Indian army. It is a very well-known fact that the Afghanistan's National Army was send to India where a comprehensive training of the Afghani troops took place. Moreover, Indian and the Afghanistan's army initiated in different pacts and have indulged in various military exercises. The sequence and partnership of the Afghanistan and the Indian army could not hold for a long time because the Taliban took over.

3.4. US Withdrawal and Implications for India

US withdrawal will have large implications for India. Because the Modi led Indian government was more comfortable with US-led Afghan government but it would not be in compatibility with the Taliban.

Secondly, the Indian Modi-led government is a religious version of Hinduism ideology with less tolerance towards Muslims. Accordingly, the Taliban's ideology holds the Muslim fundamentalism that at later stage will contradict to their relevant objectives. Therefore, India will have serious implications in upcoming era.

3.4.1. Economic Implications

3.4.1.1. Set Back to Indian Investments

After the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the political and economic spectrum seems very confusing for the Indian government. In addition to building Afghan infrastructure, India has helped organize trade routes to Afghanistan — and through it, to countries in Central Asia. It secured waivers from U.S. sanctions to build the \$8 billion Chabahar port in Iran, hoping it could be a key trade route to Afghanistan that bypasses Pakistan. India was also part of a consortium planning a 4,400-mile rail network linking Afghanistan with Europe. Now those projects face uncertain futures. The government of the Taliban on the one hand has been very reluctant in seeking relations with India, but on the other side they have indicated that India might invest and assist Afghanistan in rebuilding its economy. Unlike the past, where the government of Afghanistan under the ruler ship of Ashraf Ghani made decisions under the Indian influence, the Taliban's government might not bend down against the Indians. India, on the other side has left with so little options. One, for such example is the fact that many investment projects initiated by India have come to a halt as the US has left the country. It is important to state out that the government of the Taliban is also very sketchy about the Indian investments. On the one side, government of the Taliban asks the international community to help the country in one of the worst humanitarian crisis this world has ever seen. But on the other side, government of the Taliban seems very reluctant in taking aid from India. It is observed that India has invested around 3 to 4 billion in Afghanistan over the past of 20 years⁹⁶. The government of the Taliban has repeatedly said that it will not allow any state to use the territory of Afghanistan against any other state but government of the Taliban also knows the importance of trade or investment

⁹⁶ Andrani Bagchi, "US withdrawal and impacts on India" The Economic Times" 16, July, 2021

which was done by India. Although, many political analysts have stated the fact that government of the Taliban will likely to develop relations with India in the near future as the need of the government of the Taliban is to ensure the economic prosperity of the people so that it can legitimize its rule in the eyes of public in Afghanistan. But, the major ideological differences show the non-compatibility of Indo-Afghan future engagement.

3.4.1.2. Decrease in trade with Afghanistan

The trade volume between India and Afghanistan in 2019 stood at around 1.5 billion⁹⁷. Though, it is a well-known factor that this trade volume between India and Afghanistan was based on US presence. India and Afghanistan had been doing trade in the past owing to closeness of both governments too; emergence of government of the Taliban in Afghanistan had too affected the trade. However, one of the elements which are important to take notice of is the fact that the government of the Taliban had not disrupted the trade between the two states. It was India who has controlled and reduced the trade related activities since the government of the Taliban has taken control. One of the reasons out of many for the lessening of the trade since the government of Taliban has come is the vulnerable position of India. India has not been an advocate of the government of the Taliban. Neither the government of Taliban has an optimistic image of the India. Thus, a blow came to the trade as the government of Taliban formed in Afghanistan. It is noted that the trade volume between the two states decrease around mere 200 million dollars as the government of Taliban is in place⁹⁸. India will try to starve the government of the Taliban out in Afghanistan as it seems the only possible solution to exert pressure on Afghanistan.

⁹⁷ External Publicity Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, India and Afghanistan: A Development Partnership, c. 2019, p. 8.\

⁹⁸ Indian Times. 20 October, 2021

3.4.1.3. Hurdles to Access Central Asian Republics

India already faced a lot of difficulties when it came to the connectivity of trade with the Central Asia Republics. All the Central Asia Republics have been very rich when it comes to natural resources and thus this is the reason that the Central Asia Republics get attention of many regional countries as the Central Asia Republics can provide gas and other resources at very minimal rates. . India's extraordinary economic growth of more than 7 percent annually since 1997 has made it the world's second-fastest-growing energy market, with estimates that the country will need to import more than 80 percent of its fuel by 2030⁹⁹. As the Taliban have formulated their government, the only possible route for India to conduct trade with the Central Asia Republics has had been at stake. For example, India had been conducting trade with the Central Asia Republics via Afghanistan over the years. The governments of Afghanistan under different rulers have provided the logistics and security to the trade of India and the Central Asia Republics. But with the Taliban on board now, the Central Asia Republics and India will not have the freedom which they enjoyed in the past. Therefore, the Central Asia Republics and India will also face a lot of difficulties in the trade related affairs. It has been noted that the trade volume between the Central Asia Republics and India has decreased since the government of the Taliban has been made in the Afghanistan¹⁰⁰. Also, the Central Asia Republics and India will face an expensive turnover for the trade. . It is also observed that the Central Asia Republics and India have been forced to conduct some trade via air as there were no means of shipping routes present for the Central Asia Republics and India.

⁹⁹ "India," World Factbook, Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, updated November 8, 2011

¹⁰⁰ Arun Sahgal, "U.S. Af-Pak Strategy and Afghanistan's Alternative Futures: Options for India," in R. K. Sawhney, Arun Sahgal, and Gurmeet Kanwal, eds., *Afghanistan: A Role for India*, New Delhi: Centre for Land Warfare Studies, 2011,

3.4.2. Decreased in Indian Political Influence in Afghanistan

There is no doubt about the fact that the government of the Taliban will massively decrease the political influence of the India in Afghanistan. AS in the past, during the Taliban First regime in Afghanistan, India strongly supported the Northern Alliance, which was based on ethnicities, such as Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbeks. And they were hostile towards Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan. India assisted the Northern Alliance movement and provided weapons and defense advisors to them and the Indian forces established a hospital in Tajikistan for the use Northern Alliance's fighters¹⁰¹. However, the leverage that India enjoyed in Afghanistan before the government of the Taliban was enormous. After the US attack on Afghanistan India increased its influence in Afghanistan even up to that level that the Afghan resources were used by the Indians in Afghanistan. It was evident that the political decisions taken by the Afghan leaders like Ashraf Ghani and others which clearly showed a bias towards India will end now. When the U.S. Started withdrawal from Afghanistan last year, India is believed to establish back channels of engagements with the Taliban¹⁰². However, the Taliban might not ignore its historical mistrusts with India. Though, the government of the Taliban has not personal aims against India but it is a reality now that the India will not be in a position to dictate the government of the Taliban.

3.4.3. Diplomatic Implications for India

The diplomatic implications for India are worse as the government of Taliban took place. Talking about the diplomatic implications for India, one of the foremost implications is the snatching of strategic depth in Afghanistan.

¹⁰¹ Ganguly and Howenstein, 2009, p. 127.

