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# CIVIL WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

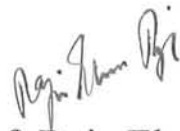
A dissertation submitted to the  
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Department of International Relations  
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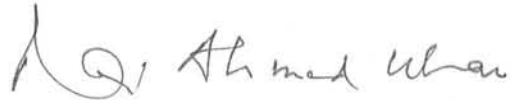
*This thesis is dedicated in memory of those Afghans who became victims of the fratricidal conflict being imposed by the warboards, at the instigation of hostile powers*

# CERTIFICATE

This dissertation by Fazal Mehmud is accepted in its present form by the Department of International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad and it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a dissertation as partial fulfillment for the degree of Masters of Philosophy in International Relations.



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## INTRODUCTION

### **Civil War In Afghanistan**

The ill-fated country has been at war for eighteen long years, since the much trumpeted Saur Revolution brought People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) regime headed by its legendary chief Nur Mohammad Tarakai to power in April 1978. The abrupt failure of the newly installed regime in translating its promises into concrete actions, greatly undermined their very existence among the masses at large, who had pinned high hopes from them in the wake of Sardar Daud's tyrannical rule. Secondly these Communists, who had been groomed and papered by their mentors at Moscow, grossly failed to understand and perceived the very psyche, traditions and leanings of the rural population, strongly entrenched in their traditional –cum- conservative system.

The bulk of the rural masses, at the instigation of the tribal, religious, establishment were strongly averse to the Communist's moves to mould their lives in accordance to their ideological orientation<sup>(1)</sup>. Though the reforms initiated by the Soviet-backed government were ameliorative in nature in the then prevalent socio-economic conditions, but ironically, it caused unprecedented resentment and outrage among the rural masses at large. It gave rise to popular resistance and thus paved the way for armed hostilities among various strata of the populace on ideological basis.

The utter failure of the PDPA (Khalq faction) regime in stemming the ever-increasing tide of the rural based resistance movement spearheaded by the Kabul-based Ikhwan movement leaders, namely Gulbadin Hekmatyar and

percieved Amanullah Khan to be a threat to their imperial designs, extended patronage to the disgruntled rural elites, hell bent to exterminate the government of Amanullah Khan, which ultimately end in his abdication in 1928, after a protracted fighting causing colossal losses<sup>(5)</sup>.

His ouster thus signalled the end of the reforms era, and institutionalised the growing strenth of the rural elites in the government. Thus these developments sowed the seeds of permanent hostility between the urban and rural elites, which again resurrected in 1978, but alas that confrontation put at stake the very survival of the state and society.

These rural elites in the Post Amanullah Khan era, assumed the enviable status of king makers and king breakers, as evident from the successive ruler's policy to coopt or intefrate them into the state institutions, in order to prevent or deny any hostile tendencies on their part against the government. Barnett Rubin describes that relationship as a "Patron-client relationship".

The Communists, who mainly consisted of the middle class, urban educated detribalised Afghans had developed a strong hatred for the rural establishment, whom they perceived to be the main impediments in the way of progress and nation building. They labelled them as revisionists, obscurantists and a mere tools in hands of Capitalist forces.

Some observers like Watanjar and Mohammed Alam are of the opinion that the rural establishment exercised complete sway over the army which greatly caused resentment among the Communist officers and soldiers. Many officers having links with these elites got rapid promotions and other perks and privileges at the cost of the Communist officers, whose prospects of promotion had been dashed to ground owing to their low social and economic standing in the society at large.

So the Saur revolution was the result of accumulation of long standing grievances and growing desire on the part of the urban elite's to crush the very power of the tribal-religious establishment, in order to relieve the society from their authoritarian clutches and to set in the process of rapid social, political, economic and cultural transformations. But their dream failed to materialise as the regional and international scenario took a dramatic turn, which led to an alliance between the rural elite's and foreign powers against the Soviet backed regime. The said alliance gave rise to a counter revolution based upon the notion of "Jihad and nationalism", against the so called atheist Communists backed by the Soviets.

The undue interference of foreign countries greatly exacerbated the tussle between the rural and urban elites, and thus internationalised a domestic conflict, and sowed the seeds of permanent foreign interference, which continues unabated, have resulted in complete transformation of the state and society apparatus and wrought unprecedented sufferings upon the helpless masses<sup>(6)</sup>.

Another noticeable feature or product of the urbanisation process was the emergence of the Islamist revivalist forces based mainly in Kabul, as a counter to the Communists<sup>(7)</sup>. The faculty of the Islamic studies at Kabul university was the breeding ground of the Islamists. These Islamists who were mainly, detribalised urban, middle class educated Afghans effectively exploited the notion of Jihad in the post Soviet phase to enlist the support of the otherwise traditional, conservative rural society, though opposed to the militant type of Islam as professed by them<sup>(8)</sup>. But their past glaring struggle against the Communists, greatly raised their standing among the rural population, which naturally swelled their ranks.

The maverick Hafizullah Amin who had assumed power after the mysterious disappearance of Nur Mohammad Tarakai became the Prime target of the invading Soviet's troops. On the fateful dawn of December 1979, the



Soviet armed forces invaded Afghanistan, killed Hafizullah Amin along with his family at the spacious Dar-ul-Aman palace after a fierce resistance put up by Hafizullah Amin loyalists. The Soviet's appointed Babrak Karmal a parchamite Communist more subservient to their wishes as the new president of the country.

The Soviet invasion kicked off a bitter decade long war that resulted in immense human and material damages to the country at large. The successive failures of Babrak Karmal in restoring peace and crushing the resistance movement, impelled the Soviets to replace him with Dr. Najibullah, the chief of the dreaded KHAD (Khidmat-e-Ittilat-e-Davlati) the country prime intelligence agency.<sup>(9)</sup>

There is a contentious debate among the scholars and analysts regarding the genesis of the civil war. Many writers having pro-Marxist leanings like Mark Urban of the Financial times, trace the origin of the civil war to the post Saur revolution phase, which caused direct confrontation between the state and society. These said scholars flatly refused to entertain the notion that Afghanistan was the victim of the Soviet's invasion and contend that their presence was mainly a symbolic<sup>(10)</sup>. And further-more, the Afghan Communists faced the main brunt of the fighting and fought single-handedly against the Mujahiden, and secondly they enjoyed the backing of the urban population amenable to their rule. Their opinion is further vindicated when the regime of Dr.Najibullah managed to survive after the Soviet withdrawal for four long years contrary to expectations.

The Pro. Mujahideen writers such as Sakhi Jan Ahmedzai tend to consider the post- Soviet withdrawal era till the emergence of the Taliban as the civil war phase. They contend that the soviet withdrawal pitted various ideologically and ethnically opposed groups against each other. Secondly, the Mujahiden who had maintained unity among their ranks began to crumble as a result of ethnic and political cleavages, with the disappearance of the common

enemy i.e. the Soviets<sup>(11)</sup>. The Kabul regime also suffered from the same menace, which proved to be one of the important factor in their downfall As ill-luck would have it, the post- Dr.Najibullah era further pushed the country into abyss of ethnic and sectarian conflict<sup>(12)</sup>. While at present, the war has assumed an ethnic and sectarian dimension. The Taliban represent the Pushtun population, while the northern alliance influence has been confined to mainly non- Pushtun ethnic populated areas in the North<sup>(13)</sup>. The compartmentalisation is more along ethnic and sectarian lines.

However , keeping in view all the relevant facts it can be safely presume that the phase of the civil war mainly started from the Saur revolution which challenged the supremacy of the tribal religious establishment. This resulted in a sever backlash in the shape of resistance movement ,which engulfed the country side .

The centuries old ethnic and sectarian cleavages and animosities that exited among various communities, suddenly resurrected in the wake of the traumatic Saur revolution and subsequent violent developments which imbalance the equilibrium between the state and society. Every successive regime faced that dilemma of how to impasse the centralised authority on the micro society which had become all too powerful and autonomous, strongly aversed to such a government authority since the Saur Revolution<sup>(14)</sup>.?

Dr.Najibullah being a shrewd and calculated statesman in utter contrast to his predecessors embarked upon a policy of National reconciliation with the prime objective to enlist the popular support, very vital for the survival of his dwindling regime<sup>(15)</sup>. But the belated moves of Dr.Najibullah failed to make any noticeable success owing to the disgruntled rural population who perceived him to be a mere puppet in the hands of his Communist mentors.

The dismal failure of much publicised policy of National reconciliation convinced the Soviet high-ups to forsake the turbulent country which had tied down the Soviet forces in a bitter fighting resulting in colossal casualties<sup>(16)</sup>.

Dr.Najibullah by that time had drew certain definite conclusions, which compelled him to shelve away the Soviet's clout in a bid to make him acceptable to the masses at large. Secondly, he grasped the intentions of the Soviets who were primarily concerned to ensure the safety of their troops and to pave the way for their eventual withdrawal. Thirdly, by that time the Afghan army had emerged as a formidable force to be reckoned with. Their daring exploits and heroic feats which they exhibited during their long-drawn fighting with Mujahideen, greatly discarded the then prevalent myth that the Afghan forces sought their strength from the Soviet troops. The astonishing achievements against the Mujahideen at Zavar and Khost fronts bolstered Dr.Najibullah morale and confidence to demand the withdrawal of the Soviet troops in a bid to prove his mettle single- handedly against the fractious resistance groups. Ironically, many field commanders, disillusioned with the leaders of the seven Peshawar based parties had struck agreements with the local Afghan government garrisons and generals.

The change of guards at Kremlin effectuated a dramatic change of regional and international scenario<sup>(17)</sup>. Domestic mounting public pressure forced Gorbacheve to expedite the UN sponsored peace parleys in a bid to ensure the withdrawal of the Soviet troops. After protracted parleys a UN brokered Geneva accord on fretful day of April 14, 1988 was signed, thus heralded to the world the eventual end of the Soviet's occupation.

But as ill-luck would have it, the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and the disengagement of the USA, created a vacuum and disrupted the client patron relationship. However the role of the big powers was soon assumed by the neighbouring countries, thus further aggravating the crisis and brought it to the point of no return.

The Kabul regime in post Soviet's withdrawal phase exhibited remarkable resilience in foiling repeated attempts of the Mujahideen to wrest control of the major urban centres<sup>(18)</sup>. Dr.Najibullah whose very survival was at stake, effectively exploited the prevalent ethnic and sectarian cleavages to ensure his very survival in power, to which he succeeded in great extent. But at the same time, the raising qawm based ethnic militia's caused irreparable damages to the very fabrics or structures of the Afghan state and society at large.

The Afghan minorities which had long aspired to challenge the domination of Pushtuns, were the prime benefactors of Dr.Najibullah policy of raising militias and appeasement strategy<sup>(19)</sup>. Though that policy undermined the very existence of his regime, in later stages.

The revolt staged by Shahnawaz Tani, the then defence minister in Dr.Najibullah regime in March 1990 was the growing resentment among the Pushtun Communists, toward the hegemony of the predominant Persian parchamites, and sought a Pushtun's settlement to the crisis. But the failure of the coup further heightened differences among various ethnic groups both within the government and in resistance<sup>(20)</sup>.

The failed coup attempt against Gorbacheve convinced the Afghan Communists about the imminent fall of their regime which depended exclusively upon Soviet's military and economic assistance. Dr.Najibullah had become convinced to let the peace process a chance to save the country from complete chaos and collapse<sup>(21)</sup>.

The regime's control over rural areas continued to erode. The revolt staged by Rasheed Dostum in league with parchamites and Ahmed Shah Masood, struck a shattering blow to the government. At that critical juncture, Dr.Najibullah resigned under a UN peace agreement brokered by Benan Sevan. But the peace parleys it failed to materialise<sup>(22)</sup>. Dr.Najibullah fell not because

of any onslaught by Mujahideen, but because the loss of Soviet aid eroded his ability to control factionalism and ethnic conflicts in his own ranks.

The post Dr.Najibullah era engulfed the country especially the city of Kabul in a renewed fighting among various combatants most notably, Gulbadin Hekmatyar and Ahmed Shah Masood. The incessant infighting caused huge exodus of the Kabul's residents to the neighbouring countries. The brain drain caused colossal damages to the very viability and existence of the country's institutions<sup>(23)</sup>. The exit of professionals, technocrats, bureaucrats intellectuals etc., have hampered the affairs and working of any future governments in the country.

Ironically the historic city of Kabul did not witness the like of killing and destruction even during the decade long Soviet's occupation<sup>(24)</sup>. It pushed the country into an abyss of protected civil war along ethnic and sectarian lines. And thus undermined the very cause of "Jihad" for which the nation had rendered numerous and memorable sacrifices. But failed to achieve any noticeable, success owing to the intransigence of both the adversaries i.e. Hekmatyar and Ahmed Shah Masood<sup>(25)</sup>.

Sibghatullah Mujaddadi remained president of the country for two months, and later replaced by professor Burhanudin Rabbani under Peshawar accord, but these accords failed to take into account the ground realities, which had undergone dramatic transformation. The country was reduced to a lawless state. The fighting led to the complete breakdown of the state and society apparatus and brought the country on the verge of catastrophic collapse<sup>(26)</sup>.

The masses who had suffered a lot were awaiting for a "messiah" to relieve them from the clutches of the warlords<sup>(27)</sup>. At the end of 1994 the country witnessed the emergence of the Taliban from Kandhar the stronghold of the Durrani's tribe. Many factors like the exclusion of the Durrani's from the power in the wake of Sardar Daud exit caused a sense of deprivation among

them, secondly the Communist government and the resistance Pushtun groups mainly consisted of the Ghilzai's tribe, rival of the Durranis. Thirdly, the failure of the Ghilzai's Pushtuns in off setting the Tajik monopoly in Kabul in Post Dr.Najibullah era tilted the balance in their favour<sup>(28)</sup>. Last, but not least the Islamic students had a strong organisational set-up in Kandhar, which greatly facilitated their task. The civil war in Afghanistan is intrinsically linked to the interests of the regional and extra regional powers. The changes at global and regional levels greatly affected the country<sup>(29)</sup>. Moreover, the domestic politics of Afghanistan also underwent dramatic changes in line with the international anarchy. This chaos that ensued in the wake of anarchy in international arena failed the successive peace efforts, and further aggravated the crisis in the country<sup>(30)</sup>.

In the past great powers had tried to consolidate the buffer state by providing the rulers with enough military and financial resources to subjugate others contenders for powers<sup>(31)</sup>. But with the ceasing of aid in the post cold war era, the international community acted as if Afghanistan had a law-bound state apparatus, that would govern the country, once a more legitimate authority took it's place, but that authority never emerged.

At present the country is at a very critical juncture and it is clearly compartmentalised along ethnic and sectarian basis<sup>(32)</sup>. The Taliban represent the over whelming majority of Pushtun population,while the Northern alliance, comprises the non- Pushtun parties,who are bitterly opposed to the Taliban style of government. Both the groups are locked in a bitter fighting and it has assumed a serious dimension<sup>(33)</sup>. The political pundits are of the view that the Taliban despite suffering heavy casualties on the Northern fronts are better poised against the Northern alliance administration, which is marked by financial and administrative weaknesses, and rampant corruption and lawlessness among their troops.

How did the country slip into the quagmire of civil war? What were the forces that were instrumental in hastening the process of confrontation between the state and society? How did the loss of central authority in the wake of Dr. Najibullah's resignation led to the emergence of multiple centres of power but open to resist the imposition of any central government authority? Will the country be disintegrated along ethnic and sectarian lines as feared by many quarters? And what is the hidden agendas of the regional and extra-regional powers in augmenting the flames of civil war which has assumed a complex and multifaceted nature? How the long-drawn war has affected different segments of the society? Will the Taliban remain a viable force in foreseeable future? How the march towards nation building checked by the war will be achieved? How the new elites will be coopted in the state structure? What is the viable solution to bring an amicable end to the long-drawn hostilities that have evaded various solutions for the last two decades?

These are the many questions raised by the recent history of a conflict ridden and fragmented Afghanistan. The Afghan civil war is a rather complex phenomenon, which calls in an in-depth examinational explanation. This dissertation seeks to contend that the continuing Afghan civil war is best explained in terms of the conflict between the state and society running through and increasingly aggravated the country's history since the beginning of its modernisation process in 1920s. This a simply yet, empirically convincing explanation based on a systematic perusal of Afghanistan's politico-historical process in the chapters that follow.

## CHAPTER # 1

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To grasp the nature of the intractable conflict raging in the country, one must have a fair knowledge about the history, social structures, geo.-political conditions, and varying forces determining or moulding the lives of the Afghans. Afghanistan has a land area of 6,50,000 square kilometres. The central Asia republics namely Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan lie to the north west, China to the north east, Pakistan to the east and Iran is towards the west.

As a result of capricious history, Afghanistan is not a nation state in the modern sense of the term. The total estimated population is about 15.5 million(pre-war), the main ethnic groups numbered approximately as follows:

Pushtun's	6,500,000
Tajik's	3,500,000
Uzbek's	1,000,000
Hazara's	970,000
Aimaq's	800,000
Farsiwon's	600,000
Breahvi's	200,000
Turkmen's	125,000
Baluch's	100,000
Nuristani's	100,000



The Pushtuns, although the leading nationality both in numbers and in political influence, the dominance is resented by most of the other ethnic groups. The cultural diversity of the country is accentuated by the fact that the various nationalities speak different languages and dialects, have different physical features and practice different customs. As a result, there is very little of an Afghan Consciousness. They would identify themselves as Pushtuns, Hazaras, Tajiks. Rivalry and disunity stem from the chronic anarchy of Afghan society. The word "Afghan" refers exclusively to Pushtuns, the power holders, the rulers, often considered usurpers of lands held formerly by members of minority ethnic groups mainly in the northern parts of the country. The political power in Afghanistan has remained with the Pushtuns ( Durrani Tribe) and it did serve as a basis for future political unity from 1747 to 1978.

