

Ahmed Draya University – Adrar
Faculty of Lettres and Languages
Department of English Lettres and Languages



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Objectives of American Foreign Policy in the Middle East and Asia

Case Study: American Intrusion in Afghanistan (2001 – 2020)

Presented by:

Ahmed GUEBBOUH

Supervised by:

Mr. Abdelkarim MEBROUKI

Board of Examiners

Miss. Omayma KERTHIOU

Chairperson

Mr. Abdelkarim MEBROUKI

Supervisor and Rapporteur

Pr. Aziz MOSTEFAOUI

Examiner

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Dedications

I dedicate this work to my little three children

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Abstract

This paper examines the various objectives of the American foreign policy realized by conquering Afghanistan. The American invasion of Afghanistan was a retaliation to the September 11th, 2001 attacks on the American homeland. President G. W. Bush launched a pre-emptive Global War on Terrorism from Afghanistan On October 2001. The paper argues that although the U.S-led invasion was to dismiss al-Qaeda and overthrow the Taliban regime that sheltered its leader Bin Laden, the U.S sought to attain other objectives. Operation Enduring Freedom succeeded initially in destroying al Qaeda and overthrowing Taliban. Later, the U.S shoot Osama Bin Laden successfully in Operation Neptune Spear special mission but the occupation continued. This research tends to discuss the military, economic, political, and geostrategic gains of the 19 years-long war despite its heavy costs. These obscured motives of the intrusion of Afghanistan ranged from getting a foothold in South and Central Asia for a full control of oil resources and to project power and weaponry supremacy in the region. The U.S. also aimed at deterring its rivals, particularly China, Russia and Iran, through building military bases in the area. These war motives are hardly streamed in the main media due to the Information Industrial Complex. However, analyzing a good deal of the war literature and independent media sources that emerged in response to the case discloses that the American war on terror has realized many other goals by invading countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. The elongated occupation continues until today and all past exit strategies have failed but there are hopes for a successful future settlement designed by the incumbent administration.

Keywords

Foreign Policy, 9/11, Afghanistan, Al Qaeda, War on Terrorism, Geostrategic gains, Occupation, Military and Political Objectives, South Asia, Exit Strategy.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ANA	The Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
AQ	Al Qaeda
AQAP	Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQAP	The Yemen-based al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQIM	Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNN	Cable News Network
CRS	Congressional Research Service Report
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
GWT	Global War on Terrorism
IIC	Information Industrial Complex
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence, the Pakistani Military Intelligence
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti - (“Committee for State Security”), the Russian Intelligence Agency
METO	Middle East Treaty Organization
MIC	Military-Industrial Complex
MSP	Military Service Provider
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations

NSC	National Security Council
NSD	National Security and Defense
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIR	Operation Infinite Reach
PDPA	People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PMC	Private Military Company
PMF	Private Military Firm
PSC	Private Security Company
MPVPV	Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice
RFDCS	Russia’s Federal Drug Control Service
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SEAL	United States Navy Sea, Air, and Land
TAPI	Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan
UIFSA	United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNOCAL	Union Oil Company of California
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WIFJAJC	World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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General Introduction

There are occasions when war is compulsory and inescapable just as there are other times when it is not. Most wars create costs that outweigh their benefits and the United States has always been part of conflicts somewhere in the world. U.S. wars have evolved from minor territory-capturing expansionist little wars with the natives to imperial conquests of massive territories overseas, as the nation mellowed militarily, for miscellaneous objectives.

Throughout its history, the United States' foreign policy has seesawed between isolationism, neutrality, and interventionism. The U.S has maintained its policy of non-interventionism for most of the nineteenth century. Such policy was simply an armour for protection against the old and more powerful empires in Europe behind the vastness of the ocean. However, American withdrawal from world affairs became no longer a strategic choice that suits an emerging empire. American imperial ambition, therefore, began to have a vision that the U.S. has an important role to play in the destiny of the world. Hence, isolationism became outdated after WWII and the course of American diplomacy changed. Each time the swing comes in response to a certain political interest and to serve a specific administrative and ideological perspective. The foremost alteration of American foreign policy followed the end of WWII. Since then, the nation has been involved economically, politically, and militarily in the vast world affairs. During the Cold War Era (1945-1991), both superpowers, the U.S. and the USSR, strived for preeminence and hegemony in the world.

The United States was aware of the Soviets intentions about the future of the Middle East and Asia, so it switched to the policy of containment, aimed at preventing communism from spreading beyond its natural borders and keeping it where it existed. Because the American foreign policy is often justified by benefits, it had vital security interests in the Middle East and

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Asia, where Communism was creeping too, for which it was willing to take arms to defend. In a bipolar era, these U.S. policies mismatched with the other block's, the Soviet Union which also wanted to ensure stability on its southern frontiers and remain in a position to benefit from any general repulsion against the United States in the region. The ideological, and foreign policy doctrinal clashes usually led the two superpowers to some indirect skirmishes and some incidental encounters in many parts of the world among which the Republic of Afghanistan was one in late 1979.

The U.S has strongly condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as it dreaded a further Soviet Communist expansion into neighboring countries in Southwest and central Asia. The U.S covert support to the Afghan resistance through the CIA helped to halt the Soviet belligerence and forced it to pull out in 1989 ending the Soviet-Afghan war before it was completely dissolved in 1991 ending the Cold War era too.

American security discourse and foreign policy have so often been subjected to constant reconfiguration since WWII and the cold war era, and the attacks of 9/11 has outlined much of the 21st century American political practices. The American involvement in the Middle East and Southern Asia planted the seeds for its enmity in the new era of unipolarity when the sole major power sought a new 'World Order' that assures stability, security, and prosperity. However, American support for the Afghan Mujahideen was the basis for the emergence of the Taliban regime and thus the advent of Al Qaeda the precursor to the 9/11 attacks. Those occurrences reopened Afghanistan to foreign pestering and harassment through the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan that turned into an occupation to this day.

An integral characteristic of U.S. foreign policy has been formed by the relationship between the United States and Afghanistan. The U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) was transformed into the longest and the second most expensive war in its history. So, in this

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paper, I raise and attempt to answer the following major questions: Why does the U.S continue fighting an endless war in Afghanistan? What motivates the U.S to keep up a costly war that has drained more than a trillion dollars? The U.S intended to destroy al Qaeda and remove the Taliban regime that sheltered its leader Bin Laden. Al Qaeda and the Taliban regime were quickly smashed after OEF, but American occupation to Afghanistan continues. Ironically, the U.S is currently reduced to sitting on the table of negotiations with those former enemies whose territorial and political power is expanding. Therefore, is the American war in Afghanistan to eradicate terrorism or protect the U.S interests and achieve other objectives? What does really justify U.S incessant war in Afghanistan while America has almost joined the previous fiascos of Alexander the Great, the British Empire, and the Soviet Union as botched intruders in a historic and battle-hardened republic and the graveyard of empires?

The American military engagement in Afghanistan lacked clarity and transparency. So, the release of the “Afghanistan Papers” in December 2019 by the *Washington Post*, and the “Cost of War” by *Brown University* earlier that same year, in addition to *Craig Whitlock’s* “Confidential Documents Reveal U.S. Officials Failed to Tell the Truth about the War in Afghanistan” intensifies doubts and curiosity about the war costs, outcomes, and time that are products of how many objectives the U.S had in Afghanistan. Most of the latter were and still are not streamed on the main media due to the Information Industrial Complex (IIC). Both reports had a great deal of impact on the American and international public’s understanding of counter-terrorism wars especially the Afghan cause. This work, therefore, discusses both the declared and concealed motives of a further American presence there.

In order to discuss the literature of a war, we need to discuss the reasons and outcomes of these wars. The objective of the current study is, therefore, to provide a comprehensive review and analysis of the literature about the topic, so this research is contingent on a host of written

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sources, government communications, and media outlets about the topic. With such a comprehensive collection of sources at my disposal, the work endeavours to present answers to questions that pop out from reading sources like *William McHenry's* "Why Won't the US Leave Afghanistan?" or *Pepe Escobar's* "Why the US Won't Leave Afghanistan". Sometimes the war itself means business for interest groups and lobbyists, so both of *Michel Chossudovsky's* publications "The War Is Worth Waging: America's War on Terrorism", and "The Spoils of War: Afghanistan's Multibillion Dollar Heroin Trade" point out that the U.S.-Afghan war has a profit driven-agenda: a war of economy and resources. *John Bellamy Foster's* *Naked Imperialism: the US Pursuit of Global Dominance*, *Noam Chomsky's* *Terrorizing the Neighbourhood: American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era* in addition to *Michele Bartram's* "Understanding America's Longest War", and many other sources give a clear insight into the political, military, and imperial upshots of the war.

The primary research method for this paper is collecting the necessary data about the military issues from diverse sources. A quantitative approach to access some statistics and figures about the war spending, gains and casualties will also be included in the third part of the research. The research paper will focus on comparing the different military agendas and strategic policies on the administrative level (in the US) and on the ground (in the field of the study in Afghanistan since 2001 till the present). In doing so, chapter one reviews the rivalries of the U.S and the USSR for supremacy and dominance in the middle east and Asia after the withdrawal of the British and French empires following WWII. Their doctrinal conflicts and juxtaposing foreign policies in the Cold War era led them to indirect encounters in various hotspots among which Afghanistan was one. This encounter ended by the withdrawal and dissolution of the Soviet Union. The second chapter discusses the Afghan Euphoria and the triumph which followed the Soviet defeat and pullback. It also spotlights the chaotic environment that gave rise

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to the Taliban regime and al Qaeda whose emergence was the pretext to the American-led invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11 attacks. It is in this chapter where *Alex Linschoten et al.*'s idea of the CIA's own responsibility for the emergence of al Qaeda in his "An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban-Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan" fits in. Finally, the third chapter is a case study of the reality behind occupying Afghanistan. In this chapter, based on the available data, the research focuses on discussing and analysing the military, economic, political and geostrategic objectives that are intertwined with destroying al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The work ends with a brief assessment of the U.S political and strategic failure in Afghanistan that has spilled too much ink since 2001.

Chapter One: American and Soviet Cold War Foreign Policies in the Middle East and Asia

1.1 Introduction

Throughout its history, the United States' Foreign policy has seesawed between isolationism, neutrality, and interventionism. For the most part, it has been dominated by 'non-entanglement'. "Avoiding entangling alliances" is the lesson Americans have concluded from George Washington's farewell Address in 1796. The warning has influenced much of the American foreign policy throughout the early decades of its history. However, the policy of 'isolationism' become outdated after WWII leading to changes in the course of diplomacy. The shift of American Foreign Policy has become clear during the period following WWII. That era 1945-1991 is known as the 'Cold War Era' (1945-1991) during which the U.S. and the USSR competed for preeminence in the world.

1.2 The Cold War Era in the Middle East and Asia

1.2.1 American Interests, Alliances and Containment Policies in the Middle-East in Post -WWII

Among the spots of the U.S interests in the world after WWII was the Middle East. The area represented an alternative for trade and a source of raw materials-especially oil and arms deals. The U.S interest in the new sources of raw materials in the area was met by potential threats from its Communist rivals. Consequently, the U.S. has followed a type of policy that defends its allies and protects its interests by ensuring a 'stable' Middle Eastern region with balanced power. Thus the U.S. restructured its priorities. Analysts admit that, "the United States' primary interests in the Middle East including securing strategic access to oil in the Gulf region,

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supporting and protecting Israel's sovereignty, maintaining the United States' military bases, defending client-states and friendly regimes, and resisting Islamic movements and terrorist groups" (Al Sarhan 2017).

The policy of 'containment', which means preventing communism from spreading beyond its 'natural borders', and keeping it where it existed, engraved the US foreign policy after WWII. As the world became bipolar, struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union as major powers soared. Historically speaking, the old major European powers, especially Britain, underwent economic ordeal after WWII was over. They were incapable of exercising their political and economic role in many parts of their vast empires. The author of American Orientalism argues, "British publicly admit that they are no longer able to keep the Middle East in order without ... [US] help" (Little 119). Thus, their withdrawal meant gaining a new sphere of influence by the Soviet Union. Early during the 1940s, the "Soviet policy in the Arab world appears to be aimed at the dropping of British influence in that area and the acquisition of the balance of power" (119-120). The United States was aware of the Soviet intentions in the future of the regions, so, the author clarifies, "Washington responded by issuing the Truman Doctrine in 1947 that indicated that the United States would take over Britain's commitment to Greece and Turkey" (119-20).

In order to defend and secure its interests, the United States began to form Alliances in the region to stop the Communist advances, particularly in the neighboring countries of Eastern Asia that were part of the British Empire. For instance, they formed the Middle East Treaty Organization (METO), which included Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Britain and Iraq in 1955 and conducted the Eisenhower Doctrine 1957 (that makes the U.S a member of Anglo-American Association). Besides the formation of the Central Treaty Organization CENTO in 1959 (which replaced the METO), and the Nixon Doctrine of 1962 (which required some countries to oppose

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the Soviet advances). Finally comes Jimmy Carter's own Doctrine that explicitly "informed the world in January 1980 that the United States had vital security interests in the Middle East for which it was willing to fight, whether it had dependable partners or not" (120). The steps above were clear U.S. tactics to contain Communism, which would lead to further tensions between the two superpowers until the late 1990s.

In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, so the policy of containment itself became outdated and American Foreign policy needed a new characterization. Containment, though being under attack by many opponents, was successful in restricting the steps of 'the Communist evil' for more than forty years. The U.S., then, needed a redefinition of a new policy in the entire world. For example, "[o]nce the Soviet Union conceded defeat, soon to be followed by its disintegration, the United States was left without a successor strategy, and, consequently, with no clear road map to follow" (Onea 01). The United States emerged as the sole dominant superpower in the post-Cold War era. Hegemony, leadership, primacy, and military power clearly marked American foreign policy in international affairs in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century (Al Sarhan, 2017).

Soviet Foreign Policy in the Middle East and Asia After WWII

Akin to the U.S., the Soviet Union emerged as a superpower after World War II. Thus, competition between Capitalism and Communism, and the struggle for preeminence (on land, seas, and space) in the world, and East Asia in particular, were clear objectives for the two blocs. Consequently, the world at large became 'bipolar' divided into a group of friends; which included Communist countries in Eastern Europe and third world countries, and another of enemies; the capitalists and imperial circles. This mind map was largely the perspective of the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. The USSR had its own approaches to resist the enemy's doctrines.

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The Soviets relied heavily on anti-American propaganda domestically and throughout the outer world especially during the early years of Stalin's regime who died on March 1953.

After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republic (USSR) was formed in 1922 marking the end of the Russian Civil War. The vast country reunited under a single name 'The Bolsheviks'- the Communists led by a single party known as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist republic had a new tone.

During the 1950s, The USSR under Secretary-General Khrushchev adopted a unique policy of great interest towards the Middle East and Southern Asia. Instead, "Moscow did not need the Middle East oil fields for itself, but it had a vested interest in denying (or threatening to deny) access to them by its industrialized rivals, east and west, for whom they were a vital resource" (Malik 189). Besides, East and Western Asian areas was used both to offend the Western imperialist advances by exerting more pressure on the U.S, and to defend the Union by avoiding potentials of transforming the area into a threat: political or military. In other words, "[The] Soviet policy in the Middle East, from 1974 onwards, had two principal aims: to ensure stability on the southern frontiers of the Soviet Union and to remain in a position to benefit from any general revulsion against the United States in the region" (Edmonds 189). The same tendency continued for almost a decade later. In his book, "Domestic determinants in the Soviet Foreign Policy", *Hafeez Maleek* concludes that: "Like Khrushchev and Brezhnev before him, Gorbachev [sought] to ensure the security of the USSR's southern borders, strengthen the Soviet Union's military and political influence in the region vis-a-vis that of the United States, avoid confrontation with the United States, and gain access to the region's energy resources" (103).

On another respect, the USSR, too, just like the U.S had its own interests in the Middle East mineral resources, although this was for different purposes as Hafeez Malik argues:

Generations of Russian, rulers have long been interested in the Middle East, in the areas situated along their southern border. For the second half of the seventeenth century to the latter part of the nineteenth century they expanded southward and eastward across penetrable and indeterminate frontiers, impelled by a variable combination of strategic, political, ideological, and economic motives. (213)

1.3 The Afghan Hotspot and the Bipolar Clash

Both the U.S. and the USSR had their own vision and strategies to resist or offend each other in the region during the Cold War era. Both shared some factors that drew the outlines of their foreign policies. Above all, the two participated in building the Afghan infrastructure where they had their investments during the 1960s, years before the war. The USSR and the U.S had different historical factors, social, political and economic systems as well as differing ideologies. The latter led them to tensions in the area that, fortunately, excluded the military confrontation.

The USSR considered the spread of Fundamentalist Islam in the Middle East and Central Asia, as it made its way into the southern Soviet Republics, a threat to Communist doctrines and ideologies. This explains the covert aid of the U.S. through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to the Pan-Arab Jihadists temporarily, as they believed that the Soviet invasion was targeting Muslims and Islam besides imperialism (Mamdani 220-221). The Islamic expansion coincided with the overthrow of the Iranian Shah in 1979. The Western-backed Shah regime was replaced by another extreme Islamist one led by Ayatollah El Khomeini. In Neighboring Afghanistan, The USSR-backed the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) that was in control of the country since 1978. Soon the PDPA's control was weakened by the pro-Western Hafizullah Amin seizure of power (Shaista and Youngerman). This increased the USSR fears

of Western assistance to Amin and thus the government of Leonid Brezhnev decided to invade Afghanistan.

1.3.1 The Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan in 1979

Before the Soviet-Afghan War, Afghanistan had endured a long history of political and military strife; it was the only state to be occupied by Great Britain in the nineteenth century, the Soviet Union in the 1980s, and the United States since 2001 (Mamdani 01). The borders of the Soviet Union were among the scenes of ideological conflicts between the two powers. Akin to the Monroe Doctrine, Brezhnev Doctrine ordered the Soviet Red Army to defend the communist regimes in the region and Europe. Therefore, the Afghan PDPA Regime was not an exception.

In a meeting joined by the General Secretary KGB and the Soviet government, Brezhnev concluded that Soviet intervention was necessary to combat *the Mujahedeen*. *The Mujahedeen* were a group of warriors for the faith or Islamic struggle. They emerged in Afghanistan as resistance group against the Soviet Red Army. Later that Christmas, the USSR launched its invasion with a hope that there would be no Western objection or reaction (Fremont-Barnes 31-36). The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan started from air and land on December 24, 1979. As the Airport of Kabul was under Soviet control, the Soviet soldiers crossed through the southern borders into Afghanistan. Three days later, on December 27, Afghan President Amine was executed in a joint operation by the Russian intelligence agency (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti), which translates to (“Committee for State Security”) in English or (KGB). The successful coup called ‘Operation Storm-333’ lead to the installation of a new pro-Soviet government on the eve of 1980 led by exiled Babrak Karmal. This angered the Muslim

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Nationalists, called the Mujahedeen, who opposed Communism and started insurgencies against the Soviet Red Army and the Afghan army.

The Mujahedeen were a religious group armed and financed by the U.S through Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and China. The Soviet invaded Afghanistan to protect the Communist government of PDPA, which the Afghan Mujahedeen wanted to expel. Unexpectedly, however, the US, Pakistan, Saudi and Chinese and other non-governmental combined support to the Mujahedeen forced the Soviets to withdraw and terminate its intervention in Afghanistan (Malik 29). Supported by the U.S intelligence, financially and militarily, the Afghan resistance (the Mujahedeen) made the Soviet aware of its devastating mistake; a mistake that, according to (Reuveny and Prakash) was one key factor among many others that led to its eventual and surprising breakdown (p 693-708).

1.3.2 American Reaction to the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

The first U.S reaction to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was diplomatic. President Jimmy Carter condemned the move harshly. In his State of the Union address on January 4, Carter declared that “This invasion is an extremely serious threat to peace – because of the threat of further Soviet expansion into neighboring countries in Southwest Asia, and also because such an aggressive military policy is unsettling to other peoples throughout the world” (Carter,1980). The early economic and diplomatic bonds, which were realized during the Richard Nixon presidency, ended. It froze the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks SALT-II¹ and withdrew its

¹ Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union that were aimed at limiting the manufacture of strategic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons. The first agreements, SALT II, and I were signed by the two powers in 1972 and 1979, were intended to restrain the arms race in strategic ballistic missiles armed with nuclear weapons. First suggested by U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1967, strategic arms limitation talks were agreed on by the two superpowers in the summer of 1968, and full-scale negotiations began in November 1969. (See Encyclopædia Britannica, 2016)

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ambassador from the Soviet Union to express its discontent with the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan.

The U.S. considered the invasion a violation of the international law, a threat to U.S. allies in the region and possibly a manoeuvre for gaining more control over the oil supply. President Carter called for cutting ties with the USSR. He added that “While the international community waited for them to do so, neither the United States or any other nation committed to world peace and stability can continue to do business ‘as usual’ with the Soviet Union” (Carter, 1980). Moreover, the U.S. reaction marked an end to the Age of Detent² and the Carter administration boycotted summer Olympic games which held in Russia in 1980 and thought of making restrictions on trade with the Soviets. The remarks and topics discussed in that speech came to be known as *The Carter Doctrine*.