¹⁰²NRP, "with the US exit From Afghanistan , India Fears an increasingly Hostile Region" Lauren Frayer

India since the cold-war era had started gaining momentum in Afghanistan by putting its efforts in developing the country. It maintained cordial relations with the country political representatives. After the fall of Taliban first regime, India restarted its embassy in Kabul, and opened new consulates in Herat, Mazar Shareef, Jalalabad and Kandahar. That diplomatic move of India enabled her to make amicable relations with local lords to enhance trade and investment. Consequently, the foreign ministry of Pakistan alleged that India provided assistant and support to different separatists' groups in Baluchistan. The foreign ministry stated that the Indian consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad are bases for RAW and its proxies¹⁰³. India has done huge investments and has planted roots for the development of Afghanistan. The hidden agenda's is to spread its influences and to achieve its desired goals. To undermine the Pakistan's influences is also one of the main objectives.

India, did maintain friendly relations with the government but if analyzing the 1979 intervention, Delhi was against the rise of Taliban. Taliban take over might leave a negative impact if things are not properly planned. The complete withdrawal of the U.S troops from Afghanistan will definitely leave huge impact and also its adverse effects on its hegemonic designs in the poor country. India always held a point of view towards the Taliban which is pessimistic in nature. The relations between the Taliban and India have never on the driving seat. When the government of the Taliban was established in Afghanistan, India was one of the few countries who oppose the Taliban regime. All the economic, diplomatic and other ties with the Taliban were broken. Thus, rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the diplomatic implications for India in Afghanistan have surely seen a blowback. The strategic and the diplomatic implications for India

¹⁰³ "RAW Active in Indian Consulates: Pakistan," Dawn, August 2, 2003.

have been dented and many political analysts have suggested that India might have to start from the point zero.

3.4.4. Strategic Consequences for India

While analyzing the strategic perspective of India's interests in Afghanistan there are two major dynamics to take into account. Afghanistan is very crucial for India in its relations with Pakistan. However, the Taliban triumph has significantly diminished the Afghan alliance with India. She is bitterly hostile to the Taliban and is unlikely to be able to ally with them. If the Taliban support Islamist rebellions against Pakistan, Islamabad can simply cut off Afghanistan's trade routes to the sea. Thus, Pakistan now has far more leverage over Afghanistan than India used to have. Thus, the so called proxy game between India and Pakistan in Afghani territory now became more complicated.

Second, the future of some of India's strategic connectivity projects is now in jeopardy due to the Taliban takeover. Because India and Kabul have no shared boundaries — while arch-rivals Pakistan and China do — New Delhi is forced to view Tehran as its gateway to Afghanistan. Indeed, India has long collaborated with Iran so as to establish a trade route between the Iranian port of Chabahar and Afghanistan¹⁰⁴. Indians, however, were delayed in their endeavour. Other nations are already conjuring up alternate connectivity pathways that render Chabahar obsolete. Much of the responsibility for the Chabahar project's sluggish progress should be placed in India and its overly cautious approach. After the US placed sanctions on Iran, Delhi feared antagonizing the US government.

¹⁰⁴ Siddiqui, S. (2021). Afghan chaos further incentive for India's efforts to strengthen ties with Iran. *Al-Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East*. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/08/afghan-chaos-furtherincentive-indias-efforts-strengthen-ties-iran>.

3.4.4.1. India's fears grow over china and Pakistan's Influence in Afghanistan

India and China are the world's two most populous countries. They share the world's longest unmarked frontier, stretching more than 2,100 miles, and they've fought over it many times. Tensions have been especially high since a June 2020 border clash left 20 Indian troops dead. India chose to retaliate off the battlefield, by banning dozens of Chinese-owned apps, including TikTok. Meanwhile, China has been building a giant global infrastructure network including roads, pipelines, power plants and ports, called the Belt and Road Initiative. India is not part of it. But Pakistan is — and Afghanistan soon could be, too. The ascendance of China in Afghanistan will try to unify the entire region — minus, of course, India, This will also sort of strengthen the fears in India that there is an actual Chinese encirclement taking place¹⁰⁵. For India, the possible expansion of Chinese infrastructure into Afghanistan means the world's biggest democracy may be further isolated economically in its own backyard.

Similarly, India's worst fear is that Afghanistan will become a haven for militants from Pakistan. India and Pakistan are nuclear-armed neighbors and nemeses who've fought many wars. Pakistan has long-standing ties with the Taliban. India's concerns about cross-border terrorism will mount with the return of Afghanistan to Taliban rule¹⁰⁶. Fears are growing that Pakistan could again use the Taliban's return to power as an opportunity to attack the interests of its longtime foe India. For decades, one of Pakistan's core interests have revolved around diminishing India's role in Afghanistan and use the country to push its militaristic policy in the region¹⁰⁷. This essentially means that if the peace process would not lead to an inclusive government, which

¹⁰⁵ Indian times 20, august, 2021

¹⁰⁶ C. Raja Mohan, Post-American Afghanistan and India's Geopolitics, Foreign policy Magazine, Aaugust,18,2021

¹⁰⁷ Umair Jamal, " US troops withdrawal from Afghanistan Risk fueling a new Paakistan-India proxy war", CACI Analyst, August, 25, 2021.

appears likely, Pakistan will be forced to double down on its policy of supporting the Afghan Taliban. India, which supports the Northern alliance, the only remaining group that is still opposing the Taliban's return from the Panjshir province, can be expected to use all available means to bolster the Anti-Taliban alliance. Panjshir is the only remaining province of Afghanistan that is not under Taliban control and a majority of the military officials and troops that worked for the government of former President Ashraf Ghani have fled to the province.

3.4.5. Security Challenges to India

The security challenges for India have become more as the government of the Taliban is in control in Afghanistan. In the Afghan Taliban the Haqqani network is one of the most influential and best armed trained faction, the said group attacked Indian installations and the its embassy in the capital of Afghanistan¹⁰⁸. Though, given the close interaction between the Haqaani group and ISI, it is strongly chances that the group will be in harsh enmity against India¹⁰⁹. India bolstered its intelligence and security when it had the strategic depth in Afghanistan under the democratic governments in Afghanistan. But as of now, things have been very blurry for India as the government of the Taliban is controlling and dictating affairs. For example, India has already pointed out and increased security on its border as the government of the Taliban took over the country. There are many observers of international relations have been suggesting for India to change its harsh policy towards the Taliban. For example, the Indian ex-diplomat Vivek Katju asserted that the "Indian policy makers were confused about open talks with the Taliban, even when the group was gaining global legitimacy. It was known that the Taliban was giving signals

¹⁰⁸ Rudhra Chaduri, "Dealing with the Taliban , India strategy in Afghanistan" Carnegi Inida, 20, June 2020.