It is interesting to note that only an external threat can unite the Afghan tribes, and that only temporary, whether against centralised government or external enemies. The Afghan tribes irrespective of ethnic groups got united against the British in Anglo-Afghan wars because of the latter alien nature, while the 1979 Soviet military intervention had united the nation, at least in resistance. Further more, Afghan nationalism would develop from the shared reactions to dangers posed by the common external enemy. Ironically, the withdrawal of the Soviet troops and the Subsequent collapse of the Dr.Najibullah regime resulted in the disintegration of the Afghan Society along ethnic and sectarian basis<sup>(1)</sup>.

The influence of the government was confined mainly to Kabul and the major urban centre, while the local chieftains and landlords exercised control on things as they pleased in the provinces. Any regime, that tried to infringe upon the traditions of local rule was bound to encounter resistance<sup>(2)</sup>. Many political analysts are attributing the Taliban abrupt failures in the North owing to the strong opposition from the local population, opposed to the Taliban style of governance, contrary to their traditions.

The present day Afghanistan territories were dominated by various empires until the eighteenth century. The sudden, assassination of Nadir Shah in 1747, led Ahmad Khan, a tribal chieftain of the Papolzai, Saddozai clan to organise the Abdali confederation.. Afterwards he along with the leading Afghan tribes of the Ghilzai's and kuril's laid the foundations of the state of Afghanistan and declared Kandhar its capital.

Ahmed Shah Abdali's death in 1773, hastened the process of dissension's among the Durrani tribe, which eventually led to the downfall of the Saddozai monarchy and the Mohammadzai led by Amir Dost Mohammad Khan ascended to the throne of Afghanistan in 1835 after a long protracted civil war<sup>(3)</sup>. Thus it closed the chapter of the Saddozai rule, and the Mohammadzai ascendancy to the rule Continued unabated except a brief interregnum of Bacha Saquo in 1929 till the Saur Revolution of 1978.

The rivalry between Russia and U.K. led to three Anglo-Afghan wars as the former tried to establish their influence in Afghanistan. In 1880 Amir Abdur Rehman popularly known as " The Iron Amir" a nephew of Amir Sher Ali Khan ascended to the throne. Amir Abdure Rehman a farsighted and calculated statesman decided to conduct his foreign policy under the control of the government of British India, in return for annual subsidy to consolidate his hold over the country. As a result the Russian "Forward Policy" received a set-back because of the establishment of the British influence in Afghanistan. However, there ensued a tussle between the two powers to influence Afghanistan domestic and foreign policies. Both the powers realised the futility of engaging in hostilities in view of the changed regional and international scenario. The British decision to erect Afghanistan as a "buffer state" and Russian desire to keep Britain away from its Asian frontiers had brought a kind of strategic stability through mutual vulnerability. The effectiveness of Afghanistan as a buffer depended on the Russian compliance with that buffer arrangements, although the Geo.-political situation of Afghanistan destined it to become a buffer par excellence.

In 1893, Durand line Agreement was signed, but it sowed the seeds of the Pushtunistan dispute with Pakistan, which pushed Afghanistan into the Soviet's camp. Amir Abdur Rehman embarked upon a policy of internal consolidation by subjecting the whole country to the dictates of the central authority. He employed the institution of Islam as a source of legitimacy in pursuit of his imperial designs. He organised the army on permanent basis and streamlined the institution of bureaucracy, and also coopted the clergy into the state institutions.

The Amir also evolved the institution of " Loya Jirga" which served a vital purpose in coopting the tribal traditions into the state institutions. He considered Pushtun's tribes one of the bulwarks of Afghanistan. He settled many Pushtun tribes in northern Afghanistan. His tactics of forced settlements of Pushtun tribes in northern Afghanistan helped in consolidation of central power. The Pushtun settlers played a vital role in neutralising the majority of the Tajiks and Uzbeks in the northern Afghanistan. The policy of Abdur Rehman proved effective in the post Dr.Najibullah era, when the said Pushtun settlers prevented the possibility of secession of the ethnic minorities spear-headed by Ahmed Shah Masood and Rasheed Dostum.

Habibullah succeeded to the throne in 1901. He in utter contrast to his father policy of keeping the Afghans in isolation, began to open the country to modern education and thus paved the way for the emergence of a highly motivated, politicised intellectual elites, who were instrumental in bringing revolutionary transformation in the state and the society afterwards. He also permitted the return of the exiled Mohammadzais. Among them the families of Tarzai's and Yahyakhel popularly known as the "Musahiban" began to make deep inroads into the society at large, through their extensive networks of political and educational institutions, though confined mainly to the urban centres of the country.

The prominent intellectuals from the Tarzais and Musahiban families like Mehmud Beg Tarzai and Nadir Khan (who later became king in 1929) moulded the population, on modernisation and revolutionary doctrines, which these intellectuals had imbibed during their stay abroad<sup>(4)</sup>.

Mehmud Beg Tarzai founded a new group known as the “ Young Afghans” after the “ Young Turks”. Amanullah Khan the son in law of Mehmud Beg Tarzai was also closely associated with the said group. They founded a news paper to disseminate their ideology and influence among the cross sections of the population. Habibullah policy of co-operation with the British aroused deep suspicion and resentment among the ranks of the young Afghans. He was assassinated on February 20, 1919 near Laghman, by a teenage student of Habibiya Lycee school. His death cleared the way for Amanullah Khan to lay claim to the throne for which he had been aspiring since long<sup>(5)</sup>.

The first act of Amir was to proclaim Afghanistan’s independence and it forced Britain to negotiate a new treaty of friendship on the basis of equality. He employed the frontier tribes to stage an uprising against the British.

According to Barnett Rubin instability in the internal politics of a buffer state can easily generate security dilemma’s among the neighbouring states, as each to assure that their rivals don’t exploit the resulting opportunities. So according to his opinions, such crisis set off the Anglo-Afghan wars and the Soviet invasion in 1979<sup>(6)</sup>.

In may 1919, Amanullah declared war on British, and concentrated Afghan troops in Waziristan which greatly alarmed the British. After one month of heavy fighting both the countries accepted armistice on May 20, 1919 thus ending the Third Anglo-Afghan war. On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1919 a treaty was signed at Rawalpindi in which Britain accorded full independence to Afghanistan in lieu for recognising the Durand Line<sup>(7)</sup>.

Ghazi Amanullah Khan was determined to put the country on the track to modernisation and development, and for that purpose he introduced wide-ranging reforms in different arenas. Unlike his predecessors he made nationalism as a source of his legitimacy and opened up the country by enhancing close commercial and cultural co-operation with the foreign countries, which verily proved suicidal for his very existence.

Amanullah Khan tried the reconstitution of social control on the society especially in the areas of taxes, land tenure and transportation. He institutionalised the taxation department by abolishing many arbitrary taxes, and by extending the taxation network to the rural areas also. In addition to that he introduced wide ranging land reforms by selling off state lands and instituted a full private property in land. He also abolished slavery and forced labour. He is credited for laying the foundations of modern state of Afghanistan, gave the country its first constitution in 1921, which introduced the national citizenship with full civil liberties. He paid special emphasis on the spread of education among the masses at large especially the female education. He sought help from the foreign countries in establishment of schools which gave rise to various social and political pressure groups. The foreign funded schools are as follows,

**Amaini The German School (1924).**

**Ghazi School. An Indian Staffed School in (1927).**

**Malai Lylee Girls School French.**

He also sent many girls abroad for higher studies which provoked strong reaction among the conservative sections of society.

The changes, he introduced also included the removal of the traditional parent's right to betroth their children, the dismissal of the government officials who chose to have more than one wife, the changing of the weekly holiday from Friday to Thursday, the abolition of the piri system in the army and terminating the allowances to the ulemas etc. were some of the measures which exacerbated the Afghan's discontentment and set off a series of revolts throughout the

country covertly aided by the British<sup>(8)</sup>.

His failed endeavours to mould Afghanistan on European style led to mass revolts staged by the tribal and religious establishment, who perceived him to be a threat to their existence. His army made up of the newly trained conscripts utterly failed to put up any strong resistance against the unruly tribes who were provided with arms and financial support by the British who were held bent to settle scores with Ghazi Amanullah Khan for igniting revolts in Tribal areas, across the Durand line. The failure of the army in crushing the revolts forced Ghazi Amanullah Khan, to abdicate on 14 February 1929<sup>(9)</sup>. The collapse of the central government was the first crisis the country had faced, and this made the state subservient to the rural elites, as evident from the policy of appeasement being followed by the successive governments till the Saur revolution in 1978.

Taking advantage of the chaotic conditions prevalent in Kabul, a Tajik bandit hailing from Koh-e-Daman north of the Kabul namely Bacha Saquo ( Son of water carrier) captured Kabul and proclaimed himself the king of the country. As a consequence, the country descended into anarchy and lawlessness. The Afghan tribes sensed alarm by Bacha Saquo moves to strengthen his authority at Kabul. The British who had intrigued to overthrow Ghazi Amanullah Khan were afraid of the Russian intervention and wanted to stabilise the turbulent situation created by Bacha Saque.<sup>(10)</sup>

Nadir Khan, cousin of Ghazi Amanullah Khan, in league with British manipulated the events, and emerged as the consensus candidate for the top slot. A grand tribal Laskhar (force) was organised by him, and staged a three-pronged attacks on the Kabul. Bacha Saquo mainly Tajik's troops put up a spirited fight, but ultimately they had to give up to the much stronger Pushtun troops. Bacha Saquo was arrested and then hanged. In the aftermath of Bacha Saquo there ensued a vendetta killings of the Tajik population by the unruly hordes of Pushtuns militants, which left deep scars on the mind of the estranged Tajiks.

Ironically Ahmed Shah Masood wilfully exploited the Tajiks antagonism against the Pushtuns to emerge as the sole undisputed leader of the Tajiks during the resistance struggle against the Soviets, in order to offset the Pushtuns domination<sup>(11)</sup>.

Nadir Shah became the king of Kabul on October 17, 1929 and brought the whole country under his sway. He reverted to the traditional pattern of government in order to enlist the support of the masses more over he coopted the tribal and religious elite's into the state institutions, and thus embarked upon a gradual process of modernisation plus isolation.

He was assassinated in 1933. His nineteen years old son Zahir Shah, ascended to the throne, but the real powers were in the hands of his three uncles namely, Mohammed. Hashim, Shah Mehmud, and Shah Wali Khan. Zahir Shah followed the policy of non alignment, and appeasement of rural establishment.<sup>(12)</sup>

The departure of the British from India in 1947, created a power vacuum. So Afghanistan found an opportunity to repudiate the Durand line agreement, and raised the question of Pushtunistan. The Afghan government provocative moves aimed at destabilising Pakistan resulted in the flaring up of tensions in the region. At this critical juncture, the USSR signed a trade agreement, under which Afghanistan was offered free transit rights. As ill-luck would have it, that trade agreement paved the way for the Soviet influence, which ultimately proved suicidal for the very existence of Afghanistan in the later stages.

Thus it can be logically stated that the Pushtunistan issue was one of the important factors in pushing Afghanistan into the Soviet camp and resulted in invasion in 1979 to ensure the survival of the Communist regime facing threats from resistance groups supported by the USA.

Sardar Daud during his premiership brought about rapid changes in

social and economic institutions, but political growth remained stagnated which later manifested itself in violent tribulations and subsequent revolutions. In 1964, king Zahir Shah launched a phase of limited “ experiment with democracy”. This enabled different political groups to become active in the Afghan political arena. These developments provided the Soviets with both leverage and opportunities to meddle in the country affairs. The emergence of peoples Democratic party of Afghanistan (PDPA) can be attributed to that phase, plus the Soviet role. But the division of the PDPA into Banner (Parcham) and Masses (Khalq) factions greatly perturbed the Soviets. The rivalry between the two groups was intense due to deep seated differences along personality and tactical lines, and more importantly linguistic lines<sup>(13)</sup>. The Khalq was mainly composed of rural pashto speakers, while the parcham was made up largely of Kabul based Dari speakers. In opposition to these groups there was the all powerful party of ‘Islamic society of Afghanistan’ (Jamiat-E-Islami-E-Afghanistan), formed by a group of Islamist instructors of the faculty of theology of Kabul University, struggling for the radical re-organisation of Afghan society along Islamic lines.

The increasing range and diversity of political forces, which social and political changes unleashed and the constitutional, experiment brought to light , proved to be the downfall of the constitutional experiment as a whole. The constitution of 1964, although sanctioned by a loya jirga, was filled with unresolved contradictions, which were not over come by informal agreements between political actors.

It is pertinent to mention that the technical illegality of political parties under the 1964 constitution denied successive, constitutional governments the ability to build solid parliamentary basis grounded in party affiliations, and Prime-ministers appointed by the king were forced to dispense adhoc patronage in order to win crucial votes. This in return produced an inefficient and insensitive policy making process, the flaws in which were exposed in devastating fashion when the central government miserably failed to respond to



the drought crisis in 1971-1972<sup>(14)</sup>. The key problem of the democratic period was that the legal rational constitutional system which is embodied had no particular normative appeal to the Afghan population and lacked legitimacy.

The democratic experiment did not alter the basic ground rules which governed the relations between the state and micro society. These ground rules consisted in large part of norms of reciprocity on one hand between the mainly Kabul based Pushtun military and political leadership and Pushtun micro-societies, and on the other between the largely Tajik bureaucratic administrative elite's and to some extent other minorities micro societies. Unfortunately Zahir Shah was by all accounts a weak figure who made no effective inroads into these ground rules, and further more could not personally off set the enfeeblement of the policy working process which the 1964 constitution produced. This not only led to a state of inertia within the Afghan government, but heightened concerns within the Soviet's Communist leadership that its political, economic and military investment in Afghanistan might be wasted. This came to ahead in 1972 when the king appointed Musa Shafiq as prime minister, who sought an Islamic base for his government. His aim was to curtail the activities of the Communists and to enlist foreign aid from sources other than the Soviet Union. This policy inevitably brought the democratisation and modernisation drive into direct conflict with the Soviet's interests.

In July 1973, Zahir Shah was over thrown by Sardar Daud in an almost bloodless coup. The Coup was executed with the help from Parchamites, and Soviet union hailed the arrival of Sardar Daud<sup>(15)</sup>. However, after consolidating his rule by the mid 70's he emerged as untrustworthy from Moscow perspective. It discovered that Sardar Daud was a self seeking nationalist, and his alliance with parchamites was one of political convenience, and that he desired to balance relationship with Moscow. Sardar Daud instituted a non- communist one party system, resolved to get rid his administration of Communist sympathisers and sought economic aid from western countries<sup>(16)</sup>.

Sardar Daud rapprochement with Pakistan and Islamic countries alarmed the Afghan Communists and the Soviets who decided to strike at him at an appropriate time. Ironically Sardar Daud did not pick up significant non-communist support to compensate for that he lost when he parted company with the Communist faction<sup>(17)</sup>. On the contrary his initial attempts to suppress the more prominent and active Islamists which provided the basis for a strong Islamic backlash, which came to a head in a major uprising in Panjsher valley in July 1975. One of the leading figure in the uprising was Ahmed Shah Masood the “Lion of Panjsher”. Though Sardar Daud succeeded with little difficulty in putting down the uprising, but his action fuelled heightened hostility from a group whose approval might have enabled him to claim a wider, base of “Islamic ideological” support. Moreover the 1974 death in custody of western educated ex- prime minister Mawand alienated the western educated urban Afghans. Consequently the Soviets were instrumental in bringing much needed unity within the PDPA ranks in self defence against Sardar Daud<sup>(18)</sup>. This led to the bloody coup of April 1978 enabling PDPA to seize state power, eliminating Sardar Daud and most of his trusted colleagues, who were denounced by the PDPA and Moscow as “the enemies of the Afghan people”.

The over throw of Sardar Daud marked the most decisive change of regime in the history of the modern Afghan state. While major political changes in the past had sprung from the discontentment of the leading figures within Afghanistan micro-societies, the seizure of power in 1978 by the urban based PDPA had no such roots. There was no basis in the country for a mass revolution. Those who displaced Sardar Daud regime merely had at their disposal the forces necessary to mount a coup in Kabul. Secondly, the Communists which mainly consisted of the detribalised, urban educated middle class, enjoyed the backing, of the urban elites, who wanted to dismantle the supremacy of the rural elites which they enjoyed since the abdication of Ghazi Amanullah Khan way back in 1928. Though the support base of the Communist regime was confined to the major urban centres which later on greatly undermined their existence, in the face of stiff resistance engineered by the

disgruntled elements ejoing the support of the estranged rural population, yet the ideology and platform of the new rulers committed them to attempt fundamental changes in the prevailing distribution of powers between the state and micro societies. And that resulted in a dilemma which the new regime faced, and that proved to be one of the important factor in their downfall.

## CHAPTER # 2

# THE AFGHAN CIVIL WAR: FIRST PHASE

## SOVIET INVASION

The abrupt transformation that ensued in the wake of 27 April 1978 Coup, trampling over the dead body of Sardar Daud brought a new system utterly opposed to the traditional cum conservative Afghan society at large<sup>(1)</sup>. The Afghan Communists at the instigation of their mentors in Moscow, decided to pull out the country from the prevalent social, economic and Political mess, in order to pave the way for the nation progress, development and modernisation along the soviet lines. But ironically there efforts ended in an abrupt failures and pushed the country into the abyss of fratricidal war causing unprecedented human and material losses<sup>(2)</sup>.

The Saur Revolution and the subsequent Soviet intervention in December 1979 Paved the way for the civil war. The resistance movement was confined mainly to the bulk of the rural areas against the Soviet backed Kabul regime. It is wrong to presume that the Mujahideen were exclusively fighting against the Russian troops alone<sup>(3)</sup>. But a thorough research revealed that the Soviet troops were merely present in the urban centres most notably Kabul, Mazar Sharif and Jalalabad, and the fighting was conducted mainly by the Kabul regime troops who exhibited extra ordinary daring and determination in countering the opposition moves.

