

THE BACKGROUND AND CAUSES OF REFUGEE PROBLEMS IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Afghanistan is a country that produces the world's largest single group of refugee emergencies in the world. The causes of refugee flows in Afghanistan are believed to be due to domestic as well as external factors. Domestic factors like local government and different ideologies and external factors such as foreign dominations, have caused conflicts which later led to the flow of refugees in Afghanistan. However, external factors such as foreign domination, have triggered higher flow of refugees in the country. Due to this complexity, the refugee problems still exist. Thus, an understanding on the causes of refugee flow is crucial because the refugee problems need to be tackled from the roots and subsequently this can minimize the problems. Afghanistan is the focal analysis because it produces the largest single group of refugees in the world. The statistics of refugees from Afghanistan are gathered from various sources but mainly from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The statistics are presented from the 1970s until 2003. A general background of refugee numbers from Afghanistan is presented.

INTRODUCTION

Refugees have been mistaken with migrants, economic migrants and illegal immigrants. Refugees are thought to be people who migrated to foreign countries finding fortunes or looking for a better life. However, being a refugee is different from all the categories mentioned above.

In international law, the term 'refugee' is extremely important for it can differentiate between life and death for an individual seeking protection in a foreign country. The 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees has provided a definition

of a refugee. Article 1 A (2) of the 1951 Refugee Convention, defines ‘refugee’ as a person who;

as a result of event occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who not having a nationality and having being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such event, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

(Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951)

The definition of refugees has been extended under the 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspect of Refugee Problem in Africa that also includes those fleeing “external aggression, foreign occupation and foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order” (Article 1(2) of the 1969 Convention).

REFUGEES IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan has produced the largest single refugee group in the world (Amnesty International, 1999). According to the 1979 to 2003 statistics by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (see Table 1), the number of Afghan refugees started comparatively low in 1979 and increased remarkably to over one million in 1980. Then the number grew steadily for to over 4 million in 1981 to 1985 and adding another million from 1986 to 1989. Later it increased to over 6 million in 1990 and 1991 which marked the highest number of refugees in Afghanistan history. Later the number of refugees decreased and marked a steady decrease to over 2 million from 1993 to 1999. Then they increased to over 3 million from 2000 to 2001 and gradually decreased by about one million from 2002 to July 2003.

The number of refugees in Afghanistan over the last couple of decades is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 : The number of Afghan refugees in 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s

<i>1970s</i>	<i>Number of Refugees</i>	<i>1980s</i>	<i>Number of Refugees</i>	<i>1990s</i>	<i>Number of Refugees</i>	<i>2000s</i>	<i>Number of Refugees</i>
<i>1973</i>	Few hundreds	<i>1980</i>	1,728,000	<i>1990</i>	6,325,900	<i>2000</i>	3,580,400

(continued)

<i>1970s</i>	<i>Number of Refugees</i>	<i>1980s</i>	<i>Number of Refugees</i>	<i>1990s</i>	<i>Number of Refugees</i>	<i>2000s</i>	<i>Number of Refugees</i>
1978	109,900	1981	3,877,700	1991	6,294,800	2001	3,809,600
1979	502,000	1982	4,380,400	1992	4,550,800	2002	2,481,000
		1983	4,578,300	1993	3,388,200	2003	2,357,191
						(end June)	
		1984	4,305,900	1994	2,739,200		
		1985	4,615,700	1995	2,676,900		
		1986	5,073,500	1996	2,664,700		
		1987	5,511,200	1997	2,663,700		
		1988	5,609,900	1998	2,634,200		
		1989	5,630,500	1999	2,562,800		

Sources :

- 1) UNHCR. (2001). **Refugees by Number 2001**, Retrieved 4/28/2004, from <http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb/nsf/0/29add271b5b471d085256a>
- 2) *Statistic of refugees in 1973 and 1978 taken from:* ABIM/PKPIM. (1989). **Afghanistan Dawn of A New Era**. Kuala Lumpur : Percetakan Datuk Keramat Sdn Bhd. Pg 61
- 3) UNHCR.(2002). **Refugees by Number 2002**, Retrieved 4/28/2004, from [http://www.irinnews.org/webspecials/idp/pdfs/unhcr 2002.pdf](http://www.irinnews.org/webspecials/idp/pdfs/unhcr%2002.pdf)
- 4) UNHCR. (2003). **Refugees by Number 2003**. Retrieved 4/28/2004, from <http://www.unhcr.org.uk/info/briefings/statistics/documents/numb2003.pdf>