¹⁰⁹ Vahid Brown and Don Rassler, Fountainhead of Jihad: The Haqqani Nexus, 1973-2012 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013

for diplomatic contacts, but the Indian government was attached with the Ex- Afghan president Asharf Ghani. A costly repercussion has to be paid for diplomatic immaturity¹¹⁰. India has already lagged behind other regional players such as Russia, China and Iran in establishing contacts with the Taliban. Many political analysts have pointed out that yes, there are security implications present for India from the government of the Taliban. But the intensity of these security threats and challenges come from Pakistan and not from the government of the Taliban. The government of the Taliban is busy in developing and restructuring Afghanistan that it will not focus on any other external front. So, yes, India will be facing security implications from Pakistan as it is expected that the Pakistani leadership will be operating with utmost control under the government of the Taliban. This is an unlikely position for India to be in.

3.4.5.1. India's fears about surge in militancy in IOK

With Afghanistan's takeover by the Taliban, India will not only have to rehash its geopolitical engagements, but also deal anew with the regrouping of India-centric militant organisations like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM)¹¹¹. The potential spill-over of the Taliban's so-called "victory" against the US has several implications for India, particularly in the context of the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Although it is still too early to spell out the contours of the emerging threat, India anticipates a possible upsurge of extremism in the Kashmir Valley.¹¹² The US' exit from Afghanistan may come to provide ideational succour to extremist and other insurgent movements in South Asia.¹¹³ Accordingly, it is only reasonable to believe that the Taliban's supposed victory against the US may further fan the fires of unrest in

¹¹⁰ Vivek Katju, "J&K talks through a wide lens", The Indian Express, 25 June 2021

¹¹¹ Basit and Mahmood, "Implications of Possible United States Withdrawal."

¹¹² Sana Shakil and Mayank Singh, "Resurgence of Taliban Will Embolden Terrorists in Kashmir, Say Experts," The New Indian Express, August 17, 2021, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2021/aug/17/resurgence-of-taliban-will-embolden>

¹¹³ Hamraz Ahmad, "Why Kabul Is Not Saigon," Al Jazeera, August 21, 2021,

J&K, which has been restive since the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates have sworn their allegiance to the Taliban supreme leader Haibatullah Akhundzada. Consequently, AQIS will use the Taliban's supposed victory as a plank to stoke the insurgency in Kashmir further.¹¹⁴ Therefore, India feels security threats in Kashmir valley due to the said reasons.

3.4.5.2. Threats to India's Eastern and Northern Borders

India has invested \$3 billion in Afghanistan- in dams, highways, electricity grids, hospitals, schools, and even in the parliament building. With all this now in Taliban hands. The Modi's regime has done itself no favors with its consistently anti-Muslim rhetoric and domestic policies, which are likely to stoke resentment across the Islamic world. The Quad partnership- comprising India, the US, Japan, and Australia- strengthens India's maritime presence in the Indian Ocean. But the main security threats to the country are on its land borders with China and Pakistan, where the Quad is unlikely to be of much use. India now has a Taliban regime to its northwest, a nuclear –armed enemy state to its west, and a hostile superpower to its northeast, and it faces ongoing threats to its territorial integrity. In this environment, maintaining national security and regional stability will pose an unprecedented challenge for India in the months and years ahead.

3.4.6. India Refugees Policy Set back to its Humanitarian Efforts

As terrified Afghan citizens, especially women and children look for safe asylum, India's own altered refugees and citizenship policy may severely impact its humanitarian efforts. India's Citizenship amendment Act allows Hindu and Sikh asylum seekers a fast track to citizenship but exclude Muslims. "We are in constant touch with the representative of Afghan Sikh and Hindu

¹¹⁴ Sandhu, "Taliban in Afghanistan: Will There Be Fallout in Kashmir?"

communities and we will facilitate repatriation to India of those who wish to leave Afghanistan".¹¹⁵ If India sticks to its CAA stance, it could exclude deeply persecuted communities like the Hazara Shia.¹¹⁶ It remains to be seen how India responds to a worsening humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

3.4.7. Social Repercussions for India

The revival of Taliban in Afghanistan increased Islamophobia in India. The Indian right wing started a hate campaign against Muslim minorities in reaction to the capture of power by Taliban in Afghanistan¹¹⁷. Similarly, a few Indian Muslims greeting the victory of Taliban take over in Kabul. The agenda of Modi's regime is driven by hatred, exclusionism and majoritarianism. A BJP politician Ram Madhav called the 1921 Moplah rebellion one of the first manifestations of a "Talibani mentality" in India. International experts on genocidal violence have warned that India is preparing for "genocide" of the 200 million Muslims in India¹¹⁸. Those Muslims who counter hate or are vocal about atrocities against the community were being accused of being Taliban sympathizers, even if they condemn the group. The late founder of the Taliban, Mullah Mohammad Omar, graduated from a Deobandi seminary in Pakistan, along with several other Taliban leaders. But while Afghanistan's new rulers call themselves Deobandis, clerics here in the birthplace of Deobandi Islam are keen to distance themselves from the Taliban — even if they occasionally speak admiringly of them¹¹⁹. There has been vicious campaign against

¹¹⁵ Ministry of external affairs of India. 16, August, 2021

¹¹⁶ Kugalman' Rsearch fellow in Wilson Institute. 30 august 2021

¹¹⁷ Express tribune "Islamophobia surges in India after Taliban triumph" 21, septamber, 2021

¹¹⁸ ibd

¹¹⁹ Lauren frayer "The Taliban's Ideology Has Surprising Roots In British-Ruled India" NPR magazine, 8 ,sep,2021

Muslims in India in the name of Love-Jihad, Corona Jihad and Hindu nationalists and terror outfits never leave a chance to perpetuate violence against Muslims. Though a few group of Muslims encouraged from the victory of Taliban and likely they may encounter the repressions of RSS via violence. Consequently, it will be led to communal violence in India.

Chapter 4

Implications of US Withdrawal from Afghanistan for Pakistan

4.1. An Overview of Pak-Afghan Relations

The sweet and sour relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan could never blend or merge. Pak-Afghan relations have stayed under the red light due to unfortunate political, economic, and social situation at both sides of the borders. Sadly, even after sharing border for more than 70 years now, Pak-Afghan relations never took a long flight on which any capitalization could be made. Over the years, different rulers have ruled in Pakistan and Afghanistan. From King Zahir Shah to Ashraf Ghani and from Liaqat Ali Khan to Imran Khan, Pak-Afghan relations did not patch up. Lack of trust, diverging interests, different friends, and different enemies have played a substantial role in the degradation of Pak-Afghan relations.

Historically, Pak-Afghan relations started off very badly when the Grand Jirga conducted in Kabul decided to invade the Northern tribes and parts of Pakistan because according to them, these areas were cordial parts of the Afghanistan. Tribal wars broke out and this border conflict is still a matter of contention between Pak-Afghan relations. Pak-Afghan relations took a turn when the Cold War went to its peak. Then, Pak-Afghan relations took a curve when the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics invaded Afghanistan and Pakistan came to the rescue of Afghanistan. As the USSR packed up their bags and left the country, the relations filled with animosity and anger became pleasant for some time as the government of mujahedeen who called themselves as Talibs was formed. The government formulated by Taliban had the informal support from Pakistani politicians and establishment.