The inter division between Khalq and Parcham, the two major off shoots of PDPA also revealed the division of the Afghan urban educated elites along ethnic, regional and linguistic lines. There is no doubt that both the factions were committed to pursue the Marxist-Leninist ideology<sup>(4)</sup>.

But the Saur Revolution brought to an ultimate end the long chapter of the Durrani rule and thus set in the process of chaos and disintegration which

continues unabated at an alarming scale even after a lapse of two long and tortures decades. Interestingly the Durrani's rule was replaced by the Ghilzai's tribe as most of the Communists (Khalqis) and resistance groups were drawn from the said tribe of Paktia<sup>(5)</sup>.

The new government headed by Nur Mohammad Tarakai initiated wide ranging reforms with the view to bring drastic transformation in various social, economic and political arenas<sup>(6)</sup>. Though the reform were ameliorative in nature, but caused wide spread resentment and fears in the rural area ignited by the tribal religious establishment, as it greatly undermined their very standing and existence. The reforms were in line with the measures adopted by Ghazi Amanullah Khan way back in 1920's, which caused uproar and subsequently led to his abdication<sup>(7)</sup>.

The naive ideologically motivated Communists failed to perceive the growing strength of the all powerful rural establishment who controlled the very destiny of the nation by effectively exploiting the sacred institutions of Islam and nationalism<sup>(8)</sup>.

The said reforms were;

- 1.Redistribution of land holdings among land less peasants.
- 2.Elimination of usury.
- 3.Discontinuation of the bride price.
- 4.Mass literacy campaign.
- 5.Depoliticised religion.
- 6.Modern means of communication.

But these reforms ended in an abrupt failure, and resulted in wide spread opposition from the rural establishment. To make the matter worse, the overzealous Khalqi officials, resorted to intimidation and force. They punished those who did not accept their ideas, destroyed their properties and even

resorted to killings also. These measures created hatred for the Khalqis, which greatly undermined the popularity and credibility of the new regime.

The successive failures of the newly installed regime in stemming the ever increasing tides of the resistance movement, forced the Soviet troops to intervene physically. Hafizullah Amin became the Prime target of the invading troops<sup>(9)</sup>. The invasion resulted in a major global and regional changes, thus confronted the world with new lurking dangers. The arrival of the Soviet troops coincided with the appointment of Babrak Karmal a Parchamite, more subservient to the Soviet's wishes.

Babrak Karmal launched a full throated campaign to expand the influence of the regime, especially among the rural areas, where the new regime had little or no followings. But despite his best efforts, he failed to win the popular support, as the masses regarded him a 'Soviet puppet' who had put at stake the Sovereignty of the country, for the sake of his personal interests<sup>(10)</sup>.

The Soviet's invasion produced a prompt reaction from Afghan micro Society. This reaction manifested itself in three distinct ways. First, some groups chose to go into exile. Second, other groups, directly and immediately vulnerable to the coercive forces which the USSR had introduced, found it necessary to reach, Some accommodation with the regime<sup>(11)</sup>. Third, a large number of rural groups took up arms against the Soviet backed Babrak Karmal regime.

The rural population enlivened with the notion of " Jihad" being propounded by the religious, tribal elites resulted in mass migration to the neighbouring countries. The rustic, Afghan's indoctrinated with the mission of jihad rendered unprecedented sacrifices.<sup>(12)</sup>.

The fratricidal war resulted in the utter annihilation of Society infrastructure and institutions. The mass migration also resulted in economic dislocation of the masses. As a consequence the social, economic and political

CHAPTER-3  
THE AFGHAN CIVIL WAR: SECOND PHASE  
POST- SOVIET WITHDRAWAL

**The Aftermath of the Withdrawal**

On 15 February 1989, the last member of the Soviet combat Contingent, Lieutenant General B. V. Gromov crossed the frontier between Afghanistan and the then Soviet Union, thus bringing to an end the USSR longest and most painful military adventure into the land of wild. The Soviet's withdrawal caused alarm among the war weary residents of Kabul, that the Soviet backed Kabul regime might be collapsed in the wake of intense Mujahideen pressure. This was accentuated by severe food and fuel shortages which aggravated the strains imposed by an usually bitter winter.<sup>(1)</sup>

But in utter contrast, the Kabul regime proved unexpected resilient and the Mujahideen who controlled the bulk of the countryside miserably failed to capture the regime's urban strongholds. But there were certain internal and external factors responsible for the Mujahideen failure, which are as follows:

- 1) The first was the massive Soviet's military and economic assistance to the Kabul regime in the post withdrawal period.
- 2) The failure of the western countries in providing much needed military and economic aid to the Mujahideen.
- 3) The Kabul regime effectively exploited the ethnic and sectarian

divisions in the society, in order to compartmentalise the Afghan society along ethnic lines, which eventually led to the undermining of the Mujahideen effectiveness.

4) The raising of “qawm” based militias by the Dr.Najibullah in defence of his regime, greatly led to neutralising of Mujahideen military strength.

5) The negative effects upon resistance cohesion of attempts by outside powers to boost the position of particular elements in the resistance which they deemed sympathetic to their objectives. Last but not least, the failure of the Mujahideen to resist these pressures effectively, and to respond swiftly, and more importantly concertededly, to the newly emerged military and political situation with which they were confronted.<sup>(2)</sup>

The USSR initiated a massive operations to relieve the shortages by which the beleaguered Kabul regime was afflicted with. The air lift of supplies was unprecedented in scale since the days of the Berlin Blockade. These “humanitarian” flights were in disguise for a massive operation to re-supply the regime with much needed military equipments. In 1989 to 1990, the USSR reportedly supplied the regime with about \$1.4 billion worth of arms and equipments. Moreover the Soviet did not leave the military arena to the regime. Senior and war-hardened Soviet officers continued to take active part in the planning and direction of all major military operations, as reported by Markurban corresponded of the London Times.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Afghan army made effective use of massive fire power at it's disposal to cause maximum damages among the resistance ranks and the civilian population on whose support the Mujahideen depended. In order to strengthen the Kabul regime position the USSR, rushed back to Kabul thousands of young Afghans, who had been taken to the USSR in previous years to be trained as future ‘janissaries’. These Afghan



students who had been indoctrinated by the Soviet's to 'kill and die' for the PDPA's cause, proved reliable and effective in countering the Mujahideen attacks.

The regime at the behest of their mentors at Moscow launched a vigorous campaign to polish the PDPA's image as a reformist nationalist force respectful of Islam and, Afghan traditions. Though the regime failed to enlist the support of the masses at large but succeeded in making dents among the highly urbanised, secularised Kabulis, some of whom had grown very nervous about the consequences of the Mujahideen victory and the prospects of life under a Mujahideen led Islamic government. At the same time Dr.Najibullah tried to improve the image of PDPA as a reformist party, by appointing Sharq as the prime-minister in place of Sultan Ali Kishtmend, and of others "non party" ministers to ensure broad support.<sup>(4)</sup>

#### **Formation of the Fracture Afghan Interim Government**

While the USSR was employing various tactics to prop up the dwindling regime, but ironically the reaction of the western powers was notably flat footed. The withdrawal of the Soviet's troops resulted in the diminution in the US commitment for the Mujahideen cause. The most glaring example of this was the fall in the supply of stingers missiles to the Mujahideen, creating a shortage which was actually felt as the resistance undertook operations against urban Centres, which the regime sought to defend with air strikes.

The region specialists believed that the fall of the Kabul regime would result in utter chaos in the absence of a well-organised Mujahideen council or shora capable of administering the affairs of the country. So the Mujahideen leaders in active consultations with friendly countries decided to evolve a mechanism of government through a shura

or council. But at the same time the term Loya Jirga was avoided, probably so that non-pushtun groups would not be offended. The Shura was held after long deliberations from 10-24 February, 1989 in Islamabad, but differences resurrected over its composition among the component resistance parties. The Iran-based Shia Mujahideen groups boycotted the proceedings as their demand for 100 out of 519 Shura's seats were outrightly rejected by the Peshawar based Mujahideen parties, who were prepared to concede only 70 seats to them.

The Peshawar based Mujahideen parties secured overwhelming numbers of seats. Each of the seven parties was given 60 seats and though the support which different parties could command within Afghanistan varied enormously. The bulk of the delegates to the Shura came from the Eastern provinces of Afghanistan and were Pushtuns, the northern provinces were under represented. The powerful commanders like Ahmed Shah Masood and Abdul Haq etc., refused to attend the Shura, which greatly undermined its credibility.

After lengthy wrangling, the Mujahideen leaders arrived at a mechanism for shaping an interim government, called Afghan interim government (AIG).

The offices were divided among the Peshawar-based seven parties according to the votes, they could secure from the Shura when the voting took place, Mujadidi emerged with the highest total, followed by Sayyaf, Mohammadi, Hekmatyar, Khalis, Burhanudin Rabbani and Gailani. As a result of the balloting, Mujadidi was named head of the State, with Sayyaf as prime minister, Mohammedi as Defence Minister, Hekmatyar as Foreign Minister, Burhanudin Rabbani as Minister for Reconstruction and Gailani as Chief Justice.

But the Mujahideen interim government failed to achieve its

prime objectives of bringing much needed unity among the ranks of the resistance groups. It not only alienated the Shia Mujahideen and the Iranian government, but also left many Sunni Mujahideen field commanders and their supporters thoroughly disenchanted with the petulance of émigré politics. This played straight into the hands of the Kabul regime, which exploited the situation in its favour.

### **The Jalalabad Campaign**

The next step in the strategy of the resistance groups was to attempt to boost the credibility of their interim government by securing a city within Afghanistan from where the interim government could operate and consequently gain international recognition (Pakistan had not accorded the interim government diplomatic recognition partly because of the difficulties associated with hosting a government in exile).

Jalalabad, was the headquarter of 11 infantry division. The Afghan army had about 6,000 regular troops defending the city. In addition there were 3,000 militiamen and 500 Jozjanis (special troops) in Jalalabad. The city was ringed with a large number of security posts each manned by 100 or 50 regular soldiers armed with heavy weapons and armour. A 3,000-yards deep minefield with dug-in tanks and machine guns within the nine mile's belt covered all approaches to the city with interlocking fire.<sup>(3)</sup>

Three weeks after the Soviet's troops withdrawal from Afghanistan, the much talked of Mujahideen offensive against the regime began with an attack on Jalalabad on 6 March, 1989. Nearly 20,000 fighters belonging to eight guerrilla groups but mainly to Hezb-e-Islami (Khalis), Hezb-e-Islami (Hekmatyar), Jamiat-e-Islami and NIFA participated in the attack.

Ghaziabad farm, which is 25 kilometres east of Jalalabad, was captured by the advancing Mujahideen fighters on 6 March 1989 without much resistance. The next objective was the strategically important garrison of Samarkhel 12 kilometres east of Jalalabad city. It was the Headquarter of the Afghan army's 11 commando division. The joint forces of Mujahideen carried out a two pronged attacks on the garrison and it fell without much resistance on the night between 7 and 8 March two days after the offensive for Jalalabad had begun.<sup>(6)</sup>

The loss of Samarkhel was a great blow to the Kabul army. Not only did it result in losses of lives and military hardware but it also resulted in a loss of prestige as Samarkhel was one of the strongly defended divisional headquarters.

After capturing Samarkhel, the next objective of the attackers was the main airport of Jalalabad, the capture of which would have prevented any supplies and reinforcements to the government forces in the city. By 9th March a portion of the airport was captured and the runway made non operational.

The advancing Mujahideen troops had to contend with several consecutive rings of security posts before entering the Jalalabad city. These posts began to crumble before the Mujahideen who had to move through a vast open terrain which provided them no cover. They became extremely vulnerable to co-ordinated machine gun fire and aerial attacks. Both the sides resorted to trench warfare, that resulted in military impasse. Soon the ammunition in the Mujahideen camps began to run out, and tiredness crept in. The Kabul regime taking advantage of the situation resorted to artillery and aerial bombardments which caused unprecedented destruction among the Mujahideen ranks. The Afghan army soon launched a major counter offensive against the Mujahideen manning the Samarkhel garrison. The Mujahideen failed to put up any noticeable resistance to the regime troops, and they subsequently staged a humiliating withdrawal from the garrison amid heavy casualties.<sup>(7)</sup>

The Jalalabad campaign greatly undermined the standing and cause of the

Mujahideen. But there were many factors responsible for the abrupt failure in taking the city. First, insufficient attention had been paid to the need to coordinate Mujahideen activities, both nation-wide and in the Jalalabad region. Simultaneous attacks were not launched on other regime areas, and this permitted the regime to concentrate its forces for the defence of Jalalabad. Secondly, the Mujahideen in the Jalalabad region lacked command and operational capacity for set piece as opposed to guerrilla battles. Thirdly, the Mujahideen lacked enough manpower to take on the city defenders and also they were hampered by shortage of arms. Fourthly, the supply route from Kabul to Jalalabad was not blocked prior to the commencement of the campaign. Fifth, the regime made maximum use of its efficient air force, causing irreparable losses among the Mujahideen camps. Sixth, the Mujahideen were not helped by defections from regime troops which they had anticipated earlier. Last but not least, the massacre of the surrendering regime soldiers by the troops loyal to Maulvi Younis Khalis led to the complete halt to the defection to the Mujahideen.

The negative fallouts of the Jalalabad shambles were devastating for the Mujahideen. It was a great set back for Younis Khalis, Heḳmatyar and Sayyaf. The adverse international publicity which the Jalalabad failure attracted, and the drop in international interest in the Mujahideen cause, damaged the Mujahideen as a whole. At the same time, it increased the image of the Kabul regime as a viable and distinct force and increased its bargaining position.

✓ **Khost:** Having failed in their attempts, to liberate Jalalabad, the Mujahideen leaders turned their attention toward Khost, the eastern border town with Pakistan. The town had been besieged for years by the Mujahideen but they failed to take it, despite the fact that it had always been defended by the Kabul army only.<sup>(8)</sup>

Khost was the headquarter of Afghan army's 9th infantry division with a strength of about 4,000 to 5,000 regular Afghan soldiers and similar numbers of

militias. The strategic located Khost was the home town of Dr. Najibullah and then Defence Minister Shahnawaz Tani, who had strongly fortified the town in a bid to prevent its fall.

Jalaluddin Haqqani, the local Jadroon tribe commander was made the incharge of the campaign to get liberated the town. The Mujahideen troops under the command of Jalaluddin Haqqani staged, a fierce attack on the town in the mid of April, 1990 and advanced upto the suburbs of the town. But the regime troops especially the militias recruited from the Mehsud and Wazir tribesmen from across the border put up a spirited defence, and foiled the attempt of the Mujahideen to take the city. The ensuing battle continued for two months, as a result a stalemate developed.

The failed Khost campaign resulted in heavy casualties both in men and materials among the combatants. The failure of Mujahideen could be attributed to the lack of a common strategy between those participating in the offensive, internal dissension, among the Mujahideen commanders, aerial superiority of the regime and the failure of the Mujahideen to fight a sustained military operations against a fortified city like Khost.

But in a great display of unity the Mujahideen groups again mounted a three pronged attack on Khost in March 1991. The operation was so well coordinated and thorough executed that it impelled the regime troops to stage a retreat to the nearby Gardez garrison. The Khost fell to the Mujahideen on 31st March 1991. The fall of Khost was a great psychological boost-up though it did not result in domino effect, as anticipated by many Afghan analysts like Rahiwulloh. The incessant infighting among the Mujahideen prevented the fall of other major urban centres.

The internecine conflicts between the two erstwhile enemies Ahmed Shah Masood and Gulbadin Hekmatyar greatly benefited the Kabul regime to prolong its tenure. The Jalalabad episode, led to the exacerbation of tensions as

Hekmatyar accused Ahmed Shah Masood, for not launching simultaneous attacks on the regime out posts around the country.

Things came to a head in early July 1991, when at the Farkhar Pass, a local Hezbi-e-Islamic commander, Syed Jamal had slaughtered thirty of Ahmed Shah Masood commanders. The killing led to an open war between the two parties especially in the north. The alleged killer Syed Jamal along with his five colleagues were arrested by Ahmed Shah Masood troops, who were later on executed with the orders of Ahmed Shah Masood.<sup>(9)</sup>

The Farkhar pass, episode sowed the seeds of permanent hostilities between Hekmatyar and Ahmed Shah Masood, which damaged Mujahideen cause and standing.

### **The Kabul Regime and Armed Forces**

✓ The presence of the Soviet troops greatly strengthened the regime of Dr. Najibullah, which was under immense pressure from the Mujahideen groups. The Soviet troops which were concentrated along major highways and towns, had effectively prevented the resistance from cutting off roads and over running government bases. The presence of the Soviets in the country was a great morale boosting for the PDPA. Though there existed an unbridgeable differences between the Khalq and the Parcham factions, but their differences never assumed an alarming proportion owing to the Soviets tactical handling of the situation. Secondly, they were instrumental in bringing much-needed unity among their ranks. But with the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, Moscow lost an effective coercive control over the Kabul regime. The loss of that control, resurrected the old rivalries between the fractious PDPA factions which greatly undermined the viability and existence of the Kabul regime in the later years. But still Moscow tried to influence it's clients through advisers and assistance,

both militarily and economically.<sup>(10)</sup>

The withdrawal of the Soviet troops thus endangered the very survival of his government. In view of the impending lurking dangers stemming from the ever increasing armed hostilities from the resistance groups in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal, Dr.Najibullah initiated many drastic measures in different arenas with the view to broaden his dwindling support among the masses and crushed the military might of the Mujahideen groups. . Dr.Najibullah embarked upon a calculated but a dangerous course of action by forming ethnic militias which proved to be an important factor in the fall of his government. He made an effective use of the available Soviet aid in organising these militias, which were quite effective, especially in the north, that guarded the Kabul regime lifeline to the USSR.<sup>(11)</sup>

Dr.Najibullah, made an effective use of the massive resources by retaining control over the major cities and access to the paved roads. As the source of Dr.Najibullah power shifted from the direct military presence, to the redistribution of resources, he was impelled to delegate more powers to local commanders, thus increasing factionalism within the regime. Dr.Najibullah relied heavily on armed qawm based militias rather than the regular armed forces. The most important militias were stationed in the northern parts of the country, manning the road links to the USSR. The largest and the most organised militia was the mainly Uzbek Jauzjani, led by Rasheed Dostum.