The U.S did not have the ability to confront the Soviets in Afghanistan directly. For the American public was not yet willing to invest any effort in a new war after their defeat in Vietnam. By invading Afghanistan, the Soviets “had meant to protect the revolution, their greatest worry being U.S. response, which had not materialized” (Tanner 241). Instead, the real obstacle that faced the Soviets was the landscape and another resistance in Afghanistan that they had not anticipated (241). On one hand, the Red Army suffered heavy losses due to the fierce fighting in the mountainous nature of the war regions that they were not used to, and the guerrilla war tactics by the ‘soldiers of God’- or *the Mujahedeen* whom the West considered ‘freedom fighters’. In addition, “the acquisition by the mujahidin of the US Stinger shoulder-held ground

² D tente: French, the reduction of tension between states. The term has been used largely in connection with US–USSR relations since the late 1960s, in which a policy of peaceful coexistence was professed by both parties, and seemingly pursued, through arms limitation talks and the Helsinki Accord, 1975, on security and cooperation in Europe. (Scruton 177)

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to air missile was particularly helpful to the cause” (Bert 130). It is because of the way the war was orchestrated that many called it a Soviet-Vietnam.

By spring 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the USSR. He initiated various social and economic reforms in addition to more support to the army and the war in Afghanistan. He wanted to empower the army and end the war in a quick and decisive victory. The new leader continued the Kremlin Propaganda that the USSR was resisting U.S imperialism in Afghanistan too and that arming and financing the Mujahidin was ‘unwise’.

In America, however, Ronald Reagan was reflected. Soon, forced by the Congress, he signed a National Security Directive aimed at supporting the Afghan ‘freedom fighters’ by all possible means. Americans had realized that in Afghanistan forces resisting communist rule had beleaguered the Soviets themselves. It was though as the west had discovered its genuine ally in the Cold War and U.S. aid, consisting of money and weapons to the Mujahidin topped half a billion dollars in 1985, more than all in the prior year’s put together. The aid to the Afghan resistance began with a small sum of \$30 million in 1980 to reach its peak of \$670 million by 1987 (Tanner 262-267).

1.3.3 End of the War and the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan

The Soviet-Afghan war was ended by a peace deal known as the Geneva Accord in 1988. The heavy losses and international pressure besides the deteriorating economy forced the Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan and to end its eight-year-long war. Moreover, unrest in the USSR Southern Muslim republics ascended threatening the Union.

After six years of negotiations, the U.N sponsored peace talks in Geneva between the Soviet Union and the U.S (as guarantors) on one hand, besides Pakistan and Afghanistan on the other hand. The peace agreements provided for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from

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Afghanistan was signed (Ottaway). Reporting on the event to the Washington Post newspaper on April 14 from Geneva, David B. Ottaway concluded that:

Both the United States and Pakistan immediately made clear that they are not ready to abide by "the letter and spirit" of the accords unless the Soviet Union carries out its troop withdrawal exactly as promised and cuts off all its military aid to the Kabul regime...They also made clear that they regard the Afghan government that signed the accords as "illegitimate" and unworthy of diplomatic recognition. (1988)

The peace deal meant different things for both sides: For the US and Pakistan the accords represented an end to the war and complete withdrawal of the Soviet army. Whereas the Soviet Union considered it an end to the American-Pakistani aid to the Mujahidin. The eight-year war ended in heavy losses for both sides. Estimates show that about 14,500 Soviet soldiers and 18,000 Afghan troops died in the war. Almost 1 million Afghan civilians were killed and 90,000 fighters were counted among the Mujahidin.

1.4 The Breakdown of the Soviet Union and the New Challenges for the U.S

The Soviet-Afghan war and the costs of the arms race as part of the cold war burdened the Soviet economy throughout the 1980s. Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms revolutionized the politics by introducing concepts such as concepts of *perestroika* ('reconstruction'), *glasnost* ('openness') and *demokratizatsiia* ('democratization'). By openness, the new leader opened the Soviet markets and minds in front of Western goods and reforming economic and socio-political ideals hoping to boost the economy but these new plans failed. The war had its long-term impacts too. These war impacts were that "in the USSR ... the burdens of the war contributed to the short-term legitimation of Communist Party rule, and played a role in the breakdown of mono-organizational socialism and the disintegration of the USSR as a territorial unit (Maley 164). Eastern European challenges during late 1990s, as Communist allies, fell one by one and

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non-Communist regimes came to power while others simply demanded freedom and self-determination. Gorbachev's initiatives to maintain the Union territorial integrity waned and ended in a coup that ousted him in 1991 and the nationalist leader Boris Yeltsin came to power with high expectations for change on June 12, 1991, as president the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. The new leader was elected by 57% of the vote to become the first popularly elected president. As Russia, Belorussia and Ukraine declared their respective independence in December 1991, the Soviet Union disintegrated marking the end of the cold war. In short, Reuveny and Prakash explain briefly how the USSR dissolved:

[The] collapse was inevitable due to domestic problems (such as inefficient central planning and ethnic problems) and/or structural problems (such as the Cold War and the increasing economic gap between the Soviet Union and the West). Leadership-based explanations emphasize the roles of political leaders (particularly Gorbachev and Shevardnadze) and the Soviet elites. (693)

On the other side of the world, conservative Americans interpreted the event as a U.S success that resulted from Reagan's and Bush's military and economic spending that quickened the collapse of the USSR. The Democrats on their turn claimed that the collapse was due to their decades-long policy of containment since Truman days. However, both believed that though there exists no 'enemy', the world still feels insecure. Though there is no more arms race, no détente policy, missile crisis and especially no need for shelters on the backyards against a Soviet invasion, American thought, being unipolar in the world is more challenging than facing a superpower. Consequently, the sole major power sought a new 'world order' in President G.W.H Bush' terms that guarantees stability, security, and prosperity.

The Soviet-Afghan war gave rise to what became known as 'the holly Jihad'. The latter formed the basis for the emergence of Taliban regime, which in turn gave birth to 'Al Qaeda'

organization. The holy Jihad attracted thousands of Muslims from neighboring countries, who were charged ideologically with the spark of holy war. They joined the Afghan resistance to fulfil what they believed was a divine duty: The Jihad against the Soviets. It is this stimulus that “would ignite the firestorm that we have since come to regard as global Islamist extremism ... Among the recruits [were] Abdullah Azzam [from] Palestine, and Osama bin Laden, the son of a Saudi Arabian billionaire” (Lowenstein 14). Since then groups as such became renegade groups subsidizing universal intimidation to world peace and the West which demanded new foreign policy.

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen how the middle-eastern area was subjected to the dual impact of the competing superpowers: The U.S and the Soviet Union. Following WWII and the withdrawal of the previous imperial powers, mainly Britain and France, both new superpowers competed for supremacy and preeminence. The Americans and their allies through NATO, SEATO and CENTO driven by commercial and raw materials interests wanted to contain Communism and spread their own political and economic styles.

The Soviets on their part feared the spread of western capitalism and influence in the region. These tensions constituted a cold war starting from 1945. The most considerable scene of indirect conflicts became apparent in 1979 after the military intervention in Afghanistan by the Soviets who wanted to help their communist Afghan PDPA party. Diplomatic relations worsened between the U.S and the USSR leading to an end to a period of détente. Moreover, The U.S, its allies in the region supported the Afghan freedom fighters, the Mujahedeen, financially, and militarily who made the Soviet’s Red Army job complicated.

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International pressure on the Soviets ended in signing the Geneva Accord of 1988 that planned a Soviet gradual withdrawal from Afghanistan after nine years of costly war for both sides. By 1991, the USSR dissolved due to economic and political crises and the U.S.A emerged as a solitary superpower the world to face newer challenges.

Chapter Two: The Rise of Taliban and Al-Qaeda, and the Dawn of Terrorism

2.1 Introduction

The land of Afghanistan has witnessed various kinds of conflicts. Some of these skirmishes were civil wars, others were proxy wars, direct foreign interventions, and the war on terrorism. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan did not end the Afghan crisis. Instead, it generated further anarchy by turning the country into a civil war. The USSR or the ‘evil empire’, as U.S. President Ronald Reagan referred to it in 1983, pulled back its troops on schedule by February 15, 1989. Soon afterward, the ‘holy warriors’, or, ‘the Mujahedeen’, as they are best known, started fighting among themselves for more control.

On another respect, the Soviets continued to finance their ally, Mohammad Najibullah, until 1992. For under the Geneva peace accord of 1988, the Soviets agreed to withdraw and keep indirect support for their PDPA government with arm supplies³. Some of these arms were the best that the Soviet technology had produced such as MiG-27 airplanes and SS-1 (SCUD) missiles (Saikal et al 201-202). The USA and Pakistan, on their behalf, supported their allies in Afghanistan as “the CIA was empowered to coordinate international delivery of arms to the main Sunni Mujahedeen groups, who represented the majority of the Afghan people and had established their political headquarters in Pakistan” (199) in what appears as a proxy war⁴. As

³ Among the major point that were on the debate table during Geneva peace talks between the US and the USSR was the flaw of aid and support to their allies. The draft accords dealt with not only the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, but also the discontinuation of external assistance – in effect, aid from Pakistan and the USA – to the Afghan resistance. (Maley 139)

⁴ In a letter to Cordovez of 8 December 1985, and in a speech five days later, US Deputy Secretary of State John Whitehead had effectively accepted that US aid to the resistance would cease at the beginning of a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, even though Soviet aid flows to the Kabul regime would be permitted to continue throughout (and beyond) the period of the withdrawal (Maley 138). In addition, ‘the United States has advised the

a result, the continued conflicts among the warlords gave upsurge to a radical faction known as the 'Taliban Movement'.

2.2 Afghanistan After the Soviet Withdrawal

The pull away of the Soviet Army ended the confrontation with the Mujahedeen. However, the USSR succeeded to install, and continued to support a pro-Communist government of Mohammad Najibullah for a few years later. In April 1992, the Mujahedeen under the leadership of Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud declared Afghanistan as an Islamic Republic after dethroning the former government.

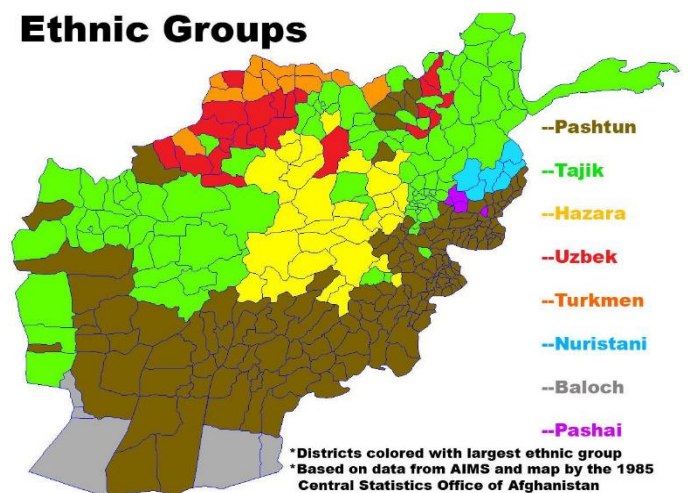
Historically speaking, the new government of Burhanuddin Rabbani and its strong military leadership of Commander Ahmed Shah Massoud had a 'moderate Islamism' and could govern the country until September 1996. After that year, the Taliban militia challenged its extreme Islamic regime. The failure to establish a stable regime was related to the division among these groups who had once united to resist the Soviet enemy. As Saikal et al picture the scene:

The Mujahedeen remained as fragmented along ethno-linguistic, tribal, sectarian and personality lines as ever. The Pakistan-based leaders of the seven main Sunni Islamic Mujahedeen groups had failed to agree on a common political platform [with little] cohesion among the leaders of the minority Shi'ite Islamic groups ... based in Iran. Nor were there any effective links between the Shi'ite and Sunni groups. Not one of the groups or their respective leaders had managed to develop a national profile or a nationwide following. Most groups functioned as fighting militias within specific localities from which their leaders originated, and enjoyed support substantially along lines of ethnic or tribal identification. (211)

Soviet Union that the U.S. retains the right, consistent with its obligations as guarantor, to provide military assistance to parties in Afghanistan. Should the Soviet Union exercise restraint in providing military assistance to parties in Afghanistan, the U.S. would do the same. (qtd.in Maley 139-140)

The external influence on these groups degenerated the internal fragmentation of the Mujahedeen. Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia each supported a faction with plans to establish a certain regime. Through Pakistani military intelligence, Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan supported Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who led the extremist *Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan* (an Islamic Party) to head the post-Communist government in Kabul to expand Islamabad's wider regional interests. Similarly, Saudi Arabia supported Abdul Rasoul Sayyaf who led the *Ittehad-e Islami* (Pashtun-dominated group during the 1980s), another small group, that had to promote Sunni Islam (*Wahhabism*) as an anti-Iranian *Shi'a* Islam. The Iranian plan was to empower Abdul Ali Mazari who led an organization called *Sazman-e Nasr* (Organization of Victory), to head an Iran-based alliance of *Shi'ite* resistance groups. It was Ali Mazari, also known as 'Tehran Man', who later in 1990 led the influential political party *Hezb-e-Wahdat* (Unity Party) that had links to Iranian intelligence officers and religious leaders. Consequently, the Unity Party became so strong that it was involved in conflicts with other Mujahedeen and thus caused Mazari's assassination by the Taliban in March 1996 (211-212).

Figure 1.Map of the Afghan Ethnic Group Composition Mid-1980s



Source: Levi, Scott. "The Long, Long Struggle for Women's Rights in Afghanistan" *Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective*, 12th ed., vol. 2, The Ohio State University and Miami University, pp. 1–10, origins.osu.edu/Article/long-long-struggle-women-s-rights-Afghanistan.

However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and unlike Pakistani, Iranian and Saudi support to the Mujahedeen, the U.S showed little interest in further supporting neither of the groups who have started a civil war over the establishment of a preeminent power in the new republic. Instead, “the U.S ended its generous aid and turned its back to the conflict” (Bert 130). The neglecting of the Afghan cause after the soviet withdrawal and dissolution was not a wise policy, as Wayne Bret believes, it only made the reconstruction uneasy. Thus, “a wiser policy would have been at the least to remain engaged ... to attempt to fashion some kind of settlement that might have ameliorated the forces of Islamic fundamentalism and hastened the beginning of a healing process in Afghan society” (130-1). That is, the U.S. policy has created a more suitable environment for an Islamic extremist regime to emerge and prosper.

2.3 The Rise and Rule of the Taliban (Seekers of Knowledge) 1996-2001

Historians agree that the government of the Mujahedeen helped the evolution of the Taliban in 1996. The Afghan holy warriors who could defeat the Soviets in their Holy war and by the flaw of military assistance from the West failed to unite and rule their liberated nation. The factions who were once a hitting fist for the Red Army have now become a domestic machine of bloodshed. The Uzbeks, the Tajiks, the Hazaras, and the Pashtuns frequently fought one another and the Afghan euphoria that followed the defeat and the retreat of their enemy ended as they began killing one another.

The Capital Kabul, where the strongholds of the Communist government were installed, remained immune to these conflicts for almost three years after the Soviets fiasco and pullback. However, the situation changed after that as battles for the liberation of Kabul began turning the capital city into decay.

2.3.1 The Taliban Backgrounds

The Taliban were Afghan-Soviet war veterans. A Sunni faction commanded by a ‘one-eyed’ man named Mullah Omar. Taliban was a puritanical Sunni Muslim movement mostly Pashtun from the Kandahar and southern Helmand and Kandahar regions in Afghanistan. Taliban aimed at instituting strict Islamic Law *Sharia*. It broke out of the Mujahedeen whom the Taliban believed had a failed Islam. Taliban is a Pashto and Persian word of an Arabic origin. They were called so being former students ‘*talibs*’ (students) or (seekers of knowledge) in different ‘*madrasas*’ (religious schools) that had an immense influence on their view of Islam and thereby an Islamic nation. Thus, they did not have any secular education unlike Massoud and Hekmatyar.

The new regime lacked support outside its borders. Apart from Pakistan, no country supplied them. Therefore, they relied heavily on the support of wealthy extremists such as Osama Bin Laden, the founder of the terrorist group ‘*Al-Qaeda*’ (the base), who declared war on the ‘enemies of Islam’, particularly the Americans, due to their sustenance for the newly formed entity of Israel and U.S invasion of Iraq in the first Gulf War in 1991.

2.3.2 Taliban Religious Influence and Expansion

The Taliban Islamic fundamentalists despised anyone with different religious convictions. They had gained control over the capital as soon as the pro-communist regime fell. For the West, the regime was both strange and aggressive according to Bert who admits that:

[Taliban regime] forbade women to work or to be Educated. They closed movie theatres and banned music. They forced men to grow beards and punished theft by amputating hands. In general, they created a civic society [that] few admired. Among the Taliban’s more reprehensible actions were the deliberate destruction of one of the world’s great archaeological treasures, two 115-foot-high sandstone statues of

Buddha in the city of Bamiyan. At least this action killed no one, unlike the massacre of the ethnic Hazaras who died by the thousands. (355)

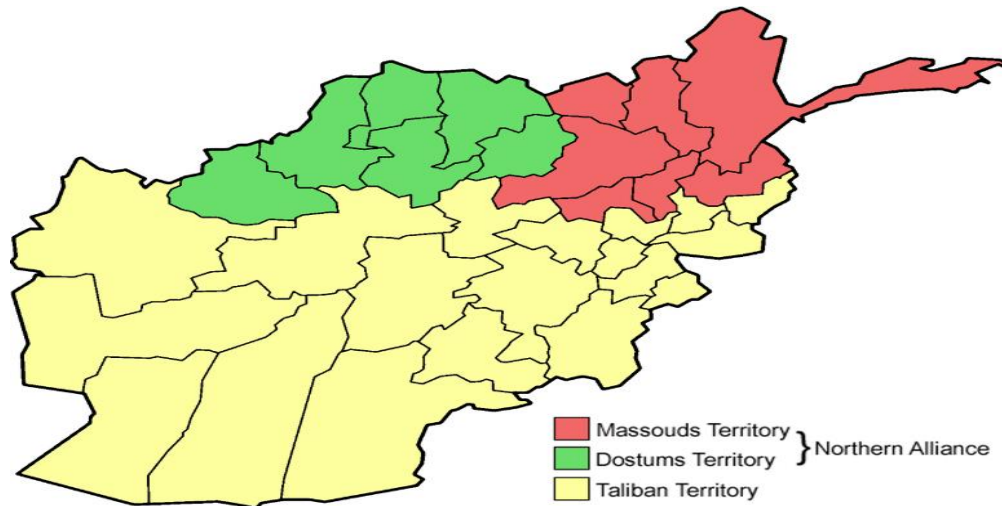
Taliban's new structure and legitimacy strengthened their position while Massoud and Hikmatyar's militias continued fighting on different parts of the country for control. The main obstacle that hindered the Taliban from controlling over 95% of the country was the Northern Alliance, called '*Jabha-yi Muttahid-i Islāmi-yi Millī barāyi Nijāt-i Afghānistān*', known as the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (UIFSA). Two major commanders led the Northern Alliance of the mujahedeen forces: Ahmed Shah Massoud and Rashid Dostum who had gained control of Kabul long ago. The former commander was a brilliant strategist and a fierce fighter nicknamed 'The Lion of Panjshir' referring to the valley where his battles against the Soviets were successful. However, on September 27, Taliban succeeded to seize the capital Kabul after defeating Massoud, and imposed what they believed *sharia* law. The map below in (Fig.2) shows the territories of each of the three forces.

Amid the Afghan civil war, particularly on November 5, 1994, Kandahar fell to Taliban who emerged as a powerful militia armed with Soviet weapons such as MiG- jets and machine guns. The continuous triumphs of the Taliban had a big impact on their jihadist mindset. Because of their increasing military powers and influence, "the Taliban's military successes ... fuelled Mullah Omar's conviction that he had a divine calling to rescue Afghanistan from the forces of misrule and usher in a 'true' Islamic government, a conviction reinforced by a vision he claimed to have had of the Prophet Muhammad, who had endorsed his *jihad*" (Lee 633).

Later in 1996, Mullah Omar declared himself a leader of the republic after '*shura of ulama*' (a debating assembly of thousands of Afghan scholars) that not only called for continuing the jihad, but also "proclaimed Mullah Omar as *Amir al-Mu'minin* of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" (334), that is (Commander of the faithful) of the republic. Omar

became the definitive consultant for all civic or religious issues in the country paying no attention to the *Loya Jirga* (an Afghan legislative institution)

Figure 2. Map of the Situation of the Northern Alliance and Taliban Territories in Afghanistan in Late 1996 During the Civil War; Massoud (red), Dostum (green) and Taliban (yellow) Territories



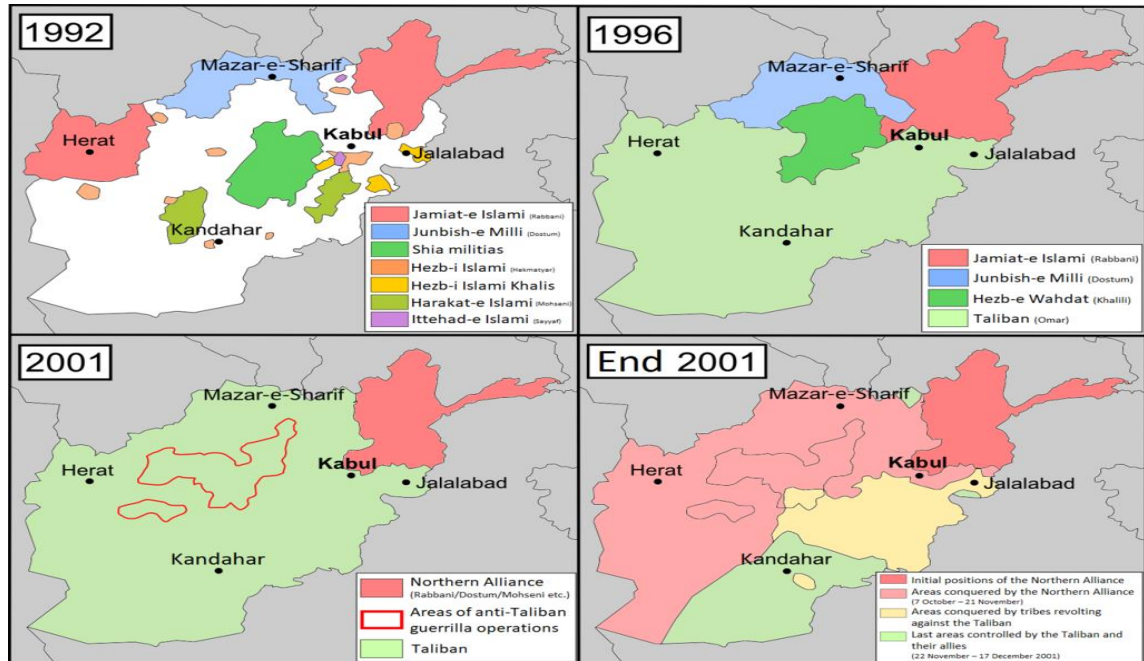
Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. “Northern Alliance. Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 24 Mar. 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Alliance.