But as the unfortunate event of 9/11 took off, Pak-Afghan relations once again saw a massive decline in relations because Pakistan had to choose between its neighbor and global powers like the US. Pakistan opted the latter and the all-time low of Pak-Afghan relations was observed. Pak-Afghan relations took another turn when the Peace talks between the Taliban and the US started in Qatar, who was down and out after fighting their longest war away from home ever. As the US picked up their boots from the Afghanistan just like their rivals did in 1988, Taliban took the government once again¹²⁰. The contemporary situation is still not very clear that if Pakistan is going to accept the government of Taliban or not. Pakistan has already stated that it will not take any single-handed decision but as the picture shows, the government of Pakistan, and majority of people of Pakistan have a soft corner for Afghans and the government of Taliban.

4.2. Post 9/11; Pakistan Objectives in Afghanistan

4.2.1. To Counter Indian Strategies

Having a hostile neighbor in the east and unfriendly next-door neighbors had inflicted serious foreign policy challenges for Pakistan since its inception. Pakistan could not undermine its national security and for this very reason, it could not participate in any unwanted military adventure. As it is said, “enemy of my enemy is my friend”, India and Afghanistan have worked upon the same motive for a very long time. After 9/11, the alliance between India and Afghanistan had created very serious threats on its western border¹²¹. Though, a point to be noted is that all the democratic governments in Afghanistan have been friendly with India and hostile with Pakistan. Starting from King Zahir Shah to Ashraf Ghani, all the governments enjoyed good

¹²⁰ Akbarzadeh, S. (2019). The Taliban: a new proxy for Iran in Afghanistan? *Third World Quarterly* .

¹²¹ Muhammad owais, “India and Pakistan Strategic Influence in Afghanistan: Pros and Cons of Rivalry” *Journal of political studies* June, 2020

and warm relations with India. Post 9/11, India political, economic, social and strategic influences increased drastically in Afghanistan. New Delhi countered Islamabad in Kabul not only in shape of security but also economically, cultural, political and strategically. Thus, the allegations of India engagements in Afghanistan as a serious insecurity factor for Pakistan had been proven¹²². The government of Pakistan therefore always tried to decrease the role of India in Afghanistan for the purpose of securing its western border. While the government of the Taliban had opposite approach towards India. India and the government of the Taliban in Afghanistan never got along and when the strong hold of Taliban once again emerged in Afghanistan, India was bothered to close its diplomatic mission from the state and had to flee.

4.2.2. Cross Border Terrorism

Over the years, the soil of Afghanistan had been used for instigating cross border terrorism in Pakistan. India on the eastern front and Afghanistan on the western front did not allow the military of Pakistan to have a breath of relaxation. Afghanistan had been used by India for a number of reasons. India used to sponsor the terrorism into Pakistan via Afghanistan. For example, many watchdogs including the ISI of Pakistan have raised the concerns that Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan who have been hiding in the mountains of Waziristan and other Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) were financially supported by India via Afghanistan.

This enhanced the capabilities of the TTP to spread chaos in Pakistan. Moreover, the unrestricted movement provided to Indian agencies in Afghanistan by Ashraf Ghani spoiled the game plan for Pakistan. It was obvious that until the government of any leader backed by the US remains in Afghanistan, the influence of India will sustain. However, to the surprise, the

¹²² Kiran, A. (2009). Indian Quest for Strategic Ingress in Afghanistan and its Implications for Pakistan. ISSRA Papers, 1 (1), 12-29.

government of the Taliban is able to nurture themselves in Kabul and Afghanistan. India bitterly opposes the group because of their utmost and unconditional support for Kashmiri people. The leverage that India had in Afghanistan when the government of Ashraf Ghani was present had puffed in thin air for the time.

Pakistan did not enjoy a strategic depth in Afghanistan but as soon as the government of the Taliban came, Afghanistan will not remain same before. Many political and international relations analysts have hinted about the agenda that the installation and fall of Kabul has been a major victory for Pakistan not only in Afghanistan but over India as well because India is most likely to lose the title of most favorite nation by Afghanistan. It is very much expected that the state sponsored terrorism and funding to banned outfits in Pakistan like Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and TTP will face a huge dent in coming times because the Taliban have made it evident that the soil of Afghanistan will not be used by any foreign power to carry out its filthy agendas against any other nation¹²³.

4.3. US Withdrawal and its Implications for Pakistan

Now that the US has left Afghanistan after putting a full stop to its “forever war”, and still there is a vacuum created in Afghanistan and in the region too. It would be a worst-case scenario for Pakistan if Afghanistan falls into another civil war as the direct recipient of its implications. But Pakistan has become increasingly desperate to ensure that the leadership of Taliban does not indulge in any misadventure as it could have far more complications for Pakistan too. Pakistan very readily provided the certificate of good character to the Taliban.

¹²³ Syed Ali Abbas, S. H. (2021). Sectarian terrorism in Pakistan: Causes, impact and remedies. *Journal of Policy Modeling*.

Any actions of the Taliban internally or externally can hyper the Western world. It will leave very less room for Pakistan in the international community to justify the acts of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The US may not seem as a major player in this situation, but US is still having the ball in its court. Just like the North Korea and Iran who are deemed as rouge states in the point of view of the United States, Afghanistan can end up in a similar situation. Thus, the US can use its force to cripple the already dismantled economy of the Afghanistan.

Therefore, Pakistan has to carve out its policies in a well-versed manner. On the one hand, Pakistan has to make sure that the Taliban follows the rules of the games and on the other hand, Pakistan has to hope that it does not come under the radar of the US sanctions if anything unfortunate happens. Ayesha Siddiqa, a well-known journalist who have an eagle eyes on the contemporary situation have also mentioned the fact that the political leadership of Pakistan and Afghanistan have an idea that the US might take any kind of step in times to come by pointing out irregularities in the government of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Pakistan is not in a position to confront the US in such situation because a time will come where Pakistan might have to select between the two; the government of the Taliban in Afghanistan or disregarding them. According to her, this is the situation that Pakistan has to avoid.

Pakistan is already under the vigilant monitoring of the Financial Action Task Force for more than 5 years now. If the Taliban are called off as the terrorist or non-state actors controlling the Afghanistan, then it might become difficult for Pakistan to keep up the diplomatic and political support to the Taliban. Therefore, the policy makers sitting in Islamabad have to take the decision and formulate a policy that if the situation is dragged down to such tight spot, what might be the course of action for the state.