These Jauzjani militiamen, had been trained in the guerilla warfare by the Soviet K.G.B in the tough terrain of the Siberia. They proved very effective in fighting the Mujahideen as evident from their astonishing successes against them. These militiamen who mainly consisted of the local rogues, were notorious for looting and plundering, and in the quest they did not even spare the innocent people. The foundation of this movement was laid by a local-Kabul regime commander namely Ghulam Mohammed, in his desire to take revenge from the Mujahideen for the massacre of his family. It is reported that during his



absence, the Mujahideen attacked the village and intruded into his house, where nearly fifty members of his family were murdered except one of his daughter who managed to survive by hiding herself behind the trunk. When Ghulam Mohammed reached his house, and witnessed the horrible nerve wrecking scenes of his ill-fated family, who were punished merely for his association with the government. At this moment, he fired at his only surviving daughter, and thus closed his family chapter for ever. In utter grief he shouted "Geelam Ma Choor Shah" meaning my home has been destroyed. In his address to his friends he avowed to fight till his last against the marauding Mujahideen.<sup>(12)</sup>

He thus organised the Jauzjani militia, which later assumed the name of Geelam Jam or carpet snatcher. That militia whose strength run mainly into thousands, included large number of pushtun settlers in the north, thus it is wrong to label it as an exclusive Uzbek militia. That militia guarded the natural gas fields in the north, plus took an active part in military engagements against the Mujahideen on the Kandhar, and Khost fronts, where they had proved their mettle through their heroic feats and daring movements.<sup>(13)</sup>

Another northern based militia was that of Ismaili Hazara led by their traditional religious leader, Sayyid-Mansur Nadiri, based mainly in the strategic located town of pul-e-Khumri. That militia effectively guarded the salang tunnel, and had neutralised the Mujahideen groups operating in Baghlan province. The most effective armed qawm based militias in Pushtun populated areas were that of Gen. Jabber Kandhari and Maj Asmat Muslim. Gen. Jabber, the most dreaded and a military tactician had at his disposal an unruly force of Kandhari tribesmen numbering 3000 who served the government of Dr.Najibullah till his removal. It was a common saying among the residents of Kabul, that whenever Dr.Najibullah intended to tame the unruly Geelam Jan militia, he used to send Gen. Jabber for that purpose. Rasheed Dostum had never dare to challenge Gen. Jabber authority. The toughness and daring of Gen Jabbar militiamen can be gauge from the fact, that they used to fight bare footed, and never abandoned their posts or surrender before the enemies.<sup>(14)</sup>

In consultations with the party top brass, Dr.Najibullah, abandoned its ideology in favour of survival. He presided over the reversal of virtually every element of the PDPA's programme. He changed the name of the country back to the Republic of Afghanistan, changed the name of the party to the Watan (homeland) party, renounced Marxism, single party rule and socialism and embraced Islam, pluralism and market economy. Rather than pursue a revolutionary strategy, Dr.Najibullah redistributed the massive Soviet aid to the various apparatuses linked to the regime, most notably the militias. The high level of aid may have constituted the political price that Gorbachev had to pay to obtain his hard-liners agreement to withdraw Soviet's troops and Dr.Najibullah assent to the Geneva accords with positive symmetry. Even with the aid increased, Afghan state expenditures that were needed to compensate for the Soviet's withdrawal provoked a severe fiscal crisis after 1988. As an alternative to dependence on Moscow, Dr.Najibullah printed money.<sup>(15)</sup>

The resulting hyperinflation in turn reinforced dependence on Soviet's supplies of food and fuel. The Soviets supplied an average of 250,000 tons of wheat per year, more than 100 percent of the total estimated consumption of the population of Kabul. With these resources Dr.Najibullah managed to retain control over the major cities and access to the paved roads that linked them. As the source of Dr.Najibullah power shifted from direct Soviet military presence to the redistribution of resources, he was forced to delegate some powers to local commanders, there by, multiplying the basis for factionalism within the regime. Unable to create an effective, modern military, the government moved away from bureaucratic chain of command towards a system based on brokerage, in which the state pays powerful leaders to supply troops from among their followers. Dr.Najibullah thus relied increasing on the above-stated heavily armed qawm based militia's rather than the regular armed forces. Dr.Najibullah created military command structure for the northern zone that placed Pushtun generals in charge of co-ordinating the activities of non-Pushtun militias. Nonetheless, the government's political and economic efforts in the north strengthened the capacity for collective action of that area's inhabitants,

once the overlay of foreign-assisted, Pushtun-dominated administration was stripped away.

The regime failed to find any formula for internal coherence that could substitute for its abandoned ideology. Instead, regime figures tried to assure their survival by pursuing links to various social groups within the country, including both Mujahideen and militias. Through this process Dr. Najibullah and his partymen forfeited influence and invited an ethnic realignment of political forces. One manifestation of this process was the re-emergence of open conflict between the Khalq and Parcham, whose members found different allies in the resistance and the government armed forces. The March 1990 coup in which Khalqi Defence Minister Shahnawaz Tani united with Hezb-E-Islami leader Gulbaddin Hekmatyar against Dr. Najibullah was only the most dramatic example of an alliance across an ideological gulf. Another manifestation of the process was the increasingly open tug-of-war between Dr. Najibullah and the non-Pushtun government militias based in northern Afghanistan.<sup>(16)</sup>

The struggle over the future of reforms in the USSR intensified in 1990 and early 1991, and the various factions in Kabul looked again to their patrons in Moscow. As the Moscow hard-liners prepared for their coup in the summer of 1991, Babrak Karmal returned to Kabul on June 20, 1991. His arrival may have been part of a contingency plan to restore a more hard-line Afghanistan policy after the anti-Gorbachev coup. At any rate, the failure of the August coup in Moscow disheartened both the Khalqis and the Karmalites.<sup>(17)</sup> At this point they may have decided finally that the revolution was over and that they could assure their personal survival only by making ethnic alliances against Dr. Najibullah.

Many of the Pushtuns in the Khalqi leadership had already joined Hekmatyar, Sultan Ali Kishmand, the only Hazara in the party leadership, resigned in the summer of 1991. He complained of Pushtun domination and supported the political demands of the Iranian-based Shia parties for regional autonomy and broad representation in the central government. The emerging independence of the Soviet Central Asian republics, as well as the increased

dissolution of power sharing in a transitional government also increased tensions, especially between Tajiks and Pushtuns.

The regime's control over rural areas continued to erode. The Mujahideen consolidated their hold over outlying areas, especially the Northeast, and the regime had scant control even in many areas dominated by groups that owed nominal allegiance to Kabul. Both the Jauzjani's and Ismaili's militia's seemed to exercise nearly as much independence as Ahmed Shah Masood's Council of the North, and both the Kandhar and Herat garrisons had struck deals with local Mujahideen groups that left them in a tenuous equilibrium between Kabul and the local population. Dr. Najibullah, fell not because of any onslaught by Mujahideen but because the loss of Soviet's aid eroded his ability to control factionalism and ethnic conflicts in his own ranks.

## CHAPTER-4

### The Afghan Civil War: Third Phase

## DISINTEGRATION OF AFGHAN STATE

### **Afghan State Disintegrates**

Just when the United Nations Peace plan was supposed to go into effect evolving a power sharing mechanism for the transfer of power, the dissolution of the Soviet Union at that critical stage utterly transformed the regional and international significance of Afghanistan. The two super-powers had devised this plan as an exercise in hegemonic co-operation under the auspices of the United Nations. The United States and the Soviet Union would ask the Secretary General's office, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions, to sponsor an interim government, the super powers would use their influence with the regional states and with the Afghan clients to assure implementation of the plan and promote order and stability. But with the dissolution of the USSR, one super power disappeared, the other had to disengage and thus co-operation between them became moot. In the absence of hegemonic power, security dilemmas emerged both for regional states and for the ethnic coalitions with in Afghanistan.<sup>(1)</sup>

The domestic politics of Afghanistan also underwent dramatic changes in line with the international anarchy trends. The chaos that ensued in the wake of anarchy in international arena foiled the implementation of the UN peace plan and thus sealed the future of the country and plunged, the country into a new round of fratricidal war among the combatants, which subsequently led to the fragmentation of the state apparatus. The savage war that engulfed the country since the resignation of Dr.Najibullah way-back in April 1992, continues unabated till the present, taking heavy losses both in human and material.<sup>(2)</sup>

## **Attempt to Implement the UN Plan**

After the Baker-Pankin agreement of September, 1991 UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar tried to secure co-operation among all states involved. To assure compliance with the superpowers plan by the regional states, he travelled to Saudi Arabia and then to Tehran where he met President Ghulam Ishaq Khan of Pakistan, as well as Hashemi Rafsanjani of Iran. All leaders claimed to support a political settlement. The civilian government in Islamabad felt that a stable Afghanistan was in the national interest of Pakistan. The emerging independence of the Central Asian states could give Pakistan an alternative to its eternally unequal contest with India in South Asia. A peaceful Afghanistan through which the newly independent republics could have access to Pakistan and the sea was essential to that vision.

After Perez de Cuellar completed these consultations, he received further encouragement. The Soviet's foreign ministry met one of the last demands of the United States and its partners when its UN delegation explicitly told Perez de Cuellar that Dr.Najibullah need not be part of the transition set-up, a policy shift that Dr.Najibullah soon confirmed.<sup>(2)</sup> In October 1991 the secretary general said, "I have been given assurances that some of the controversial personalities concerned would not insist on their personal participation, either in the intra-Afghan dialogue or in the transition mechanism."<sup>(2)</sup>

✓ In November 1991 the foreign ministers of the USSR, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan met in Moscow with four of the seven Pakistan-based Mujahideen parties (Jamiat and the three traditionalist parties) and Iran based Hezb-E-Wahdat. These parties had met twice since the spring with the foreign ministers of Pakistan and Iran to discuss implementation of the five points proposed by the UN secretary general in May 1991. The three Pushtun-led Islamic parties had refused to participate in previous meetings and were not invited to Moscow. The composition of this meetings signalled the seeming success of U.S. policy aimed at marginalizing both Dr.Najibullah and Hekmatyar.

A joint statement issued after the Moscow meeting called for the replacement of the current government in Kabul by an "Islamic interim government." The interim government would hold elections with the aid of the Organization of the Islamic conference and the United Nations (mentioned in that order). The Soviet side promised not only to terminate weapons supplies but to withdraw any remaining military advisers and end supply of fuel for military operations. The Mujahideen promised to expedite the release of Soviet prisoners of war(Pows).

Following the meetings in Moscow, Perez de Cuellar invited the permanent representatives of the United States, the USSR, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran to a "tea party" in his office to affirm their multilateral co-operation. Iran declined to attend a meeting with the United States, but all five states affirmed support for the UN initiative. This informal show of co-operation was not backed up by the level of force employed in Cambodia, where the international community deployed billions of dollars worth of military resources, civilian personnel and humanitarian aid to assure a transition. The regional powers in this case, aware of the lack of any enforcement mechanism, continued to strengthen their links to groups in Afghanistan, that could promote their interests and block their rivals.

This meeting authorised the Secretary General's Office to accelerate its work on the transitional mechanism. The first proposal, from Moscow, was to establish a joint government between Mujahideen and non-Communists in Kabul. Moscow suggested that Zahir Shah or Mujaddidi be designated as president while Dr.Najibullah's appointee, Fazl Haq Khaliqyar, a non-party dignitary from Herat, continued as prime minister. Objections by the Pushtun radicals, namely, Hekmatyar, Khalis, and Sayyaf, and by Jamiat leader Burhanudin Rabbani, undercut this simple and direct solution.

Benon Sevan, then set off to carry out long-debated plans to use the good offices of the UN secretary general to promote negotiations among the various Afghan parties. In January 1992 the new secretary general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, announced a plan under which all Afghan parties would submit to his office lists of candidates for an "Afghan gathering" (ijlas). The United Nations would negotiate agreement among the

parties to select about 150 representatives, and the gathering would elect a committee of about 35. This committee would canvassed the entire nation and on the basis of these consultations, would summon a nation-wide meeting to decide on an interim government and the holding of elections.

This cumbersome procedure was designed to overcome several obstacles. Power-sharing negotiations remained impossible because, unlike the insurgents in other regional conflicts, the resistance parties still refused even to meet openly with representatives of the existing government. (All of them, however, had their own back channels to individuals in Kabul). Organising a multiparty council Afghanistan, as in Cambodia, where all four parties signed an agreement, was impossible. Dr.Najibullah had offered to hand over power to Zahir Shah or to a neutral force, but not to a fragmented resistance that had not defeated him and that offered no united alternative. Furthermore, any Afghan's who tried to convene a gathering would be suspected of promoting his own power, and any non-Afghan's - even the UN secretary general - would lack legitimacy. The UN plan operated on the premise that the Afghan groups assembled could build legitimacy and authority incrementally. The procedure drew on certain Afghan traditions (in particular the emergency Loya Jirga) propounded to the United Nations by exiled officials of the old regime, including the former king and his advisers. The proposal resembled others, going back at least to the Cordovez plan of 1988, that attempted to resolve the conflict by an appeal to pre-war Afghan "national traditions".<sup>(3)</sup>

The three traditionalist-nationalist parties of the Mujahideen submitted a joint list of proposed participants in the gathering, as did the Shia Hezb-E-Wahdat. Zahir Shah and his advisers ultimately refused to submit a list to a gathering that gave such weight to the resistance parties. The Sunni Islamist parties (including Jamiat) refused, suspecting that the UN effort was move to exclude them from power or to deny their impending victory. Dr.Najibullah also postponed giving his list, which would have constituted a more decisive signal that he was prepared to depart than had his previous confidential assurances.



✓ By March 1992, Pakistan and the United States were putting intense pressure on Benon Sevan to force Dr.Najibullah to leave. They claimed that an explicit, public commitment by Dr.Najibullah to depart would allow them to pressure the “rejectionists” in the resistance. After several long sessions with Benon Sevan in Kabul, Dr.Najibullah presented his list and agreed to announce his intention to resign. On March 18, 1992, Dr.Najibullah addressed the nation on television and radio. Reading a speech written for him by Benon Sevan, he announced his resignation, which he said, would take effect once the United Nations had established an “interim government,” to which he would transfer all “powers and executive authority.” The international community prepared for the implementation of the regime for conflict resolution in Afghanistan.

### **From Conflict Resolution to State Disintegration**

The cut-off of aid, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and his own announcement, however, soon deprived Dr.Najibullah of any “powers and executive authority” to transfer. The broadcast of a clear signal that Dr.Najibullah would leave, before the establishment of an alternative to replace him, created a vacuum of power in Kabul into which the regional and ethnic coalitions rushed in.

In the past great powers had tried to consolidate the buffer state by providing a ruler with enough military and financial resources to neutralise other contenders for powers. But now the great powers merely promised to cease aid to the armed groups that they had funded and to “support” (verbally) the assumption of authority by a group of men whose names had not even been announced and who controlled no armed forces. The international community acted as if Afghanistan had a law-bound state apparatus that would govern the country once a more legitimate authority took control. The Soviets had made a similar errors in 1979, when Brezhnev and his advisers thought that sending their army to seize control of the central state in Kabul would enable their clients to control the country. In 1979, at least, the opposition was still disorganised and poorly armed; by 1992 the principal groups left out of the political settlement also controlled well-armed and organised forces.<sup>(4)</sup>

After the fall of Dr.Najibullah, four principal armed groups fought for power in Kabul. These groups had different ethnic compositions and different sources of foreign support, according to the regions in which they were based. Each group to some extent also enjoyed income from local taxes or customs, as well as from the drug trade and other enterprises.

Rasheed Dostum, a former commander of the Afghan Army's Jauzjani division, led a largely Uzbek group of former government militias that also included members of other ethnic groups from northern Afghanistan. Former leaders of Parcham, including Babrak Karmal, joined him in Mazar-E-Sharif. He received support from the Karimov government in Uzbekistan and perhaps from Russia.

Ahmed shah Masood and Burhanudin Rabbani led mainly Tajiks, with members of some other north-eastern ethnic groups; they were allied to one small but well-organised Shia party that had lost favour with Iran. They drew on the resources of their regional base in the north-eastern provinces. After Burhanudin Rabbani became acting president in June 1992, they received some financial support and fuel from the Saudi government and enjoyed the use of Afghanistan's newly printed bank notes.

Hekmatyar led a mainly Pushtun group that consisted of Hezb recruits from the refugee camps and eastern Afghanistan, former Khalqis, and former government militias. He never succeeded in galvanising the Pushtun tribal Shuras behind him, however, and thus lacked a consolidated regional base. The tribes were hardly involved in the struggle for Kabul. Hekmatyar continued to receive help from Arab and Pakistani Islamic radicals - and Ahmed Shah Masood continued to capture such foreign volunteers from Hekmatyar's ranks. Finally Hezb-E-Wahdat, which had a base in the Hazarajat, organised the Shia of Kabul city who were armed by the Iranians and Parchamis during Dr.Najibullah's fall.<sup>(5)</sup>

The ethnic structure of the conflict changed over time as the domestic and international balance of power shifted, suggesting that the conflict was fundamentally a struggle for power rather than an ethnic war fuelled by "ancient hatreds." At first,

Ahmed Shah Masood, Rasheed Dostum and Hezb-E- Wahdat took joint control of Kabul and repulsed an attack by the Hezb-Khalq coalition. This conflict seemed to pit resurgent non-Pushtuns against Pushtuns, who had long dominated the Afghan state. It was also a clash between coalitions backed by Iran, on the one hand, and Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on the other. But by the end of 1992 the ethnic alignment had shifted. By the start of 1994, Hekmatyar's Hezb-E- Islami, Mujaddidi's ANLF, the Shia Hezb-I Wahdat, and Rasheed Dostum's Jumbish allied in a Co-ordination Council (*Shura-yi-Hamahangi*).

