

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN AFGHANISTAN: ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FROM 1996 TO 2001

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Conflict Transformation during the period 1996-2001 in Afghanistan with specific analysis on the Socio-Economic Development. The period of 1996-2001 in Afghanistan is said to be the first Islamic Emirate wherein the Taliban were in power in most parts of the country. In the same period, they were more inclined towards developing human capital of Afghanistan but the approach was gender biased and in favor of male. However, in the twentieth century expecting socio-economic development of any country while keeping half of the population aloof from the process was an uphill task. With regard to the large economic magnitude and especially the lack of previous literature available on the topic it was difficult to empirically analyze the exact Socio-Economic development with proper indicators. However, it was evident that the collapse of the state machinery resulted in "bazaar economy" which was mainly controlled by informal sector. The same was responsible for drastic changes in the Afghan society. In the first Islamic Emirate from 1996-2001 the Afghan economy was based mainly on trading. While alone in the year nineteen ninety-nine the Afghan opium production reached to its optimum level and in the same year 75% of the world opiates were produced in Afghanistan. Following positive response to the international community the Taliban had banned the cultivation of opium in 2000. The opium was the mainstay of the Afghan Economy, the planting of opium completely discontinued in 2001. In nutshell due to lack of infrastructure and technological development coupled with lack of support from the international community the state of Afghanistan in first Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (1996-2001) was not in position to stable its economy and bring prosperity in the Afghan society`.

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Introduction

The process of conflict transformation is a broader concept which involves improvement in structural changes and delivers peaceful settlements. The process of transformation includes conflicts at all levels.¹ The process of transformation means engagement in pre and post violence situation, and to deal with their causes and effects for longer period of time. Different studies have been conducted for the evaluation of conflict transformation, however due to lack of proper knowledge about the subject fruitful results cannot be achieved.²

The Taliban are a radical movement that emerged in Afghanistan in the 1990s following the Soviet Union withdrawal. They are groups of religious people with the aim of building Islamic Emirate based on Sharia. History of Taliban has revealed that they have very good propaganda and intelligence whereas local independence of their leaders in the field allows them flexibility and unity.³

Predominantly Pashtuns, the Taliban are believed to have made efficient inroads in the country through exploitation of ethno-political tensions as well as opposition to external forces by the Afghan people. They have also used the absence of local administration as a tool for taking support of local community.⁴ The Taliban who used the name of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is a Hanfia Deobandi Islamic Fundamentalist Jihadists movement. It ruled over 90 percent Afghanistan from 1996–2001. At the same time, they have claimed to make some reforms in the country like narcotic control, implementation of justice system based on Sharia, maintenance of law and order. However, allegedly providing safe heavens to Al-Qaeda, which is believed to be the perpetrators of the 9/11 incidents, went against Taliban and they were subsequently overthrown following the United States led attack against Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. The Taliban regained Kabul on 15 August 2021 after 20 years of insurgency.⁵

¹ Mary Kaldor, *New and old wars: Organised violence in a global era*. (John Wiley & Sons, 2013).

² Beatrix Austin, and Hans-Joachim Giessmann, *Frieden and Konflikt transformation*, (Handbuch Frieden, 2019): 449-460.

³ Shaista Wahab, and Barry Youngerman, *A brief history of Afghanistan*, (Infobase Publishing, 2007).

⁴ Gilles Dorransoro, "The Taliban's winning strategy in Afghanistan." (2009).

⁵ Oliver Ramsbotham, and Tom Woodhouse. "Peace operations." In *The Routledge Handbook of Security Studies*, (Routledge, 2009), 431-443.

Northern Alliance militia seized different parts of Afghanistan and opposed government of Taliban. The reason behind opposing Taliban government was the violation of human rights in Afghanistan. United States of America (USA) invasion of Afghanistan in December 2001, the Taliban government had control over almost all of Afghanistan. The Taliban started War against United States; NATO forces International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) with the name of Jihad.⁶

Conflicted-ridden societies generally experience institutional, capacity and structural change in the process of conflict transformation and peace building. The implementation of Conflict transformation and peace building is a challenging task because some ends up in constructive manner while some in destructive way or even worse.⁷ It was further suggested that nations who are recovered from war and conflict in their society always experience different challenges such as infrastructure development, socio economic development, providing basic facilities of life to the citizens who have positive consequences.⁸ Likewise the war torn Afghanistan faces massive challenges that is trust building in the world. The other major challenges in process of transformation were strengthening of institutions, economic development and socio-economic stability, promotion of equality in legislation and equal rights regardless of ethnic background.⁹ The peace building process in Afghanistan also include bringing changes in policies, agreements, institutional setups, security environment, developmental assistance, national and international factors. All these are the key factors ignorance of which may create new conflicts for the state like Afghanistan. Similarly, resilient challenges of land disputes, political, socio-economic governance and conflicts among the ethnic groups of Afghanistan are the serious threats for stability and peace.