4.3.1. Security Implications for Pakistan

4.3.1.1. Spillover Effects of Extremism and Violence from Afghanistan to Pakistan

There have been very less instances throughout the history that Afghanistan became stable. One major power left Afghanistan and the other one barged in. The continuous sufferings have been harsh on Afghanistan and its citizens but Pakistan is also suffering due to instability in Afghanistan. One aspect that has become crystal clear is that if the stability in terms of politics and society is not present in Afghanistan, there will be no room for stability in Pakistan. The history also acclaims this notion so does the political analysts. When the USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979, not only Afghanistan had to face a hefty fate but Pakistan was presented with more than 3 million Afghan refugees. It is estimated that more than 1.5 million Afghan refugees are still in Pakistan¹²⁴. With the refugees, a wave of terrorism was also observed in Pakistan. Many journalists have also indicated that the civil war in Karachi in 1990s had connections with Afghanistan. Three million refugees had to be settled in somewhere in the country, so they did scatter around and many of them shifted to Karachi which is famously known as the hub of Pakistan. Though, the US withdrawal and establishment of Taliban government in have created uncertain situation in Afghanistan. If the civil wars erupt in Afghanistan, then definitely it will pill over effects on Pakistan

4.3.1.2. Space for Resurgence of TTP

Islamabad is currently worried about the repercussions that might emerge in the wake of the US and NATO force's withdrawal. A dominant Taliban, being Islamist in outlook and perception, may encourage the TTP militants to reorganize themselves and pose a security challenge to

¹²⁴ Sohail Anwar, M. H. (2021). Afghan refugees implications on ,Pakistan Journal of International Affair.

Pakistan again. Starting in 2010, Pakistan has put major, mostly military, efforts in fighting terrorist networks based in provinces such as Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). One of its major military operation was Zarb-e-Azb (2014–2017) – conducted by the Pakistani Army against various militant groups, including the Tehreek-e-Taliban. In this military operation, 490 soldiers were killed, while more than 3,500 militants were killed in various counter-terrorism activities of the operation. As a result of which Pakistan's law and order situation saw some drastic improvement. According to the South Asian Terrorism Portal, the civilian fatalities in terrorist violence in Pakistan at the beginning of the operation in 2014 were 1781 which decreased to 540 at the end of the operation and stood at 97 in the year 2019.

Now, as the government of the Taliban is gaining strength in Afghanistan, many have indicated that the supporters and sub-groups of the Taliban in Pakistan will gain strength. A prime example is of the Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan who has declared their allegiance with the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan conducted a grand operation against the TTP in 2014 just after the misfortunate attack on the Army Public School occurred in 2014. There is no doubt that Pakistan was able to root out the TTP and other factions of them from the mainstream. After shedding a lot of blood and by breaking the back bone of the TTP, Pakistan has been able to prevail peace in the state.

The National Security Advisor of Pakistan, Dr. Moeed Yousaf had given a statement in the start of 2021 that if the fall of Afghanistan government takes place, it will present disturbance in Pakistan on societal level as many new terrorist groups will surface from the ground. The coming time will make the picture black or white for Pakistan when it comes to domestic terrorism¹²⁵.

¹²⁵ Sohail Anwar, M. H. (2021). AFGHAN REFUGEES IMPLICATIONS ON PAKISTAN. *Pakistan Journal of International Affair*.

So far, Pakistan has curtailed the network of terrorism in the country due to Zarb – e -Azb. But some organizations like that of the TTP have found a chance to fuel its own agendas on taking the advantage from the victory of Afghan Taliban in Afghanistan.

As the TTP is a subsidiary group of the Afghan Taliban. Such as on the first day of Taliban victory in Afghanistan thousands of prisoners were released from jails which have created indirect security threats to Pakistan. Around 800 TTP militants, including its former deputy emir Faqir Muhammad , along with many AQ and IS leaders have been released from Pul-e-Charki and Bagram prisons¹²⁶. This is likely to give strength to all terrorists' organizations operating in and outside Afghanistan, posing regional security risks. So, Pakistan has informally demanded to the new government of Afghanistan to push and stress the TTP to throw their arms. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan in an interview stated that there is a chance for the members of banned organization to come into the national mainstream if they are willing to stop the state and throw away their weapons.

4.3.1.3. Chances of Transitional Jihadism, Al-Qaeda and IS

Since the fall of Kabul, the Biden administration has received scathing criticism for its early withdrawal without reaching a political settlement and mishandling of the situation following Taliban control in Afghanistan¹²⁷. In order to deflect the mounting criticism, the Biden administration is going the extra mile to justify their position, thereby underplaying the risks, such as President Biden's categorical dismissal of AQ's presence in Afghanistan¹²⁸. The US presence in Afghanistan had a strong check on all terrorists groups, such as Al-qaeda and Islamic

¹²⁶ "Key TTP leaders released from Afghan Prisons". Dawn, August,16,2021

¹²⁷ "Defiant Biden Defends Afghanistan Withdrawal as Criticism Mounts", Aljazeera, August 31, 2021,

¹²⁸ Daniel Dale, "Fact Check Biden Claims Al Qaeda Is 'Gone' From Afghanistan. Then the Pentagon Confirms It's Still There," CNN, August 21, 2021

States. However, now they will get benefit from the space which has created due the US withdrawal. Consequently, they will be security threat for regional countries, especially for Pakistan. The internally weak and externally vulnerable Afghanistan once again will be a safe haven for all the militants groups if its economic needs are not met, then the Taliban will not be able to counter the said groups. Therefore, it will pose serious security threats for Pakistan.

4.3.1.4. Threat of Infiltration of Refugees

Pakistan was one of the countries which provided space to more than 3 million Afghan refugees in the climax of the Afghan war. Pakistan gave shelter to one the world prolonged refugees, since 1979, round about five millions Afghan refugees have been living in Pakistan, the recurrence of wars and economic and political instability in Afghanistan have stalled the refugees to get back to their country¹²⁹. The world community did not bring stability in Afghanistan after the 20 years longest war in Afghanistan after the 9/11 attack. According to the US special representative for Afghanistan reconstruction stated that Afghanistan is more dangerous before as it was before 2001¹³⁰.” But unfortunately, Pakistan has suffered a lot when it comes to the infiltration of Afghan refugees. For example, the infiltration of Afghan refugees’ presents enormous threats not only to the security of the country but the infiltration of Afghan refugee’s shapes the society as well, As, it has brought the culture of immorality in the country. Similarly, back in the 1990s, the infiltration of Afghan refugees became so much that the Afghan traders became more in the markets of Peshawar than the Pakistani sellers.

The infiltration of Afghan refugees is viable and it can have some serious repercussions for Pakistan. As, it increased after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, according to Pakistani

¹²⁹ Amina khan, “Afghan refugees in Pakistan” Institute of strategic studies , March. 07. 2017

¹³⁰ “Pakistan: Renewed Threats to Afghan Refugees,” Human Rights Watch, July 1, 2016

officials on the Chaman-Spin Boldak border crossing, the normal traffic has almost doubled with more than 20,000 people crossing the border daily¹³¹.this sudden influx is necessary as it may include a number of Pakistani and Afghan nationals released from Afghan prisons and might include some TTP members. Additionally, if Afghanistan's financial assistance is not restored soon, it is likely to face an imminent risk of food shortage and economic meltdown. A rise in Afghan economic woes may still spur a refugee crisis with grave consequences for an economically weak Pakistan.

Furthermore, the infiltration of Afghan refugees can provide security threat to Pakistan. Apart from this, the Infiltration of Afghan refugees provides an economic stress to Pakistan because the country which is finding it hard to deal with the societal and other related issues, the infiltration of Afghan refugees will make it even tougher for Pakistan.