The Taliban’s north and western expansion (Fig.2) ensued in the great battle in an attempt to take down Mazar-I Sharif on May 25, 1997. The Mazar was a major city controlled by ‘the United Front’ coalition that opposed Taliban. According to them, “Mazar was an even greater centre of *jahiliyyah* than Kabul, for not only was it the last refuge of Parchamis and Khalqis, it was the most socially liberal urban centre in Afghanistan” (638) and hence needed a speedy reform to comply with *Sharia law* even if this required the use of force. The invasion was a failing attempt that lasted for only three days and was too costly. The Taliban lost hundreds of their soldiers including key commanders who were either executed by the opposing coalition, surrendered or simply laid dead.

On August 8, 1998, the Taliban invaded the city again causing frenzy killings shooting anything and anyone that moves. They searched homes for males from Uzbek, Hazara, and Tajik

ethnic groups to ensure less resistance. The incident is one of the bloodiest cases of the 20 years-long Afghan civil war. Historians argue that through the massacre of Mazar-I Sharif, the Taliban sought revenge and thus renewed the cycle of killings that featured the Afghan civil war.

Figure 3. Four Maps for a Generic Scheme of the War of Afghanistan (1992–2001). (Showing the Major Armed Militias Fighting for Control of the Country Throughout the Years Until the October 2001 U.S.-Led Intervention in Favour of the Northern Alliance).



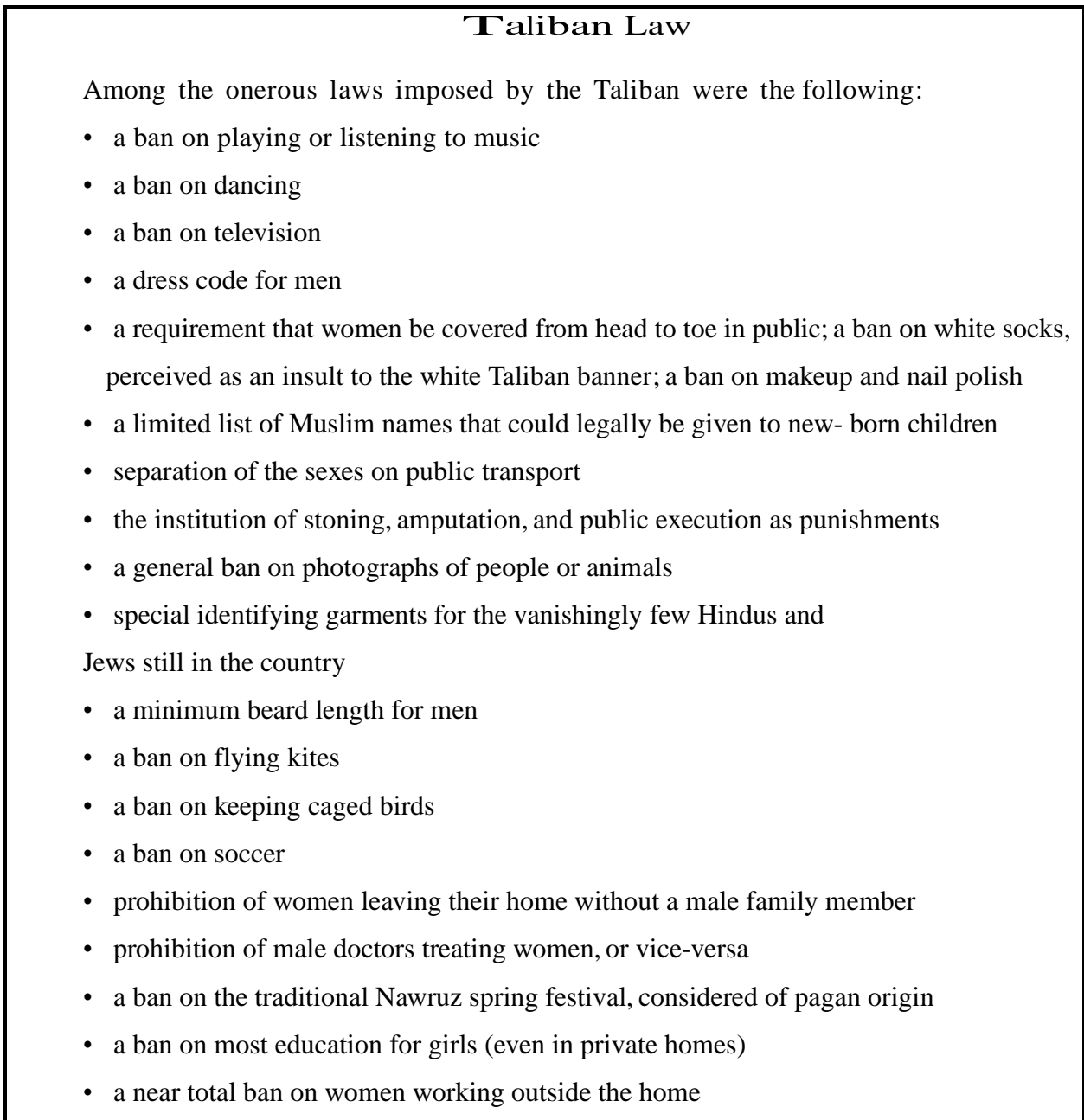
Source: Wikipedia, The free encyclopedia. “Afghan Civil War (1996–2001).” Afghanistan Conflict (1978–Present), Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 17AD, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_Civil_War_

According to a report “Afghanistan: The Massacre in Mazar -I-Sharif” by Human Rights Watch, “The killings of Hazara men and boys appear to have been carried out largely in reprisal for the killing of several thousand Taliban soldiers after a failed attempt by the Taliban to take the city from May to July 1997” (1998). The attack on the city was also stimulated by religious conflicts between the Taliban and Hazaras. Taliban are conservative *Sunni* while the Persian-speaking and Iranian-supported Hazaras were *Shi’a* ethnic group who were required to become *Sunni*, leave Afghanistan or would risk death.

In terms of religion, the Taliban enforced its rule through the Ministry of the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (MPVPV). For example, as (Fig.4) reports, they forced payer attendance in mosques, banned TV and music. Besides, male adults had to grow full beards, and wearing western clothes became prohibited. Veiling turned out to be obligatory for females who, moreover, had their manner codes. Girls were no longer allowed to attend schools and segregation between genders was issued; separate offices, separate access doors and even separate work buildings (Lee 636-637). Everyone had to comply with the new regulations. Any violation of these codes was punishable. Consequently, tensions between the Taliban and foreign agencies developed and many organizations closed or chose to quit the country rather than complying.

The expanding power of the Taliban rose fears in neighboring countries such as Iran and Uzbekistan. Iran particularly threatened to retaliate for the murder of its diplomats in its embassy in Mazar-I- Sharif by the Taliban, and in defense for the *Shi'a* ethnic group. Pakistan, on another hand, wanted a western recognition of the Taliban government despite rising condemnation against it for human rights violations. Pakistan argued that the new regime would bring law and order to the country. It would also ban opium cultivation, and that the trans-Asian oil and gas pipeline project was by then more possible than ever before.

Figure 4. Taliban Law of Conduct and Manner Code



Source: (Shaista and Youngerman. 226)

Although the Taliban regime was largely considered illegitimate, the Pakistani appeal the west to normalize relations with the Taliban was partly heard especially as far as the economic interests were concerned. For example, “despite the USA not having any formal diplomatic relations with the Taliban government, UNOCAL, a California-based company ... opened

offices in Kandahar and Kabul and began to negotiate with the Taliban for the contract to build the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan (TAPI) oil and gas pipeline” (Lee 642). Most contacts between the Clinton administration and Taliban were aimed at Union Oil Company of California (UNOCAL)⁵ project on one hand, and prospects of Taliban bans on opium production after gaining control over 90% of the republic on another. The pipeline project would soon be suspended under pressure from U.S shareholders⁶ who protested Bin Laden’s threats and his terrorist acts.

2.4 Bin Laden, Al-Qaida (AQ) in Afghanistan and the U.S

Historically speaking, Al Qaeda (AQ) in Afghanistan consisted of a network of revolutionaries and war veterans who have battled the Soviet Red Army during the ten years-long Soviet–Afghan war. It takes its name from the Arabic term ‘*al Qaeda*’, also ‘*al qa’ida*’ (meaning ‘the foundation’ or ‘the base’). It originated as a network of trained operatives who fought the Soviets. After the War between the Soviet Union and the Republic of Afghanistan, Bin Laden sponsored the group and transformed it into an alliance called the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders (WIFJAJC) that later became al-Qaeda in May 1996. The organization started forming a large base of operations after the Islamist extremist regime of the Taliban had seized power in 1996.

⁵Unocal Corporation is one of the world’s largest energy exploration and production companies. It has various petroleum pipeline interests. Its principal oil and gas exploration and production sites are in Asia and North America. (Douglass 2020)

⁶ Unocal had bad reputation that restricted its activities in countries in chaos from repressive governments. Therefore, it was criticized for dealing with the Taliban regime before September 11, 2001, in connection with the proposed pipeline across Afghanistan. Because of protests from investors, as the Taliban were harbouring Osama bin Laden, Unocal dropped the pipeline plan following the bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania carried out by al-Qaeda in 1998. (Douglass 2020)

As Osama Bin Laden arrived into Afghanistan in 1996, his impact on the Taliban movement became so prevalent that its leaders welcomed him and shared his ‘theory’ of “defeat [ing] the infidels of the West” (Runnion 126). As a result, based on this new status, he “sought to form an alliance with these Islamic fundamentalists and his al-Qaeda organization, and he continued to build terrorist camps free from the government oversight ... [In return] Taliban support in terrorist acts resulted in the payment of millions of dollars from bin Laden (126-127). Thus, the holy jihad against Americans and their allies became a religious compulsion. The marital kinship between Bin Laden and Mullah Omar strengthened the bond even further between the Taliban and al-Qaeda making a strong group of terrorists and establishing representational loyalty in a matrimonial agreement.

Furthermore, Al-Qaeda gained more strength as the WIFJAJC was formed. This included the Egyptian Islamic Jihad of Ayman Zawahiri and Bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda. The relationship between the two leaders was established during the Afghan-Soviet war but became stronger in the late 1980s. Just like Bin Laden, Zawahiri supervised military training in camps for the travellers who arrived at Afghanistan to take part in the fighting of the Soviets and to capture Kabul from northern Alliance forces.

Both leaders came from an aristocratic family but the major view that they had in common was the existence of a trio challenge facing the “*Umma*” (the Muslim Community); ‘crusaders’ (referring to the West particularly America), Zionism (Israel) and Communism (the Soviets). Therefore, their merger and cooperation were necessary to resist and drive away from this danger.

Pressures from the U.S. and Saudi government to expel Bin Laden and his small group volunteers from Sudan in 1996 ended his fortunes and his military activities there. However, “[t]he years in Sudan had enriched bin Laden’s religious education and sharpened his rhetorical

skills. Once he arrived in Afghanistan in 1996 and established his headquarters there, he swiftly built on these new strengths” (Gerges 57) on one hand. To deal with his financial crisis, “[h]e leveraged his status as the spearhead of resistance to the American-Saudi alliance in the Middle East to raise money in the Gulf and elsewhere, and to recruit volunteers. Young Saudis and Yemenis flocked first to Sudan and then to Afghanistan to swear *baya*, or fealty, to bin Laden and to join his new jihad caravan” (57) and from there his foundation literally emerged in May 1996.

Al-Qaeda guerrilla organization became part of the Taliban army that started training in different camps to carry on the noble duty; ‘to kill Americans’. The trainees were not only instructed to kill Westerners, especially Americans, but also to look, smell and speak like them⁷ while Bin Laden continued his financial support to these camps.

The advantage of being in the heart of Afghanistan, in Kandahar through the UNOCAL office, the CIA kept an eye on Osama Bin Laden who was the Taliban’s guest for the time. The CIA considered Bin Laden the ‘top financial sponsor’ of terrorist activities especially the ones that target America and Americans. The USA ignored warnings from Taliban rivals, Massoud, General Dostum and even Hamid Karzai, about potential terrorist threats by Bin Laden and their request for U.S. and NATO military and financial support were never accepted.

The U.S policy toward the Taliban did not change considerably before August 1998. When Madeleine Albright became U.S foreign secretary a year earlier, most criticisms of the State Department were about Taliban hospitality to Bin Laden who issued a “*fatwa*” (a formal/

⁷ On secret terrorist operations, students were also taught to blend into the Western world of the infidels. Contradictory to their social upbringing, terrorist trainees were instructed on Western etiquette and protocols; to be clean-shaven, take showers, and wear cologne to hide body odour to smell more appealing to westerners. Further, they were instructed to speak in code in case phone lines were tapped, using words such as “Canada” instead of “Afghanistan” or using “playing with balloons” to refer to terrorist-related activities as part of the jihad. (Runnion 127)

legal opinion) declaring war on America and Americans wherever they might be (643-644). However, when Al-Qaeda attacked the U.S embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the US policy toward Taliban become tougher and the relationship between Taliban and the U.S worsened.

2.5 Bin Laden and the Beginning of Terrorism

The East African part of the world has been relatively peaceful since the former colonies got their independence in the second part of the 20th century. However, things began to change three years before the major events of 9/11. Bin Laden had a ‘*shura*’ (a ruling council) that used to supply doctrinal legitimacy, legislative assistance, and fighting proficiency. As soon as Al Qaeda leaders Osama Bin Laden and Zawahiri delivered their *fatwa* declaring war on America and its allies, a series of attacks begun to make news headlines of international media.

Bin Laden launched his first attacks in the Eastern part of Africa. The data gathered suggested that “Al-Qaeda has had greater success in East Africa and the Horn than any other part of sub-Sahara Africa” (Shinn 47). On August 7, 1998, at 10 a.m. local time, more than 200 people were killed in a coordinated attack on the U.S embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The first one occurred outside the American embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, when a truck bomb exploded. Moments later a second truck bomb exploded outside the American embassy in Dar-Salaam, Tanzania. Reportedly, 224 people were killed including 12 Americans and about 45000 were injured in the attacks.

A few days later, The U.S. fired missiles on Al-Qaeda bases in an attempt to kill Bin Laden in an operation referred to as Operation Infinite Reach (OIR) on August 20, 1998. The airstrikes targeted the Khost training camp where Bin Laden was believed to hide (Phinney 25-38). Another series of air strike were on *Al-Shifa* pharmaceutical factory in Sudan that same day killing and wounding 11 Sudanese. The Sudanese factory was believed to be used by Bin Laden

to make chemical weapons as U.S. intelligence services concluded based on collected soil samples from nearby. Both attacks failed to murder Bin Laden. Instead, the last operations were later condemned for being faulty. When the operation failed, the U.S. requested the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, to handover 'his guest' for trial, a decision that was never made until his death in 2011 in another special military operation.

Al-Qaeda emerged quickly in different parts of the world and gained followers who later formed affiliate organizations to accomplish local gains. In South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, the success of Al-Qaeda was directly linked to common economic inequalities and widespread poverty in these countries despite their richness in terms of natural resources due to corruption. Minorities are marginalized politically and economically, and above all, most of these countries have Muslim minorities.

Al-Qaeda network had many affiliates across the Middle East and Africa. Among these: Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), The Yemen-based al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Al-Nusra Front and Al Shabab in Somalia. In the meanwhile, Al Qaeda (AQ) had a growing presence in Afghanistan. Together Al Qaeda's main network and its affiliates had one major aim: to target American and western interests in the region. In the summary of his article "Al-Qaeda and the U.S Policy: Middle East and Africa" Clayton Thomas argues that:

AQ [Al-Qaeda] affiliates that have primarily targeted local governments have also turned their efforts to Western interests in the region, aiming at soft targets—such as hotels—frequented by Americans or Europeans. U.S. officials have cautioned that some Al Qaeda affiliates may increasingly turn to this type of attack as a way of remaining "competitive" for funds and recruits, in light of the wide publicity garnered by such attacks carried out by the Islamic State. (2018)

Al-Qaeda has been involved in many terrorist incidents in different parts of the world. As it grew, it had affiliate organizations and domestic groups with local agendas to fight, as Bin Laden put it, the “Crusader plunderers” urging his operatives to be ready for a long war to defend Islam.

2.5.1 Major attacks by Al-Qaeda Before and After 9/11

Through its supporting groups and affiliate organizations all over the Middle East and Africa, al Qaeda has successfully planned and conducted many operations and attacks on different targets mainly on American interests and institutions and its allies. The most notable one was orchestrated on September 11, 2001. The (Table 1) below highlights the major attacks since 1993.

Table 1. Table of the Timeline of Major Al-Qaeda Attacks Since its Formation

Major Attacks by al-Qaeda as Reported on the Media in Different Parts of the World		
<i>Dates</i>	<i>Event (s)</i>	<i>Operatives</i>
Feb. 26, 1993	A Truck bomb explodes under the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York killing six people.	Osama Bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda
June 25, 1996	A U.S. military housing complex in the eastern city of Khobar in Saudi Arabia bombed by a fuel truck. 19 U.S soldiers killed and 400 people wounded.	Bin Laden a prime suspect.
Aug. 7, 1998	Truck bombs explode at U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. 224 people, including 12, Americans were killed. The U.S launches cruise missiles at sites in Afghanistan and Sudan.	Al-Qaeda. since then Bin Laden became America’s biggest enemy
Oct. 12, 2000	Bombing of U.S. warship Cole in Aden harbour kills 17 sailors.	Al-Qaeda

Sep. 11, 2001	Three hijacked planes crash into New York's twin World Trade Center towers and plunging into the Pentagon in the worst such attack in modern history. A fourth hijacked plane crashes in Pennsylvania. Nearly 3,000 people are killed in total.	Al-Qaeda
Apr. 11, 2002	A truck explodes near El Ghriba synagogue on the southern Tunisian island of Djerba. 14 Germans, 05 Tunisians and a Frenchman were killed.	Al Qaeda claims responsibility.
Oct. 12, 2002	Bombs explode in Kuta Beach nightclub district of Bali in Indonesia, killing 202 people.	Jemaah Islamiyah, linked to al Qaeda, admit responsibility.
Nov 28, 2002	1) Three suicide car bombers blow up a hotel popular with Israelis in the Kenyan resort of Mombasa, killing 15 people. 2) On the same day, two missiles narrowly miss an Israeli Arkia Boeing 757 carrying 261 passengers on take-off from Mombasa airport.	Al Qaeda claims responsibility
May 12, 2003	09 Americans among at least 35 people are killed in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.	Al Qaeda bombers
Nov. 9, 2003	Suicide bombers kill 30 people in a Riyadh residential compound in Saudi Arabia.	Al Qaeda
July 7, 2005	1) Attacks on three London underground trains and a bus by four suicide bombers kill 52 people in. 2) In September, Al Qaeda's faction no. 2 led by Ayman Al-Zawahiri says al Qaeda carried out the bombings to strike at "British arrogance".	Al-Qaeda and its factions
Nov. 9, 2005	Bombers attack three hotels in Jordan's capital Amman. 60 people are killed including the three suicide bombers.	Iraq's al Qaeda group claims responsibility.

Apr. 11, 2007	Suicide bombs kill 33 people in central Algiers, the first big bomb attacks in the centre of the Algerian capital in more than a decade.	Al Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).
Dec. 25, 2009	An attempt by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian man, to bomb a U.S.-bound passenger plane.	The Yemen-based al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) claims responsibility.
Oct. 31, 2010	Gunmen take hold of hostages on a Sunday mass at a church in Baghdad. Around 52 hostages and police are killed.	Al Qaeda's Iraqi affiliate claims responsibility
Nov. 5, 2010	A blocked plot to send explosive parcels to the United States. Two parcel bombs were intercepted on cargo planes in Britain and Dubai.	The Yemen-based al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula AQAP claims responsibility
April 28, 2011	A bomb kills 15 people including 10 foreigners in Marrakesh, Morocco, in an attack that bore the hallmark of Islamist militants.	Al Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has threatened to attack Moroccan interest a week before.
May 01, 2011	A team of US well trained special operatives (SEAL) invaded the comps of Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan where he used to hide and killed him in a mission called Operation Neptune Spear (ONS)	

Source: Collected and adapted from Reuters. "Timeline - Major Attacks by Al Qaeda." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 2 May 2011, 02.14 pm, www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-56711920110502.

The assassination of bin laden in 2011 the Operation Neptune Spear (ONS) special American mission did not end the activities of Al-Qaeda or its affiliates. There have been issues related to new loyal leadership to take revenge for the death of, and carry out the legacy of Bin Laden. As a result, from 2001 until today, more affiliate groups and anti –American organizations emerged after the split of al Qaeda and the Islamic state (Clayton 03-14).