From the statistics above, it is clear that the number of refugees in Afghanistan can be explained through various conditions happening in the country. Thus, to explain the causes of refugees flow in Afghanistan, whether it is caused by domestic or international factors, the writer will explain according to various phases namely, Phase One : Era of Local Controls with minimal foreign influence, Phase Two : Era of local control and the influence of the Soviet Union, Phase Three : Era of the Soviet Union Domination, Phase Four : Era of the Soviet Union Invasion, Phase Five : The Era of Local Conflicts, Phase Six : The Taliban and the United States Era and Phase Seven : Era of the United States domination.

Phase One : Era of Local Controls with minimal foreign influence

Due to limited statistics, the number of refugees in Afghanistan can be summarized as relatively low in 1970s. It started with few hundreds in 1973 to over five hundred thousand in 1979. Looking back at Afghanistan history, the previous rulers, namely Ahmad Shah Durani (1747-1773), Dost Muhammad (1830s), Amair Ali(1863-1879), Abdul Rahman (1880-1901), Habibullah (1909-1919), Amanullah (1919-1929) and

Nadir Shah (1929-1933), had tried to keep a neutral policy with the super powers Britain and the Soviet Union. Even though they had introduced modernization in education, military and many more aspects, they managed to keep both super powers at minimal level in the domestic politics (ABIM/PKPIM, 1989). Furthermore, despite of the diversity of more than 55 ethnic groups, the rulers also managed to eliminate resistance mostly from the non-Pashtun ethnic groups in the country under a strong central Pashtuns government (Vogelsang, 2002). In general, the country was in a stable condition and did not generate flows of refugees.

Despite the neutral policy with the British and the Soviets, the local government however started to plant pro-western seeds in the country visibly seen under the ruling of Amanullah, Nadir Shah and Zahir Shah. The turning period was during Amanullah's period, when he detached the long-practiced neutrality policy with the super powers and introduced a pro-Western style such as that women were not required to put on a veil. In fact, his wife, Queen Soraya, went out publicly unveiled and consequently created serious tensions among the Afghan populations (Rasayanagam, 2003). This led to various rebellions which later resulted with him being overthrown. Many religious chiefs and judges who showed disapproval were executed (Agwani, 1981). Even though these incidents would have produced refugees through the current refugee definition, those victims of persecutions could not be categorized as 'refugees' since the Refugee Convention only came in 1951.

Phase Two : Era of local control and the influence of Soviet Union

According to Rasayanagam (2003) the King Zahir Shah's era was portrayed as democratic. Many development and changes were introduced via the King's prime ministers and Muhammad Daud was one of them. Their 1946 Constitution spelled out a lot of fair and equal distribution of power with many rights to everybody including principle of equality to all men and women, freedom of thought and expression, the protection of private property and freedom of worship to the non-muslims .

Furthermore, education flourished in the country with many foreign countries like Soviet Union, United States, Germany and France sponsoring the university faculties in various fields, such as agriculture, economics, medicine, law and politics, education and engineering. Some of the young Afghans were sent abroad to study under grants by the foreign powers. With the democratic atmosphere and education flourishing hand in hand, the Afghan community especially those in Kabul were enlightened and to a certain extent improved their lives by working with the government. Various political parties such as Tehrik-i-Naujawan Baidar (TNB), People's Democratic Party of Afghan (PDPA) and Jamiat-i-Islami had added to the flavor during the democratic era (Rasayanagam, 2003).

However, the seeds of conflict became visible when foreign grants and loans deteriorated. In addition, there were high levels of unemployment and under employment, clashes

between traditionalist religious groups and the people with Marxism ideology, issues concerning of women's rights and the long drought that led to famine. All these problems put Afghanistan in the hot soup and led Daud to overtake the government when King Zahir went on holiday in Europe. Daud abolished the monarchy system and transformed the country into a republic (Rasayanagam, 2003). He convened a Loya Jirga¹ to discuss and approve a new constitution for a single-party system that invest enormous powers to himself as the head of State, chief executive, commander-in-chief of the armed forces and the leader of the sole political party (Agwani, 1981).