The predominance of Ahmed Shah Masood and Burhanudin Rabbani in Kabul alienated first Hezb-E-Wahdat and then Rasheed Dostum. Furthermore, the political situation in the newly independent states of Central Asia set formerly allied Uzbeks and Tajiks of north Afghanistan against each other. Rasheed Dostum's backer President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, worked with Russia to restore to power in Tajikistan a coalition of former Communists and others, including Uzbeks. Ahmed Shah Masood, meanwhile, gave refuge to the supporters of the opposition, which included Islamists, Tajik nationalists, and democrats. Karimov apparently wanted Rasheed Dostum to block Ahmed Shah Masood's access to the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border.

Iran, too, differed with Ahmed Shah Masood over several issues. As early as the summer of 1992 Iran's establishment of a consulate in Rasheed Dostum's capital of Mazar-I Sharif created tensions with Burhanudin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Masood. In December 1993 Ahmed Shah Masood launched an offensive to take control of Shia neighbourhoods of Kabul, leading Hezb-I Wahdat to sign an agreement with Hekmatyar in January 1993. Rasheed Dostum broke ranks with Ahmed Shah Masood, he attacked Jamiat positions in the north in fall of 1993 and openly allied with Hekmatyar by New Year of 1994, when the two former enemies launched a joint attack on Ahmed Shah Masood's forces in Kabul. This alliance was soon formalised through the establishment of the Co-ordination Council.

While shifting power relations were tearing the country apart, both outside powers and Afghan groups continued their efforts to reinstate legitimate government. But the fragmentation of social power, the multiplicity of armed groups, and the

abdication of the major states doomed those efforts. While foreign ministries negotiated peace plans, intelligence agencies pursued preparations for other contingencies. Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Uzbekistan all worked to ensure, at the least, that forces supported by their rivals would not become too powerful. A more detailed account of these developments will illustrate how they conformed to the model of the security dilemma under anarchy.

Since 1989, Hekmatyar had been using ethnic politics, among other tactics to counter the State Department's endeavour to marginalize him. He allied with the Khalqis in 1989-90. After the Moscow meeting in November 1991, where neither he nor Kabul was represented, Hekmatyar, using Qaddhafy as an intermediary, wrote to Dr.Najibullah with an offer of collaboration. Dr.Najibullah later sent a trusted military officer to Peshawar to explore the offer. In Kabul there was talk of a "Pushtun solution."

Meanwhile the non-Pushtun northern alliance was solidifying. Both the largest government militias and the largest Mujahideen force - the Islamic Army of the Supervisory Council - were based in this area. Ahmed Shah Masood had received large quantities of American material since the spring of 1991, enabling him to equip and expand his Islamic Army to about twelve thousand men. Confronted with Ahmed Shah Masood's new strength, Rasheed Dostum began secret negotiations with him. Ahmed Shah Masood also continued to regain credibility with the anti-Dr.Najibullah Tajik Parchamis in the party and the army, many of whom had long hedged their bets by cooperating with him. Iran nurtured the non-Pushtun alliance through its links to non-Pushtun Parchamis and northern militias. Thus it balanced the opposing Hezb-Khalq alliance.

In January 1992, almost as soon as the aid from the USSR stopped, Rasheed Dostum went into open revolt. Rasheed Dostum, like all commanders, received containers of freshly printed banknotes, at least some of which he then redistributed to his men. Deprived of Soviet aid, however, Dr.Najibullah halted salaries for the inflated number of soldiers that Rasheed Dostum claimed to have under his command. The Soviet's military had sent one last shipment of weapons and vehicles to Afghanistan. No

longer restrained by the threat of reprisals, Rasheed Dostum seized the whole cargo with the aid of Abdul Mumin, a Tajik Parchami officer aligned with Ahmed Shah Masood, who commanded the border garrison, through which the aid passed.

Rasheed Dostum's revolt was a textbook case of the end of defection in a co-operation problem. Co-operation over time between an aid giver and an agent who has partly antagonistic interests can be seen as an iterated Prisoners dilemma. The cooperative strategies were for Dr.Najibullah to continue giving aid and for Rasheed Dostum to fight against Dr.Najibullah's enemies. If Rasheed Dostum refused to fight or attacked the wrong targets. Dr.Najibullah could retaliate by withholding aid. If Rasheed Dostum did not receive as much aid as he wanted, he could sit on the sidelines or attack Dr.Najibullah's other allies. In addition, the Soviets provided external monitoring and enforcement of the co-operation. Now both the iteration and the external enforcement had ended.

Dr.Najibullah turned to other means for control of an agent by a principal. He tried to use ethnic ties to create reliable agents who could monitor the unreliable ones and take sanctions against them. He tried to extend the control of Pushtun military officers who were loyal to him over the northern militias by shifting key Pushtun generals into positions of command. Dr.Najibullah's warning that he would no longer pay for phantom soldiers indicated that his new agents would monitor Rasheed Dostum more closely.<sup>(6)</sup>

The attempt to strengthen monitoring of the northern militias by Pushtun commanders provoked the revolt. Rasheed Dostum canvassed support for the revolt from other non-Pushtun militias and the mainly non-Pushtun Parchami forces in Kabul, where officials who saw Dr.Najibullah sinking desperately sought protectors among the Mujahideen and the militias. These factional and ethnic revolts within the armed forces and party epitomised the failure of institutionalisation that rendered an organised transition impossible. The chain of patronage and co-operation that had sustained the vestigial institutions of the Afghan state had broken down with the disengagement and dissolution of the United States and USSR.

The rebel militias solidified their Iranian-brokered alliance with commanders of Hezb-E-Wahdat, Jamiat, and other northern resistance groups. The day after Dr. Najibullah announced that he would resign, this coalition seized control of Mazar-E-Sharif, cutting off Kabul's main supply lines. Rasheed Dostum announced the establishment of an autonomous administration in the north and the formation of his National Islamic Movement (Junbish-I Milli-yi-Islami). Ahmed Shah Masood, an acknowledged hero of the resistance, emerged as the political spokesman for the alliance, but its most powerful military force consisted of Rasheed Dostum's troops. Rasheed Dostum had more than forty thousand men, triple Ahmed Shah Masood's force. The northern commanders both militias and Mujahideen felt that they had been ignored in the UN process, which had concentrated on mediating between the mainly Pushtun leaders in Kabul and Peshawar. Ahmed Shah Masood told the Mujahideen that he was acting on behalf of resistance commanders and the NCS, not a regional-ethnic alliance; he may have given a rather different impression to Rasheed Dostum. Rasheed Dostum expected an important position in the new government, but Ahmed Shah Masood's party leader, Burhanudin Rabbani an Islamic scholar who opposed deals with "Communists," consistently refused.

As the revolt threatened to topple the government before the transition could be completed, the United Nations streamlined its plan. A "pre-transition council composed of impartial personalities" chosen from the lists submitted to the United Nations would take over "all powers and executive authority" from the current government. This council would then convene a shura in Kabul to choose an interim government. Under severe pressure from the United States and Pakistan, the major leaders in Peshawar and Kabul agreed, but agreements in Afghanistan, like any where reached under anarchy, must be self-enforcing. Both Hekmatyar and the commanders of the northern alliance, who led the most powerful military forces in the country, viewed this process as an attempt to marginalize them.

According to the plan, on the night of April 15-16 a UN plane would fly the members of the interim government into Kabul, where Dr. Najibullah would transfer

power to them at the airport and leave for exile in India on the same plane. During the day of April 15, however, in a meeting of more than eight hours at the Islamabad residence of the prime minister of Pakistan, two of the Mujahideen parties expressed misgivings about the pretransition council and asked for a Mujahideen government. When the Mujahideen leaders were unable to agree on the composition of the council, Benon Sevan flew alone to Kabul in the early hours of April 16. There, however, the Parchami rebels allied with Ahmed Shah Masood had seized control of the Kabul airport with 750 to 1,000 troops flown from northern military bases. Dr. Najibullah, blocked from reaching the airport, fled to the office of the United Nations.<sup>(7)</sup>

Led by Babrak Karmal's second cousin, Foreign Minister Abdul Wakil, the Parchami rebels denounced their former leader Dr. Najibullah as a hated dictator and secretly asked Ahmed Shah Masood to enter the capital as head of state. The Parchamis intended to use Ahmed Shah Masood as a figurehead who would continue to depend on them. He rejected this offer and asked the leaders in Peshawar to accelerate their efforts to form an interim government of Mujahideen. Ahmed Shah Masood faced a security dilemma, which arose in part from the failure of the NCS to appoint a national leadership or any decision-making mechanism. If Ahmed Shah Masood moved the northern forces to secure Kabul with Rasheed Dostum's aid, he would provoke resentment from Pushtun commanders, risking ethnic war. But the longer he remained outside the city while the leaders dithered, the more opportunities Hekmatyar and his Khalqi allies had to stage a coup. Similar logic applied to the other side's dilemma.

Ahmed Shah Masood constantly spoke on his American radios with prominent Pushtuns in the NCS, trying to assure them he had no intention to take power for himself or for the northern alliance. For ideological reasons, and because he felt he had been insufficiently consulted, he rejected the UN interim plan. He claimed to hope that despite their shortcomings the Peshawar leaders would create an interim government that would provide legitimate political leadership. Despite intense Pakistani pressure, however, the leaders in Peshawar argued for ten days about arrangements for a transitional government.<sup>(8)</sup>

Meanwhile, Pushtuns in the Afghan military - mainly Khalqis, but also some Parchamis close to Dr.Najibullah - reacted to the threatened take-over of Kabul by the northerners. Hekmatyar and his supporters prepared to reactivate plans for a military victory in Kabul. When Hekmatyar had sought to take Kabul by force, in March 1990 and August-September 1991, the United States had been able to use its sponsorship to halt the offensives. But just as the end of Soviet aid deprived Dr.Najibullah of leverage over the militias, so the end of U.S. aid deprived Washington of leverage over Hekmatyar.

Khalqi officers permitted Hezb-I Islami fighters to infiltrate the city. Hekmatyar's military force also crossed the Pakistan border and camped south of Kabul, where Khalqi units joined it. Although Islamabad was officially neutral, Hekmatyar continued to recruit fighters and to transfer weapons, oil and supplies from Pakistan as well as maintain offices and bank accounts there. And Jamaat-E-Islami supported him.

On April 25, with the Peshawar leaders still unable to reach agreement, the forces of Ahmed Shah Masood and Rasheed Dostum, already in control of the airport, entered the city to pre-empt a coup by Hezb. The non-Pushtun Parchamis, assisted by the Iranian embassy, had also armed the Shias of Kabul city. Hekmatyar portrayed his strategy as a defence against a coup by the northern alliance. After several days of hard fighting, the joint forces and expelled the Khalqi-Hezbi forces.

The party leaders, Hekmatyar excluded, finally reached agreement on April 26th and announced the Peshawar Accords. For two months Mujaddidi would be acting president; he would be followed by Burhanudin Rabbani for four months. At the end of the six-month interim, the government would hold a shura to choose a government for the next eighteen months, after which elections would be held. The acting president would answer to a council composed of the leaders of Mujahideen parties. Ahmed Shah Masood became minister of defence. The interim government arrived in Kabul from Peshawar on April 28 and proclaimed the establishment of the Islamic State of Afghanistan.



The government relied on the forces of Ahmed Shah Masood and Rasheed Dostum for military control of Kabul, and Hekmatyar bombarded the city with rockets and denounced the ISA as a disguised Communist regime. At the same time fighting between Iran-backed Shia and Arab-backed Salafi (Wahhabi) Sunni groups took many lives.

Four months after Burhanudin Rabbani assumed authority as acting president, on October 8, 1992 the leadership council reluctantly voted to extend his mandate for forty five days, on the grounds that continued fighting and the destruction of Kabul had made it impossible for him to summon the shura in the time designated. After the extension, however, the government would summon a nation-wide *shura-yi ahl-E-hall-u-aqd* (council of those who loose and bind, an Islamic legal term unfamiliar to most Afghans). The shura would elect a president for the following eighteen months. Somewhat belatedly, Burhanudin Rabbani managed to convene a shura of 1,335 men at the end of December 1992. But most of the parties boycotted the shura, charging that it was manipulated by Burhanudin Rabbani, whom, to no one's surprise, it elected as president on December 29, 1992.

The assumption of a near monopoly over the central government by Jamiat accelerated the shifts in alliances that changes in the regional international system had begun. Ahmed Shah Masood and Burhanudin Rabbani became more isolated as their former allies turned against them.

The United Nations and most of the international community had by this time virtually dropped Afghanistan from the political agenda. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia began a new initiative, which pro-Hekmatyar forces turned to their advantage. After a January 1993 appeal by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and pressure from Jamaat and its allies in Pakistan, the major party leaders, Sunni and Shia, signed a new agreement in Islamabad on March 7, 1993. The leaders then paid a visit to Saudi Arabia, where they made the pilgrimage to Mecca and took an oath to adhere to the agreement. This oath had little effect, however, because the agreement, among other shortcomings, was internally contradictory. The agreement left Burhanudin Rabbani as president but made

Hekmatyar the prime minister, reproducing in Afghanistan a political relation that had undone successive Pakistani governments. The prime minister would appoint the government, including the defence minister, in consultation with the president, who remained supreme commander of the armed forces. The prime minister immediately announced that he would dismiss Defence Minister Ahmed Shah Masood, while the president and supreme commander of the armed forces announced that Ahmed Shah Masood would remain at his post. When the president travelled to the eastern outskirts of Kabul for a secret meeting with the prime minister, gunmen attempted to assassinate him on the way, and no further meetings were planned. Ahmed Shah Masood resigned as defence minister in May 1993 but continued to command the same forces.<sup>(9)</sup>

After months of negotiations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan, the new alliance of the anti-Jamiat forces coalesced. On New Year's Day 1994, Hekmatyar and Rasheed Dostum launched a combined assault on the forces of Burhanudin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Masood. Fighting along these lines also broke out in Mazar-e-Sharif and elsewhere in the north, especially in those areas to which refugees had fled from Tajikistan. Despite his lack of consistent foreign support, Ahmed Shah Masood gradually gained ground over the year, vindicating his reputation as a military commander, but these military accomplishments brought the country no nearer to peace.

Instead Burhanudin Rabbani lost whatever legitimacy the Islamabad Accords had conferred on him. He was scheduled to remain as interim president until June 28, 1994 by which time elections were to have been held, but he unilaterally lengthened his own term to the end of the year. By that time, according to conservative estimates based on the numbers of victims arriving at Kabul hospitals, more than twenty thousand had died in the war from April 1992 to December 1994. Many were buried quickly by families or abandoned under the rubble.

In the rest of the country, between the fall of Mazar-e-Sharif on March 19 and the surrender of Jalalabad on April 23, 1992, Mujahideen had negotiated the surrender of all major government garrisons. Regional councils, some of which included commanders who had formerly fought on opposite sides, formed on the basis of local ethnic and tribal

ties. Many regions of the country enjoyed stability under autonomous local leaders or Shuras. The fighting in Kabul, however, repeatedly threatened these local arrangements, as national leaders sought regional support or secure base areas.

No one had any reason to secede from such an important state, and the regional states let the various Afghan commanders know that they would not countenance any formal partition of Afghanistan. In fact, however, the regionally based ethnic coalitions became autonomous, each with its own armed forces and sources of revenue, however inadequate. All major customs posts, the government's principal sources of revenue in the absence of foreign aid or natural gas exports, were under the control of regional Shuras, which kept the revenue for themselves. Tens of thousands of tenuously controlled armed men occupied the streets of the capital. The government, with neither tax revenue nor foreign aid, paid its armed forces by distributing the freshly printed bank notes that continued to arrive by planes from Russia. Many groups funded the continued war through the drug trade. The government was forced to default on promised aid to the regional Shuras.

## CHAPTER-5

### The Afghan Civil War: Fourth Phase

#### EMERGENCE OF THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT

The sudden emergence of the student led Islamic militia completely changed the scenario of the country and threatened the very existence of the marauding war- lords who had imposed a reign of terror since the collapse of Dr.Najibullah's regime way back in April 1992. The origin of the movement though shrouded in mystery initially, but later it revealed that it was an indigenous force drawn mainly from the religious madrassahs, cherished with the desire to restore order and tranquillity to the war-ravaged country at large.

The Taliban achieved a series of spectacular victories mainly in Pushtun inhabited areas of south-west Afghanistan which stunned, the world at large. The exemplary peace and order which they restored, greatly increased their standing among the masses. The fall of Kabul in September 1996 which coincided with the brutal execution of Dr.Najibullah at the U. N. office by the Taliban caused unprecedented resentment and rage. Secondly, the imposition of strict Islamic shariah by confining the women to houses., closing down girls educational institutions, and some other measures to segregate male and female population caused uproar and opposition from many quarters, which greatly undermined the viability, and cause of the Islamic led-student militia.

The Taliban ill planned abortive moves to capture northern Afghanistan Shattered the myth of invincibility and caused heavy casualties which hampered their march towards the said areas. The failure of the Taliban clearly illustrates a glaring fact that war is not a permanent solution to the crisis and all the parties concerned need to exhibit flexibility to find a viable solution to that intractable conflict, evading solutions for the last two decades.

The presence of many die-hard Communist elements (Khaliq's) in the

Taliban ranks refute the impression that it mainly consisted of Islamic puritans immersed with a mission to impose a Islamic order. The remnants of the ex-Communist regime form the core of the Taliban fighting force. According to some reliable estimate, there are nearly five thousands Communist officers and militiamen who have joined the Taliban movement in guise of religious motive, but with a prime aim to consolidate their positions in order to play their would be historic role once the decline of Taliban movement starts. The Communists are headed by the maverick ex- defence minister namely Shahnawaz Tani. He has changed his name to Mulla Bashir and ostensibly trying to present himself as a faithful Muslim by keeping a long beard.