2.6 The Crisis of the Taliban's Refusal to Handover Bin Laden

Taliban leader Mullah Omar came under growing pressure from the USA and Al Qaeda about the submission of Bin Laden especially as the continuous missile strikes on the bases of 'The Base' did not only violate the Afghan sovereignty but threatened Taliban Movement too. Mullah Omar came under further pressure by Saudi Arabia to 'raise his hands' on Bin Laden though he could not secure a final decision about the issue by his senior religious advisors.

The Taliban refusal to abdicate Bin Laden had many reasons. One of them was his financial support to the Taliban in return for his safety in Afghanistan. In exchange for his protection, Bin Laden "was able to offer Omar money, training, occasional military support from his fighters, and special favors, such as the assassination of Ahmad Massoud in September 2001 by two suicide bombers" (Shaista and Youngerman 228). The swapping deal was never compromised although Saudi Arabia offered its own version of it. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia "had pledged hundreds of millions of dollars in aid once bin Laden was handed over or quit Afghanistan; such financial assistance was urgently needed [by] the Afghan economy ... [as]the country was once more in the grip of famine" (Lee 465).

The second reason was that Mullah Omar needed political support to his regime from the international community while "offering to trade bin Laden's extradition for diplomatic recognition of his government [although] Washington, however, was in no mood to negotiate and so the ground was cut from under the Saudi initiative" (466). Mullah Omar's bargains nearly cost him his life and position in a rebellion by two other leaders of Taliban Abd al-Haq Arsala and Abd al-Ahad Karzai. Thanks to the vigilance of the Pakistani intelligence (ISI) who continued to support Taliban despite the U.S pressures, the coup failed and later the two suspects were murdered.

Contrary to what Taliban leaders hoped, the United States under President Bill Clinton administration, issued travel bans on Taliban leaders, a financial and arms sanction on the Movement in late 1999 through the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Moreover, its missile strikes on Al Qaeda camps continued and the situation remained the same despite other attempts by Hamid Karzai when he became the leader of Pashtuns of Afghanistan *Popalzai* succeeding his father.

2.7 Taliban Opium–Based Support

There are conflicting sources regarding the policy of the Taliban towards the cultivation of opium and poppy in Afghanistan. Yet it is enough to know that Taliban wanted to end all sorts of corruption that were prevalent in society during the warlords' supremacy through the Ministry of the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (MPVPV) and thus drug production was not an exception.

In the aftermath of the weakened economy due to U.S sanctions, the financial crisis has had an impact on the Taliban regime. Consequently, there has been a slight change in their policy of opium and poppy production. Reportedly, throughout the first years of its rule in 1997, the Taliban has barred the production of poppy and opium. Contrary to the warlords of the Mujahedeen, under whose rule “drug production in Afghanistan skyrocketed to launch the country as the world’s leading source of heroin and opium production, producing as much as 70 percent of the world’s supply” (Runnion 126), things changed as Taliban seized power and conduct of the country. Taliban “quickly announced that the drug trade in Afghanistan must be eliminated” (126). However, their need of financial sources compelled them to lift that ban. Instead, opium farmers in some parts of the country were encouraged to cultivate it for export purposes to meet the temptation of the increasing demand. To support its regime, “the Taliban

soon realized that drug cultivation and production was imperative in order to pump much-needed income back into the economy and, more important, to fund their efforts ...by taxing [opium] farmers” (127).

2.8 The September 11th Attacks on the U.S and Its Repercussions

As we saw earlier, Al-Qaeda’s terrorist attacks (instead of the word jihad) against the United States had begun earlier before 9 /11 and it spread all over the world and determined the future of the foundation. As Bin laden gained confidence from his successful attacks on western targets in many parts of the world, he felt he was in a position to interfere even in the Afghan domestic affairs. One example was securing an interview with Ahmed Shah Massoud, which was a suicidal trick that killed him and some of his assistants in addition to the two Tunisian al Qaeda-backed journalists on September 9, 2001.

The war declaration on Americans and their interests ‘anywhere in the world’ took a new direction by 2011. Instead of attacking Americans elsewhere, Bin Laden masterminded attacking Americans on their soil. This incident is the second major event in the U.S history book after the Pearl Harbor attack by Japan on December 7, 1941, that killed 2403 Americans and led to its involvement in WWII. Bin Laden and his operatives had an agenda and a plan for an attack as such. In 1988 when Al-Qaeda was officially founded, he announced that “the only way to kill a large number of Americans was by striking inside the United States itself: only a massive blood-letting of American blood would force the United States out of Muslim lands” (Gerges 68). This decision to internationalize the jihad to this extreme signified an internal cohesion and careful planning by Al-Qaeda.

Surprisingly, while American State Department and Pakistani ISI officials were discussing ways to capture Al Qaeda leader, after the Taliban rejected American threats and

KSA's financial bid to surrender him, Bin Laden was executing some of the most tragic suicidal operations both inside and outside Afghanistan. On September 11, 2001, two days after the successful suicidal bombing in Afghanistan, al Qaeda hijacked four American planes: two passenger jets crashed into the World Trade Center in New York and a third one into the Pentagon. A fourth attempt, which targeted the White House, failed and the plane crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. The attacks were executed without consulting the Taliban leaders and "bin Laden took direct charge of the planning for the ... operation. He reportedly pressured Khalid Sheikh Mohammed to expedite the execution of the attacks and maintained the strictest secrecy" (82) like the other attacks executed without warning signs.

Initial official sources, reported that in New York about 2750 people were killed, 184 at the pentagon and about 42 in Pennsylvania. The 19 hijackers of the four planes were also killed in the attacks and 25,000 more people were injured and about \$10 billion of infrastructure and property damage.

After the successful attack, the '*sheikh*' Osama, as many nicknamed him, has now become a hero in the eyes of many Muslims especially among Taliban Islamic extremists. Many thoughts so because "America was waging a 'crusade' against Islam and Muslims and al-Qaeda was a vanguard of Islamic resistance [as many others believed that] it was a pretext to occupy Arab territories, siphon their oil resources, and humiliate their people" (Gerges 19).

2.8.1 American Response to the 9/11 Attacks

President George W. Bush has been in office for nine months before the attack. He was considered 'a president who lacked experience' and thus "portrayed by his opponents as uninformed and uninterested in foreign policy" (Shaista and Youngerman 228). However, as intelligence services worldwide linked the attack to Al-Qaeda and the media documented it to

convince the world's governments of the suspicion, there was a great shift in his position regarding U.S. involvement in the use of force in parts of the world justifying an opened war on terror kicked off by the attack. This strategy prepared the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Therefore, Bush's first reaction was demanding Taliban to surrender the suspect Bin Laden or face war.

Earlier on the night of the attack, President Bush threatened that the U.S will not distinguish between the terrorists and those who offer them refuge. Later, on September 20, 2001, in his address to the Congress, he announced his plan for the 'War on Terror' that fighting Al-Qaeda would only be its beginning. Analysts considered the famous speech as the beginning of a major military campaign starting from Afghanistan and then was followed by Iraq in 2003.

Many countries around the world who feared Islamic violence quickly supported Bush's agenda or at least did not clearly oppose it. The neighboring countries to Afghanistan, in particular, such as Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan were used as grounds for U.S and British forces preparing for the intervention which would start on October 03, 2001.

Historically, the campaign against Al-Qaeda started by air raids on its military and political targets to weaken the regime. NATO and the U.S. forces killed almost 5000 Afghan civilians due to massive bombarding. From October 9 onwards, the Taliban bases began to fall one by one to Northern Alliance while its militias retreated southward. The U.S and allied forces campaign was so successful that it quickened the defeat of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The defeat of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda had many reasons. Dr. Imtiyaz Gul Khan highlights some of them in his article "Afghanistan: US Policy and Post 9/11 Afghan War Scenario". He explains that:

One [reason] was the synergy between US air power and Northern Alliance ground offensives...second was the inherent weaknesses of the Taliban as the Taliban was a loose coalition that had failed to grow out of its regional roots, and the third was that

Taliban did not take recourse to guerilla warfare as was characterized of them against the Soviets. (2012)

The 9/11 attack is the major reason that quickened the collapse of Al-Qaeda and harmed Taliban whose leader never agreed with Bin Laden's way of fighting Americans outside the borders of Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda's actions fit into the sphere of the proverb that says, 'those who walk rapidly on the wrong pathway will only distance themselves from their goalmouth'.

In the Arab world, some voices raised up condemning the attacks and the criticizing attackers. For example, Zuhdi, Derbala and their coeditors of the book, *Istirātījīyat Wa-taffjīrāt Al-Qā'idah: Al-akhṭā' Wa-Al-akhṭār* (Al-Qaeda strategies and explosions: Mistakes and dangers), argued that these attacks 'violate Islamic law' as it forbids killing innocents of whatever religion or nationality. They thought that the attacks 'produced the opposite impact', which of course led to the downfall of Al Qaeda and Taliban, let alone the death of many Muslim. Therefore, making Jihad for the sake of it was Al Qaeda's 'big mistake' (Zohdi et al). Furthermore, President Bush himself described the attack as 'anti-Islamic' and its planners were 'unfaithful to their own religion'. Thus, he ordered the destruction of Al-Qaida and Taliban as a first counterterrorist step.

2.8.2 The Quick Collapse of the Taliban

Taliban continued to reject the abdication of Bin Laden despite threats by President G.W Bush. This time Taliban leader asked for proofs that link Bin laden to the terrorist attacks and later asked for negotiations about the issue. In return, according to *The Associated Press*, Bush replied that "[he has] said that the Taliban must turn over the al-Qaida organization leader living in Afghanistan and must destroy the terrorist camps. They must do so, otherwise there will be a consequence ... There are no negotiations ... no calendar" (Bush 2001). Both the U.S. and Britain, through its Prime Minister Tony Blair, continued to pressure the regime to hand over

Bin Laden or face destruction and lose power. However, Taliban officials never seemed to comply. Instead, they “have repeatedly said they are not afraid of American military action, and a rally in Kandahar, the southern city where the Taliban was formed, appeared meant to underscore that defiant message” (Bush 2001) and even U.S ally in Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf could not succeed to convince the officials of the Islamic militia.

The invasion of Afghanistan was a start-up of the war on terror agenda that was aimed at destroying Al-Qaeda and ousting the Taliban regime that accommodated its main leader. The War on Terrorism limited Al Qaeda’s ability to plan further attacks on American interests as many of its cohorts were either killed, arrested or fled from Afghanistan. The biggest blow was the death of Osama Bin Laden who was killed in Operation Neptune Spear (ONS) by a United States Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) team on May 02, 2011. In the end, Al Qaeda dissolved and its elements scattered in the nearby regions; Iran, Yemen, Pakistan and then Northern Iraq.

In short, the September 11 attacks were the seeds of Al-Qaeda’s own destruction and the regime that harbored it. The U.S-led attack and the dissolution of Taliban was followed by a UN resolution in December 2001 that paved the way for the Pashtun Leader Hamid Karzai to set up a new government to start up a new post-Taliban era.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the Soviet fiasco and withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 under Geneva accord was a victory for both the U.S and the Afghans. That triumph turned Afghanistan into chaos and civil war in the following decades. The Mujahedeen successfully overthrew the pro-communist government of the PDPA led by Najibullah who continued to get support from the Soviet until 1992, and declared Afghanistan an ‘Islamic Republic’ with Burhanuddin Rabbani’s government.

In 1994, the once unified mujahidin have multiplied into different factions and the republic got into an era of warlordism. The lawlessness that followed ethnic conflicts gave birth to a *Sunni* Muslim puritanical movement named the Taliban. It emerged from Pashtun religious students in the southern Helmand and north-western Pakistan. The Taliban wanted to enforce strict Islamic law, or *sharia*, throughout the republic and thus got into conflict with the other factions of the mujahidin who allied and became united under Commander Ahmed Shah Massoud. Taliban success in restoring peace and order brought a sense of security to the people. Thus, they gained popularity and supporters inside Afghanistan.

However, from 1996 to 2001 the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan underwent a dark era of its history under the Taliban rule. The regime lost international support except from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Taliban supreme leader welcomed Osama Bin Laden into Afghanistan who established Al-Qaeda threatening to attack America and its allies in response to their invasion of Iraq in the first Gulf war 1990-1, and for its support to Israel. Because Bin Laden declared *Jihad* on the ‘Crusaders’, the ‘occupiers’ of ‘Islamic sacred lands’, Al Qaeda executed many attacks against Americans and western institutions in the Middle East and Africa before the major ones on the American homeland on September 11, 2001. The alliance between Mullah Omar and Bin Laden did accelerate the downfall of the Taliban in November 2001 after only six years of its rise for Al-Qaeda’s terrorist activities.

American War on Terror launched from Afghanistan started the longest and second most expensive war in its entire history. The concept of ‘Islamic terrorism’ replaced the threat posed by the ‘evil empire’ (Communist USSR) and Afghanistan became the target of a new war that, despite the disappearance of its declared motives, continues to this day.

Chapter Three: Justifications of the American Intrusion and Occupation of Afghanistan

3.1 Introduction

America has intervened in Afghanistan since 2001 and has not yet left it since then until the moment of writing these lines. Since then, Afghanistan has become a new ‘hot war’ zone. The war motive, the ‘War on Terror’, has replaced the cold war era’s communism. Ironically, However, while the cold war tactics targeted nations and governments, a U.S. Congressional Research Service report (CRS) concludes that, “never in the past, had a country as powerful as the U.S., had waged a war against a single individual and not a state. US waged the ‘War on Terrorism’ against AL Qaeda and its leader Osama Bin Laden” (Clayton 2018) not on the Republic of Afghanistan or its government that has been considered illegitimate. Terrorist organizations and attacks have grown considerably even after the collapse of Al Qaeda and the death of Bin Laden in 2011. The war has continued for almost 19 years, and what was once believed to be the good war, in President Obama’s terms, turned out to be the worst one.

3.2 The Aftermath of the U.S-Led Intervention in Afghanistan Post 9/11

The U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) with the NATO and anti-Taliban Northern Alliance militia succeeded to ouster the Taliban government almost immediately. One major reason for the speedy collapse of the Taliban was their lack of preparation despite warnings to Mullah Omar by Pakistani official and advice about U.S. plans and intentions (Linschoten and Kuehn 170) of the invasion. The Taliban removal was followed by another success of the U. N’s effort to form a new government from major Afghan factions. The new government excluded the majority faction – the Pashtuns - who were the safe haven of the

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Taliban. This was a mistake that fuelled much of their subsequent tensions according to historians. A UN agreement in 2001 nominated Hamid Karzai as head of the temporary administration that had no interest in the integration or reconciliation with the old Pashtun Taliban who, if spoke out, were either imprisoned or prosecuted. The Agreement was held later signed in Bonn December 5, 2001.⁸

From 2001 until 2003, the interim administration oversaw the political affairs of Afghanistan. Besides about 5000 International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops, about 9800 U.S military and the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) spread across the previous Taliban areas and provinces providing security and enforcing law and order. Other Humanitarian and non-governmental agencies (NGOs) flocked into the country to provide aid. From time to time, small pockets of resistance ended up with the murder of soldiers from allied forces or from the insurgent groups.

From 2003 to 2005, the small frequent conflicts reflected the old Taliban regime's attempts to amalgamate its 'parcels' and set up its structures in efforts to renew its insurgency. Moreover, the Taliban had been interested in some sort of cooperation with al-Qaeda though al-Qaeda members were in no position to support the Taliban in any other way. Furthermore, the arrival of more NATO soldiers and military forces and their expansion in the southern and eastern Afghanistan bottled-up most of them in their regions. In 2008, the Taliban and al Qaeda could join hands anew and the new era "saw the insurgency come into its own and achieve

⁸ International community as well as the four major Afghan groups, the Northern Alliance; supporters of former King Mohammad Zahi Shah (Known as the Rome Group because many had relocated there); former leaders of Pakistan (known as the Peshawar Group); and group of opposite figures with links to Iran (Cyprus Group) gathered in Bonn (Germany) on Nov.26, to discuss the political future of Afghanistan. The four groups concluded an agreement on an interim setup, on Dec. 5 2001.Hamid Karzai was nominated as Chairman of the twenty-nine-member Interim Administration. For details, see "A Review of the Bonn Conference and Application to the Road Ahead in Afghanistan" by Fields and Ramsha, and Jalālza'ī (pp.227-228).

significant territorial and propaganda successes against the Afghan government and foreign forces” (Linschoten and Kuehn 317).

The renewed alliance between the Taliban and remnants of Al Qaeda allowed them to re-establish their training camps along the borders with Pakistan, in areas along the southeast mountainous area of Kabul and Tora Bora, which has witnessed heavy bombings from 12 to 17 December 2001 at the beginning of U.S. incursions. Historically speaking, the battle there continued for almost a week as some witnesses confirmed the presence of Bin Laden and Al Zawahiri there. The Offensive was ceased by news of a potential surrender bid which gave Bin Laden and other senior leaders a chance to flee across the borders into Quetta, the capital of Pakistan’s Baluchistan Province and South Waziristan under cover by some fighters.

The emergence of the Taliban and new affiliates of Al-Qaeda again threatened the fragile stability of Afghanistan as the American attention shifted to the War on Iraq. Thus, hosting Al-Qaeda in neighboring regions and the Taliban insurgency were major obstacles for reconstruction and development.

Owing to the shift to the war on Iraq, as a part of U.S. plan of ‘the war on terror’, the opponents of the war and proponents of major conspiracy theories about the entire event still doubt the real intentions behind the invasion of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The U.S., they, argue has turned its back to the masterminders of 9/11 and went to chase the Iraqi regime under a new motive of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), which, too, were never found.

3.3 September 11th, 2019: A conspiracy Theory with an Obscured Agenda

The strategic failure of the consecutive U.S. administrations in Afghanistan since 2001 has raised up doubts about the real intentions of involvement in the series of war on terror in general and the intrusion in Afghanistan in particular. The objectives of American-Afghan war,

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as it is sometimes called, have been subject to too much scrutiny especially by advocates of conspiracy theories.

These skeptic attitudes were caused by what these proponents believe is the failure to reach the main military goals. In the first twenty pages of his book *American Crusades: Unilateralism, Past & Present*, Gurtov Mel argues that destroying Al-Qaeda network as a military objective was intertwined with other objectives that are more globalist such as making the war on terror “an ideological campaign for a just peace that favors human liberty and rebuilding Afghanistan. Besides, winning the war on terrorism is exceptionally America’s responsibility that is equally important to idealistic and political reasons (1-20). Therefore, the return of Al-Qaeda under different names, the re-emergence of the Taliban and its importance in ‘weaving’ the country’s destiny and the soaring number of violent attacks are all signs of the U.S failure to reach those objectives.

The amount of literature that was dedicated to the conspiracy foundation is innumerable. The most notable work was the book (written in French) *L’Effroyable imposture* (or "The Horrifying Fraud", or as its English-translation version *9/11: The Big Lie*) by the French journalist and political activist Thierry Meyssan⁹. The author argues that the 9/11 attacks ‘false flags’ the Military-Industrial Complex (MIC) lobbyists and the right-wingers in the U.S. Government who wanted a reason to invade first Afghanistan and then Iraq under the ‘War on Terror’ doctrine (Meyssan). Although the book came under attack by some critics for lacking

⁹ *The Frightening Fraud*, a book by Thierry Meyssan claims that the plane that ploughed into the Pentagon on September 11 never existed. It, sold out its original run of 20,000 copies within two hours of going on sale. The author's conspiracy theory argues that American Airlines flight 77 did not exist, and that the whole disaster was a dastardly plot dreamed up and implemented by the US government. The French media has been quick to dismiss the book's claims, despite the high respect of the author /the journalist. See, (Henley, 2002)

forensic evidence, it did have wide popularity at the time. Moreover, other authors considered Al-Qaeda itself an enemy that does not really exist, or simply a CIA creation (Linschoten and Kuehn), or simply those who are still “unsure of an enemy that really exists and whether it is worthy of fighting” (Zizek) these long costly wars.

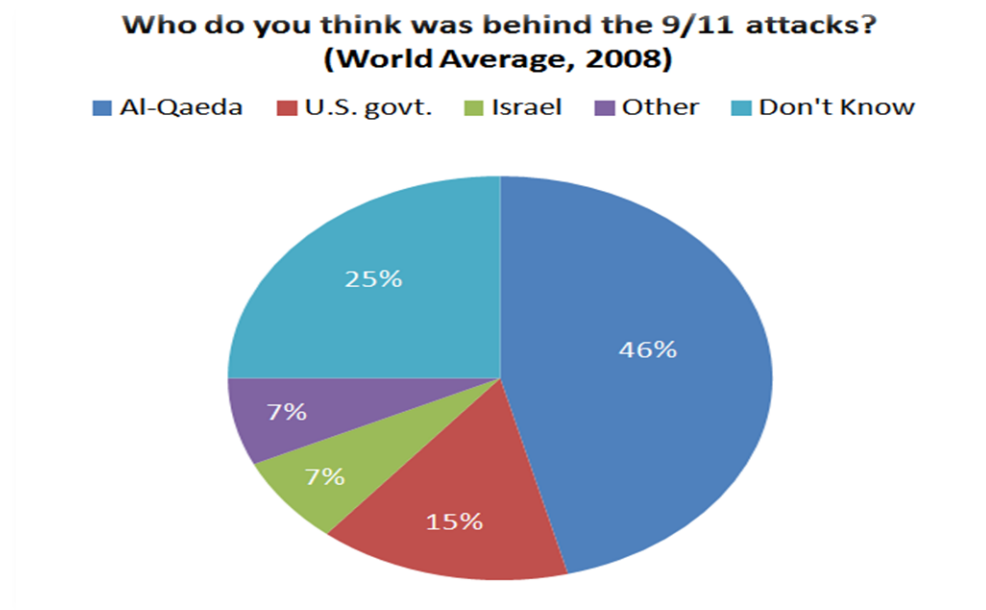
On another hand, throughout the years following the 9/11 attacks, frequent polls have been continuously conducted in America about the same notion of conspiracy theories. For example, in 2004, a Zogby poll reported that 50% of New Yorkers believed that the government was complicit and that “the U.S. leaders had foreknowledge of impending 9/11 attacks and ... failed to act ... [and] 66% call[ed] for [an investigation]” (Zogby). That same year, a partisan poll found that “Democrats in America [were] evenly divided on the question of whether George W. Bush knew about the 9/11 terrorist attacks in advance [and] 22% believe[d] Bush knew about 9/11 attacks in advance” (Rasmussen). On a global level, in 2008, a Voice of America report reported that “global poll showe[d] doubt about al-Qaeda role in 9/11 attacks ... [and after] seven years ... many people [internationally] do not believe that the attacks were the work of the al-Qaida terror network” (Klein). As the chart (Fig. 5) below shows, various opinions and views related to the attacks both inside and outside the U.S. were being assessed. The vast majority, 46%, believe that Bin Laden and his organization are involved.