In this paper researcher try to find out the solid reasons responsible for the long-term instability in Afghanistan and how the Taliban Government handled different issues to bring socio-economic development in Afghanistan. In order to investigate the issues of Afghanistan the proposed study was conducted to study post conflict transformations phases; it also focusses on knowing the factors which were involve in conflict and war creations.

⁶ Torunn Wimpelmann, *The Pitfalls of Protection*, (University of California Press, 2017).

⁷ Luc Reyhler, "From conflict to sustainable peacebuilding: Concepts and analytical tools," (Reyhler/Paffenholz, 2001): 3-15.

⁸ Tobias Debiel, and Axel Klein, eds. *Fragile peace: State failure, violence and development in crisis region*, (Zed books, 2002).

⁹ Nicole Ball, "The reconstruction and transformation of war-torn societies and state institutions: How can external factors contribute?" *Fragile Peace*, (London: Zed Books, 2002).

Objectives of the Study

To examine the Socioeconomic factors leading to conflict transformation in Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001.

Research Methodology

This study employs mixed method in data collection i.e. primary and secondary data. The primary mode of data collection was intensive in-depth semi structured interviews of informal discussions and conversations while secondary information was collected from extensive literature review, reports of different organizations, and newspaper reports. The first part of qualitative data collection was semi structured interviews with the experts in study area. The experts include national and international experts from academia, diplomacy, military, media, politics, and civil society. Purposive sampling with defined criterion was therefore employed to choose respondents in the group. In the second part the mode of data collection was content analysis through an extensive review of literature, newspaper articles, and reports of different agencies. This is done in order to understand how conflict transformation with specific reference to socio economic development occurred from 1996-2001 through the prism of international and national experts.

Number of Respondents Interviewed	
Respondents	Percentage
Academia	30
Diplomats	13
Military Personal	10
Media	24
Politician	10
Civil Society Personal	13
Total	100

Survey Results, 2023

The key indicators which were considered is education level of Afghans in the era of Taliban, economic condition was measured through cross border trade in Afghanistan, the condition of social security in peace and war. The changes in market and employment structure in Afghan economy. The economic and political dimension which results in conflict transformation was observed in the current study.

Results and Discussion

Peace and war in Afghanistan

The state of Afghanistan was developed in the first half of twentieth century. The state was established in such way that their dependency on British Empire remains. The dependency was mainly for resources and economic activities. Amir Abdur Rahman khan who rule Afghanistan from 1880 to 1901 mostly rely on British subsidies for ruling Afghanistan in return British Empire implement their own decision for the larger interest. Lack for proper resources with Afghan rulers there was limited investment on infrastructure, Education, health and human resource development through which equal opportunities were provided to citizens. The situation from the start created distrust among the state, society and other stakeholders. Lack of human resource development through education, organizational training, political and legitimacy inside the state creates problems for the rulers, however rulers using power and military tries to suppress their voice. In 1978 People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) come into power which bring a remarkable reforms also radical reforms were introduce know as Saur Revolution. 1979 another reform polices was introduce, but at the same year Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan against increasing insurgency and conflict in society. The ruling Afghanistan was unable to control issues emerges in society.

History of war in Afghanistan

The Afghan people fight against Soviet Union and was supported by foreign countries includes United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Similarly same back up was provided by Soviet Union to different tribes in Afghanistan. As a result of this conflict millions of Afghans migrated to Pakistan and Iran to save their lives. After Geneva agreement in 1989 Soviet Union withdrawal from Afghanistan, a new interim government was form in Afghanistan. The interim government was composed of Sunni parties of Afghanistan while Shia parties and communities were totally ignored. An internal war between different groups started, among these groups some were supported by Soviet Union i.e., President Najibullah, while on the other hand various Afghanistan groups aegis by United State, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The collapse of Soviet Union and winding down of United States of America changes the balance of power in Afghanistan. The Najibullah government was collapsed through Abdul Rashid Dostum. Who was the commander of Uzbek military allegiance, switched toward the side of mujahedin and enter to Afghan capital in 1992. In history this period is known as Lebanization in Afghanistan. A weak mujahedin government was establishing with no interest of super powers in Afghanistan. The situation led to create a civil