There is no doubt that the Taliban are strongly entrenched, but they have failed to emerge as a viable political force enlisting the support of the cross sections of society. Secondly, they could not present an effective administrative system to reflect the popular feelings. Thirdly, the Taliban have been bogged down in fierce fighting in northern Afghanistan, which caused heavy losses both in human and material. These inherent weaknesses tend to signify that the movement is a transitory phenomenon, and might be failed to survive in the stormy years ahead and, would be replaced by a force subservient to the public will.

✓ The resignation of Dr.Najibullah under a UN brokered peace formula, was a premature move on the part of the world body. His resignation resulted in the dissolution of the state apparatus and central authority and thus paving the way for infighting among the Mujahideen.<sup>(1)</sup>

The infighting among the combatants was confined mainly to the metropolitan city of Kabul. Ironically the once historic city Kabul did not witness the like of the killing and destruction even during the decade long Soviet's occupation, as was the case with the short lived Mujahideen government. The city was divided among the forces of Ahmed Shah Masood, Hezb-e-Wahdat, Gulbadin Hekmatyar, Abdul Rab Sayyaf, and Rasheed Dostum. The troops loyal to Rasheed Dostum and Wahadat committed gross human rights violations-unprecedented in the country long chequered history. It is

unfortunate to note that the women were the prime targets of these marauding hooligans. According to a survey conducted by the Amnesty international, during the Professor Burhanudin Rabbani rule, hundreds of women were abducted and systematically raped and tortured, and large number of them ended up into the prostitution dens.

The incessant fighting among the warlords brought the ill-fated country on a verge of collapse. The continuous fighting resulted in a huge exodus of the Afghans, especially the inhabitants of Kabul-the most educated and liberal sections of the Afghan society. The brain drain, caused immediate loss to the country as with the exit of the professionals, technocrats, the state felt immense shortage of skilled officials in running the affairs of the government in an efficient way.

The incessant fighting among the combatants, caught the world attention towards the pathetic plight of the ill-fated Afghans subjected to the ravages of a senseless war. At last in 1994, the United Nation's made another move to find an amicable settlement to the Afghan issue by applying a variant of the regime for conflict resolution. On February 12, 1994, Secretary General U.N, Boutros-Ghali nominated former Tunisian Foreign Minister Mehmud Mestri as his special envoy to Afghanistan in order to help in canvassing a broad spectrum of the Afghan leaders, soliciting their views on how the United Nations can best assist Afghans in facilitating national rapprochement and reconstruction.

The UN Special mission headed by Mehmud Mestri met with a wider range of Afghan personalities during his visits to the region, and thus succeeded in creating a national public space that had long been absent from Afghan politics. The mission created a new hopes of peace among the war ravaged Afghans.<sup>(2)</sup>

The proposals revealed that the expectations of the people of Afghanistan had converged on something like the international regime for conflict

resolution. Common themes included an end to the foreign involvement that Afghan's claimed was fuelling the war, a UN monitored cease fire, a neutral security or peace keeping force, a transitional period leading to elections and the disarming of the population and the principal belligerents. Elections might be preceded by a meeting of a Loya Jirga. Interestingly neither Afghans nor any other troops contributing states favoured an international peace-keeping force in Afghanistan. Instead, a neutral Afghan force was envisioned, perhaps recruited from regional shuras to control the security in Kabul, and disarmed the combatants.

Mehmud Mestri again paid a detailed visit to the region from July 3, to September 7 1994. The results of the previous missions encouraged Afghans to step forward to put further pressure on their leaders to make peace under a UN brokered peace plan, envisaging the formation of a broad based government representing all segments and spectrum of the society. On August 11, 1994, for instance, nine hundred tribal elders, claiming to represent one million refugees in Pakistan released a petition for peace through the offices of the UN High Commissioner for refugees in Islamabad, Calling upon the worldbody to accelerate its present efforts for finding a viable solution to the intractable conflict raging in the country, causing immense destruction.

But as ill luck would have it, the main protagonists of the civil war tried to use the UN mission to reinforce their positions. At that time the parties were involved in the manoeuvring, as they made alliances and counter alliances among themselves in the bid to impose their writ over the ill-fated war ravaged Afghan capital, the once metropolitan city was reduced to a rubble and a ghost town by the marauding war lords. Burhanudin Rabbani who was the so called president of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, had allied himself with Abdur Rab Sayyaf Chief of the Saudi backed Ittehad-e-Islamic against his main rival Hekmatyar. Hekmatyar had organised a co-ordination council that grouped his party with Rasheed Dostom, chief of the notorious Geelam Jam militia, the remnants of Mujaddidi's followers, and the Iranian backed Shia party 'Hezb-E-

Wahdat'. That co-ordination Council, was adamant in its demand to remove Burhanudin Rabbani and replaced it with some neutral person. A move which, was out rightly rejected by Burhanudin Rabbani, who was adamant to remain in power at all costs. Ironically, Hekmatyar had joined hands with Rasheed Dostum, whom, he labelled as a remnant of the past Communist regime, and accused his militia of committing heinous crimes against the Mujahideen during the Dr.Najibullah regime. Hekmatyar alliance with Rasheed Dostum, greatly undermined his credibility and mass following among the Pushtuns who perceived him to be an opportunist bent upon to seek power at all costs. The other parties like Harakat-E-Inqilab of Muhammadi, Hezb-E-Islami of Maulvi Younas Khalis, National Islamic Front of Afghanistan led by Pir Syed Gilani, and Muhsini's Harakat-E-Islami, the Shia party dependent on Iran, adopted a neutral course, and refused to join any of the warring factions, but confined themselves to the side line's, watching the mayhem going on in the country.

At the directives of Mehmud Mestri, Ismail Khan, the all powerful warlord of the Herat region convened a council in Herat during July 20-25 1994 with the purpose to initiate an intra-Afghan dialogue among the warring factions in order to bring an amicable settlement to the simmering conflict. But the council failed to achieve its desired results, as Burhanudin Rabbani outrightly rejected any role for Rasheed Dostum in any future peace process and labelled him as "Communist", and Hikmetyar was not willing to attend meeting in an area under Jamiat control, and secondly demanded the removal of Burhanudin Rabbani from the presidentship as a precondition for participating in any peace parleys.

The eruption of renewed differences among the Afghan warring factions was a severe blow to the Mehmud Mestri peace endeavours. He played another move by working with the "neutral" parties and personalities during the months of August and September, 1994 but utterly failed to obtain agreement on the form of a transition government set-up in view of renewed escalation of fighting among the warlords. The UN Secretary General on whose initiative Mehmud



Mestri had stepped up the peace parleys, personally visited Islamabad on September 6 1994 to supervise the UN peace endeavours. But he failed to achieve the desired results in the wake of unbridgeable differences among the combatants who were bent upon to settle their personal scores on the battle field by putting at stake the interests of the country. In an utter disgust the Secretary General issued a statement noting “with regret that the efforts to convene a joint meeting of the warring factions and neutral leaders of the parties were not successful.”<sup>(3)</sup>

At the directives of Secretary General, Mehmud Mestri returned to the area. But again the warring factions had once again failed to reach an agreement on the terms demanded by the Afghan people, who were facing the main brunt of the in-fighting. Disgusted and disillusioned with the Mujahideen leaders, Mehmud Mestri openly allied his mission with a group of independent Afghans from the old regime, most notably close advisers and relatives of ex-Afghan monarch Zahir Shah, and also several prominent individuals and officials from the period of New Democracy. On September 29, 1994, Mehmud Mestri opened a meeting of a forty members Afghan “advisory council” in Quetta. The Council, which remained in session until October 17, proposed that Burhanudin Rabbani hand over power to an authoritative council, that would oversee disarmament of the belligerents and prefer for a Loya Jirga to decide the future of the country. A neutral security force would take control of Kabul, though it was unclear how this force would be recruited and who would pay for it. The notion of setting up local rather than international peace keeping force was an innovation in UN conflict resolution and peace keeping, but the problem of organising and financing such a neutral forces posed a new set of problems. Interestingly, Burhanudin Rabbani, Hekmatyar, and other Afghan leaders accepted the UN proposal in principles, and thus raised expectations about an amicable solution to the long-drawn civil war. This plan was endorsed by the United Nations.

Though Mehmud Mestri and his team were about to implement the UN

plan, at that critical juncture, every body was taken by surprise appearance of a new armed movement. The appearance of the Taliban-literally Islamic led student militia, avowing to implement strict interpretation of Islam, and restore order, changed the whole complexion of the country politics, and thus pushed the UN plan into oblivion.

### **Taliban Emergence**

The internecine conflict raging in the country since long, being imposed by the so-called Mujahideen, who had wrought deaths and destruction on an unprecedented scale upon the helpless Afghan population at large. These warlords had put at stake the interest of the whole country for the sake of their vested interests.

The masses who were the main victims of that fratricidal conflict were awaiting for the arrival of a "Messiah" to relieve them for their sufferings and restore peace and normalcy to the country at large. The country witnessed the emergence of a new force led by the Islamic led student militia known as Taliban, in October 1994 from the historic city of Kandhar. The Sudden emergence of this newly led Islamic force spurned a big surprise, as nobody had envisaged the emergence of such a force.

Though initially the origin of the Taliban movement remained shrouded in deep mystery, and the astonishing successes of the Islamic militia further surprised the people. There were wide spread speculations about the origin of the movement. But later events proved that it was an indigenous movement enjoying wide scale support among the masses at large, who had suffered enough at the hands of the warlords, bent upon to prolong their agonies by putting at stake the interest of the whole country for the sake of their vested interests at the behest of the hostile foreign powers.

As far as the origin of the Taliban movement was concerned, the

abduction and subsequent killing of a three Herati women on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1994 proved to be the immediate cause of the Taliban emergence. That incident which took place in the vicinity of Kandhar caused profound outrage and grief across the city. The relatives of the victims took the disfigured dead bodies to the local elders pleading to initiate action against the said commanders. The area notables expressed their inability to take on these all powerful commanders, who were allied to various Mujahideen parties.

— A young religious scholar in mid thirties namely Mulla Umer, who was the incharge of a local Madrassah, in league with his students studying at his Madrassah decided to take action against the said outlaws, who had destroyed the peace and order of the area by indulging in such types of unlawful activities. It is pertinent to mention, that Mulla Umar had taken an active role in Jihad during the Soviet's occupation of the country, and had lost one eye in the war. Mulla Umer was associated with Harkat-E-Islamic party led by Nabi Mohammadi, but after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces, he devoted exclusively to running the affairs of a local Madrassah. In addition to religious education, he imparted military training to his students at his Madrassah and thus had organised a big force of a ideologically motivated and well trained fighters, which later greatly facilitated his task of crushing the power of the warring factions.

Mulla Umer organised his students and supporters and launched an all-out attacks on the hideouts of these commanders. Heavy fighting meanwhile ensued, but the Taliban having the support of the local people overcame resistance from the commanders and subsequently killed them. Flushed with success, the Taliban started taking control over some area's. At the directives of Mulla Umar those outlaws responsible for the abduction of the three women were hanged and their dead bodies kept hanging from the poles in the centre of Kandhar city for three days.

yes — In June 1994, Pakistan decided to establish rail and road links to the

central Asia republics in order to tap the region resources. On September 14, 1994 Gen. Nasrullah Babar, the then Interior Minister announced that the following week he would travel to Central Asia via Qandhar and Herat to negotiate the transit of a Pakistani convoy that would leave in mid-October. The convoy would be organised by the National Logistics Cell. A representative of the railway department would accompany Gen. Nasrullah Babar to examine the feasibility of constructing a rail along the route. The World Bank had promised \$1.5 million for such a feasibility study.<sup>(4)</sup>

✓ In the meanwhile Benazir Bhutto paid a visit to Turkmanistan to attend its independence day celebrations. The two all powerful Afghan warlords namely Rasheed Dostum and Ismail Khan, heads of the Shuras in Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat also took part in the Turkmanistan national day celebration at the invitation of the President. There Benazir Bhutto held long parleys with both the Afghan warlords who controlled Afghanistan borders with Turkmanistan and Uzbekistan. At last an agreement was reached and both the leaders assured full co-operation to Benazir Bhutto to facilitate the transportation of humanitarian convoys to Turkmanistan via Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif.

✓ On getting go ahead from Rasheed Dostum and Ismail Khan, thirty trucks laden with food, clothes and medical supplies left Quetta for Afghanistan. Soon after crossing into Afghanistan, on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1994, the convoy was stopped by the member of the infamous Ismat Muslim militia who had long exacted tools from travellers and had served Dr.Najibullah regime as a militia in the area.

✓ The Taliban who had already occupied the suburbs of Qandhar and organised a huge-force attacked these militiamen, holding the convoy. After a fierce fighting, the student led Islamic militia threw a big surprise by defeating these militiamen, and got freed the convoy. Without losing any time, the Taliban mounted a three pronged attack on city of Kandhar, where there ensued a fierce fighting as the local commanders put up a strong resistance to the newly

emerged force, which they perceived to be an inherent threat to their very existence. But Taliban enjoying the support of the local people, who had been subjected to a reign of terror by the local warlords, quickly swept into Kandhar city, where they captured the two strategic places, the airport and the governor residence.

The Taliban quickly gained wide popular support by imposing an exemplary order in the turbulent city of Kandhar. They initiated a clean up operation by collecting weapons from the people, and secondly those outlaws who were alleged to have indulged in unlawful activities were punished, according to the injunctions of Islam. A new administrative system was formulated with the prime view to conduct the affairs of city in an efficient way. The Taliban system of governance based upon quick justice and fair-play further enhanced their popularity, and thus their ranks were swarmed by hundreds and thousands of Afghans irrespective of their ethnic, linguistic or regional affiliations.

✓ The Taliban apparently comprising both the Afghan refugees settled in Pakistan, and their Pushtun Pakistani brethren. The core leadership of the Taliban movement consisted partly of traditional, privately educated Ulemas - from the southern Pushtun tribes and partly of students studying in traditional Sunni Madrasas based in Pakistani Baluchistan, Tribal areas and NWFP. Some of the top brass leaders of the Taliban had been an active and influential commanders during the hey day of Jihad against the Soviet's occupant forces, but had become alienated from the party leadership mainly after the withdrawal of the Soviet's forces, as the Mujahideen parties abandoned the path of jihad and indulged in power struggle among themselves, which greatly undermined their credibility and standing among the masses, who had pinned high hopes from them in the wake of the Soviet's withdrawal. Most of the Madrasas, where they recruited students and beside religious education they were imparted military training also. Interestingly these Madrasas, the breeding ground of the Taliban, were affiliated with the Jamaat-I-Islami. This party led by Maulana

✓ Fazal-ur-Rehman was opposed to the Islamic radical Jamaat-E-Islamic, and had allied with the Pakistan People Party led by Benazir Bhutto. Thus many opposition quarters like Mehmud Achakzai, alleged that Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman alliance with Benazir Bhutto was primarily meant to seek favours for the Taliban, and thus discarded the Hekmatyar and eastern Pushtuns in favour of Taliban and the southern pushtuns.<sup>(6)</sup>

As the Taliban consolidated their hold, the leaders of this amorphous movement began to articulate the common feelings of people, to relieve them from the self imposed savagery that had drawn global attention towards the war ravaged country. They denounced the failure of the Mujahideen leaders to establish security and began collecting weapons from the hostile groups. They charged the former commanders with having become thieves and rapists. They tore down all checkpoints set up by the local commanders to extort money and took many steps to remove all sorts of menaces like corruption, lawlessness, bribery etc. They imposed a conservative interpretation of Islamic laws, especially regarding women who were to be confined to the homes, and their education prohibited. As they took over Helmond valley and Ghazni, where poppy cultivation was the major profession of the people, they denounced the drug trade and burned poppy fields which greatly enhanced their image and credibility.

✓ The restoration of order by the Taliban was also in the interest of Pakistan. In December 1994 Pakistani workers were repairing the airport in Kandhar and also the Kandhar- Herat highway. Pakistan also sent three more convoys to the Central Asia States and thus there emerged a big prospects of having close commercial relations with these newly emerged states, which could served as a strategic depth against India.

The emboldened student led Islamic militia with an avalanche of public opinion supporting them advanced towards Kabul - their prime target with astonishing success. Much to the surprise of military and political analysts like Retired Gen Hamid Gul, the strongly entrenched Mujahideen parties in the

southern pushtun areas failed to put up any noticeable resistance. These armed groups either fled or joined them, thus swelled the Taliban ranks. By February 1995 the Taliban had advanced into the Wardak province and encountered the forces of Hekmatyar, who was using the areas as a rear base for his bombardment of Kabul.

Meanwhile, the negotiations related to the UN Plan, continued. Burhanudin Rabbani announced on December 26, 1994 that he would step down in accordance with the UN plan, but two days later he again unilaterally extended his term. At that juncture, after a lapse of many years the United States also took interest in the Afghan issue. In mid December 1994, Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel visited Jalalabad, and had paid a call on Zahir Shah in Rome, thus signalling support for the Afghan moderates who were key to the UN plan. The US ambassador to Pakistan, also met Burhanudin Rabbani, Rasheed Dostum and Hekmatyar in a bid to push for implementation of the UN plan. The main obstacle was the composition of the interim authoritative council, but the underlying problem was the unbridgeable differences between Hekmatyar and Ahmed Shah Masood forces. Hekmatyar wanted to use the agreement to force Burhanudin Rabbani to resign and eventually Ahmed Shah Masood forces to vacate Kabul. Ahmed Shah Masood would not pull out without guarantees, stronger than any the United Nations was likely to be able to give that Hekmatyar forces would be disarmed and demobilised to the points where they could no longer threaten the devastated capital. As the negotiations prolonged, the two warring sides continued to pound each other with rockets, and the people of Kabul continued to face the devastation and senseless killings.