However, a number, though small, of those who accuse the government of covering it up or neglected measures to avoid it is also there. They believed that “the flurry of communications ... and data tracked by the CIA, FBI, and NSA prior to the attack had revealed that something was about to happen; they just hadn't known what, where, or how big” (Tunner 292) until it happened and it was too late to avoid.

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Amid the disparity of the public and/or international opinion, the political culture in the U.S. since then has become preoccupied with Bin Laden, terrorism, and the war on both everywhere. This discourse is often echoed in the speeches and thoughts of all sorts of people from ‘top four-stars’ military officials, to civilians in charge of their homeland security or even ordinary citizens who care about their own safety; all can have some details about security.

Figure 5. The Findings of Opinion Poll About 9/11 Conspiracy Theories



Source: Archer, Alan G. “Opinion Polls about 9/11 Conspiracy Theories.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 20 Jan. 2020.

No matter how much or what the dialectics were, the war was declared and “the Bush administration believed [the war] was justified in identifying and attacking Afghanistan with the goal of eliminating bin Laden and al Qaeda ... abolishing the base from which bin Laden had launched the attacks [was] crucial and therefore legitimizing an attack on Afghanistan” (Bret 137). Yet is that the only goal after 19 years, one would argue? Especially as there have been far more major terrorist attacks by al Qaeda and its regional clones in the thirty months

since September 11 than there were in the thirty months prior to that momentous event (Clarke 301).

3.4 Motives of the American Military Intrusion in Afghanistan (2001-2020)

When the Taliban gained control of Afghanistan by the end of the 20th century, the conflicts between the mujahidin slightly waned and a sense of security and stability was achieved. However, the emergence of Al-Qaeda in 1996 by Osama Bin Laden, who launched a series of terrorist attacks against the U.S. and its allies, opened the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to foreign harassment again especially that of 9/11. In response, the United States and its allies declared war on al Qaeda and the Taliban regime that ‘harboured it’. This was the direct objective of the U.S-led war on Afghanistan. Nevertheless, many believe, as this work argues, there are other concealed goals for the intervention and all the intrusions that followed it under the doctrine of ‘the Global War on Terrorism’ (GWT). Some of them are strategic or geopolitical and military, and others are purely economic.

3.4.1 Domestic Political Plan: Afghanistan as a ‘Scapegoat’!

The horrors of the attacks traumatized the public who wanted a quick action. The master-minders of 9/11 were a dangerous menace to the U. S. Further future attacks on the United States and its allies were more likely to be launched from the same organization. The new President, G.W. Bush had a low approval rates and many questioned his popularity (Ceaser et al). He was just elected after the controversial elections of 2000 that was settled by the Supreme Court in the famous ‘Bush v. Gore case’¹⁰

¹⁰ The 2000 presidential elections were the closest in the history of the US Electoral College and the first ever to be decided by the US Supreme Court. It pitted Rep. George W. Bush against Dem. Al Gore as initial results of the elections showed that Gore had won the popular vote. None of the candidates had garnered the 270 electoral votes required for claiming the presidency. In the end, the US Supreme Court decided the outcome of the election

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President George W. Bush's long speech in front of the National Security Council (NSC) pushed for an immediate decision "that would allow the speedy implementation of a military strike. The concern was that delays in hitting some specific targets that the public approved would risk political support and fear of political repercussions from a disgruntled public" (Bert 132). The American public feared more attacks as the 'enemy' was still loose. The president wanted a quick military action that would destroy the enemy and make people feel safer. Consequently, the Bush administration "handed the public mood of shock and revulsion over the shocking tragedy of 11th September, [and] was able to exploit these sentiments to advance long-standing global economic and strategic aims" (Nafeez 240) that have spilled much ink and raised much guesswork and speculation.

The president has been just elected for office. The American public was now to come together to help him follow the procedure that Richard A. Clarke draws for him below:

Now, as he stood with an arm around a New York fireman promising to get those who had destroyed the World Trade Center, he was ever American's President. His polls soared. He had a unique opportunity to unite America, to bring the United States together with allies around the world to Fight terrorism and hate, to eliminate al Qaeda, to eliminate our vulnerabilities, to strengthen important nations threatened by radicalism. (286)

The roadmap could push his soaring approval rates even further and "September 11 has turned [him] from a minority president whose party lost control of the Senate into arguably the most powerful U.S. president in recent times" (qtd. in Nafeez 281). Contrary to Clarke's plan, "he [Pres. Bush] did none of those things [above]. He invaded Iraq [instead]" (Clarke 286). On

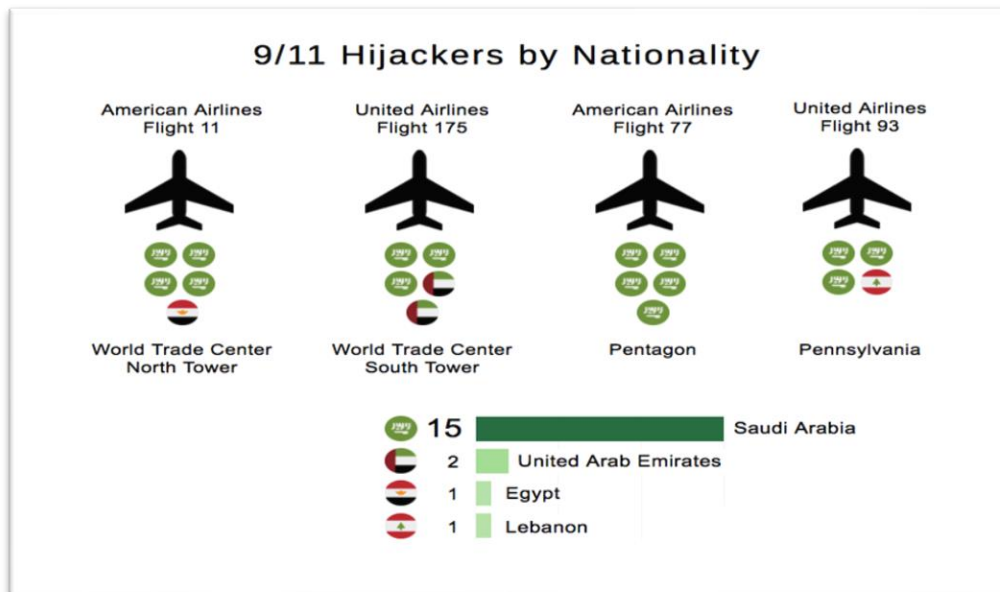
in 'Bush v. Gore case' that, in a 05 to 04 vote, ruled in favour of G. W. Bush who entered office as an embattled president, with many questionings his legitimacy. See Ceaser et al, "The election of 2000" for more details.

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another hand, Afghanistan is the weakest circle in the chain of the nations where terrorists belong. The 19 terrorists were mostly from countries with official institutions and governments as the chart below shows. The hijackers were 15 from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 02 from the United Arab Emirates, 01 from Egypt and another one from Lebanon (Fig. 6). None of them was from Afghanistan!

“The 9/11 Commission Report” reports that the hijackers received their training in Hamburg, Germany where the leadership of the hijackers planned most of these attacks. Others in Spain and Malaysia. The hijackers got their pilot training on U.S soil, exactly in Florida and they had links to other cells in San Diego California, USA. The masterminder of the 9/11 attacks Khaled Sheikh Mohamed was living in Pakistan (Kean et al) for most of his life. Some of these countries are American allies. They were not even blamed for the involvement of their citizens in the attacks, let alone invading them for terrorism, which sounds illogical.

Figure 6. The Nationalities of the Hijackers in the Four Operations of 9/11 Attacks



Source: OC: 722, Editor. “R/Dataisbeautiful - 9/11 Hijackers by Nationality [OC].” Reddit, Reddit Inc, 2018, www.reddit.com/r/dataisbeautiful/comments/6dd51q/911_hijackers_by_nationality_oc/.

Inside the U.S., the public that once sought revenge for the bloodshed quickly turned into criticizing the policy of the Bush administration for its unclear strategy in dealing with the war especially as the U.S. Patriotic Act was issued later in 2001. Many Americans especially Muslims were arrested for security measures. The Act had an opposite impact for it “has been utilized to push for an absolutist security agenda (ASA) that legally posits U.S. national security as the controlling standard for international security” (Flint) after 9/11.

The consensus against terrorism was shattered by the arrest of American citizens in the United States, many of whom were denied defense lawyers and due process. Ironically a month after the attack, “federal authorities had to admit that they had not found any evidence that any of the over 1200 people facing indefinite detention had any sort of role in the 11th September attacks” (Nafeez 276). Thus, for many the needed reforms of the Patriot Act were actually the beginning of fascism in a supposedly democratic republic (Flint 2004). For these reasons, many Americans felt that the security measures of the Act were abusive and unjust. When President Obama came to power, he has publicly expressed his intentions in “toning down” and even “abandoning various aspects of the agenda” (Astrada 100) of the ASA that his administration inherited from its predecessor, President W. Bush’s administration.

3.4.2 Geopolitical and Strategic Goals

Afghanistan’s strategic location has made it vulnerable for diverse invasions throughout its history. It has been an axis of different imperial desires as early as its chronicled history, from the Persian coast-to-coast stretched Persian superpower to the contemporary American superpower. The U.S. occupation is the last of those interventions following the British Empire and the Soviet interventions earlier in the 20th century.

3.4.2.1 Pre-eminence and Projection of Power in the Area

The American imperial history has a vision that the U.S. has an important role to play in the destiny of the world's nations. In other words, "the doctrinal thrust in articulating the United States' foreign policy direction has long embodied the desire to maintain a "balance of influence" in meeting U.S. interests (Siracusa et al 16). It is a vision that interconnects the imperialist and hegemonic doctrines from James Monroe's of 1823, to Woodrow Wilson's international liberalism after WWI, to Harry Truman's of 1947, to Ronald Reagan's 1980s, to George Herbert Walker Bush's New World Order of 1990s, George Walker Bush's War on Terror of early 2000s, to Barack Obama's Doctrine of Idealism and the use of Force of 2014.¹¹

The occupation of Afghanistan has undoubtedly allowed the U.S. to have a foot in Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its fiasco in Afghanistan in 1989. Therefore, invading Al-Qaeda and Taliban, not the people of Afghanistan, according to Astrada, allowed the Bush administration to establish a "legally definable enemies" as a strategic tactic allowing the U.S. to project its security interests and political goals and thus to establish a particular legal basis for international security that suits a unipolar superpower (Astrada 58). Moreover, the war on terrorism, that officially justified American intervention in Afghanistan, is an international campaign led by the U.S. the campaign served American foreign policy of the era in other different ways especially in securing a firm strategic 'toe and foothold' in Central Asia where the USSR had historically had the bigger foot and hegemony. In return, Saikal et al. argue, "this

¹¹ See "Presidential Doctrines: U.S. National Security from George Washington to Barack Obama", by Siracusa and Warren for further details.

means that America and its allies are most likely to remain focused on Afghanistan for some time to come, and thus maintain American pre-eminence in the area on a long-term basis” (237).

3.4.2.2 More military Bases for Both War and Peace

Historically speaking, superpowers had military bases beyond their geographic borders particularly for imperial motives. The military bases, for example, help in colonizing more lands and facilitate potential conquests or conflicts with enemies. The bases also could help controlling resources purposefully for material gains. Others simply are established to compete with and deter rivals.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the United States saw that the global threats to its security and its allies have waned. However, after the attacks of 9/11 and the emergence of al-Qaida in Afghanistan and parts of the world, the fear of new threats resurfaced. This might explain the soaring number of American bases overseas (Excerpts from Pentagon's Plan) that allows for quick deployment procedures, discourages rivals, and reassures allies.

In his article “The 700 Military Bases in Afghanistan”, Nick Turse clarifies that the military facilities that had been abandoned by the British in the 19th century were used by the Soviets in the 20th century. Later these amenities ended up in the hands of the Americans and the Afghan National Army in 2009. The author also confirms that:

Nearly a decade after the Bush administration launched its invasion of Afghanistan ... NATO, and other coalition bases there, as well as facilities used by the Afghan security forces... range from relatively small sites like Shinwar to mega-bases that resemble small American towns. Today, according to official sources, approximately 700 bases of every size dot the Afghan countryside... are under construction ... as part of a base-building boom. (2010)

Moreover, there are about 300 bases for the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) under U.S. command. The major ones are reportedly located in major cities bordering Iran and Pakistan. Some of these cities are Kandahar, Kabul, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, and Pektaya. Being a part of the base-building boom project, the Pentagon's account of military bases is rarely reported, and usually kept secret and "after nearly a decade of war, close to 700 U.S., allied, and Afghan military bases dot Afghanistan. Until [2010], however, they have existed as black sites known to [only] few Americans outside the Pentagon" (Turse). As a result, "the network of US military bases in the Pentagon-coined arc of instability that stretches from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf and South/Central Asia is a key reason for remaining in Afghanistan forever" (Escobar).

3.4.2.3 Destabilizing the Adversaries' Borders

Throughout the long history of Afghanistan, the land has been used by major powers as part of their war games. So, it can be argued that "the landing of American troops in Afghanistan in the winter of 2001 was conscious policy to set up forward bases on the crossroads of three major areas: The Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia" (Ramtanu 27). Countries such as Russia, Iran, and China are all old U.S. rivals since the Cold War era. Thus, political dominance and manipulating resources have been major objectives of imperial wars of these powers.

China is the second largest economy and soon might be the first ahead of the USA and the E.U combined. Both Russia and Iran, from other perspectives, have nationalized their oil to escape Wall Street manipulation or exploitations. Moreover, as the U.S. gets a position in the area, its strategic military tactic is likely to strike fear and costs these countries more resources for self-protection. The war on terrorism has given U.S. reasons to set up bases in Afghanistan and the neighbouring Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kirgizstan and many more (Fig.7).

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Figure 7. Map of the U.S. Military Bases in Central Asia and the Middle East Five Years After the Occupation



Source: Dufour, Jules. "The Worldwide Network of US Military Bases: The Global Deployment of US Military Personne." *Mondialisation*, 8 Mar. 2016, www.mondialisation.ca/the-worldwide-network-of-us-military-bases/5512697

The American occupation of Afghanistan did not end with the defeat of Al-Qaeda nor with the murder of its leader in 2011. The existence of the U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan became familiar to the people of Afghanistan, since they are there to help establish a strong government, despite their frequent conflicts. The other side of the coin is that the U.S. has found a new spot in the region to justify its traditional policy in the Middle East and southern Asia of securing the free tide of oil through the Persian Gulf, protecting its supplying allies and thus keeping the prices under control (Excerpts From Pentagon's Plan). The attacks of 9/11 and the occupation had other purposes that were not streamed on the main media. Nafeez Mosaddeq lists some of them in his book *The War on Freedom*, he explains:

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The 11th September attacks thus provided the crucial pretext the Bush administration needed to consolidate its power and pursue a drastic unlimited militarisation of foreign policy on a massive and unprecedented scale required by long-standing elite planning, while crushing domestic dissent and criminalising legitimate protest. What happened on 11 September constituted exactly what the Bush administration needed, to expand and consolidate America's "global primacy" as the "truly last superpower" by invading Afghanistan, which is a foothold to unrivalled control of Central Asia, and thus Eurasia. (280).

Moreover, the United States has "constructed 38 military bases in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the three former Soviet republics to purportedly guarantee security though to the great discomfort of China and Russia" (Meszaros 23). The widespread Military presence across the Afghan borders, as said earlier, had other goals. Since almost every sector of U.S. was traumatized by the tragic 9/11 incident, the US dominant elite showed strong support to the US policy in Afghanistan to exploit it for a new global military campaign and backed the global expansion of the US military role to bring the whole world to US imperialism (Hardth et al xii).

China is the world's second-largest economy and it postures an economic threat to the American markets and commercial products. Thus, the game of a military presence near its borders, and in East Asia in general, dissuades China economically and militarily. Militarily, "America's military presence in East Asia is arguably exacerbating instability in the region by making China feel encircled" (Posen). On its part, China considers America's enormous military manifestation in the region as a threat to its security. This presence along China's maritime periphery is militarized and provocative especially with its Pacific fleet leading 170 exercises and 600 training events with more than 20 allied countries in the region every year (Haddik 139).

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Both Chinese and Russian officials have expressed their worries about U.S.'s manifestation in the region. China has “expressed concern over the long-term NATO and US presence... [it] perceives the growing US presence in Central Asia as a form of encirclement. Reports that the USA might deploy its troops in Kazakhstan prompted the chief of the Chinese General Staff to warn that such a move would pose a direct threat to China’s security” (Lachowski 55). The Russians on the other hand, feel uncomfortable about an elongated American existence in what was once part of its empire. They realized that the Western political, military, and economic presence in a region that it had traditionally dominated could become permanent which would not serve their long-term interests. As a result, Russia began to counteract NATO’s influence and reassert its hold on the region (56). The Russian officials had to protest and called for the eventual withdrawal of the military bases established there by the US-led international anti-terrorism coalition. The Russian military strategists had understood the American intentions, according to Zdzislaw Lachowski who explains their view when he says:

[Russia has] repeatedly stressed that such bases were only permitted for the period necessary to stabilize Afghanistan and to achieve the goals set forth by the coalition. The Russian military also feared that the USA might deploy missile defences in Central Asia that could hit Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles in their boost phase. (56)

On the other side of the Afghan borders, there is the Islamic Republic of Iran. The U.S. considers Iran a threat to the American wealthy Arab allies in the region. This explains why there are more military bases around its borders than any other country in the area (Fig.8). Iran

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is one of ‘the rouge states’¹², in president G.W. Bush’s terms who, in January 29, 2002 State of the Union Address, declared that “the United States views rogue states, and their terrorist allies [constituting] an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world” (Bush, Jan. 2002). Later, in a graduation speech at West Point, he explained his strategy to deal with them. He said, “[T]he wars on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge... We must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten . . . the U.S” (Bush, June 2002).

Figure 8. Map of Military Bases Around Iran Across the Borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan



Source: “r/Worldpolitics - Map of All US Military Bases around IRAN.” Reddit, 2020, www.reddit.com/r/worldpolitics/comments/c4wa5i/map_of_all_us_military_bases_around_iran/

By rouge states, President Bush was referring to countries such as Iraq, Iran, North Korea, and Libya. The U.S. claims that these countries have or will certainly have an agenda to acquire

¹² The list of the rouge states is constantly updated to abide by U.S. foreign policy and interests in the world since the cold war era. For example, countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq have recently been dropped from the list. For details about Rouge States and US policy towards them See (Pillar, 2018) and (O’Reilly).

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and / or develop weapons of mass destruction. These rouge states have economic and socio-political schemas that reject the idea of a unipolar power. They “have earned the label of rogue not so much for the fact that they present threats due to overt power capabilities, but rather due to the fact that they are perceived as nondemocratic often portrayed as totalitarian or authoritarian regimes” (O’Reilly 306).

Just like China and Russia, Iran has also expressed concerns over the American bases close to its borders. As Ramtanu Maitra explains in “New U.S. Bases in Afghanistan”, the closest base to Iran is in Shindand, which is the largest airbase in Afghanistan in the western province of Herat. Therefore, the proximity of Shindand to Iran, the author argues, could give Tehran cause for concern. Consequently, strategic analysts were quoted to agree that Tehran has a reason to claim that Washington is in the process of encircling Iran (Ramtanu 27-29).

This American strategy is not ‘neo’. It has been an America tactic during the Cold War era. Chomsky termed it as ‘horrifying the neighbourhood’ strategy that the U.S. has long ago exercised in Central America and East Asia to contain Communism (Chomsky 1991). Therefore, since the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan was to deter and secure its preeminent and hegemonic position economically and militarily in the new global order (Jaeger et al 2003).

In short, the US presence in and about Afghanistan is vindicated as a strategy to combat global terror. Yet ‘Rouge States’ and the neighboring powers mainly Russia and China and other provincial powers like Iran and India, view it with much doubt and anxiety. In reaction, they had their own counter strategies to hinder the U.S. policies and advances particularly in Afghanistan and in the Eastern, Central and Southernmost Asian areas in general.

3.4.3. Economic Motives

Events of September 11th, 2001, were viewed as ‘the open-ended’ expansionist war to execute planned schema to secure an expansive economic, military and strategic welfares covered by the U.S. military influence. In addition to its geographic location with borders with China, Russia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and India, Afghanistan is reportedly rich in diverse natural minerals that dribbled the Soviets earlier and now the Americans.