Daud was mesmerized with the idea of modernization. In order to achieve the objectives, he abandoned the long-established neutral policy by taking the Soviet Union deeper into the country. The government had come to a four year barter agreement in 1950 whereby the Soviet Union would provide petroleum products, cement and cotton cloth with other essentials such as wool, raw cotton and other Afghan products in return (Rasayanagam, 2003). More lucrative financial assistance in the form of loans and grants from the Soviet Union as well as the United States were granted after he resumed his presidency. All the loans and grants were used for various purposes such as building infrastructures, military capabilities, educations, and many more (Hyman, 1992).

In spite of the visible development in the country, Daud was insensitive to the domestic politics such as the issue Afghan women's veil. To justify his action in the unveiling issue, he consulted Islamic scholars and jurists and asked them to prove anywhere in the Quran that prohibits unveiling. After the scholars consensually agreed that there was no prohibition, the royal family's wives and daughters went out publicly unveiled in one of the country's national events. The effect on the population was electrifying. Those opposed to the idea were charged with treason for advocating to overthrow the government. Many muslim ringleaders were arrested, and the rest of the groups had to flee to save their lives. During Daud's era, it was that estimated 600 muslim leaders were killed (Tahir, 1982). This might explain the refugee flows in the mid and late 1970s.

The significantly increasing number of refugees in the late 1970s can probably be associated with Saur Revolution in 1978. Daud did not realize the potential danger of both economic and political overdependence on the superpowers. The effects were profound where he found that there was too much Soviet involvement in the country. He planned to eliminate them through his anti-communist policy. He approached Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern oil countries to support his policy (Vogelsang, 2002). Daud had arrested and imprisoned leaders of the PDPA. The army, whose officers were mainly PDPA members backed by the Soviet Union, intervened and Daud's palace was attacked. Daud and his family were assassinated (Bridgot & Roy, 1988). Many soldiers were killed and there were civilian casualties. As a result of the Saur Revolution, there were approximately 402,000 Afghan refugees seeking refuge in Pakistan and 100,000 in Iran (UNHCR, 2000). It is believed that Saur Revolution created the flow of refugees in the late 1970s.

Phase Three : Era of the Soviet Union Dominations

When Daud was ousted, Muhammad Nur Taraki became the president of the republic. Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed between the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. Both countries pledged to consult each other to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity. With Taraki in power, Soviet influence was extremely prevalent. Few drastic and apparent changes were introduced including replacing the traditional black-green-red Afghanistan flag with the red flag. Professions related to Islam were abolished and citizenships of the royals are removed (Vogelsang, 2002). These changes produced another flow of resistance adding to the chaos that had already existed.

External politics also contributed to the unrest. Relationship between Afghanistan and the United States was disrupted when US Ambassador, Adolf Dubs was kidnapped by the Marxist opponents and killed during the police attempt to save him (Bridget & Roy, 1988). Moreover, after Ayatullah Khomeini regained power in Iran, the resistance towards Marxism in Afghanistan became intense. Islamic leaders, who had taken part in Iran, returned to the country and captured the Herat Province. This situation endangered Soviet's interest in the country (Vogelsang, 2002).

Hafizullah Amin became the president in September 1979 and tried to implement a policy more independent of the Soviet Union. He carried out a bloody repression against all opponents including Taraki's. Amin had listed 12,000 names to be prosecuted by the regime. Popular uprising in Kabul produced much bloodshed, revolts and heavy bombings. Even with the huge numbers of the government military, the unrest was unsuccessfully settled in the country and military intervention by the Soviet Union was inevitable in 1979 (Vogelsang, 2002). The chaotic situation produced a few hundred thousands of refugees in 1979 and more than one million in the 1980s.

Phase Four : The Era of the Soviet Union Invasion

The 1980s had witnessed the increasing number of refugees in Afghanistan steadily growing from over one million to over 5 million by the end of 1989 (See Table 1). The Soviet Union with an army of 85,000 had entered the republic on the 27 December 1979 and Amin was killed in the assault at the Tapa Tadj Beg palace. Babrak Kamal was installed as the new President (Bridget & Roy, 1988). The Soviet government's presence in Afghanistan had sparked more opposition by the Afghans and the occupying forces confronted the civilians offensively.

The resistances were led by various groups known as the Mujahiddeen². The groups rose, partly due to the increasing influences of communism in Afghanistan. They aimed to nurture the Afghan society according to Islamic tenets and provide solutions to the social and political problems in the country. Besides the original groups of the

Mujahiddeen, the resistance forces were also formed by 200 unorganized groups inside Afghanistan (Tahir, 1982).