war or proxy war in Afghanistan. The interest of super powers decreases with passing time different conflict arises in the region with the name of religious power. In 1994 a tense situation was created in Afghanistan and Taliban start emerging from Kandahar whose solo objective was to restore stability. In 1996 Taliban enter capital of Afghanistan and control major parts of Afghanistan. The conflict of interest arises among groups of Taliban which was the main reason of not achieving objective of stability. The Taliban were divided into two major groups

i.e. Pashtun Taliban and non-Pashtun Taliban. The Pashtun Taliban was backed by United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia while non-Pashtun United Front (UF) was backed by Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Iran. Mullah Mohammed Omer was elected as leader of Afghan Taliban and in 1997 he announced the name of Islamic State of Afghanistan which was known as Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA). The leader of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) had control over ninety Percent of territory while the remaining parts was under control of United Front (UF). The presence of different radical groups in Taliban raises concerns of foreign countries. The presence of major groups like Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) bring Afghanistan in the attention of international world. The state of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) was again used as battle field among the super powers. The current study mainly focuses on the Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001 and socio-economic factors which were affected during the government of Taliban. The history of Afghanistan reveals that different forms of conflict were considered as a primary cause of instability. The state was unable to work on socio economic and other basic factors which were necessary for stability. The factors include education, health, income opportunities, social welfare, security, freedom of speech and people representation in state affairs were challenges for peaceful transition.

Social Security Dimension

According to experts in study area Afghanistan is one of the states who always welcome external powers to rule. The Afghan security situation was at risk, it is a country that is always at receiving end. The chronic insecurity risks the life of citizens as well as leadership of Afghanistan. The personal interest of leadership brings Afghans to instability. The country was always at receiving end from super powers and their rivalry states. Afghanistan was used as battle field by super powers due weak governance. The continuous conflict and insecurity in Afghanistan directly affect people of Afghanistan. The sovereignty creates a secure, peaceful and politically stable unit. However, a weak and highly dependent state cannot take own

decisions.¹⁰ In every era Afghan government is under pressure of external forces which do not help them in developing. These external forces always try to develop their own influence in Afghanistan for which they bring own military or they build a weak military organization which was control by them. The regimes that failed to develop a strong military organization and legitimacy in Afghanistan results in counterattack. Another reason of continuous crises in Afghanistan is that of weak democratic and authoritarian ability of state organization which was unable to protect human rights of citizens. To a greater extent lack of regime legitimacy and inability of providing state security was the main reason of local conflict among the people of Afghanistan. Instability and sustainable development in peace building provide opportunities to self-interest people in the state, at the cost of country sovereignty and stability ruler struggle for personal interest. In citizen mind peace is important for ending conflict transformation in Afghanistan. Insecurity is the most debatable issue which was the reason involvement of anti-state factor in government organization.

Economic and Political Dimensions

Experts were of the opinion that regional sovereignty was a dream of Afghanistan rulers. History reveals that Afghanistan was always a state with no political and economic stability. The state was rule through multiple sovereigns including different tribes' dominancy. There was no unifying measure to control violence and conflict among tribes. There was no concept of state identified with common interest of groups and never gained support from these groups led to periodic crises in legitimacy. There was also lack of capacity to create an effective political environment for different classes in the society. Expert was of the opinion that Soviet invasion in Afghanistan was one of the reasons that there was continuous crises and deadlock among the people of Afghanistan. There was lack of relationship between state and civil society for managing conflict among different groups fighting for power.¹¹ In a power vacuum after defeating Soviet Union subnational groups start emerging which was struggling for power. Regional political and military structure was introduced with limited interest. International military groups take benefit of state collapse and Afghanistan became a safe haven for military groups in Muslim world.¹² The citizens of rentier state suffer in political and economic instability which includes people rights,

¹⁰ Aage B. Sørensen, "Toward a sounder basis for class analysis." *American journal of sociology* 105(6), (2000): 1523-1558.

¹¹ Matthew Fielden, and Jonathan Goodhand, "Beyond the Taliban? The Afghan Conflict and United Nations Peacemaking." *Conflict, Security & Development* 1(3), (2001): 5-32.