3.4.3.1 The Afghan Mineral riches

According to the *New York Times* reporter James Risen, during the years following the invasion of Afghanistan, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Pentagon and United States Geological Survey (USGS) conducted aerial and ground surveys about the supposed Afghan mineral resources armed with the old Russian maps and charts. The findings were shocking: the previously unknown and untapped mineral reserves were estimated authoritatively at \$1 trillion enough to compete with nations in the region and elsewhere (Risen 2010).

The USSR has already known about natural riches of Afghanistan even before 1979. The Soviets had conducted geological surveys and confirmed the existence of vast materials since the 70s and 80s. Their findings revealed that there exist vast reserves of iron, uranium, copper, lead, fluor spar, lithium, high-grade chrome ore, zinc, barite, beryl, silver, tantalum gold, emeralds, bauxite and gold. Those reserves, according to “The Mining Journal”, are among the largest in Eurasia and that the Kremlin recently confirmed the findings in 2002 (qtd. in Chossudovsky 2018). Reportedly, of all the minerals that are being exploited is the lithium, which is used to produce atomic weapons, used in computer parts and for electric car batteries manufacture of which popularity is increasing in the United States.

3.4.3.2 The U.S., Oil industry and Natural Gas

In the very first chapter of this work, I have mentioned that the United States needed a position in Central Asia even before 1979. After the Soviet withdrawal in late 1990s, particularly during the Clinton Administration era, negotiations with the Taliban were held concerning the TAPI project for which the United California Company (UNOCAL) was commissioned. The project was a gas pipeline that crosses Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI) across 1900 km with less transit costs (Figure 9.). The project that would help the flow of the Turkmen gas, the third reserve in the region after Russia and Iran, into the global markets was suspended because of Taliban talk failure.

Figure 9. Map of TAPI Project Design



Source: Ahmadani, Ahmad. "Tapi Archives." Pakistan Today, 23 Feb. 2018, www.pakistantoday.com.pk/tag/tapi/.

However, just as the bombarding of Afghanistan started, the \$8.0 "crucial transit corridor" TAPI project was again contemplated. U.S officials were quoted saying, "this project opens up

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new avenues of multi-dimensional regional cooperation particularly in view of the recent geopolitical developments in the region (qtd. in Nafeez 257). Apparently, the heart-breaking events in New York were not indeed disastrous for everyone. Some sectors were instead harvesting the fruits of the disasters. In other words, “the 11 September attacks came at an extremely fortuitous time for the Bush administration, the Pentagon, the CIA, the FBI, the weapons industry, and the oil industry, all of which have benefited immensely from this tragedy” (280). Thus, the war on terrorism had a hidden agenda as Pr. Michael Chossudovsky argues, “the War on Afghanistan is a Profit-driven Resource War [and that] it is worth [going for]”. The author of “‘The War Is Worth Waging’: Afghanistan’s Vast Reserves of Minerals and Natural Gas” continues to admit that “the war on Afghanistan is part of a profit driven-agenda: a war of economic conquest and plunder, a resource war”, and that the entire objectives of “the Global War on Terrorism” (GWOT) are “rarely mentioned”. In conclusion, he says, “[T]he Post 9/11 “counter-terrorism campaign” has served to obfuscate the real objectives of the US-NATO war” (Chossudovsky, ‘The War Is Worth Waging’, 2018), and that plan to execute some of them would start as soon the Taliban were ousted and Al-Qaida is ruined.

President George W. Bush and members of his administration have already been involved in the oil industry before 9/11. According to Michael Chossudovsky’s book *America’s War on Terrorism*, President George W. Bush’s family has been involved in oil companies since 1950, Vice President Dick Cheney with *Halliburton* and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice with *Chevron*. Thus, the Eurasian oil industry meant great business for them especially as Under the Bush administration; the US oil giants have gained direct access to the planning of military and intelligence operations on behalf of the Bush administration in a covert operation that favors these giants (72).

In other expressions, 9/11 has provided a qualitative opportunity for the U.S. to act on behalf of oil giant companies opening the ways to launch oil projects and gas pipelines through Afghanistan (qtd. in Nafeez 286) to include, later, Iraq. The entire oil and gas story is best summarized in the words of the largely cited article “Energy future rides on U.S. war / Conflict centered in world's oil patch” in *The San Francisco Chronicle* which *observed* in late September 2001 that: “The hidden stakes in the war against terrorism can be summed up in a single word: oil. The map of terrorist sanctuaries and targets in the Middle East and Central Asia is also, to an extraordinary degree, a map of the world’s principal energy sources in the 21st century” (Viviano 2001) a clarification of the other bulk of undeclared motives of the war on terror following September 11th on Afghanistan and elsewhere.

3.4.3.3 The Opium Cultivation business and the Drug Trade

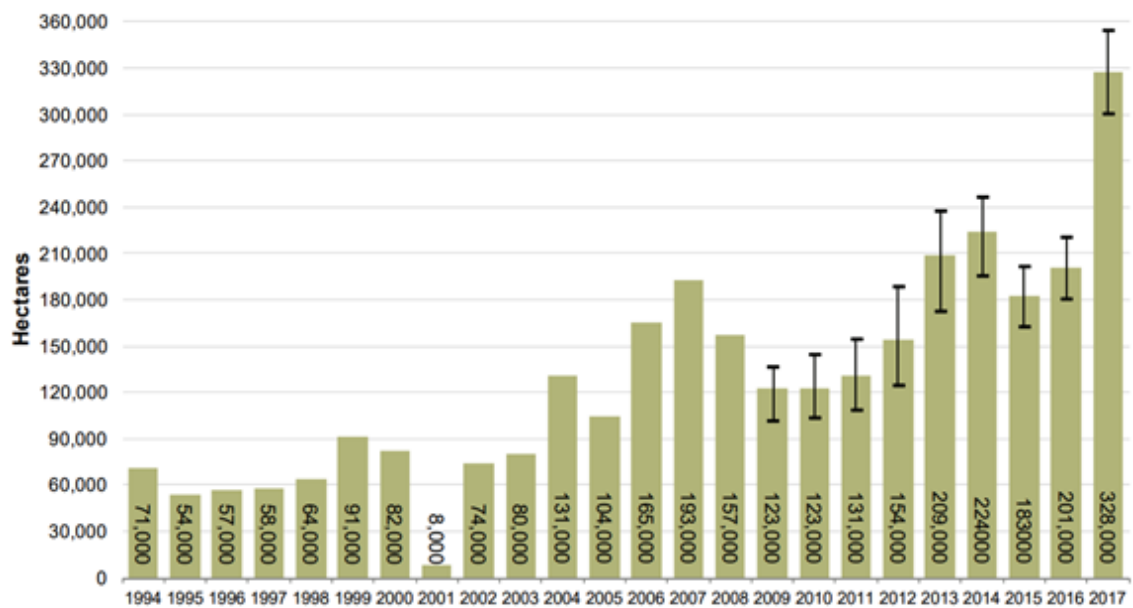
In addition to its geostrategic importance and richness of resources, Afghanistan is also known for its opium production. Sources estimate that 92% of opium production comes from Afghanistan. Afghan Warlords and a vast portion of its population depended mostly on the crop to make a living and /or to finance their insurgencies in times the Afghan economy went through tough conditions such as drought.

Among the other declared U.S. claims for the occupation of Afghanistan is fighting opium production and exportation. In 2018, *The Guardian*’s “US Anti-Narcotic Effort in Afghanistan Is a Costly Failure,” reported that since 2001, the United States has spent about \$8.6 billion to curb counternarcotic production efforts in Afghanistan and that these efforts failed despite their costs (2018). However, recent data by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) shows the opposite. Instead, it shows that since U.S. military intervention of Afghanistan in 2001 and NATO occupation in 2003, opium production has soared rapidly (Blog,

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“Drug War?”). The considerable decrease in the production, as the graph below shows in (Fig.10), was recorded in early 2001 when it reached 8000 tons. The reasons for this decrease have been discussed in the previous chapter: religious considerations as the Taliban gained control of Afghanistan and, at first, declared that the production and/or the consumption of drugs is anti-Islamic divine regulations or *sharia law*.

Figure 10. The Fluctuation of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan from 1994 to 2017



Sources: MCN/UNODC opium surveys 1994-2017. The vertical lines represent the upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence interval.

Source: Chossudovsky, Michel. “The Spoils of War: Afghanistan's Multibillion Dollar Heroin Trade.” *Global Research*, 22 Apr. 2019, www.globalresearch.ca/the-spoils-of-war-afghanistan-

Moreover, according to UNDOC (fig.10), the data confirm the conclusion of the head of Russia’s Federal Drug Control Service (RFDCS), Viktor Ivanov, who is quoted in 2010 saying that: “[T]he highest concentration of NATO servicemen in Afghanistan is being accompanied with the highest concentration of opium poppy, That situation causes doubts about the anti-terrorist mission and leads to the conclusion about the catastrophic consequences of the eight-

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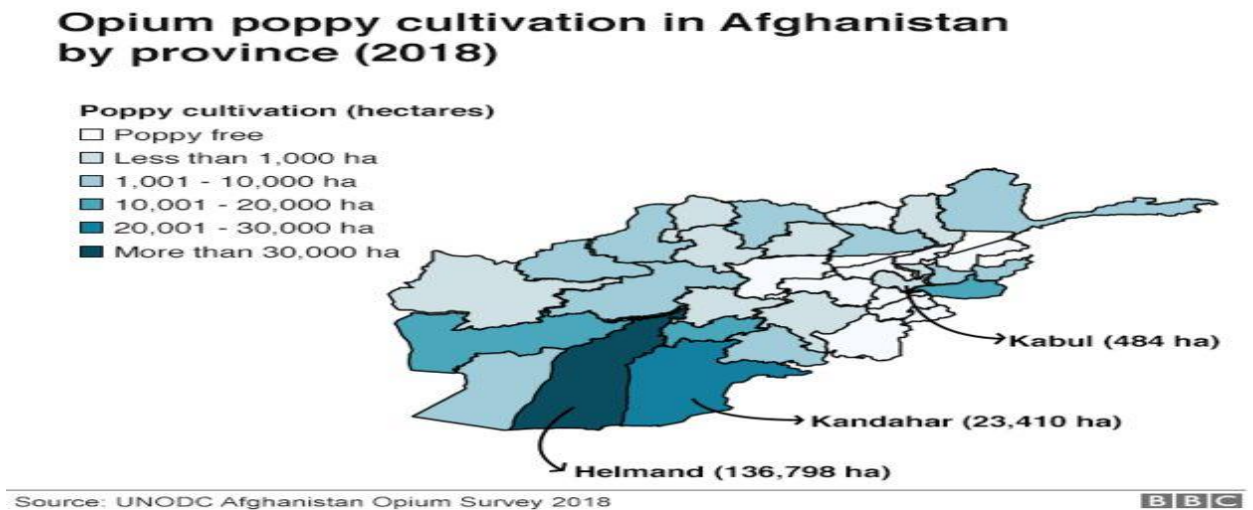
year stay [of coalition forces] in Afghanistan” (qtd. in Chossudovsky, “The War Is Worth Waging”, 2018).

Ivanov’s perspective differs from UNDOC justification, which affirms that the single reasons for the massive 2017 increase in opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan are related to domestic considerations such as lack of government control and security, corruption, scarce employment opportunities, lack of quality education and limited access to markets and financial services. These factors combined continue to contribute to the vulnerability of farmers towards opium poppy cultivation¹³.

The figures 10 and 11 show the highest opium cultivation records were in the Western regions such as Hirat and Ghor. The second higher provinces with opium cultivation were in South in Kandahar, Helmand, and the capital Kabul. Western provinces of Afghanistan such as Hirat. Surprisingly, opium poppy cultivation increases in areas under U.S. and NATO military forces; whereas its percentages are much lower or almost zero in areas under Afghan control such as Panjshin, Logar, Khost, and Parwan in the Central regions and some of the Northern provinces (Fig.11). Taliban partially ban the production of opium mainly for a religious reason as UNDOC reports (2017), and for political reasons that trigger fear of an uprising against the regime by the people if they were forced to stop growing it (Redmond, 2008).

¹³ The UN surveys found other justifications for the increase of opium cultivation in areas under NATO U.S. Most of these reasons are socio-economic ones. See the two reports, both conducted in 2017 by United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017 - Cultivation and Production - Afghanistan.” And “Afghan Opium Production Jumps to Record Level, up 87 per Cent: Survey.” by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC).

Figure 11. Map of the Regional Distribution of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan in 2018



Source: Azami, Dawood. "Afghanistan: How Does the Taliban Make Money?" BBC News, BBC, 22 Dec. 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-46554097

Based on the data and analyses above, we can agree with the conclusion which clearly states that "[T]he United States invaded Afghanistan largely to restore the heroin industry and it is now making about \$1.5 trillion every year from this business" (Press TV, 2017). Moreover, "the involvement of U.S. intelligence operators and agencies in the global drug traffic and in other international criminal networks is a factor that deserves greater attention in the emerging debate over the U.S. presence in Afghanistan" (Scott, 2003, 25). Dale Scott continues to argue that this business is executed through secret and invisible 'drug proxies' that include 'small cliques' having ties with CIA (80). Further at the end of his book *American War Machine Deep Politics, the CIA Global Drug Connection, and the Road to Afghanistan*, he concludes that "[he] would now stress even more heavily that American banks, as well as oil majors, benefit significantly from drug trafficking" (256). This deal would not have been possible without invading and occupying the lands from which 95% of the world's drug supply comes.

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According to different sources, the CIA's secret drug trafficking business is not new to Afghanistan or any other part of the world. For example, in *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, Alfred McCoy et. al reports that the drug business has been established earlier in South and Southeast Asia and in Indochina during the 1950s and 1970s and in Afghanistan, Central America and Columbia throughout the 1980s and 1990s respectively (1989). McCoy does not only narrate the historic involvement of CIA in the drug trafficking, but also explicitly confirm its protection for the drug cartels in many regions of the world. In another publication, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*, he said that “ the CIA's role involved various forms of complicity, tolerance or studied ignorance about the trade ... [t]he CIA did not handle heroin, but it did provide its drug lord allies with transport, arms, and political protection”. When it comes to the drug trafficking in Afghanistan and its neighbors, he concludes, “the CIA's role in the Southeast Asian heroin trade involved indirect complicity rather than direct culpability” (385).

Moreover, author Peter Scott Dale shares the same theory of complicity with Alfred McCoy et. al. According to his other book, *Drugs, Oil, and War: The United States in Afghanistan, Columbia, and Indochina*. Scott Dale believes that the government needed to protect and keep these drug agents under-covered to allow them expand their businesses away from any investigation. This follows the re-emergence of the CIA and re-establishing its connection with Afghanistan on post 9/11 (Burton). Thus, most of the drug goes to neighbouring Pakistan, Iran, India while large quantities are shipped to Africa, Europe and North America (fig.12).

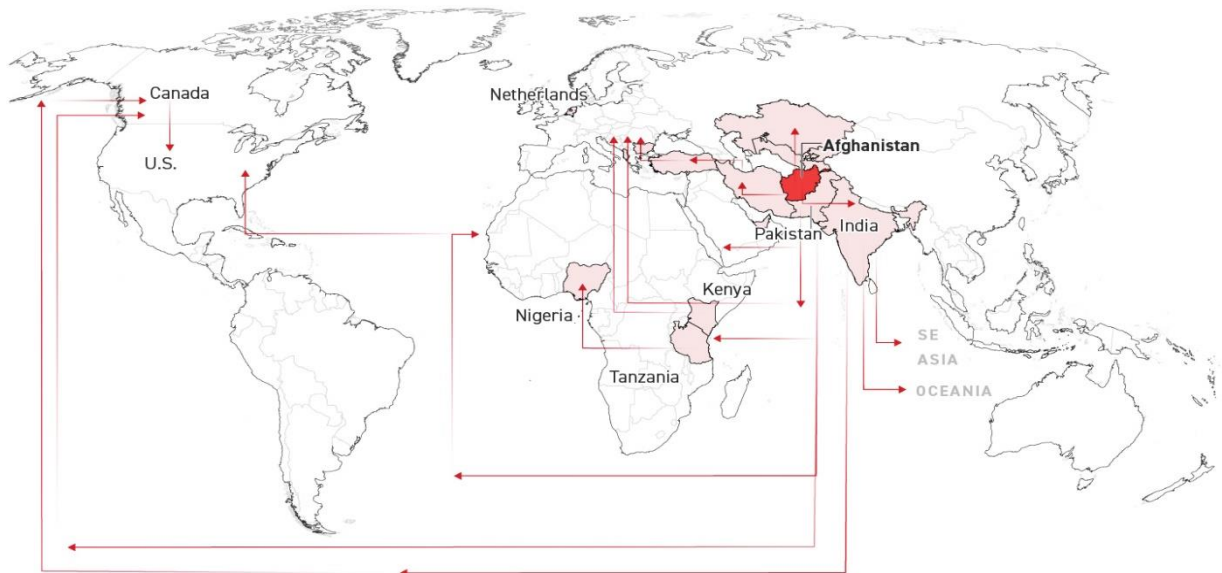
In fact, what the Central Intelligence Agency thought is private is no longer that top secret. The number of Americans who know that Afghan heroin is transported into the U.S. is big

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regardless of the silence of the media stream. Many witnesses know that loads of it are being shipped into caskets of cadavers, as a former Afghan commander explains, “Americans themselves admit that drugs are often transported out of Afghanistan on American planes”. The issue here is money (big money in fact)! He adds, “Drug trafficking in Afghanistan brings them about 50 billion dollars a year—which fully covers the expenses tied to keeping their troops there. Essentially, they are not going to interfere and stop the production of drugs” (qtd.in Scott 266).

Figure 12. Map of Transit Routes and Afghanistan–Cultivated Narcotics’ Destinations in the World

Most common transit routes and destinations for narcotics produced in Afghanistan



SOURCE: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Source: Meyer, Josh. “The Secret Story of How America Lost the Drug War with the Taliban.” POLITICO, 8 July 2018, www.politico.com/story/2018/07/08/obama-afghanistan-drug-war-taliban-616316.

Based on the facts above, huge sums of money flow into the American economy from drug trafficking which the U.S. announced that it has invaded Afghanistan to fight along with Bin Laden and the Taliban who ‘harboured’ him and his terrorist groups. The U.S. Economy

has become ‘narcocapitalist’ because of this drug laundering operations and political and economic corruption that has allowed banks to develop a highly elegant set of policies for transferring unlawful reserves to the U.S. and capitalize them in genuine businesses (257). This contradicts the media voices that whiten the image of the elite involved, particularly “[the] decision-making in the US State Department, the CIA and the Pentagon [who are] instrumental in supporting this highly profitable multibillion-dollar trade, third in commodity value after oil and the arms trade” (Chossudovsky, “Afghanistan’s Multibillion Dollar Heroin Trade”, 2005). Still “US corporate media simply refuses to cover what is one of the most important stories of the early 21st century [Afghanistan]” (Escobar, 2011), and many other parts of the world. Consequently, the full story is never told and is worth digging for.

3.4.4 A Business -Based War and Other Military Motives

In addition to the goals discussed above, the American war on Afghanistan is a gateway war. It paved the way to more wars in the region under the same title: The War on Terrorism. Just like Afghanistan, the Bush administration needed justifications to invade Iraq by manipulating the American public and the entire world connecting 9/11 to Iraq. Later the world came to discover that Saddam Houcine, who has been accused of producing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) too, had nothing to do with al-Qaeda nor with the weapons in suspicion. That is another dramatic legend.

3.4.4.1 Profitable Long War for Weapons Manufactures and Private Contractors

The interference of Arms business that began to thrive following 9/11 war on terrorism has raised new concerns about U.S. democracy exactly as Eisenhower has warned in 1961.

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Defence ministry insiders whose interests determine Washington's foreign policy now head lobbyists and influence elite. Besides, arms companies have begun to push for more arms sales (Atkinson 2015). Besides arms' deals, the IMC generates new jobs for major contractors by lobbying the pentagon and exerting pressure on congress for excessive spending in a give-and-take relationship that benefits both sides. According to Pepe Escobar, author of "Why the U.S. Won't Leave Afghanistan", ten years following the war on Afghanistan, there were over 100.000 private contractors in Afghanistan. Most of these contractors have, as he puts it, "mercenaries". He continues quoting US Defense Secretary Robert Gates saying; "withdrawing troops from Afghanistan is premature", and instead, the Pentagon "want[ed] the White House to hold off on ending the Afghanistan troop surge until the fall of 2012"(qtd. in Escobar) and the scenario continues today despite a dozen peace deals.

The other beneficiaries of the entire story of the wars linked to 9/11 such as the war in Afghanistan are Private Weapons Manufacturers (PWMs), Private Military Companies (PMCs) and Private Military Firms (PMFs) ¹⁴. These companies are literally war messengers and prophets among which the giant Lockheed Martian is an example (Hartung). They make huge profits from this weapons manufacturing such as bombs, drones and other sorts of weapons since "the new military-industrial complex ... continues to easily muster the necessary support from both Democrats and Republicans in Congress". Therefore, this "is a testament to the influence of this alliance that hundreds of billions are being spent in Afghanistan and Iraq ...

¹⁴ Global sales of arms and military services by the 100 largest defense contractors soared in the decade following 9/11. In 2010, it reached about \$ 420.0 billion with an increase of 60% since 2002. The top 100 companies on the list of arms manufacturing, 44 are based in the U.S. They include Boeing, Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin. These American companies account for more than 60 percent of arms sales revenue of the 100 manufacturers. See "Military Spending: 20 Companies Profiting the Most from War" by Stebbins and Comen, for updated analyses.