The would be winner i.e. the Taliban stepped in and broke the deadlock between Hekmatyar and Ahmed Shah Masood, but at the same time creating new problems of their own. On February 10 1995, after heavy fighting lasting many days the Taliban took over Maydan Shahr, capital of wardak province from Hekmatyar rear forces, while Ahmed Shah Masood who was awaiting for such an opportunity kept Hekmatyar front lines pinned down. That same day,

the UN Secretary General announced that the authoritative council would meet in Kabul on February 20, 1995. But meanwhile the Taliban in a surprise move attacked and subsequently captured Hekmatyar main base in Charasyab, Logar province. At last Hekmatyar fled without a fight, leaving all of his heavy weapons and documents behind. Hekmatyar supporters interpreted his move as a "tactical retreat", and hoped to stage a come back soon, but it proved to be a hollow optimism. Many of his troops deserted or joined hands with the Taliban. In the meanwhile Hekmatyar retreated to the hill district of Sarobi, the Jalalabad Shura offered him safe passage to Pakistan but refused to allow him to establish a base. Ahmed Shah Masood in view of the changed military developments, moved his frontlines south to posts deserted by Hekmatyar, then moved back slightly under an agreement negotiated with the Taliban except for a Shia neighbourhood dominated by Hezb-E-Wahdat, all of Kabul was now under the Ahmed Shah Masood control, thus he heralded to the outside world his military prowess, but it proved to be a short lived.

The neutralisation of Hekmatyar removed one of the obstacles to the UN plan, but the emergence of Taliban shattered the whole plan. The Ulema who constituted the core leadership of the movement presented their own proposals, which meant that they would carry out disarmament and oversee security in Kabul. They further insisted that the authoritative council must consist of "good Muslim" which meant the exclusion of the officials of the old regime involved but also all representatives of the existing warring factions whom the Taliban denounced as Criminals. Interestingly instead of party representation, they insisted on two representative from each provinces, a demand that reflected the relative absence of representatives from Kandhar in the leadership of any of the existing organisations.<sup>(6)</sup>

The Taliban advance on the capital cast a gloom over the city. As in 1992, the advance on Kabul of a regional forces, in the wake of . Dr.Najibullah resignation had brought the ethnic loyalties into play, which had resulted in cleavages along regional and ethnic lines. Again-take-over of Kabul by the



Taliban would replace the mainly Tajik force that controlled the Kabul with an all Pushtun force. The Communist warlord namely Rasheed Dostum operating from his strong hold in Northern Afghanistan adopted a secessionist posture by threatening to declare the independence of the Republic of North Turkistan comprising the Uzbek and Turkman inhabited areas in the north, if the Taliban attacked him. At the same time Rasheed Dostum troops had been engaged in a series of skirmishes with pro Ahmed Shah Masood forces in North Afghanistan, battles that had more to do with developments in the civil war in Tajikistan than with the battle for Kabul. The Tajikistan Islamic resistance was based in the Ahmed Shah Masood controlled areas and attacks by Rasheed Dostum, forces as both Russia and Uzbekistan were aiding Rasheed Dostum in the hope that he could help neutralise these Tajik forces.

The advance of the Taliban proved a short-lived. They took over the Hezb-E-Wahdat stronghold in southern Kabul, where Wahdat leader, Abdul Ali Mazari was killed in a shot out, while in the custody of the Taliban. But Ahmed Shah Masood in a calculated move staged a surprise aerial and ground attack on the Taliban, thus drove them out, virtually levelling the area. But the deliberate shelling of the Kabul city by the Taliban deprived the Taliban of the air of purity and invincibility.

### **Fall of Herat**

The Taliban militia true to its reputation and cause kept up their sustained struggle against the Kabul regime by opening up war fronts in different areas, in order to undermine its fighting potentials. The Taliban militia, contrary to all expectations, staged a surprise tactical retreat from the Kabul in the wake of Ahmed Shah Masood strong military presence in the suburbs around Kabul, and diverted their attention towards the south-west region, held by the all-powerful and invincible warlord namely ex-captain Ismail Khan.

Ironically the Taliban retreat from the Kabul was viewed by many seasonal observers like Dr. Tahir Amin as the ultimate doom and decline of the Islamic warriors, but verily it was a strategic move initiated by Mulla Umer, the supreme commander of the Taliban, in a bid to cut-off the main supply life line of the Kabul regime from the Herat, on which it depended exclusively.

The opening-up of the front against Ismail Khan, by staging an all out attack on the strategically located Shindand airport paid the Islamic warriors with rich dividends, as they gained considerable ground, within no time. At the same time, the Paktiawal tribes, who had joined the Taliban movement took up positions along the Kabul-Logar fronts, and thus pinned down Ahmed Shah Masood Panjsheri-troops, and prevented them from coming to the rescue of the beleaguered Ismail Khan.<sup>(8)</sup>

But the naive student led Islamic militia, failed to honour or abide by the time tested military tactics, soon as the stalemate ensued in the battle for the control of Shindand. In the meanwhile as the Eid was approaching in the mid of March 1995, the Taliban abandoned their frontlines, in order to return home for celebrating Eid. But it proved to be a tragic error, and they were forced to pay a heavy price. Taking advantage of Taliban laxity, the war hardened and shrewd military tactician, Ismail Khan mounted an-all out ground and aerial attack on the positions of vantage held by the Taliban.

The massive attack caused unprecedented chaos and destruction among the Taliban ranks, thus impelling them to retreat towards Kandhar. The Taliban front line positions fell like the nine pin's before the much stronger and well-equipped opposition troops. Ismail Khan kept up a sustained pressure on them, and astonishingly his troops reached upto the suburbs of Kandhar, routing out the Taliban along all the way.

It is pertinent to mention, that once again the political and military analysts of the Afghan crises namely Aga and Ahmed predicted the demise of

the much publicised Taliban movement, as it was confronted with such a formidable crisis, that could have shattered their existence.

At that critical juncture, Mulla Umer true to his reputation as a intrepid fighter, and a military tactician, having endowed with a tremendous oratory capabilities, gathered his supporters in the sprawling ground located at the centre of the city. Mulla Umer staged an inspiring and emotional speech, and called upon the Islamic fighters to either “advance or accept martyrdom” in their struggle against the criminal warlords which had subjected the country to a reign of terror and suppression.

The speech had a desired effect, and the Taliban despite, suffering heavy losses, gathered their troops, for a final show down with Ismail forces, who were trying to strangulate the movement in Kandhar, their only stronghold.

Mulla Umer played another tactical and timely honoured move, which ensured Taliban immediate success, and thus changed the whole scenario of the war. The advancing Taliban army was followed by another army entrusted with the task by Mulla Umer, to shot at any Talib, who tried to desert their ranks. That move of Mullah Umer caught them in a very perplexing situation, leaving them with no option, but to fell upon the enemy positions at the cost of their lives.

The Taliban militia, staged a great surprise by recapturing their lost territories, and in a blitzkrieg move, advanced upto the suburbs of Herat thus causing great surprise to the whole world.<sup>(9)</sup>

At that juncture, Ahmad Shah Masood, who had a long running rivalries with Ismail Khan, committed a tactical blunder in his desire to crush the power of his arch rival, by appointing, a Pushtun commander Capt. Aloudin Khan to led the military operations against the advancing Taliban, and despatched two thousands five hundred war hardened Panjsheri fighters, known for their heroic

exploits. But that move caused disillusionment and resentment among Ismail Khan troops, who without much-fighting gave up the defence of the city. Ismail Khan along with his family and supporters retreated towards the border town of Iran, where the Iranian authorities provided safe sanctuary to him for directing future operations, in their bid to dislodge the Taliban, whose emergence was viewed by Iran as a great ideological and military threat to their existence.

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The fall of Herat thus brought to an end the long illustrious military career of Capt. Ismail Khan, who had played a pivotal role during the Soviet's occupation of the country. Secondly, in the wake of Ismail Khan ouster, there resulted in cropping up serious differences among the ranks of Jamiat-E-Islami, as Ismail Khan supporters accused Ahmed Shah Masood of facilitating the task of Taliban to take over the city by removing Ismail Khan, from the command, at that critical time in order to settle some of his old personal scores with him.

✓ The fall of Herat, suddenly changed the regional, scenario, as the regional countries most notably Iran, Russia and India made up an alliance and accused Pakistan for patronising the Taliban, at the behest of USA. Pakistan vehemently denied these baseless charges being levelled by the above stated countries, that it was supporting the Taliban, at the directives of CIA, in order to counter the growing influence of Iran in the region, and to use Afghanistan as a launching pad for causing instability in Central Asian Republics.

✓ Pakistan expressed its great outrage at the undue involvement of India in the Afghanistan domestic affairs. India in a bid to create complications for Pakistan extended military and economic assistance to Ahmed Shah Masood. But Ahmed Shah Masood contrary to all expectations and the credibility and repute that he enjoyed, willingly accepted Indians friendship and forgot a lurking truth, that it was India who had stood by the side of the Kabul Communist regime, and during that era, the Panjsher valley was subjected to aerial strikes by the Indian pilots causing large scale human and material damages.

✓ But contrary to all diplomatic norms and the support and hospitality which Burhanudin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Masood enjoyed during the hey days of Jihad, in Pakistan, they directed their vengeance against that very country, at the behest of inimical forces, most-notably India. The Taliban militia, who scored a series of spectacular victories, in the post Herat-fall, were closing in on the capital Kabul. Ahmed Shah Masood in a desperate move organised an armed mob protest march against the Pakistani embassy in Kabul. That mob turned violent and attacked and ransacked the embassy, and looted all the valuables, and burnt down the official records. Ahmed Shah Masood supporters attacked the embassy staff, and caused severe injuries to them, including the Ambassador to Afghanistan Osman Khan. One of the embassy staff namely Mohammad Bashir succumbed to his injuries later in the hospital.

✓ Pakistan lodged a protest note with the Kabul government, and demanded stern action against the alleged hooligans, and demanded due apology and compensation. But the Kabul regime, turned down Pakistan request in a most scornful manner, and furthermore warned of serious consequences, if the Taliban did not stop rocketing Kabul. Pakistan was greatly dismayed by the provocative posture of the Kabul regime, who had launched a venomous propaganda against Pakistan in contrast to all diplomatic norms. As a consequence the relations touched its lowest ebb, and as a protest Pakistan closed down its embassy.<sup>(10)</sup>

### **Fall of Kabul**

The Islamic led student militia, after having consolidated their positions, began their march towards their final destiny i.e. to capture Kabul, and impose their Islamic writ over the country. The Taliban, led by their charismatic commander Mulla Borjan, formulated a well planned strategy for launching a three pronged attacks, in order to pierce through the well entrenched, defensive parameters erected by Kabul regime. It is pertinent to mention that Mulla

Borjan, who assumed an all important position, in the Taliban movement, had remained an ex-Afghan government military general.

The Kabul regime, whose fall seemed imminent, got panicked, and rushed in fresh reinforcements to the beleaguered capital from Takhar, and Badakhasen to prop up their defence. President Burhanudin Rabbani, who had labelled Rasheed Dostum as a “Infidel Communist” entered into negotiations with him for forming a joint alliance against the Taliban. But Rasheed Dostum, refused to enter into alliance and instead intensified attacks on Ahmed Shahi Masood troops in northern Afghanistan, thus further mounting pressure on the Kabul regime. As the countdown for the fall of Kabul started, immense pressure began to offset Kabul regime much grandiose military plans and potentials. In a desperate bid, Burhanudin Rabbani, entered into negotiations with his arch rival Hekmetyar through the courtesy of Iran. After a series of tense negotiation, both the protagonists, whose infighting had reduced the city of Kabul into a rubble and ghost town, struck a power sharing deal. According to the agreement Hekmetyar was appointed the prime minister, along with the ministry of defence and finance, in the newly broadened administrative set-up.

According to some well placed sources, Ahmed Shah Masood bitterly opposed the deal, but had to submit to the will of Burhanudin Rabbani. But the arrival of the well trained Hezb contingents, failed to make any noticeable difference, as they could not propped up the morale of the already demoralised Kabul regime troops.

The Taliban decided to launch an all out attack on Kabul from the three fronts i.e. the Logar, Sarobi and Bagram. The opening up of the latter two fronts against the Kabul regime was possible only by capturing, the eastern city of Jalalabad.

In a surprise move Taliban troops moved into Jalalabad, via Logar and Paktia fronts. The Eastern Shura, comprising different Mujahideen groups

headed by Haji Abdul Qadeer failed to counter the Taliban advance, and abandoned it without fighting, and thus relieving the people from the tyrannical rule of these marauding so-called Mujahideen warlords. The fall of Jalalabad, facilitated the Taliban take over of the strategic located areas around Bagram and Sarobi, and secondly the city of Kabul which depended exclusively on Jalalabad, for supplies, further plummeted the beleaguered regime existence. Thirdly, the fall of Jalalabad, made vulnerable the city to the Taliban imminent attack.

The joint forces of Ahmed Shah Masood and Hekmetyar decided to check the Taliban advance at Sarobi-35 k.m. east of Kabul - the last surviving stronghold of Hekmetyar. The much publicised "Lashkare-Isar" (army of sacrifice) formed by Hezb-E-Islami failed to put up any noticeable resistance, to the advancing Taliban troops. There is no doubt, that the coalition troops put up strong resistance in the first round of fighting, but the defection of Zardad Khan, the all powerful Hezb-E-Islami commander to the Taliban, resulted in wide spread defections among the Hezb-troops, which paved the way for the Taliban advance into the city.

In a calculated move Ahmed Shah Masood staged a tactical retreat from Kabul, along with his troops and heavy military equipments to his native Panjsher valley. Later on Ahmed Shah Masood used his valley as a launch pad against the Taliban, thus off setting their plans to impose their rule over the country.

The fall of Kabul coincided with the brutal execution of Dr.Najibullah along with his brother namely, Ahmedzai at the sprawling UN compound on the fateful dawn of 26 September, 1996, Where he had taken refuge after his failed abortive move to flee the country in the wake of his resignation, under the UN sponsored peace plan. . Dr.Najibullah was killed in a brutal way, and his dead body was hanged from electric pole at the Aryana Square, which sent shock waves across the whole world. But the execution of the ex-Communist

President proved to be a great strategic blunder on their part, as it greatly undermined their standing among the war afflicted masses, who had pinned high hopes from them. Most importantly Dr.Najibullah death sent shock waves among the Communists in northern Afghanistan led by Rasheed Dostum, who perceived a similar fate, had the Taliban succeeded in capturing Mazar-e-Sharif. So it impelled both the erstwhile inveterate foes namely Ahmed Shah Masood, and Rasheed Dostum to join hands against the Taliban.<sup>(11)</sup>

The imposition of strict Islamic Shariah by confining the women to homes, forcing the people to grow beard, closing down girls educational institution etc., were same of the measures, which caused great fear and outrage among the non-Pushtun's liberal population in the north. Thus they extended their support to the anti-Taliban alliance in a bid to stave off the march of the Islamic warriors into their areas.

In the wake of Kabul fall, the Taliban rushed toward the northern strongholds of Ahmed Shah Masood. The towns of Bagram, the strategic located airport at Charikar and Gulbahar fell without any resistance, and they advanced upto the main entrance routes of panjsher valley. On that occasion the local Tajik population who have had stood by the side of Ahmed Shah Masood staged a surprise attacks on Taliban, who were caught unaware and thus trapped in Gulbahar & Bagram. At the same time, the troops loyal to Rasheed Dostum, who were stationed at the salang Tunnel in anticipation of Taliban attack, mounted an all-out attack on the Taliban, assisted by Hezb-E-Wahdat and Ahmed Shah Masood troops. The joint offensive forced the Taliban to retreat towards Kabul amidst heavy human and material losses, and nearly seven hundreds Taliban were captured as prisoners.<sup>(12)</sup>

The joint forces advanced upto the suburbs of Kabul, and were closing in on the city, thus once again off setting Taliban hegemony. The anti-Taliban alliance demanded the "demilitarization" of the Kabul zone and withdrawal of the Taliban from Kabul as a pre-conditions for talks with Taliban. But the



Taliban refused to budge an inch from their principled stand to wage war against all those warlords who had inflicted, sufferings upon the population. The then Pakistan interior minister namely Naseerullah Babar rushed to Mazar-e-Sharif to prevail upon Rasheed Dostum to serve his alliance with Ahmed Shah Masood. But Rasheed Dostum, who had been assured of renewed support and assistance by the Russia, Uzbekistan, in the wake of Taliban stunning advances into the North, flatly refused to entertain Nasserullah Babar request and threatened to annihilate the city of Kabul, if the Taliban refused to evacuate it.

The city of Kabul was subjected to a heavy rocket and artillery barrages, forcing the people to flee to safe places, as the city was vulnerable to opposition attack. Again in a remarkable resilience, the Taliban put up a spirited fight, and thus stave off the opposition onslaught. In order to off set the opposition designs, and to divert their attention from Kabul, the Taliban opened up a new front on the south-west province of Baghdi's, adjacent to Herat, controlled by Rasheed Dostum. The change of loyalties by the local commanders facilitated Taliban task, who stormed into the city and caputred it. The fall of Baghdis impelled Rasheed Dostum to withdraw his troops from the Kabul front and sent them to Baghdis-Qila Muarghab front. The withdrawal of the Rasheed Dostum troops from the Kabul front greatly undermined the alliance potentials, and cause. The decision of Rasheed Dostum to shift his troops from Kabul to Baghdis fronts, without taking his allies into confidence, resulted in resurfacing of renewed differences.<sup>(13)</sup>

The Taliban who were awaiting for such an opportune time, again staged an all out ground and aerial attack on opposition troops, holding positions north of Kabul. The Islamic led student militia within no time advanced upto the main entrance of the Panjsher valley clearing the areas of the alliance troops, making hundreds of their soldiers as prisoners.

The arrival of harsh winter and heavy snow falling in the early months of 1997 caused a stalemate in the fighting, which afforded enough time to both the

sides to consolidate their positions.