¹² Olivier Roy, "Why war is going on in Afghanistan: the Afghan crisis in perspective." *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 5(4), (2001).

quick process of transparency, accountability and inefficient bureaucracy.¹³ Economic and social stability is essential challenge in the process of conflict transformation and peaceful transition from war. In reality states are ruled by the financial agency/countries which finance them to rule country. Similar is the case of Afghanistan which have a weak financial background and most of his budget was through foreign funding, therefore the direction of resource providing country was always flowed.¹⁴ History reveals that economic opportunities were clearly one of the most important reasons of conflict worldwide. However, in case of Afghanistan the role of economic opportunities was not that much as compare to political grievance among different tribes. The financial greediness was the low as compare to greediness of political power. Shift in political violence breakdown of state institutions and society. The role of civil society in Afghanistan cannot be ignored. The organization of civil society reflects ethnic, linguistic and geographical culture of Afghanistan. The tribal (Qawm) and religious (Ulema) leaders were key social units in negotiation between civil society and state. These civil organizations were not formal based organization their influence on the society is high, which have informal network in the society according to their norms, religion and tribe. The role of social network in Afghan society was important factor such as political and economic arrangements. The importance of social networking and civil society in Afghan society was the absence of state authority and trust on leadership. From the above discussion it can be easily analyzed that conflict in Afghanistan was a complex mixture of social, political and economic factors which contribute in violence and conflict transformation throughout Afghanistan. The continuous change in regional conflict system in Afghanistan was not only to bring peace and ending war. The process of transformation involves social network transformation, institutional transformation, political and economic transformation. The key stakeholder involves in this transformation need the involvement of local and regional people for different tribes to minimize the chance of emerging conflict again.

Social Demission of Bazar Economy

The bazar economy was the reason of state collapse which deeply brings changes in Afghan society. The common problem observed in bazar economy by experts was that of violence in trade and production. The agriculture production was at peak which was highly linked with opium

¹³ Mick Moore, Jennifer Leavy, Peter Houtzager, and Howard White. "*Polity qualities: how governance affects poverty*." (1999).

¹⁴ Barnett R. Rubin, "The politics of security in post conflict state building." *Building states to build peace* (2008): 25-48.

production, but no other real agriculture goods were produce during that period of time. The production of opium was high because of no state intervention and monitoring. There was no regulatory authority to monitor the mechanism and establish industries. The transfer of surplus goods and converting it into opportunity for the Afghan trader were highly ignored. Therefore, people engaged in trade were only Afghan citizens. As a matter of fact, majority of Afghan traders and their network suffer from bazar economy. The people who depend upon ordinary trading of crops earn less as compare to those who used to crop opium. The Taliban along with their alliances worked on developing education, agriculture, irrigation and training to create economic opportunities as well as to boost the economy. The dependency of citizen on state was less because of outsourcing the developmental projects. NGOs were always concentrated on fixing different condition for work i.e. employment opportunities for female and location to operate. The emergence of Kalashnikov culture was the main reason of continuous war in Afghanistan. The same culture affects different neighboring countries especially Pakistan. The wars destroy almost all traditional structures of Afghan society. The past culture was directly changed from Malik's to warlords of the area. The balance of power was divided among few warlords. Youth with arms in the community replaces elders with peaceful tradition. This arms culture of Afghan society enlarged the gap between ideal Afghanistan and current Afghanistan. The gap creates conflict among the civil society which led to conflict transformation in Afghanistan. The increase in poppies cultivation has social consequences on the Afghan society in the form of increasing drugs addiction. Another problem arises due to war condition was the insecurity in different sector investment, especially property rights. The warlords have full control over real estate, agriculture and housing. The insecurity in real estate business was also due to involvement of warlords.

Trade Dimension

According to experts after the failure Soviet Union the geopolitical and economic interest of countries changes which also known as new great game in Central Asia. Afghanistan is on the southern of Central Asian states which give him an important geo-economic benefit. However, in the era of Taliban Afghanistan was the center of illegal and smuggling trade between neighboring countries. The Afghanistan has a rich history of trade with neighbor countries Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA) was one of the most well-known agreement of trade in 1950's. This agreement was mismanaged by local Afghans, the same commodities was smuggled back to earn profit. In Taliban era the smuggling was at peak and they do not want to control it which directly harms the economy of Afghanistan. Beside that Afghanistan enjoy the disparity in trade among different states. The boarder

was used for smuggling of different types of goods i.e. transportation, drugs and other goods. A proper network was developed which involves bureaucracy and locals. Through smuggling individuals were enjoying benefits at the cost of country economy. The peak of bazar economy affects international market as well as market structure of neighboring countries. The reforms in imports laws and sanction on Afghanistan affect trade. According to experts the profit from ATTA was reduce to 900 million dollars in 2000 and compare to previous profit i.e., is 3 billion Dollars in 1999. The business of smuggling was the most profitable business from 1999 to 2001. Furthermore, the weak living standard of Afghans was the reason of low benefit from bazar economy as compare to warlords.