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[and] the documented billions stolen by government officials in Iraq and Afghanistan are treated as a mere cost of doing business” (Turley 2014). Without wars, especially long-term wars like the American- Afghan war, those private weapons’ contractors would lose trillions of dollars. Instead, there must be a reason to a war somewhere so long as “big arms manufacturers profit enormously from wars and other armed conflicts”. Arms industry is a private enterprise in the U.S., thus, “without continuous and prolonged warfare that requires the deployment of their guns, bombs, tanks, warships and submarines, [these private contractors] would go out of business” (Finn, 2018). That is how the Industrial-Military Complex (IMC) works¹⁵. Consequently, as concluded earlier, “the present war on terrorism, which is in many ways an indirect product of the projection of U.S. power, is now being used to justify the further projection of that power” (66); the military power and the weaponry supremacy.

The coalition of agencies, arms companies, and lobbyists has reached its peak under President Obama, according to Jonathan Turley, because of the considerable increase in drone attacks. Thus, President Eisenhower’s warning to Americans to "guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence... by the military-industrial complex" was ignored since there was no need to consult Congress for operations as such (2014). The economic figures and charts, designed by independent agencies, indicate that the war economy flourished through 2013. This was partly because Private Security Companies (PSCs) and spy agencies started to employ more than 11.000 employees, and counter-terrorism degrees were introduced in education. Besides

¹⁵ Contrary to President Dwight Eisenhower’s warning against MIC in 1961 and, his concerns about unchecked military expansion, and the continuing close ties between private military contractors, members of the military establishment and the federal government. Author Kone argues that from World War II to the War on Terror, the war became an end in itself, serving the interests of an elite group that uses the projection of power as a way to justify the continued expansion of military spending. See “The Military-Industrial Complex in the United States: Evolution and Expansion from World War II to the War on Terror,” by Aminata Kone and B.F. Cooling’s *War, Business, and American Society: Historical Perspectives on the Military-Industrial Complex*.

special Military Service Providers (MSPs) for contractors in Afghanistan and the other law enforcement programs on their part drained almost \$53 billion in that year alone despite spiralling protests of the tax-paying public against the war in Iraq and especially Afghanistan as America's most wanted enemy, Osama Bin Laden, was assassinated there two years earlier.

3.5 A Continuous War in Afghanistan at Increasing Costs

The American-led intervention and occupation in Afghanistan are not all about gains and profits. According to the report, "Cost of War" by Brown University, counterterrorism has currently extended to 80 countries. In 2019, the post 9/11 war on terror, in general, has cost the U.S. government \$ 6.4 trillion, \$ 2 trillion for Afghanistan alone until 2019 (Crawford). In details, that makes no less than U.S. \$10 billion a month, or \$120 billion a year (Escobar). Although the war on terror did not eradicate terrorism, the U.S. MIC will continue using it as an opportunity to keep military budgets high (Kone) despite the public opposition to it.

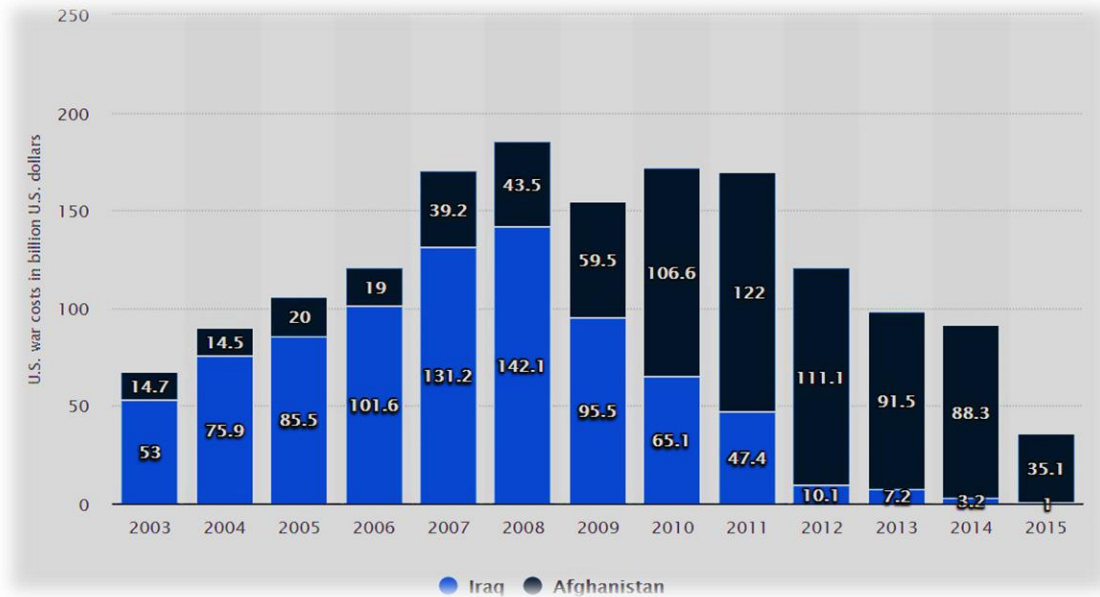
Consequently, the cost of the war in Afghanistan has exceeded that of Iraq and Syria according to the latest indicators as in the figures 13 and 14. The report "Cost of War" argues that the figures published are 'significantly underestimated' as they do not include the additional costs that are not directly linked to war (Crawford). These costs concern the after-service care for war veterans or the big sums spent on governmental facilities.

The "Cost of War" is not all about financial loss and strategic failures. It also comprises of a longer chapter, which deals with human fatalities of all sides. Since the beginning of the war against the Taliban began on October 7, 2001, American forces have reportedly recorded more than 2,300 deaths and around 20,660 soldiers wounded in the battlegrounds. Official data often kept secret and usually under-documented, show that approximately 13,500 US military

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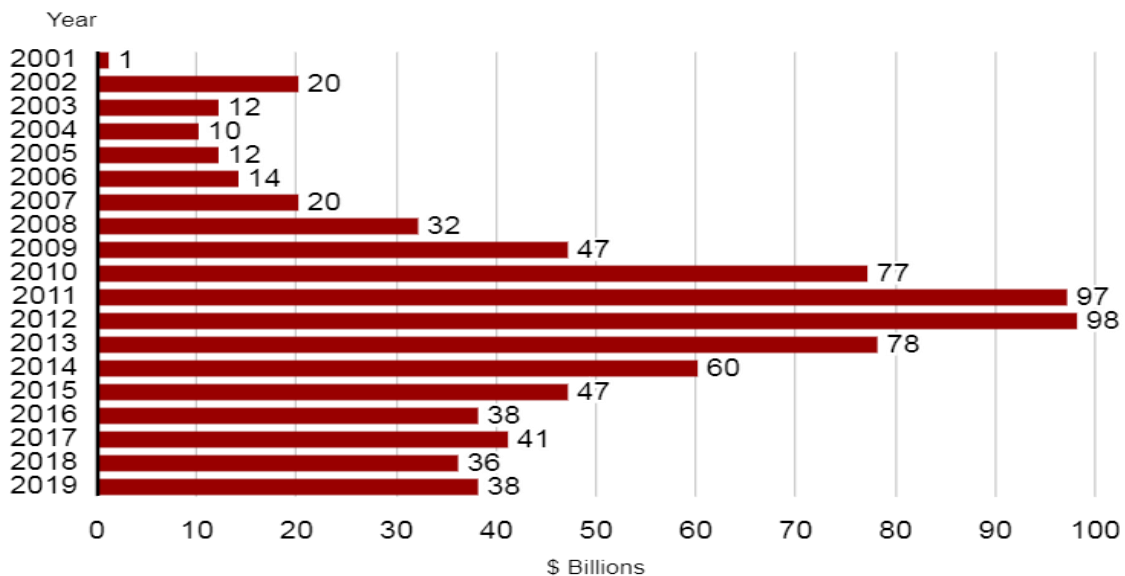
personnel were in Afghanistan as of December 2019, and nearly 12,000 American non-combatants who were working as contractors there.

Figure 13. U.S. War Costs in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2003 to 2015 (in Billion U.S. Dollars)



Source: Statista Research Department. “U.S. War Costs in Iraq and Afghanistan until 2015.” *Statista*, 28 May 2015, www.statista.com/statistics/271526/us-war-costs-in-iraq-and-afghanistan/.

Figure 14. U.S. Cost of War in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2019 (in US Billion Dollars)

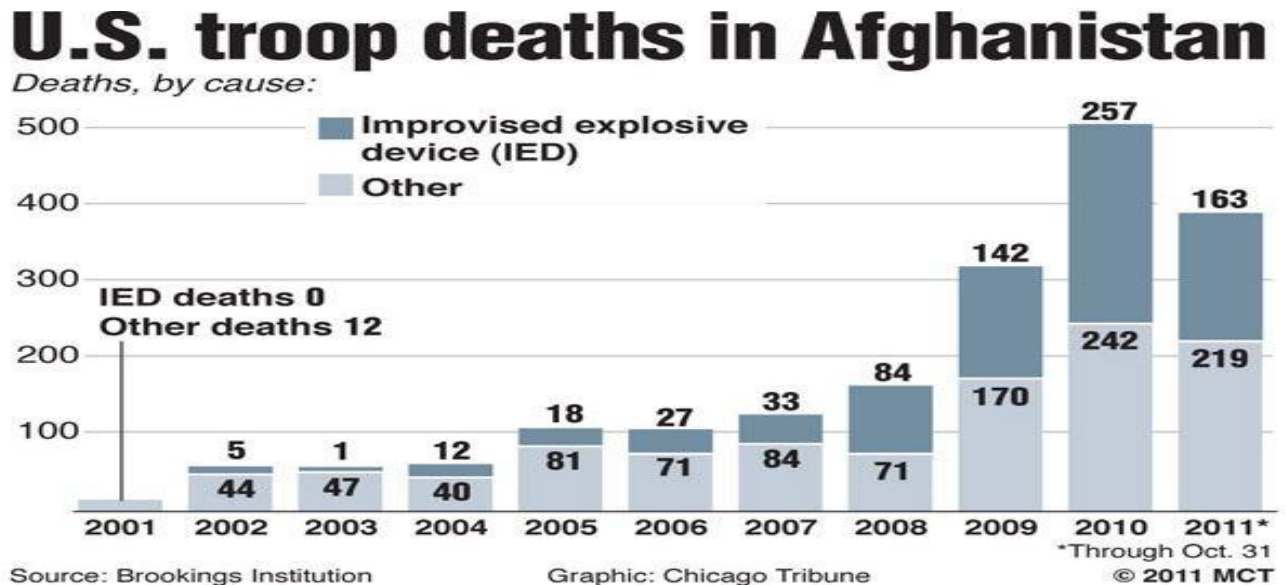


Source: US Department of Defense, Reality Check Team. “Afghanistan War: What Has the Conflict Cost the US?” *BBC News*, BBC, 28 Feb. 2020, www.bbc.com/news/world-47391821.

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A closer look at the statistics and the report “Costs of War: By the Numbers”, reveals that since 2001, about 2,298 U.S. troops have been killed in the war in Afghanistan and almost 52,010 U.S. troops have been wounded. The data (Fig.15) shows that at least 7,950 private contractors who work for the Pentagon have died in the war in Afghanistan. The year 2010 was the deadliest year of the war in Afghanistan ever (Fig. 16), with 499 U.S. service members killed and the month of August 2011 was the deadliest month of the entire 19 years of the war in Afghanistan. In 2009, more U.S. soldiers died from suicide bombs than were killed in combat in Afghanistan (2011).

Figure 15. US Troop Deaths by Cause in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2012



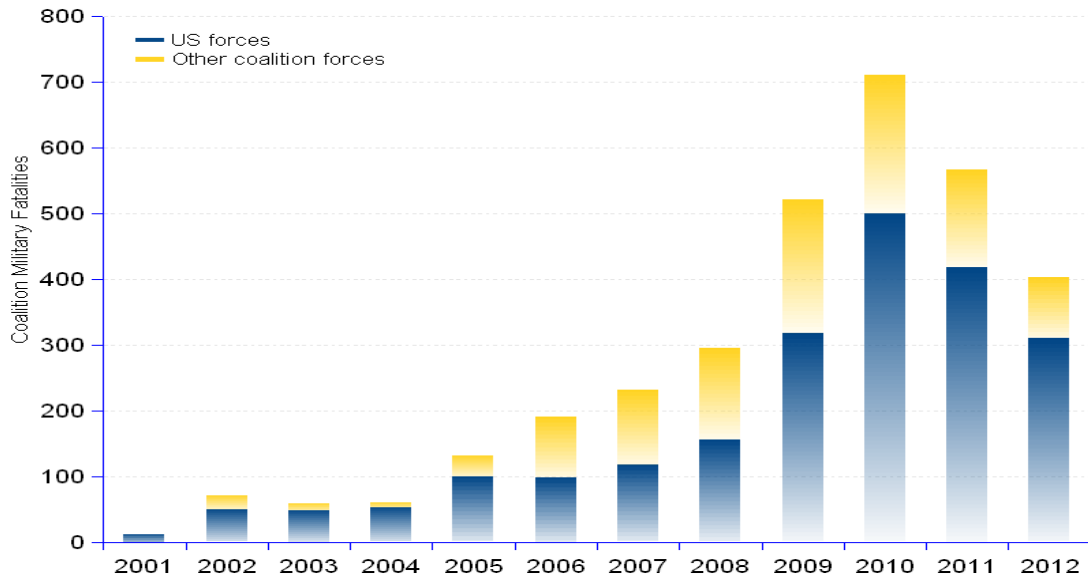
Source: Bartram, Michele. “Understanding America's Longest War.” govbooktalk.gpo.gov/2012/05/25/Understanding-Americas-longest-war-in-afghanistan/.

The numbers of the Afghan side, on the other hand, are higher than those reported in the bar graph below (Fig.17) according to recent media reports. The losses are heavier on the Afghan side, especially among Afghan security forces and civilians. According to the United

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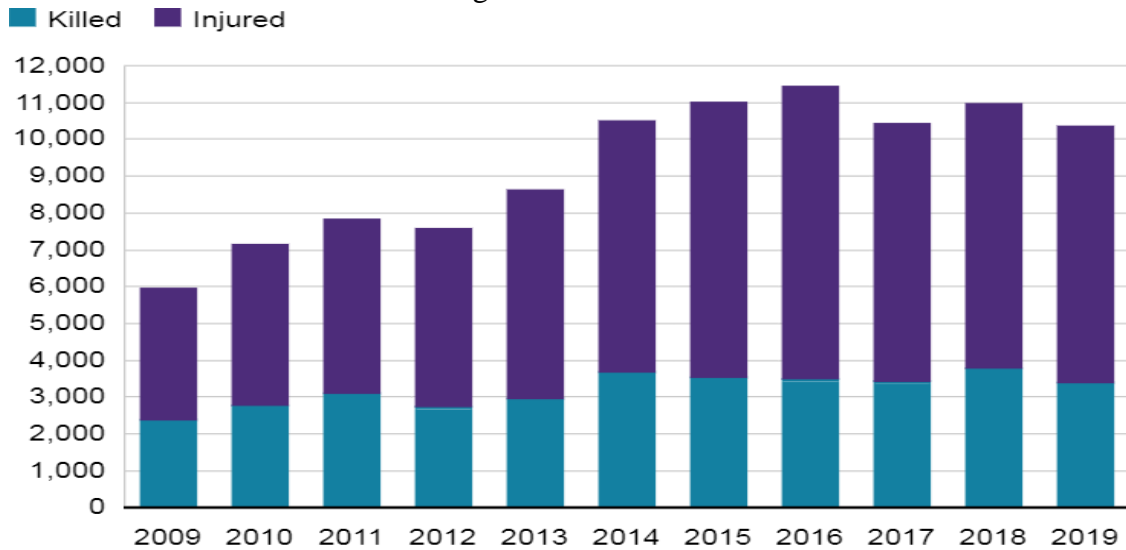
Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), more than 100,000 civilians have been killed or injured since it began systematically recording civilian casualties in 2009 (Reality Check Team).

Figure 16. US and Allied Forces Death Toll in the War from 2001 to 2012



Source: “Costs of War: By the Numbers.” Friends Committee on National Legislation, 15 Mar. 2011, www.fcnl.org/updates/costs-of-war- By-the-numbers-396.

Figure 17. Total Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan 2009 - 2019



Source: UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, “Afghanistan War: What Has the Conflict Cost the US?” *BBC News*, BBC, 28 Feb. 2020, www.bbc.com/news/world-47391821.

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The release of other series of reports by Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) known as “The Afghanistan Papers”¹⁶ exposed more fraud-related facts, which were made public, about the war cost in Afghanistan. The reports, published by the *Washington Post* on December 9, 2019, estimate that more than \$15.5 billion had been lost on fraud throughout the past 11 years (Huggard and Wittes). The papers reveal a big contrast between the war-related facts and costs (on the field), and what the U.S. officials told the American public about it. Since 2001, the papers report, the cost of the war was indeed pricey: \$1 trillion and 2300 American military victims, about 44000 Afghan civilians besides countless strategic, military, and intelligence errors. Analysts link those errors to “the failure of understanding the enemy” despite experiences. A failure to learn about how a tribal country functions, the role that the warlords had towards the United States and neighboring countries, what their goals were and how they regarded the Americans. In short, Clayton Thomas summarizes the reports saying that: “The documents, and *The Washington Post* stories that accompany them, suggest that U.S. policies in Afghanistan often were poorly planned, resourced, and/or executed. These apparent shortcomings contributed to several outcomes that either were difficult to assess or did not fulfil stated U.S. objectives” (Clayton, “Afghanistan Papers”, 2020). “The Afghanistan Papers” had a great deal of impact on the American public’s understanding of counter-terrorism wars especially the Afghan cause.

The long and costly war remains far from success. The financial and military reports to Congress about the war in Afghanistan are designed to help the legislators to make an

¹⁶ All the papers by a group of experts and analysts that comprise the report are available at the online archive of Brown University at; watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers.

independent and precise assessment of the successive U.S. administrations' efforts to rebuild, transform and even quit Afghanistan.

3.6 A Brief Assessment of the 19 Years-Old U.S. Intrusion in Afghanistan

Some historians and political analysts argue that there are similarities between the Vietnam War and the War in Afghanistan on both the political and military sides. An example of the U.S. disappointment in Vietnam occurred, as “the fall of Saigon in April 1975 did not lead to the breakdown of the US political system or the breakup of the USA as a political system. However, they did create a lingering sense of failure within the United States [a type of] humiliation of the Carter Presidency” (Maley 162). Others even prefer to call the Afghan war America’s new Vietnam just as it was a Russian Vietnam by the end of the 20th century. They explain that in both Vietnam and Afghanistan the U.S. tried to increase aid to empower the local forces while seeking a peace deal with the opposition and the neighbours (Fremont-Barnes 93). In the Afghan case, this involve the Northern Alliance vs. the Taliban and neighbouring Pakistan and India. Another similarity between the American-Vietnam and Afghan wars is that “many previous US presidents have similarly found it is much easier to perpetuate conflict than it is to end it. For instance, throughout the Vietnam War, a series of US presidents did not withdraw military forces because of the potential domestic political consequences” (McHenry 2018). Thus, making a final decision about leaving a war ‘pitch’ is not the president’s sole decision or even his administration. One reason, according to Nafeez is that:

The power of the states and the Congress has gradually been abandoned to the Executive Department, because of war conditions; and we have seen the creation of an arrogant, swollen bureaucratic complex totally unfettered by the checks and balances of the Constitution. In a very real and terrifying sense, our Government is the CIA and the Pentagon, with Congress reduced to a debating society. (282)

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This means that the withdrawal plans are linked to domestic politics, such as re-elections and, as mentioned earlier, lobbyists' interests. Another interpretation for the Afghan war policy and withdrawal prospects to end the occupation can be further understood by getting into the minds of the two opposing views of the strategic experts who contend that the U.S. must stay in Afghanistan until a political settlement appears depending on arming and training Afghan security forces on one side. Moreover, those, on the other side, who do not see U.S. presence a problem at all. Instead, they recommend that the U.S. will maintain its military presence in Afghanistan to limit the rising political and economic influence on China in the region and to 'frighten' Pakistan, Iran and even Russia.

3.7 Evaluating the U.S. Strategies in Afghanistan from President Bush, Through President Obama to President Trump

Since September 11, 2001, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan has now neared its 20th anniversary. The attacks on the American homeland made the U.S. disregard all international conventions and it engaged in an opened war against ‘enemies everywhere’. The latter could be countries and regimes as well as groups or individuals because there were no distinctions made between the terrorists or the countries that harboured them (Shabnum 44-50). Consequently, the U.S-led a costly campaign that favoured the use of force regardless of the repercussions.

3.7.1 President G. W. Bush’s Administration (Jan. 20, 2001 – Jan. 20, 2009)

The Bush administration has failed to detain the top master minder of the attacks, Osama Bin Laden. As a result, the strategy failed and was, according to Bert, “the biggest flaw in the entire Afghan effort” (154). The other reason why that approach failed was that it had other prospects: to defend the U.S.’s vital interests in the entire area. The Bush agenda diversified and, as Whitlock argues, “[its] ultimate goal [was] not the capture of a fanatic ... [which was only] a media circus, but the acceleration of western imperial power... The unread news today is that the ‘war against terrorism’ is being exploited in order to achieve objectives that consolidate American power... the expansion of the American arms industry, and the speeding up of trade liberalization” (Whitlock 2019). All were achieved later except the initial goal: killing Bin Laden.