4.3.1.4. Setback for Different Separatist Groups

As long as the US had been in the Afghanistan, India had enjoyed a free hand. There have been many separatist movements that have been handled from Afghanistan by India. More than 600 Baluchies were trained by the RAW at Serobi base for the purpose to carryout bomb explosion and attacks on Pakistani military in Baluchistan. Since the Indian Kao plan 1962, India has been funding and fanning insurgency in Baluchistan. Baloch liberation Army is basically an Indian proxy whose misdeeds are being glorified by India. Baramdagh Bugti, Baloch leader, has accepted the Indian assistance for national cause. According to Christine Fair of Rand," BLA enjoys the support from Indian RAW in terms of finances, logistics, and weapons. For instance the ex-interior minister of Pakistan Rehman Malik, reported evidence of Indian involvement in

¹³¹ Saadullah Akhtar, "Thousands of Afghans Enter Pakistan via Chaman Border Crossing," Al Jazeera, August 17, 2021,

Baluchistan. He presented Indian personnel passports, identity card, and Indian military equipment. Similarly, the director general of Frontier corps stated that different intelligence agencies are active in Baluchistan, among them India on the top list. Just for an example, separatist movements in the Baluchistan province are one explicit example of the insurgent movements in Pakistan. It is a proven fact that Baloch Liberation Army, a functional group of the Baloch nationalists which has taken arms against Pakistanis funded by India. India, using the soil of the Afghanistan has majorly used the borders and route for transferring the aid and ammunition for the separatist movements in Pakistan. The democratic government of Ashraf Ghani did not take much notice of the fact. But as the government of the Taliban has come into action, it has clearly stated that separatist movements across the border will not be supported by the government. It seems evident that India might lose the plot of contributing to separatist movements in Pakistan via the Afghanistan because strict actions can be taken by the Afghanistan government against the separatist movements.

4.3.1.5. Security of Western Border

Over the last two decades, Indian activities in Afghanistan to destabilize and marginalize Pakistan have remained a key national security concern for Pakistan. In the post-9/11 period, Indian participation in Afghanistan, in terms of money, training, and subversion of anti-Pakistan elements, rose dramatically, greatly to Pakistan's harm. Taking advantage of its strategic ties with the US and the Afghan government, Indian Intelligence Agency(RAW) has been jointly working against Pakistan. Now post the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and control of Taliban over Afghanistan, it poses serious problems for India. As the Taliban have gained control of Afghanistan India has evacuated its intelligence agency operatives, along with their weapons and equipment etc, through special airlifts. Having failed to win Taliban

through discrete contacts, India in concert with other inimical forces is likely to continue extending support to all anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan, including war lords, ISIS, TTP and other hostile elements. In order to respond effectively to an uncertain situation in the neighborhood and to the fallout of fast-evolving dynamics in the wider region, Pakistan must secure itself at home. Only by establishing peace within, will the country be able to manage any instability that might be fuelled from outside.¹³² All security related initiatives can only be carried and sustained on the basis of economic strength.

4.3.2. Political Implications

The term of complex interdependence is used in positive connotation in International Relations. The complex interdependence defines that when two states are in a way, directly or indirectly dependent on each other, the chances of rising of any conflict between those states reduces to ground level. Economic spectrum is given a lot of importance in complex interdependence. But Pakistan and Afghanistan are in a circle of complex interdependence as well but in other terms. No matter how good or bad it seems to the political leadership of Pakistan and Afghanistan, but it is a hard truth for both the states to swallow that Pakistan and Afghanistan need each other for the existence. Preferably, a stable Pakistan and stable Afghanistan is the utopian idea for many analysts of international relations if the idea of Pakistan and Afghanistan is put forth. But it is quite true that Pakistan and Afghanistan are dependent on each other.

Stability in Afghanistan is the prime motive of all the regional players. Including Pakistan, who wants to use the trade routes of Afghanistan that can save up to billions for Pakistan. In return,

¹³² Lodhi, —Dealing with the Regional Uncertainty.

Pakistan can provide political and diplomatic support to Afghanistan. The trade volume between the two states is just less than \$ 1 billion is not ideal for both the states¹³³. Political leadership of both the states has wished to increase this figure. As it is said, a person cannot do anything other than to cope up with its neighbors. This quote perfectly fits on Pakistan and Afghanistan. Years of fighting and conflicts have bored out nothing for both the states. Both the states have some things which the other states do not. Therefore, with the political spectrum changing in Afghanistan, there are high chances that a gesture of friendship will be promoted from Pakistan and it will be cordially accepted by the new leadership of the Taliban who have high regards for Pakistan.

4.3.3. Economic Repercussions

The strategic position of Afghanistan has lured many major powers to take control of it. It was stated that “Who he holds Afghanistan, will hold the world.” It is very much true because the geographical location and features of Afghanistan have attracted many foreign nations. Starting from the Britishers in the colonial era to the invasion of the USSR and then lastly to the US. No major power was able to set up their grounds in Afghanistan after spending trillions of dollars. Pakistan, however has never wished to control Afghanistan but there is not ambiguity in the statement that Pakistan holds high economic stakes in Afghanistan. Afghanistan not only provides a good and easy road route to Central Asia and then Europe, but it is full of many oil and gas reserves that are yet to be disclosed.

After the fall of Kabul, many foreign powers have denoted their interest in Afghanistan. China, most prominently has promised that if the government of the Taliban holds inclusive approach,

¹³³ avid, S. (2021). Pakistan’s Foreign Policy towards Afghanistan: A Case Study of Zia's Regime. Rashhat-e-Qalam

then it is ready to assist Afghanistan financially. The Northern parts of Afghanistan are full of gas reserves. China has intended to explore gas. For Pakistan, it will be a massive achievement on the economic front because CPEC can be made to pass through Afghanistan. The multi-billion dollars program of Pakistan and China mainly included the sea road. However, the Taliban are very much optimistic that a certain chunk of CPEC will provide Afghanistan with economic leverage. Therefore, it will be a win-win situation for all the parties included in the trade off. But certain conditionality is attached to it. Afghanistan must have to abide by certain rules and regulations because China keeps a vigilant eye on the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

For Pakistan, it is mainly about increasing its exports to Central Asia and Europe via Afghanistan. It is most likely to happen that the Taliban will come along with time. Due to civil war and stressed economic conditions, the government of the Taliban is working hard to lift the economic position of Afghanistan. Therefore, it is expected that a troika of Afghanistan, Pakistan and China will facilitate and enjoy good economic interest now as the government of Taliban is ruling.

4.3.3.1. Enhancement in Trade

Trade, investment, and cross-border engagement could provide immense benefits to Afghanistan and Pakistan via connections to Central Asia, the Arabian Sea, and India as well as bolster the broader bilateral relationship. To date, threat perceptions have limited the prospects for economic engagement, and both sides have used trade access as leverage to secure bilateral concessions. In the absence of more regulated trade, border communities have prospered from the illicit exchange of goods and narcotics, without which many would struggle to, make ends meet. Modern bilateral trade relations date to 1950, when an initial transit agreement went into effect.