Soviet Union was alarmed by the resistance and used all kinds of strategies to defeat the resistances. For instance, they used fighters jet SU-25, high-tech tanks, chemical bombs, fatal bombs (consisting of small needles) and *dum-dum* bullets which were illegal in the law of wars (ABIM/PKPIKM, 1989).

The government, under Babrark Kamal, also implemented some harsh measures such as the establishment of the secret police known as KHAD, an agency spying to terrorize government's opposition and counter insurgency aimed to reduce the number of population in the villages. Besides the air and land attacks, the Soviets also planted land mines and used toy-bombs. Villages and crops were also destroyed and burned. Throughout these actions, the population in the villages was reduced by approximately 53% (ABIM/PKPIKM, 1989). These were aimed to weaken the Mujahiddeen's resistance.

Besides KHAD, the government also started to indoctrinate the Afghans by encouraging or forcing school children at the age of ten to enroll in the 'Young Pioneers'. They were trained, among other things, to spy on their classmates and even on their families. A nationwide membership of 40,000 for the Young Pioneers was claimed in the early 1980s. The main objective was to provide a pro-Soviet and loyal administrators in the country (Rasayanagam, 2003).

The conflict between the Soviet Union and the Mujahiddeen intensified when the latter received lavished assistance including major arms storage, training facility and medical centre by the CIA (Rashid, 2001). The US military aids, which amounted to US\$280 million to the Mujahiddeen, were the biggest single CIA covert operation anywhere in the world. Besides the US, the Mujahiddeen also received assistance from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States (Rasayanagam, 2003). As a result of the rivalry, many people were killed and disappeared while millions fled to the neighboring countries. Evidentce from the UNHCR, quoted the number of Afghan refugees increased tremendously from year to year in the neighboring countries like Pakistan, Iran and India (UNHCR, 2000). The year 1989 was the peak of Soviet domination and marked the highest number of refugees in the 1980s.

The United Nations had asked for the Soviet's withdrawal and with its financial burden forced the Soviets to sign the Geneva Accords 1988. The Geneva Accords was signed by Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Soviet Union and the United States stating that the Soviets had to withdraw from Afghanistan within nine months. By February 1989 the Soviet Union had completed it's withdrawal from Afghanistan and left the new government under Najibullah (Rashid, 2001). As a result of the Soviet's withdrawal, the country did not returned to stability. It was wide-opened to many groups and tribes to control the country with their own objectives, resulting in conflicts and consequently created more flows of Afghan refugees to the neighboring countries.

Phase Five : The Era of Local Conflicts

Despite of the Soviet withdrawal, the unrest still continued under Najibullah's ruling. Basically in the early 1990s, the statistics of refugee flow could be associated with the conflicts among the resistance forces against Najibullah's ruling. Since Najibullah was restored in power, various attempts to defeat him were made, such as attacks just after the Soviet's withdrawal in Jalalabad, a coup in 1990 led by Shahnawaz Tanay, attacks in 1991 by the resistance forces, and the attack in 1992 which led to the fall of Najibullah (Vogelsang, 322-324). The attacks caused more people to flee their places, consequently producing a tremendous number of refugees in the early 1990s.

In spite of the Najibullah fall, the chaotic situation continued. Various Mujahideen groups were unable to agree on power sharing-mechanism and fighting broke out between them almost immediately and each sought to achieve its objectives by military means (US Committee For Refugees, 2001). Although all groups agreed that sovereignty belonged to Allah, they could not come to the agreement on who would be the keeper of the legitimate authority. They had different interpretations on the legitimate keeper. Some groups in the Mujahideen, like the Hikmatyar's, preferred the administration of the country to be done through a consultative body (shura) as it embodied the interest of the ummah. However, some of them, such as the Jabha Nijat -i-Milli Afghanistan (led by Mujaddadi who earned support from the ulama, tribal chiefs and landlords, *Pirs* and *Sufis*) favoured monarchical style with Loya Jirga in check of the King's behaviour. They were also willing to accept the return of ex-King Zahir Shah. Hikmatyar's Hizbi-Islami was against the idea. In fact, during Zahir Shah's period, Hizbi-Islami's journal, *Shehadat*, had listed anti-religious episodes that occurred during the King's period (Olesen, 1995).