### **Mazar-e-Sharif Disaster**

Short lived triumphant march of the Taliban into the historic northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif ended on a tragic note. The Islamic warriors who were lured into the northern stronghold of Rasheed Dostum, by his trusted commander Gen. Malik, but as ill-luck would have it, the so called honey moon between the strange bed fellows did not last long. Their alliance came to an abrupt and unfortunate end which resulted in the mass massacre of Taliban, unprecedented by its scale and severity, and thus forcing their eventual retreat from Mazar-e-Sharif. The sudden turn of events which saw the severing of much trumpeted alliance between the Taliban and Gen. Malik have left many people guessing about the real factors responsible for eruption of hostilities among them.

The Taliban, who were locked in a bitter fighting with Rasheed Dostum troops on the North-Western front of Baghdis for the last many months had failed to penetrate through his frontlines, despite their repeated attempts. But the situation took a U-turn with the change of loyalties by Gen. Malik, who embraced the Taliban in his drive to dismantle the self-imposed rule of Rasheed Dostum in the North.

The revolt staged by Gen. Malik in May 1997 from his native Faryab province, bordering Baghdis. As a gesture of allegiance, Gen. Malik had turned the western province over to the Taliban, and thus the combined forces marched into Shibergam, the military headquarters of Rasheed Dostum. It is pertinent to mention that Ismail Khan, the ousted governor of Herat, had made Faryab his base for launching attacks on the Taliban positions, was arrested by Gen. Malik and handed over to the Taliban, who flew him to Kandhar, where he is presently languishing in the jail. The change of loyalties on the part of Gen Malik was motivated more by the personal factors rather than having any love for the

Taliban. He and his step brother, Gul Palavan popularly known as "Gullo", suspected Rasheed Dostum of master minding the killing of their elder brother Rasul-Palavan. Rasul Palavan, who was the all powerful commander of Gen. Rasheed Dostum, was referred to as "Rasul Bakhuda" (Rasul the unbeliever) for his cruel nature, as he used to inflict cruel punishments on people without any crimes. Moreover a few week ago, one of their trusted confidant namely Maulvi Abdul Rehman Haqqani, was gunned down by one of Rasheed Dostum's commander Lal Palavan in the centre of Mazar-e-Sharif, as he suspected him of having entered into a secret Parleys with the Taliban to pave the way for a possible coup against Rasheed Dostum. These two murders, infuriated and alarmed Gen. Malik, to such an extent that he decided to sever his long standing friendship with Rasheed Dostum and opted for a new venture to settle his personal scores with him. In addition to that, Rasheed Dostum unpopularity among his troops was also a driving spirit behind Gen. Malik revolt.<sup>(14)</sup>

The loss of Faryab was a shattering blow to Rasheed Rasheed Dostum, though he was confident that his battle hardened 60,000 troops, stationed at the sprawling Shibergam military garrison would quelled any such attempts to dislodge him from power. The all powerful warlord possessed huge arsenals including scud missiles and Mig-Fighters planes, but lacked the loyalty of his troops, who had in the past served him loyally. The war weary troops had not been paid for eight long months, and their officials commanding the units had pocketed their wages and indulged in all sorts of corruption and malpractices.

The defection of Gen. Hafizullah, an ethnic pushtun Ahmadzai, commanding the air force fleet to Gen. Malik along with his loyalists caused disarray among Rasheed Dostum troops, who subsequently had to change their loyalties to the new master in the hope of securing a much better and prosperous future.

Sensing the danger of being entrapped in the city, Rasheed Dostum along with his loyalists fled to the Uzbek border in a long convoy. But ironically, at

the border post, the troops of the notorious Geelam Jam turned defiant, and laid a siege to his convoy, and deprived their erstwhile chief Rasheed Dostum and his generals of money and their new off load vehicles. After protracted negotiations, Rasheed Dostum was allowed to go on foot, across a Russian manned friendship bridge spanning the oxus River.

The hasty retreat of Rasheed Dostum paved the way for the arrival of the joint Malik-Taliban forces, into Mazar-e-Sharif.. It was followed for sometimes by reckless vandalism and looting sprees committed by Gen. Malik's troops. The jubilant troops fired indiscriminately in the air to herald the arrival of a new era of peace and stability, though that proved to be a hollow promise for the citizens of Mazar-e-Sharif.

The arrival of thousands of Taliban avowing to implement a strict Islamic shariah, caused dismay and fear among the otherwise liberal educated, citizens of Mazar-e-Sharif. In an immature abrupt move the Taliban closed down girls schools, and dismissed women working in foreign aided NGO's. While it is interesting to note that girls comprised 35% of the students at the local Balkh university. The local TV station was ransacked by the Islamic zealots, in their drive to cleanse the city from the social-ills afflicting it.

The arrival of heavily-armed Taliban caused alarm bells among Gen.Malik's loyalists, who feared that the Taliban might outnumbered them. Their fears were further exacerbated by the Taliban drive to disarm the very Gen.Malik troops, which had dismantled the war machinery of Gen. Rasheed Dostum, and thus facilitated the take over of the north by the Taliban. Furthermore, Taliban had given Gen. Malik an insignificant post of Deputy Foreign Minister, and indicated their displeasure to include any of Gen.Malik men in the future administrative set up in the north.

The first bullet was fired at airport when the Taliban tried to dismantle the portrait of Ali Akbar Mazari, the slain leader of Hazara's. The fighting that

originated from airport soon engulfed the whole city. The ethnic Hazara Shia troops, on hearing the news of fighting, retaliated and killed scores of Taliban stationed in and around Soraib, a Hazara dominated locality.<sup>(15)</sup>

During that time, Gen.Malik was holding tense negotiations with Mulla Ghous and Haji Ehsanullah to constitute an interim administrative mechanism to run the affairs of the newly conquered provinces. Though the negotiations failed on account of Taliban refusal to give adequate representation to Gen.Malik in the administrative set-up, while Gen.Malik was insisting upon a lion share in the government. The agitated Gen. Malik walked out of the meeting in protest, to join with his colleagues standing near by the office, eagerly awaiting the results of the negotiations. Gen. Humayu Fauji, immediately rushed towards Gen. Malik and passed on the news regarding the infighting in the city. Gen. Malik lost no time and called upon his loyalists to arrest and disarm the Taliban. His troops immediately attacked upon the Taliban, and after some resistance, Mulla Ghous was arrested, while Haji Ehsanullah died fighting along with his troops.

The joint forces of Gen. Malik and Hezb-E-Wahdat attacked the Taliban from the city closed lanes, thus causing much panic and casualties among Taliban, who were unfamiliar with the city topography. Moreover, Gen. Malik, hands were further strengthened when the local people rose and massacred hundreds of Taliban trapped in the close alleys of the city.

The Taliban after suffering initial losses, regrouped in the centre of the city, and fought desperately and single handedly despite heavy odds arrayed against them. The incessant fighting continued for nearly fifteen hours and thus caused an irreparable losses to the city - infrastructure. By the dawn of the next day, the Taliban were completely routed, and they had to make a hasty retreat towards Faryab and Pul-e-Khumri. Many Taliban were arrested while trying to flee by helicopters stationed at Mazar-e-Sharif airport.

During a visit to the city next morning, the BBC correspondent saw the

disfigured dead bodies of the Taliban, littered in the city lanes. Many moving scenes were witnessed as the badly - wounded Taliban called for help, and no body could dare to extend any assistance to the injured, for fear of enlisting the wrath of the Hezb-E-Wahdat and Gen.Malik troops.

The Taliban were also forced out of the remaining provinces namely Jauzjan, Faryab and Samangan in a similar fashion within no time.

Ahmed Shah Masood, whose position became precarious on account of Rasheed Dostum defeat, embarked upon a calculated move by cutting off the salang highway, and thus succeeded in capturing Gulbahar, and Jab-ul-Saraj in the wake of Taliban reverses in Mazar-e-Sharif.

The closure of salang highway the only link with the north, and the successive failures of the Taliban to break through the Hezb-E-Wahdat frontlines had put at stake the lives of three thousands Taliban troops under the command of Amir Khan Muttaqi in Pule-Khumri, which fell into the Taliban hands, after Jafar Nadri fled away without offering any resistance. A series of set backs suffered by the naive ideologically motivated Islamic warriors on the northern frontlines have shattered their morale, and seemed to facing a hard time to take on their much stronger opponents who had closed their ranks for a final decisive showdown with the otherwise invincible Taliban.<sup>(16)</sup>

The loss of frontline commanders like Mulla Ghous, Haji Ehsanullah and Yar Mohammad have caused wide spread panic and disillusionment among their ranks. The vacuum caused due to the untimely deaths of these commanders was difficult to fill in. Moreover the loss of thousands of battle hardened soldiers in the rugged and treacherous mountains of Hinduskush, have exposed the city of Kabul to the opponents attack.

But the Taliban having a huge man power of ideologically motivated Islamic warriors at their disposal are hell-bent to take revenge from Gen. Malik

treachery and re-established their hold over the lost territories. If the Taliban fight back, the ill-fated city of Mazar-e-Sharif would witness another round of blood letting, that will further pushed the country to the brink of collapse.

The massacre of the Taliban in Mazar-e-Sharif is a stark reminder of a fact, that how the Afghan society have polarised and compartmentalised along ethnic and sectarian basis, which have resulted in thwarting all the attempts aimed at bringing a semblance of unity and reconciliation among the diverse ethnic and sectarian groups. It seems that the nation agony and sufferings continuing for the last twenty years may go on for an aforseeable future.<sup>(17)</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters demonstrate that the conflict between state and society in Afghanistan has been at the root of the civil war. This state-society conflict has run through successive regimes, ever since Afghanistan underwent modernization process in 1920s, and eventually led to the virtual fragmentation of the Afghan state.

Like in Somalia, Central African States and elsewhere, civil wars once erupted are hard to end and assume a self-perpetuating dynamic of their own. Indeed Afghanistan is no exception to this painful phenomenon. As the thesis reveals, the state-society conflict in the four phases under examination continues to aggravate with the internal factors manipulated by external forces. The regionalisation of the Afghan civil war has virtually sealed the prospects of its termination.

It is ironical to note that the ill-fated country has been, subjected to that bloody fratricidal war, since the invasion of the Soviet's troops. The war has caused unprecedented destruction in all arenas in its wake, and especially the very institutions responsible for sustaining the state and society apparatus, and thus endangering the very survival of the Afghan nationhood.

The collapse of the last Marxist regime headed by Dr. Najibullah paved the way for bloody struggle for power among the combatants for the control of Kabul - the only metropolitan city, and now stands in ruins owing to continuous fighting. It is pertinent to mention, that the absence of a central authority, have led to the compartmentalisation of state and society along ethnic and sectarian lines - a menace responsible for foiling all attempts aimed at restoring peace to the war ravaged country.

But Afghanistan has not reverted to pre-modern domestic politics. The ailed state of Afghanistan, as it stands now, has proved "Utterly incapable of



sustaining itself as a member of the international community” is the product of that very community. As we know that international co-operation between imperial powers created the buffer state of Afghanistan. Foreign aid enabled a fractious dynasty to maintain hold over a piece of territory demarcated by Britain and Russia.

The breakdown of co-operation between hegemonic powers during the endgame of the cold war turned that buffer state into an arena of regional conflict. New elites created by the foreign aid funded schools and bureaucracy used international alliances to build armed organisations linked to different ethnic groups and regions of the country. These elites displaced those who had ruled the buffer state and created institutions of Afghan nationhood. The Geneva negotiations tried to reinstate cooperation but foundered on the impossibility of defining reciprocity in a violent, ideological conflict.

The dissolution of USSR, led to a disengagement by USA and thus left the guerrilla organisations armed and in the open field without global sponsors. In 1991-92, the United Nations, with US and Soviet/Russia verbal support failed to create an interim government from the leaders of those organisations. The regional states that supported the combatants had not evolved a co-operative agreement on the role of Afghanistan. They regulated their interstate dealings through the co-operative rules of diplomacy, but the conflict among the contending groups they backed in Afghanistan obeyed only the rules of anarchy.

What failed in Afghanistan was not just the Afghan state, but the international system that had first sustained and then undermined its rulers. The moves by the U.N. and few Afghans to restore peace could not succeed in their efforts to reverse these harsh realities. Was the breakdown of cooperation an inevitable result of vast historic change or might it have been reverted? Some argue that the anarchy in Afghanistan resulted from mistake in or sabotage of the peace plan. Some believe that the United Nations acquiesced to U.S. and

Pakistan pressure to force Dr.Najibullah from power prematurely, creating a power vacuum before an alternative was prepared to fill it.

Other blame the U.S. and the United Nations to sideline Hekmatyar, which inevitably provoked confrontation. But if the United States and Pakistan had not initially aided Hekmatyar, this problem might not have arisen, and Afghan nationalist forces might have reasserted control as In the past. If the Soviet Union had not supported the PDPA and invaded Afghanistan, the United States might not have devoted such resources to building up an Islamic resistance. In strategic interactions, causality at any moment ultimately lies in the structure of interests and capabilities left by the history that has resulted from a continuous series of such moments, none of which enjoys a privileged place. And these historical legacies leave all too little room for escape from conflict.

With automatic weapons abundant among all social networks of the country, no power can crush the parts of Afghanistan, moulding it into a state by conquest. In the past such conquest relied on international support to assure a preponderance of force, but the breakdown of international co-operation in Afghanistan has made the country unconquerable.

The lessons not only of Afghanistan but of Angola, Cambodia, Nicaragua, show that some pre-conditions must be met before a centralised authority can be evolved to take legitimate decisions. The breakdown of agreements in both Angola and Afghanistan argues that disarming contending militias, must precede before national elections or power sharing. Subordinating armed forces to an international peacekeeping force - as the Cambodian and Nicaraguan models may also be effective, but seem even less likely than disarmament in the Afghan context.

The main lesson is that resolution of conflicts in states that have been failed by the international community requires a sustained co-operation effort by

that community. But the region around Afghanistan is itself going through the turmoil of revolution and state building. Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan - all are to different degrees insecure states, warily eyeing each other. Any power shift in Afghanistan disquiets some and pledges others. The resulting security dilemmas render extraordinary difficult the construction of a demarcated political arena in Afghanistan, let alone a stable one. The continued lack of effective - engagement, by the big powers that provided aid and weapons make such agreement even more difficult.

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If the international community seriously wants to rebuild Afghanistan, it must start with a framework for regional - co-operation, Intelligent and political action must combine to shut down the sources of money and fuel for the warring factions. On the other hand, a more generous programme of aid for reconstructing the country is necessary to give the combatants - incentives to cooperate, to offer the fighters an alternative livelihood. Some form of peacekeeping to oversee disarmament might also be required. The once flourishing city of Kabul became the battle zones among the combatants thus converted it into a ghost town. The in fighting resulted in nearly 80,000 deaths, and the casualties figures runs into hundreds and thousands. The incessant fighting led to a mass exodus of the war ravaged Kabulis to the neighbouring countries. With no help and assistance from any donor agencies, these refugees landed into a squalid camps, with a pitiable existence.

Despite peace and security within Kabul city, eversince Taliban takeover in 1996,attacks from the northern highlands continue to haunt the unfortunate residents. The city remains a hostage to Ahmed Shah Masood guners and his Russian Supplied luna rockets.

The women and children are the main victims of this senseless conflict. According to some reliable estimates, nearly 50,000 bread earners were killed in the conflict,in post- Najibullah phase, leaving large numbers of women widows and children's orphans. Ironically when these widows were forced to flee their

city and take refugee in an alien soil, without any humanitarian assistance. To hope and expect from such women to live up to the required ethical standards of society is a sheer injustice. The massive refugees movements have enormous implications for Afghanistan's future. Denial of access to traditional institutions of training, education, viable sources of livelihood, they run the risk of drifting into another kind of "Vietnamese boat people".

The demographic changes, accompanied by massive economic crisis, dislocations, have undermined the factor of production. The high death rates, injuries or displacement of a large portion of a labour force have enormous negative fallouts. More palpable, however, has been the physical damages to Afghanistan economic infrastructure.

The long drawn conflict has changed the structure of the Afghan society in complex ways. Most obviously the war changed the networks of social and political relationships, which had traditionally provided for order. The Khan's who flourished by maintaining a symbolic relationship between the periphery and the state are no longer in a position to do so. But a new kind of rural elites have emerged, controlling the destinies of the micro society, called commanders and religious leaders, averse to the very idea of peace. The unabated civil war tend to Serve the very interests and Survival of the said newly emerged elites.

At the same time, the war inevitably affected the pattern of social relationship in society also. Relations among the family members have strained for a variety of reasons, including and ideological, they adopted different stances towards the Soviet presence, Dr. Najibullah regime and the Mujahideen. This essentially split many families, which had traditionally been a source of social stability. But the main urban centres especially Kabul was the main victim of combatants vengeance as the urbanites supported Dr Najibullah government. The war resulted in a "brain drain" of the Kabul's educated elites, resulting in a vacuum, which is hard to fill in the aforceable future.

The emergence of Taliban, no doubt brought peace and stability to the areas under their control, but they failed to provide a viable political and administrative system for the country at large, capable of reflecting popular sentiments.

Their premature drive to impose a strict interpretation of Islamic shariah by denying freedom and imposing various curbs on the people especially women, have greatly undermined their standing, and thus arrested their long cherished march towards the northern Afghanistan, where the people are opposed to the Taliban style of government.

But the Taliban, despite their inherent shortcomings are capable enough to bring the whole country under their rule, as the anti-Taliban alliance has failed to maintain much needed unity among their ranks, and bogged down in internal infighting. But the Taliban are not a viable force to be reckoned, to ensure permanent peace in the country. They might remain on national horizon for few years, till they are replaced by another force.

In short, the masses are disillusioned with the prevalent pathetic conditions, have pinned their hopes on the ex-monarch, Zahir-Shah, who is the only non-partisan personality capable enough to put the country on the track to peace and development. Moreover the regional as well as the big powers are also in favour of bringing Zahir Shah back to the country to play his historic role.

## INTRODUCTION: NOTES

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## CHAPTER I : NOTES

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