The Afghan Transit Trade agreement replaced it in 1965 and remained in place until the 1990s, when Pakistan suspended trade access in an attempt to influence ongoing fighting between the Rabbani government and the Taliban. In response, both parties strongly criticized the move, as did traders from border communities¹³⁴. In 2010, the two countries negotiated the more robust Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) with urging from the United States and support from the United Nations. The agreement enacted counter-smuggling initiatives; reiterated a commitment to strengthening both countries' customs facilities; enabled them to use each other's rail, road, and airport infrastructure on certain routes; and provided for the one-way transfer of Afghan goods to India via the Wagah border crossing¹³⁵. For communities on both sides of the Durand Line, meanwhile, trade has long been a lifeline amid limited economic prospects. Pashtuns from this region leverage their cross-border ties to dominate the trucking industry, and local traders often do not differentiate between licit and illicit trade. In a telling example, 71 percent of respondents from two sampled Afghan border towns in an Asia Foundation study reported that "business activity in their community depends entirely or mainly on cross-border trade¹³⁶. Unfortunately, the Afghan American led government in Afghanistan did not in good terms with Pakistan, that's why trade between the two countries did not conduct as per the agreement. However, the victory of Taliban presents an opportunity for both the states to boost bilateral trade.

¹³⁴ Gul, *Unholy Nexus*,

¹³⁵ "Agreement Between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (2010)," www.commerce.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/pdf/APTTA.pdf.

¹³⁶ Asia Foundation, "Trade and Livelihoods in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Borderlands," August 30, 2019, www.asiafoundation.org/publication/trade-and-livelihoods-in-the-afghanistan-pakistan-borderlands.

4.3.3.2. Regional and Global Connectivity

A matter of regional and global connectivity for which Pakistan is strongly pursuing CPEC and it labeled as a game changer. CPEC, China –Pakistan Economic Corridor is of 64 billion dollars and will connect the northern western province Xingjian, China to Gwadar in Baluchistan with the networks of roads , railways and pipelines. Unfortunately Pakistan, because of its heterogeneous society failed to assure China about the security of the project, China interests in the region is increasing day by day and their responsibility of Afghanistan involvement in Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as well. They are more active in providing aid to Afghanistan. No doubt that their rational approach towards Afghanistan come together with Pakistan’s regional stance but China’s investment can decline due to TTP violent attacks against Chinese, like death of nine Chinese engineers in a bus bomb blast who were working on Dasu hydro power project which postponed the important joint committee meeting on Road and Belt Initiative. If these types of incidents will continue than China will definitely reduce its involvement in Pakistan. As China is Pakistan’s biggest contributor of FDI providing 41 % of total FDI of fiscal year 2020-2021, so their less involvement will badly affect Pakistan’s economic prospect. But the Taliban’s can convince China that they can be the better protectors, and the already agreed to support China against Uighur separatists. Afghanistan mineral wealth is about 1 trillion dollars which they can offer them, and if they become the more convincing guarantor of the project affiliated with CPEC than their alliance would be stronger.

4.3.3.3. Decline in Foreign Direct Investment

One of the country top newspapers, Dawn stated that Pakistan’s economic managers are worried on the continuous decrease of FDI flows, which fell under 39 percent in July. According to the

last years of State bank inward flow of FDI is falling whereas the outward flow surged over time. It further reported that FDI stock. It was expected that Afghanistan situation will further shrink the FDI flow and it happened just after the collapse.¹³⁷ The decline in the value of Pakistan international Sukuh bonds shows the drop of confidence of international investors on its economy. If the uncertainty and instability will linger on in Afghanistan it can further reduce Pakistan's export revenues.

4.3.3.4. Cut in US Aid

There is a complex history of relationships between Pakistan and US. The war on terror in Afghanistan forced US to rely on Pakistan air space and intelligence services for its counter-terrorism operations. For Pakistan, a nuclear-armed nation of some 225 million people, having close relations with a global power is vital in order for it to maintain balance with its arch-enemy India, at least militarily, and ease domestic economic problems. From the start of the war in Afghanistan to its 2021 conclusion, the U.S. committed more than \$32.5 billion in civilian and military aid to Pakistan, according to the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan. But they are always doubtful and suspicious about Pakistan's efforts and believe that Pakistan is providing financial assistance to Taliban. In the recent interview of Ex-Prime Minister Khan, he clearly opposed the idea of allowing operating US-military base in Pakistan. As Pakistan is heavily relying on US aid so this bold statement can affect the amount of aid which US is giving to Pakistan. They already cut down half of the aid in respective years of 2011, 2017, and 2021.

¹³⁷ Dawn News paper' editortial , Decline in FDI'' 2021 december

4.3.4. Societal Implications

The withdrawal of the US from the Afghanistan has surely left an impact on the region. It is a well-known fact that the Taliban have done the right-wing politics over the years. The strict Sharia law of the Taliban has attracted a lot of people in Afghanistan. The reason that can be put forth is the fact that the Taliban dispense justice very rapidly. No matter how rich or poor a person is, the criteria of doing justice of the Taliban remains the same. According to a survey conducted in Kandahar, the spiritual capital of the Taliban majority of poor Afghans pointed out that they cannot afford the fees of lawyers and courts. So, they come to the Taliban for doing justice with them. The social implications of such measures can be observed in Pakistan as well.

Pakistan has become much radicalized over the passage of 40 or so years. The involvement of the religion in Pakistani politics is ever-increasing and the society has become radically polarized as well. All of these factors have been linked with the Taliban. The resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan is called as the victory of Islam in Pakistan. There is no second option on the fact that the victory of the Taliban has ignited the religious emotions of the Pakistan society. A good example can be observed by the fact that the fall of Kabul and the win of the Taliban in the Afghanistan were celebrated on the streets of Pakistan. A massive rally was carried out in support of the Taliban in Quetta.

The social implications can be worse for Pakistan of the Taliban taking over in the Afghanistan. Pakistan has already suffered from the wrath of the TTP for more than two decades. There is a well-off chance that the already divided and polarized society of Pakistan can suffer even more in the coming times as people feel emotionally connected with the Taliban. The rules and

regulations imposed by the Taliban are followed to some extent in the tribal regions of Pakistan too.

4.3.4.1. Resurgence of Sectarian Division

Another core social implication for Pakistan pertaining the rule of the Taliban is the resurgence of sectarian divide in the country. The rise of phenomena had a profound impact on Pakistan's society. Even though the process of radicalization had begun earlier in Pakistan society; nonetheless, extremism got momentum after the enigmatic rise of the Taliban in the 1990s. Taliban leadership denied involvement in sectarian violence and had expressed their ignorance about the presence of terrorist militants in Afghanistan involved in violence in Pakistan. The sectarian tension further intensified political instability in Pakistan and had acute adverse effects on the economy. The sectarian violence had not only internal impacts on Pakistan state and society but had caused damage to bilateral ties with neighboring countries.¹³⁸

There are some vulnerable communities living in the country like Shias, Hazara community and Ismailis. These communities have been on the target list of the TTP for a very long time. Especially in the areas of Baluchistan, these communities have been targeted and mercilessly killed. As the Taliban have regained the power and their history of oppression against the Shia and Hazara community is not hidden away from anyone. So, it is the responsibility of the Pakistani government to ensure the safety of these suppressed communities. If the government of Pakistan does not take any concrete or substantial steps for the security of these communities, Pakistan will witness another layer of sectarian violence from the banned outfits.