The Mujahideen groups were united during the Soviet's domination and invasion as they looked at Marxism as a threat to Islam. However, when the invasion was over, the conflicts resumed as they had different interpretations of some aspects in administering the country.

The Interim Government which was headed by Sibghat Allah Mujaddi, was replaced by Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani. It faced a lot of attacks from former resistance parties and other groups mainly from Hikmatyar and Hizb-i-Islami, the Ozbek militia of General Dostum (allied with Hikmatyar) and the Shi'ite Hiz-i-Wahdat of Abd al-Ali Mazari. The continuous fighting destroyed Kabul and forced many Kabulis to flee to other places. The situation in Afghanistan intensified as there were also fightings outside Kabul which involved many local warlords attacking each other to establish their own positions mainly along highways in order to levy taxes and harass travelers (Vogelsang, 2002).

The fighting within the Mujahideen groups and the war among local warlords damaged the country badly. Many Afghans fled to the neighboring countries to save their lives,

and this is why the number of refugees remained high even after the Soviet's withdrawal from the country in the early 1990s.

Phase Six : The Taliban and the United States Era

Evidently the number of refugees in the early 1990s had decreased by more than half in the mid and end of the 1990s (see Table 1). This statistics might be associated with the emergence of the Taliban.

The Taliban emerged in 1994 to stabilize the Muslims and the country as a whole. The Taliban were educated at private religious schools at the Afghan-Pakistani border. These schools had sprung up in large numbers following the Soviet invasion and were funded by Pakistan, the United States and Saudi governments. The Taliban was strongly influenced by Jam'yyat 'Ulama'-I Islam, a movement in Pakistan which stressed a strict following of the rules and regulations of Islam in particular the Sunni Hanafi branch (Vogelsang, 2003). They also accepted the Shariah law as the only code of law.

The Taliban's occupation, combated opium smuggling, corruptions, nepotism, homosexuality and many more among the warlords in the country (Hyman, 1992). The Taliban, with their military capabilities, had captured many areas of eastern Afghanistan. They burned opium fields, ordered women to wear the burqa, banned women from working outside their homes and prevented education for girls. They also launched attacks in 1996 and seized Jalalabad and Kabul. This resulted in forty to fifty thousand people fleeing to other places creating flows of internal migration. Fighting continued throughout 1997 and 1998 as Taliban captured Mazar-e Sharif. Many were killed and many more fled to save their lives (US Committee for Refugees, 2001).

In addition to the internal unrest between the Taliban and the anti-Taliban alliance, the United States started its harsh policies towards the Taliban which was in contrast to their previous lavish assistance to the latter. The support of the US shifted because the Clinton administration was criticized back home due to its support of the Taliban who committed human rights abuse against women. Previously, the US support was clearly seen after the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996. The US announced that it would establish diplomatic relations with the Taliban by sending an officer to Kabul. Furthermore, the US State Department spokesman, Glyn Davis said that the US found nothing objectionable in the steps taken by the Taliban to impose Islamic law (Rashid, 2001).

The support by the US was believed to be driven by the pipeline issue in Afghanistan. The US oil company, the Unocal, wanted to build gas pipelines from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via northern Afghanistan and the company had to compete with another company, Bridas from Argentina. Thus, the US government tried to win the pipeline's contract by supporting the Taliban. However, the US government had to switch to harsher policies against the Taliban since Clinton was having national election and the feminist votes were crucial to maintain the Presidency. As a result, the US government announced

its campaign against the Taliban allegedly headed by Osama bin Laden who organized many terrorism acts (Rashid : 156-169).

In 1998 all groups associated with Osama issued a manifesto under the 'International Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders' released a fatwa calling Muslims to kill Americans and British. After the bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the US attacked Jalalabad and Khost by firing 70 cruise missiles. The US also offered US\$5 million for the capturing of Osama. The conditions in Afghanistan intensified when Taliban fought against the anti-Taliban alliance backed by the US thus creating more deaths, destruction and increase in refugees. (Rashid: 131-134).

In 1999, the Taliban launched a major attack on the Shomali Plains forcing more than 100,000 people fleeing from their homes while another 10,000 fled to the Kunduz Province. The opposition later recaptured the Shomali Province but by then the Taliban had destroyed almost everything in sight including homes, crops, orchards and irrigation systems. This renewed fighting resulted in more than 60,000 people fleeing from their homes (US Committee for Refugees, 2000).