Opium Cultivation Dimension

The cultivation of opium was the main reason of Afghans war in every era. According to experts in study area that the cultivation of opium on large scale and establishment related industries always discontinue after resistance. It is worth mentioning that Afghan government was directly involved in cultivation or either motivates farmers. The land which was used for agriculture production such as wheat and vegetable was converted into opium production. The reason was that of high profit received by farmers and the middle man. The warlords in the area also collect high return in the form of taxes on opium production. The international pressure on Afghanistan government finally results in ban of opium production in 2000. Majority of the experts was shocked at the decision of Taliban that why they easily agree upon ban of opium production, but the main reason which experts think was that of getting international recognition. However, this decision affect local producer and trader which results in creating unemployment as well as socio economic instability.

The destruction of traditional agriculture economy and developing of bazar economy was the only reason of state collapse. The emergence of bazar economy and destruction of traditional system led to bring drastic changes in Afghan labor market as well as trade. A person living in the war condition was force to accept and adjust according to the situation. Lack of state machinery leads low industrial productivity, social and infrastructure development. The high level of opium production has drastically changed the socio-economic condition of Afghanistan. Nonexistence of state also changes the living standard of people.

Educational and Employment Dimension

Education is the fundamental right of every human being in any country. Every responsible citizen needs proper education to engage in development of state. The socio-economic development depends upon education facilities of state. Being essential component of state development, one cannot ignore

the importance of education. Although in recent years the quality of education improved internationally. However, educational system of developing remains the unchanged. Similarly, the decades of civil wars in Afghanistan had ruined every sector. Likewise, the educational sector of Afghanistan was also ruined during the wars. Majority of educational institutions were ruined in wars. During Taliban era the situation were worse enough that there was ban on coeducation in Afghanistan. The Taliban focus on improvement of educational system in Afghanistan, however female education was not improved. The literacy rate of Afghanistan was the lowest among the developing countries of the world. In Taliban era the number of female educations was equal to none. The people of Afghanistan hesitate to send females to schools, colleges and universities. Government of Taliban ban education for females after 6th grade. Another reason of low ratio of female education in Afghanistan was religious, traditional barriers, insecurity, social norms, early marriages and poverty.

According to Taliban Islam give a remarkable status to women. And following the teaching of Islam women was treated according to shira. The due rights of women were given to him; however, their right of equality was ignored. According to Taliban women will remain at home, men will provide them all facilities. From one angle the above statement recognition was given to women as important character of life, whose sole responsibility is to look after the affairs of household. Beside that woman as responsible citizen will be a right hand and facilitate their partner by taking care of home. According to Taliban women of Afghanistan suffer from different types of violence in the society. Therefore, Taliban wants to honor women with dignity, the policy maker suggested that women of Afghanistan will stay at home and men will provide basic facilities of life. The employment opportunities were reduced for females; even they were not allowed to run own businesses. The women quotas in different jobs were reduce and women were not allowed to go out of home for employment. The situation was quite alarming and educated women suffer from these policies of Taliban. Women living in Afghanistan start migrating towards neighboring countries for securing their future.

Conclusion

Afghanistan was a country without a state would not be wrong. The war economy could not stable the economy which was one of the main reasons for deterioration in Afghanistan. The infrastructure structure and social development was missing in Afghans Society. The absence of proper state structure and non-existence of international recognition for government of Taliban was another reason of unstable economy and unstable Afghanistan. The social fabric of the society improved with respect to security and improvement in the law-and-order situation. It is true that the war which was

going on for more than twenty years had left Afghanistan as one of the most destroyed countries in the world. But it is also important to note that some sections of the Afghan economy flourished during the same period such as trade. From the social development perspective, the Taliban gained popularity for its wide spread propaganda which was based on curbing corruption of the previous Afghan government. To go with this the absence of integral livelihood was also cashed. They also build further on the narrative of the fighting against the external powers and stop them from occupying Afghanistan. The Taliban as a first Islamic Emirate also build on the rural population distrust for urban areas because urban areas were seen as main areas for corruption and violence of various levels. Moreover, by and large the Taliban support was higher in the rural Pashtun areas as compared to cities. One of the major factors behind the success of the Taliban was the absence of proper administration at a district level and existence of political divide among the Afghans. The Taliban leadership was much different from the commanders of 1980 which fight against USSR. The resources that First Islamic Emirate had were mostly generated from the rural areas where they were dominant. They also took a fair share of external resources coming from whatever sources they could generate.

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