¹³⁸ Jalalzai, M. K. (2002). *The Foreign Policy of Pakistan: Sectarian Impacts on Diplomacy*. Lahore: Khan Books

Conclusion

The withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan will have long term implications for the entire region and the US itself. The US has spent a lot of time in the Afghanistan for reaching out the aims and objectives that it had set for itself. After the 9/11 accident, US invaded Afghanistan and its main objective was to bring culprits to the book. However, after a very long and cost prohibitive war in Afghanistan, USA left the country unaccomplished.

The withdrawal of the US from the Afghanistan had been an outcome of prolonged deliberations in successive US governments. Like the US entry into Afghanistan had global and regional implications, the exit after twenty years would surely transcend varying but serious regional and global implications.

The withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan had paved a smooth path for the Taliban to take over the government. While there may not exist any major resistance to Taliban government militarily; the social, economic, internal harmony, international trust and acceptance, management of routine governmental offices are some of the grave challenges faced by it with no quick fixed solutions. A lot of prudence and maturity might be the recipe to come out of crises by the Taliban.

The importance of the Taliban can be judged by the fact that the US invited the Taliban for negotiations, as against Afghan government. Their relevance had been proven over the time; thus, global, as well as regional reconciliatory process with prudence on all sides might be essential for the greater good. Particularly, Pakistan and India being the most impacted regional entities are bound to play their respective roles in regional stability, while pursuing their respective objectives concurrently.

Findings

The study has innumerable outcomes; however main findings related to the title of the research are summarized here under:

- Afghanistan is strategically, culturally, geographically and politically, one of the most significant countries in South Asia. Its this significance always attracted the interest of global and regional players; USA being no exception.
- Afghan society with multi linguistic, political, ethnic and cultural factions has always been a great difficulty for establishing a unifying Afghan government. Same might be one of the biggest challenges faced in its stability.
- The USA has always had deep strategic interests vested in Afghanistan and therefore it had been pursuing these directly, as well as indirectly. While its unabated support to Mujahideen against USSR fetched great success; however, post 9/11US invasion of Afghanistan has resulted into a blatant defeat. The study has elaborated various visible causes of US failure and its unaccomplished withdrawal.
- Afghanistan remained extremely tough battle ground for the invaders throughout its history; it remained unconquered despite 20 years long concerted efforts by USA. The USA policies in Afghanistan faced inconsistency due to tough Afghan politico-military environment.
- The twenty years US occupancy of Afghanistan gave a breathing space to Taliban; who besides accruing political maturity became militarily strong, well-equipped and well-organized; which contributed towards their victorious return in power. On the contrary, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan was being

considered as a face-saving attempt without any obvious victory; thus, it was concluded for US as nonaccomplishment and elusive 20 years engagement.

- The US entry and stay in Afghanistan influenced its global image, South Asian regional balance of power and created complicated political and regional scenarios with definite implications for all stakeholders, especially for India and Pakistan. Similarly, the US withdrawal has created new politico-strategic scenarios with far reaching implications for global, as well as regional players. This study has focused mainly on the implications for India and Pakistan.
- Indian penetration into Afghanistan during its US occupancy and through sponsorship of Pro-Indian governments in Afghanistan lead to Indian heavy financial investment in Afghanistan. The same had been put on stake after removal of American-sponsored government and return of Taliban in Afghanistan.
- Seen in the Pre-9/11 Indo-Talban historical perspective, India did not enjoy cordial relations with Taliban and was blamed for supporting Northern Alliance then fighting against Taliban. Thus, after US withdrawal and control of Afghanistan by Taliban did not serve Indian interests; consequently, the Indian concerns (elaborated in detail the study) appear quite realistic. The Taliban influence on Kashmir conflict can also be not ruled out.
- Although, the Taliban claim to be more open, broadminded, outward and transformed as compared to older Taliban version, however still, it is too early to conclude about their modern diplomatic posture.

- The withdrawal of US from Afghanistan could create an optimistic opportunity for Pakistan to develop cordial relations with Taliban as they needed the support of Pakistan in their international recognition. Pakistan played the most important role when it came to the intra and inter Afghan Peace Talks, thus, the positivity of relations of the Taliban and Pakistan might also be a reality. The Taliban appeared keen for Pakistan's support to accrue required international diplomatic status, as well as economic support.
- Pakistan, as compare to India is more vigilant and adaptive in Afghanistan case after the US withdrawal, as it has more compatibility with Taliban. However, the challenges and opportunities elaborated in the study merit much attention, as well as right focus.
- There is a vacuum created after US departed and the China, Russia, Turkey and other powerful actors could try to fill that vacuum that will start a new power politics in Afghanistan and the region, impacting all regional stakeholders, particularly Pakistan and India.

Recommendations

The study alongside identification of opportunities and challenges for different stakeholders in Afghan situation has listed doable options for each; however, some of the major recommendations have been summarized here under:

- Afghanistan is desperately dependent on foreign funding. The Taliban might not be capable enough for the foreseeable future to develop the economy of the country. Taliban Government's much dependence on foreign support cannot be ruled out, India being no exception, thus India may not stall its projects and

resume uncompleted projects for its contribution towards stability in Afghanistan.

In international relations, there is no permanent enemy or permanent friend.

- Establishment of a consensus government; development of internationally accepted policies, global recognition; economic sustenance and stability; and development of minimum essential infrastructure are some of the pressing problems of Taliban government. Pakistan ought to play its role most carefully in supporting Taliban government in overcoming its challenges without annoying the international community. The great opportunities need to be availed most prudently.
- The USA has to regain its position through evolving policies and strategies suiting changed regional and international geo-political environment. Realigning its relations with Taliban and formulation of new alliances with different stakeholders might be an operational necessity for USA.
- Pakistan being one of the most relevant stakeholders in Afghan situation, especially in post US withdrawal environment has to read the situation carefully, identify opportunities, as well as pitfalls and play safe, vis-à-vis Taliban expectations and international community concerns.
- Pakistan needs to guard its soil against transfer of militancy, especially on outbreak of civil war astride Pak-Afghan Border. The stability achieved at heavy human and financial cost in FAATA needs to be preserved at all costs. Thus, averting the chances of civil war and stability in Afghanistan is an operational necessity for Pakistan.

- In order to overcome its challenges identified and elaborated in the study and get earliest international recognition, Taliban might have to adopt moderate policy instead of pursuing its internationally much condemned past radical ideology.
- For the regional stability, India and Pakistan might have to forgo their proxy war in Afghanistan and envision mutual coexistence.
- Russia, China, Iran and Turkey might also play their role for stability in Afghanistan, and China in particular might consider mega projects with Afghanistan like CPEC.

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