Despite the unrest in many provinces in Afghanistan, the number of refugees fleeing the country steadily decreased. This was seen after the Taliban took power in 1994. The numbers of refugees in the early 1990s were over 6 million. However, they decreased to 2,739,200 refugees in 1994 and remained approximately the same until 1999 (see to Table 1). Most obtained asylum in Pakistan, Iran, India, Russia and other countries (UNHCR, 2000). Despite the tremendous decrease, the number of people fleeing Afghanistan was still the highest in the world.

Phase Seven : Era of the US dominations

In 2000, the number of refugees increased to over 3 million and this can be explained through the series of US bombings in Afghanistan in the late 1990s. While millions have fled to the neighboring countries mainly to Pakistan and Iran, hundreds of thousands were stranded inside Afghanistan either being unable to do so (eg. stopped at the border) or refused to do so. These groups inevitably became the victims of the US and Taliban fighting.

While the number of refugees was still high, another bombing by the US in Afghanistan in October 2001 created another flow exodus of refugees. The bombing was due to the attack on the US World Trade Center in September 2001. Afghanistan, accused of protecting Osama bin Laden who was allegedly the 'master mind' behind the attack, was listed as one of the prime targets in the war. Thus, from October 7, 2001 to March 2002, US launched a series of massive bombing campaigns against terrorism in Afghanistan. The US bombed 'anything that moves', as illustrated by Professor Herold in his research on the civilian casualties from the US Bombings in Afghanistan (Herold, 2002).

The US heavily bombed main cities like Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad and other remote villages killing thousands of innocent people and led others to flee in order to save their lives. From October 7 to November 18, the barbaric air bombardment killed more than 2500 people. The US went further to bomb certain civilian facilities deemed hostile to its war success. They bombed telephone exchange, electrical grid, generation plant, hydro-electric power station, Al-Jazeera news agency, religious schools, and even buses and trucks filled with fleeing refugees (Herold, 2002).

Herold (2002: 10) further stressed that 'the differential value of lives is revealed. It is because the US has ignored the Taliban's horrendous violations for years and even aided their rules. Apparently we will make war on brutal regime only when something else is at stake'. As a result of these conflicts, there are more than 3 millions of Afghan refugees in other countries at the end of 2001 and 900,000 are internally displaced (US Committee for Refugees, 2001). The US attacks have successfully created a new flow of Afghan refugees in the early 21st century.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From the various phases discussed, namely Phase One : Era of Local Controls with minimal foreign influence, Phase Two : Era of local control and the influence of the Soviet Union, Phase Three : Era of Soviet Union Domination, Phase Four : The Era of Soviet Union Invasion, Phase Five : The Era of Local Conflicts, Phase Six : The Taliban and the United States Era and Phase Seven : Era of United States domination, the writer believes that the flow of refugees in Afghanistan are caused by both domestic as well as external factors.

The local government, as a domestic factor, stands out as an important factor in causing the Afghans to flee from their country. The local government as the main player in the country, was quite authoritarian in nature when they implemented various policies considered by the Afghans as an insult to Islam. Among the examples discussed were Amanullah's favour over western style. Similarly Daud's family appeared unveiled when they attended one of the national events in the country. Taraki, when in power, also tried to suppress Islamic influence by abolishing professions related to Islam. These actions actually angered the Afghans and led them to confront the authority. Those who opposed the ideas were labeled as traitors and would face harsh punishment, be killed, imprisoned or fled to the neighboring countries for asylum.

Babrark Kamal's regime was even more aggressive. He tried to 'sovietize' the Afghans through many ways such as school children were encouraged or forced to enroll in the Young Pioneers and trained to spy on their classmates and their families. These attempts were to train them to stay pro-Soviet and loyal administrators for the communist government in the future. Babrark also employed a secret police agency to terrorize the people. Thus, it is obvious that the Afghans lived in fear and those who opposed the

regime would face severe punishment. This might explain why some Afghans chose to flee the country in order to save their lives.

The local government was also ineffective in the country's governance. The local government relied heavily on foreign assistance in building the destitute country without realizing the drawbacks of over dependence on the superpowers. For instance, Daud received lavish assistance in terms of loans and grants from the Soviet Union and the United States. The Soviets not only assisted in the physical development of the country, but tried to implant its influence inside the country. The Soviets gradually established their power in the country until it led to the invasion in 1979. Hence, due to the ineffective governance, the country was invaded by a foreign power and taken over, killing huge numbers of people and led millions to flee the country.