President G.W. Bush’s strategy failed because it was not against Al-Qaeda, according to the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, who reportedly concluded that al-Qaeda was not the major enemy and it has not been so for some time. Karzai, who wished he had joined the Taliban,

admitted that the war was between a superpower and “fierce Pashtun nationalists” who are fighting a foreign occupation and doing their best “to undermine a puppet regime” (Escobar). The Bush agenda was more of a power projection than revenge. This superpower prognosis started from Afghanistan in the intersection of Southern and Central Asia and stretched to other areas like Iraq, Syria and probably Iran (and China) up next.

3.7.2 President B. Obama’s Administration (Jan. 20, 2009 – Jan. 20, 2017)

In 2008, President Obama campaigned for election as an anti-war candidate who believed that the Afghan war is winnable and vowed to end it. In a speech, the media quoted him declaring that “this is a war that we have to win” (Obama 2009) and promised to send at least two more fighting brigades of about 10,000 soldiers to Afghanistan.

Like his predecessor Bush, Obama announced that “finishing the fight against al-Qaeda and the Taliban” was listed as one of his top primacies (Obama 2009). Thus, Obama’s Afghanistan policy has been presented as a continuation of a “good war” as opposed to Bush’s “bad war” in Iraq that he could handle with an ambitious counterinsurgency. In 2009, Obama was advised by his military commanders to follow the same counterinsurgency strategy known as COIN, which would require as many as 40,000 additional American men and women in uniform in Afghanistan. The strategy, according to *New York Times*, is “a troop-heavy, time-consuming, expensive doctrine of trying to win over the locals by building roads, bridges, schools and a well-functioning government” (Landler) after Taliban began to show some strength which would hinder any progress.

Obama’s most notable achievement in his first term, according to many Americans, was his success to terminate Al-Qaeda leader bin Laden in the special Operation Neptune Spear (ONS), a Navy SEAL raid in Pakistan in May 2011. Political Analysts believe that this step has

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“added to Mr. Obama’s conviction that he was on the way to closing the books on the war” (Landler), and that definitely helped his reelection in 2014.

However, President Obama’s second term went slightly different as he “switched off the nation-building mode” option in August 2015. He clearly showed the U.S. failure to transform Afghanistan. Despite the disappointment, and without an uncompleted mission, he could not allow the conversion of Afghanistan into a terrorist hotspot either. In a meeting of the National Security Council (NSC), he said, “We’re no longer in nation-building mode” despite all the billions and the ‘sacrifice’ in Afghanistan, and yet “the counterterrorism challenges are real.” Consequently, Obama halted his withdrawal plans and announced that he would leave thousands of American troops in the country indefinitely” (Landler) instead. This failure turned Obama from an anti-war candidate to a commander in chief of a lasting war (Cordesman 4).

Political analysts argue that president Obama’s strategy failed for different reasons. One of them is the decisions he made based on consulting his military commanders who often called for continued U.S. presence in Afghanistan to avoid the scenario of Iraq. For example, they convinced him to delay his withdrawal plans in June and then in July 2016. In doing so, he made it clear that he had decided to reverse his earlier decision to cut U.S. troop levels to 5,500 and that the new total would now be 8,400 (8). The second reason for Obama’s strategic failure in Afghanistan is the absence of a ‘reliable’ Afghan partner. Obama’s attention shifted from president Karzai to his successor Ashraf Ghani when the former refused to sign a long-term security agreement with the U.S. As a result, he concluded, “without the right partner, it was impossible for the U.S. to succeed” (Landler) in Afghanistan no matter how much efforts were made.

By the end of his term in 2016, President Obama was not able to withdraw American forces from Afghanistan completely, but he would at least reduce the number of American troops there. Reported numbers show that less than 10, 000 soldiers remained in Afghanistan, a 9,800 U.S. military personnel to be exact, remained in Afghanistan at the invitation of the new Afghan government (Cordesman 11) to train and assist the Afghan troops leaving the burden for his successor.

3.7.3 The Contemporary Challenges for a Successful Complete Exit Plan by President D. Trump’s Administration Since Jan. 20, 2017

The interrelationship between the exit plans and domestic White House policies is more apparent in the strategies set forth by President Obama and President Trump. Obama’s administration faced much criticism when he announced his withdrawal plan starting with the reduction of American troops in Afghanistan in July 2011. His opponents, reportedly, claimed that Al-Qaeda will ‘be on the rise’ again, and thus, other Islamist terrorist groups will ‘take roots’, as said earlier, his military experts and national security advisors wondered. Their assumptions were based on a similar exit plan in Iraq, which, as a result, enabled the terrorist group known the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to gain control of many parts in Iraq.

On the other hand, on his ‘America First’ election campaign, President Trump had his own version of the withdrawal plan or at least ‘the reduction of American commitments’ in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq etc. According to a White House report by the office of National Security and Defence (NSD), president Trump drew the outlines of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan when he said that, “someday, after an effective military effort, perhaps it will be possible to have a political settlement [there].” However, he did not set a fixed agenda for it. He added, “Nobody knows if or when that will ever happen” (Trump 2017). Unfortunately, the continuous

insurgencies between the Taliban and the U.S-backed Afghan forces indicate that the United States' new Afghanistan policy under the Trump administration still flounders as it fails to sort out the governance tasks necessary for long-term success and stability in Afghanistan. Only by then, the campaign promises could be realized as Trump's first term nears its end in 2020.

3.7.3.1 America First!

President Trump's strategy in Afghanistan seems different from his predecessors in the White House since 2001. In their article about the new U.S. administration, "Trump's New Afghan Strategy", Munir and Shafiq argue that, "the new strategy is condition-based rather than time-bound with a focus on tackling terrorism rather than Afghan nation-building ... the US support for the Afghan Unity Government is conditional depending on its commitment and performance" (30). In other words, the counterterrorism military support has continued to the Kabul government but without a nation-building plan as he said while outlining his plan. In the meanwhile, just like Obama, he did not belittle the potential drawbacks of a sudden exit plan. He explained to the nation: "We [Americans] must address the reality of the world as it exists right now ... and extremely predictable consequences of a hasty withdrawal", but his campaign promises (and re-elections) may compel him to accept the risks of pulling back. Reportedly, President Trump has made clear that that his administration would not mind going back into Afghanistan even after his troops' withdrawal. Thus, an existing 'come-back' procedure in mind if things went wrong later is always an option.

Therefore, it is the Afghans' chance, according to him, to stand on their own feet and draw their future destiny, "our [we the Americans] commitment is not unlimited, and our support is not a blank check. The government of Afghanistan must carry their share of the military, political, and economic burden" (Trump 2017). In saying so, the new strategy focuses more on

war fighting with little focus on political and economic reforms (Munir and Shafiq 40) in times when observers insist that any military success is largely linked to economic and political stability.

3.7.3.2 The Last Deal: February 29th, 2020 – Doha, Qatar, and Forthcoming Sanguinity

Despite the pessimism of Trump’s foreign policy, his plan is being put into practice. The eighteen months-long talks with the Taliban have been concluded with an agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban, who, ironically, was once the enemy that the U.S. needed to terminate! The agreement was signed in an official ceremony on Feb. 29, 2020, in Doha, Qatar by chief American envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the contemporary Taliban representative. The two sides signed the deal and shook hands while the room burst in cheers and *takbeer* (shouting “Allah -O- Akbar, ‘God is great!’”) as seen in a live video coverage by *Global News Channel* (2020), a self-congratulatory cry of victory for the Taliban.

According to strategists, the new American approach in Afghanistan “is flawed as it focuses on a military approach rather than a political solution for Afghanistan”, mostly because “[it] does not address the internal vulnerabilities of Afghanistan, especially reconstruction and nation-building” (Munir and Shafiq 29). However, despite all these threats, Trump “seems to have accepted that the risks of withdrawal outweigh the costs of perpetuating a military commitment to a conflict without a coherent plan to end it” (McHenry). Therefore, the U.S. should know that a widespread desire to end the war in Afghanistan does not necessarily guarantee an acceptable settlement (Tellis and Eggers 17). For that reason, political observers in and outside the U.S. believe that the strategy in these terms is simply a reelection campaign

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move. Besides, President Trump has officially declared American readiness to be back into Afghanistan in case the situation worsens again. Following the inking of the deal, he said, “I really believe the Taliban wants to do something to show that we’re not all wasting time, [but] if bad things happen, we’ll go back” (Lynch). Only the future would tell!

President Trump’s administration is aware that “the security situation in Afghanistan still lingers between the Taliban and the Afghan government for control of the country” (Gregory 338-340). Owing to this condition, Trump’s defense secretary Mark Esper believes that several spoilers, referring to the Taliban, “threaten to upend America’s goal to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan and end its longest war [in Afghanistan]” (qtd. Shawn). The Escalation of attacks in the few days following the signature of the deal made the U.S. accuse the Taliban of not living up to their commitments ‘inked’ between them and the U.S.

The talks engineered an initial withdrawal plan of nearly 13,000 American troops, starting by about 5,000 to leave within 135 days, and another number from the allied forces over 14 months. Moreover, the deal includes the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners by the Afghan government and 100 security forces held by the Taliban before their intra-negotiations start the following March. The deal is still ambiguous and may not unravel in the present terms (Mashal). The last U.S.- Afghan talks in Qatar a fragile agreement in spite of the Taliban willingness to break formally with al-Qaeda and their interest in exploring the Qatar compromise on the condition that it eventually results in the exit of all foreign forces from Afghanistan (17), which is an American precondition for any withdrawal.

Exchanging prisoners between the Taliban and the government as a decisive issue is likely to inflame much disagreement and delay the intra-Afghan consultations. The first test of the

deal has failed as, according to *Reuters*' reporter in Kabul, "the Taliban broke off talks with the Afghan government on Tuesday" (Sediqi). Consequently, the public and international optimism about the future of this war-torn republic starts to wane as well. On another hand, since the Taliban, do not recognize the Kabul-based government legitimacy, Sediqi continues to predict that "Taliban suspension of the talks could lead to an escalation of violence, which in turn could threaten the plan to withdraw U.S. troops, a major objective of President Donald Trump" (2020). Therefore, a withdrawal without a complete arrangement of these hot issues is likely to quicken the breakdown of any deal, which would likely lead to chaos akin to the aftermath of the Soviet pullback in 1989.

Much debate is necessary for the success of the pact and its transformation into a permanent peace agreement if Trump's intentions are true. As *The New York Times* explains, the road to reach stability, which is key for resolving the Afghan crisis, still depends on U.S. contribution. The U.S. must install a democratic system, improve opportunities for Afghan women and minorities who risk Taliban dominance. Moreover, the U.S. needs to eradicate the rampant corruption and heal the economy that is heavily dependent on American and other international aid (Mashal). Now that the deal is signed, the Afghans and the international community look at Afghanistan with hope for a different future, and with the justified fear of the unknown. Besides, only the days ahead will determine the U.S. intentions to leave Afghanistan or will never abandon its gains in the region at any cost.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter acknowledges that American security discourse and foreign policy have been subjected to constant reconfiguration since WWII and the cold war era, and the attacks of September 11th, 2001 has outlined much of the 21st century American political practices.

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The attacks of 9/11 on the world trade centers and other parts of the U.S. were blamed on Al-Qaeda that has emerged in Afghanistan in the 1990s. In response, the Bush administration mobilized the public and the international community to get involved in a Global War on Terrorism, launched from Afghanistan, a vengeance for its fallen dignity and to make sure the same scenario will not be repeated.

The U.S.-led intervention and occupation of Afghanistan reverberates the American experience in Vietnam, to some extent, where superpower bet on its instinctual human, military, and financial powers was challenged. The ongoing war in Afghanistan has lasted almost two decades at a cost of about \$2 trillion and more than 3500 lives lost and more than 25000 injured. These numbers outweigh the costs of Vietnam. Although this chapter does not compare the costs or the outcomes of American involvement in Vietnam and Afghanistan, it clearly argues that The U.S. did have much to gain from its intervention in Afghanistan. Unlike the war in Vietnam, from where the U.S. walked its way out empty-handed, we saw that the war on Afghanistan was exploited to accomplish many objectives that merge American power, the extension of the American arms industry, and the speeding up of commerce and business.

The war in Afghanistan is almost 19 years old and still raging, despite its high costs, it has been a mess from the startup. The alternation of the three administrations has made it steered by imprecise and uncommitted plans. Some plans, as reports from the field revealed for Congress, were powered by untruthfully and fake reports of progress from the battlefield. As a result, efforts to end it honorably were almost certainly doomed to failure all along.

The American military engagement in Afghanistan lacked clarity and transparency and its costs and time are products of how many objectives the U.S had in Afghanistan. Most of these objectives were (a hush-hush) and still are not streamed on the media. At least not as much as

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the Bush doctrine of the War on Terror was publicized. The known motive of the war was to dismantle Al-Qaida and disarm the Taliban to make sure no more attacks could be masterminded on the American homeland. However, the war was ended neither by the collapse of the Taliban nor by the murder of Bin Laden. Thus, the previous justification became suspicious and questionable.

The real motives are geostrategic, political, and economic. The 'elongated' war in Afghanistan was a superpower projection in the Southern and Central-Asian intersection where the U.S. needed a position after the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of new rivals such as Russia, China, and Iran who could either compete with the U.S. or threaten its interests there. The American military presence in Central Asia, as in many other parts of the world, is a reconfiguration of its changed global security context since it has emerged as unipolar and following the attacks of September 11, 2001.

In other terms, the war on terror in Afghanistan and elsewhere is a matter of security, hegemony, sovereignty, and even economic benefits. America now deters its rivals with the spread of its military bases along their borders. It secures the natural flow of oil and provides its allies with a sense of security and reassurance. Economically, the Afghan minerals, opium poppy, and military operations represent big businesses for the CIA, private military contractors, and private weapon manufacturers at home through lobbyists and pressure elites who benefit mostly from the war.

Publicly, there is a widespread desire to end the war in Afghanistan. However, the success of any exit plan necessitates continued economic, political, and military assistance to the Afghan government. Now that the objective of bringing the Taliban to the table of negotiations and

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inking a deal with the U.S. is achieved, expectations remain higher for the stability of the Islamic Republic and the region as prerequisites for an end of the occupation.

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Since 2001, the American intervention in Afghanistan has become a long-term occupation centered on counterterrorism. It is officially justified by continuous targeting of al Qaeda roots and other active militant groups that might threaten America now or in the future. In practice, however, the unread news today is that the chain of wars against terrorism of which Afghanistan is the bigger circle has been exploited to accomplish further objectives such as hegemony, supremacy, and weaponry power projection. In other words, by its involvement in Afghanistan, the U.S is fulfilling other regional objectives and interests in that troubled part of the world regardless of the burdens levied on the consecutive American administrations since 2001 by the Afghan war. The war on terrorism, which legitimately vindicated American-led invasion of Afghanistan, is a mere strategic policy to empower the U.S. to venture its political goals and security interests and to establish a legal foundation for global security that fits a unipolar giant. Therefore, the execution of these goals had to start as soon the Taliban was overthrown and Al-Qaida crumbled.

Firstly, *geostrategically*, the war on Afghanistan has provided America and its allies with a chance to remain focused on Afghanistan to maintain its pre-eminence in the area on a long-term basis. The U.S. now has a foothold in the region to implement its traditional policy in the Middle East and Southern Asia. The U.S now can safeguard the free flow of oil through the Persian Gulf and defend its supplying allies to keep the prices under control because political dominance and manipulating resources have been foremost aims of this imperial power for centuries.

Secondly, *Militarily*, the U.S war on terrorism and the long presence in Afghanistan has provided it with reasons to set up bases in Afghanistan and neighboring Tajikistan, Uzbekistan,

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and Kirgizstan. During the early years following the intervention, The U.S. has constructed more than 38 military bases in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the three former Soviet republics to deter and discomfort its rivals there. Since then, the number of the military bases has increased and the exact count is still a hush-hush. Some bases in and around Afghanistan help monitoring resources purposefully for material gains and others allow for quick deployment procedures, discourage adversaries, and reassure allies. Countries such as Russia and China are all old U.S. rivals in the region since the Cold War era and lately, the list expanded to include other Rogue States such as Iraq and Iran. Setting up bases on the intersection of the three major areas: Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East facilitates potential conquests or conflicts with the (budding) enemies. So, as the U.S. got a position in the area, its strategic military tactic is likely to strike fear and costs these countries more resources for self-protection.

Subsequently, both China and Iran consider this U.S tactic provocative whereas Russia, on the other side, feels uncomfortable about this elongated American existence in what was once part of its empire. They realized that the Western political, military and economic presence in the region could become permanent and would not serve their long-term interests. So, in reaction, they had their own counter-strategies to hinder the U.S. policies in Afghanistan. The future impact and consequences of these tensions of power projection are a subject for more in-depth analysis and speculation especially as China and Russia are also nuclear powers and influential members in the UNSC.

Thirdly, *on the economic respect*, the attacks of September 11th, 2001 on the American soil were motives for an expansionist war to implement prearranged schema to secure an expansive economic interest through American military influence. Large sectors in the U.S were instead reaping the fruits of the horrifying disaster either through the advantages of President G.W. Bush's Patriotic Act or the Military-Industrial Complex (IMIC). The beneficiaries from

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the 9/11 attacks emerged during the Bush administration and strongly supported American wars in Afghanistan and other parts of the world for their advantages, not for the public sake. The tragedy came at a fortuitous time for the Pentagon, the CIA, the FBI, the weapons and the oil industries.

Domestic security and war arms deals linked to the MIC generated new jobs for major contractors by lobbying the pentagon and exerting pressure on congress for excessive war spending that benefits both sides. As a result, ten years after 9/11 there were more than 100.000 private contractors in Afghanistan. The meddling of arms business that flourished post 9/11 war on terrorism has raised new fears about U.S. democracy exactly as Eisenhower has warned against the influence of the MIC in 1961. The so-called “Prophets of War”, a coalition of Private Weapons Manufacturers, Private Military Companies, and Private Military Firms flourished as demand for their services increased. For them, war means business and without armed conflicts, they would lose trillions of dollars and thereby go out of business. Since the arms industry is a private enterprise in the U. S, the war on Afghanistan and Iraq earned them huge sums of money in return for the deployment of their tanks, drones, warships, bombs, guns, and submarines. In 2010 alone, their revenues reached about \$ 420.0 billion with an increase of 60% since 2002.

Furthermore, besides Afghanistan’s geographic location and shared borders with six countries; Iran, China, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and India, Afghanistan is also rich in diverse natural minerals that the Soviets had yearned for earlier during the 1970s. The reserves have a \$1 trillion worth enough to compete with its neighbors and other countries in the world. The conducted ground and aerial surveys by the United States Agency for International Development, the Pentagon, and the United States Geological Survey confirmed the Afghan assets of mineral resources. The vast reserves range from iron, uranium, copper, lead, fluorspar, lithium, high-grade chrome ore, zinc, barite, beryl, silver, tantalum gold, emeralds, bauxite, and

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gold. Apart from lithium, which is being used in producing atomic weapons, computer parts, and electric car batteries of which popularity is increasing in the United States, no data about the exploitation of these minerals were reported, which is another topic that needs further digging and scrutiny.

Moreover, as soon as the Taliban regime was ousted, negotiations about the \$8.0 TAPI project for which the United California Company was commissioned and which was halted following the 1990s turmoil, were again contemplated. The project which is a gas pipeline, crosses Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India over 1900 km with fewer transit costs. It would help the flow of the Turkmen gas, the third reserve in the region after Russia and Iran, into the global markets.

Afghanistan is also known for its opium poppy and nearly 92% of opium production comes from there. As recent data by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes indicate, since the U.S. military intervention of Afghanistan in 2001 and NATO occupation in 2003, opium production has soared tremendously reaching 328.000 tons in 2017 despite U.S. claims of spending \$8.6 billion on counternarcotic production efforts in Afghanistan. Most surprisingly, opium poppy production and cultivation amounts increased in the regions controlled by the U.S troops and Allied forces in South and Western Afghanistan like the capital Kabul, Helmand, Herat, and Kandahar. Therefore, restoring the heroin industry is part of the U.S agenda in Afghanistan. Most of the Afghan drugs go to neighboring Pakistan, Iran, India while large quantities are shipped to Africa, Europe, and North America.

The drug business is, reportedly, operated by secret and invisible drug proxies with strong bonds with the CIA. The CIA's secret drug trafficking business is not new to Afghanistan and its role in the Southeast-Asian heroin trade includes indirect collusion and complicity with drug cartels. It keeps drug agents under-covered to help them expand their businesses protected from

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any investigation, in addition to providing transport, security, and arms. Part of the yearly \$50 billion revenues is used to cover troops expenses in Afghanistan while other huge sums of money flow into the American economy in different forms.

The American Afghan war continues despite the \$ 2 trillion expenses until 2019, and over 2,300 deaths let alone the numbers of the wounded and the disabled. Because of these costs and the reported fraud, the American taxpayer has become more aware and concerned about a costly crisis with no clear end and with too many objectives that do not benefit everyone. Calls to withdraw forces from Afghanistan have become very appealing during the presidential campaigns either for election and/ or re-election since 2001. However, fears of a recurrence of another enemy who might similarly attack the U.S. is always the first reason to delay every promised campaign exit plan. Therefore, the war has domestic political dimensions too.

This research provides a new reading of and a different perspective about the American-Afghan Crisis by exposing the hidden aspects of the entire scene. It is a deep insight into the stories behind the headlined summaries about the American war in Afghanistan. Apart from the “Afghanistan Papers” and the “Cost of War” detailed reports that contributed considerably to important parts of this paper, the research still lacks additional updated data particularly about the military and economic domains which limited interpreting parts of its findings further and deeper. For the official data as such are rarely made public due to national security reasons or simply as part of the Information Industrial Complex.

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