Ideology is another vital factor that caused refugee flows from Afghanistan. This could be observed when foreign influences started to penetrate deeper into the country with new ideologies exposed and indoctrinated to Afghans. Through education and training abroad, young Afghans such as Taraki and Babrak were mesmerized with Marxism and later, with the support from the Soviet Union, tried to indoctrinate others into Marxism. This created clashes with other groups of Afghans who firmly maintained the Islamic beliefs. The Islamic group saw Marxism as a threat to Islam and they fought against the Soviets and the Afghan government. The clashes created tremendous disaster in the country and led millions of Afghans to flee the country in the 1980s.

However, after the Soviet's withdrawal, Islam was still the issue among the Afghans. Those within the Islamic groups united when they fought against the Soviet Union. However, they were in conflict with each other after the Soviets left due to their differences. This can be seen in phase Five : The Era of Local Conflicts whereby various groups in the Mujahiddeen were in conflict and caused serious damage to the country. They had their own understanding on who was going to be the legitimate authority in the country according to their own interpretation. For some groups in the Mujahiddeen, like the Hikmatyar's, they did not want the monarchical system and favoured a consultative body (shura) to administer the country. On the other hand, some of them such as the Jabha Nijat -i-Milli Afghanistan favoured the monarchical style and willing to accept the return of ex-King Zahir Shah. Hikmatyar's Hizbi-Islami was against the idea and during the King Zahir period, the Hizbi-Islami's journal, Shehadat, listed the King's period anti-religious episodes. Their differences created continuous conflicts that inflicted sufferings to the Afghans at large creating unstoppable flows of refugees.

Diverse ethnicity was another triggering factor of refugee flows. The country, which consists of 55 ethnic groups, has often faced problems in unifying them. This could be observed in phase one. The early rulers like Dost Muhammad managed to keep in the country intact by implementing a strong central government, with minimal foreign powers in the country. However, when the country was in trouble, the ethnic groups

focused on their ethnic survival. For instance, many of local warlords attacked each other to establish their positions mainly along highways in order to levy taxes and harass travelers. Hence, some Afghans did not feel safe and fled from the country.

Lastly, foreign countries also played a role in creating the of refugee flows from Afghanistan. This could be observed in the case of the Soviet Union and United States involvement in the country, mainly the Soviet's invasion as well as the US bombing series in Afghanistan. With financial and political powers, they managed to manipulate a destitute country with a long-established neutrality policy in order to achieve their own national interests. Both superpowers have created damage at a greater scale in the country, killing people and forcing them to flee to save their lives.

Therefore, even though this paper does not mean to find conclusive finding, it could be concluded the refugee flows from Afghanistan are caused by both domestic as well as external factors. Both factors (domestic : local government, ideology and diverse ethnicity, and external : foreign countries) are interrelated and led to the creation of refugees in their own ways. However, when the foreign elements exist, the situation becomes intensified and triggers more refugee flows as can be seen in the phases discussed.

With the understanding of the causes of refugee flows, it is hoped that the root of the causes can be tackled and subsequently the problems minimized to a certain extent. According to Scholdan (2000), addressing the root causes is important to prevent refugee flows. It is a difficult task and it takes the combined involvement of international, national and local efforts.

ENDNOTES

¹ A tribal conclave comprising nominees of the provincial administration from feudal notables and clergy, was intermittently used by Afghan rulers to hold consultations on questions of national importance. (Agwani : 3)

² There are many opinions on number of parties in Mujahiddeen. According to Tahir Amin (1982: 96-97) there are six affective groups of Mujahiddeen, consisting of

- i) Hizbi-Islami led by Engineer Gulbadeen Hikmatyar,
- 2) Jamiat-i-Islami led by Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani,
- 3) Hizbi Islami led by Younus Khalis,
- 4) Harakat-i-Islami led by N.M.Mohammadi,
- 5) Milli Islami Mahaz-i-Afghanistan led by Prof Ahmad Gilani ,

6) Jabha Nijat-i-Milli Afghanistan led by Prof. Sibghat Ullah Mujaddadi. Olesen (1995 : 284) has outlined seven groups of Mujahiddeen. It includes all of the above parties plus Ittehad –i Islami barai Azadi-ye Afghanistan headed by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf.

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