Chapter 6
Afghanistan Conflict: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

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ABSTRACT
Afghanistan is one of the key countries in Asia and natural bridge between Asia and Europe via the Caspian basin. Because of her strategic situation, she has been one of the main interest points of superpowers in the world. Afghanistan has lived through many invasions, chaos, conflicts, and civil wars throughout her 5,000-year history. It is not easy to understand and solve Afghanistan conflict and prevent chaos. It may take a long time to understand the main reasons of conflict and solutions on them. The Afghanistan conflict cannot be solved in international arena without understanding the native culture, lifestyle, society structure, religious issues, tribal issues, chaos environment, the history, and main reasons of the conflicts. The purpose of this chapter is to give some facts and ideas about Afghanistan, historical reasons about conflicts, the current conditions, and some tips and points of view for the future solutions.

“Afghanistan is the frontdoor key of Asia”
-Colonel Haydar Ateş, DECOM of ISAF RC-C

BACKGROUND
It is very important to know some basic facts about Afghanistan to understand the reasons of the conflicts.

Afghanistan has about 5,000-year historical background. Throughout the history, she was named as Ariana, Horasan, and finally Afghanistan. The tribal and ethnic structure has been the main body of the society. Afghanistan was invaded and controlled by Macedonians, Arabs, Turks, Mongols, Baburs, and Persians. The big war between British and Afghans lasted about 37 years (1839-1876) and Afghanistan lost the terrain even some big achievements during the war. The southern part of Afghanistan (Baluchistan) was given to Pakistan according to Durand Agreement between Afghanistan and England (1893) (CSIS (2007)).

The Afghanistan declared her independency in 1919 and ruled by kingdom and monarchy until 1973. After then, the Afghans has tried to establish democracy. However, there have been many problems to provide the peace and stability
inside the country. During this internal conflict, the country was invaded by Soviet Union in 1979. The regime was changed as republic in 1987. The Afghans fought against Soviet invasion and defeated them. The Soviet army quit the country in 1989 (CSIS, 2007).

After the war, establishing the democracy has been in the agenda. However, the main power of politics is tribal idea. The ethnic and religious groups tried to gain power and tried to control the country. This was the main reason of the chaos and long-term civil war. The main insurgent group, Taliban, supported by Pakistan, invaded about 90% of the country and tried to set up religion-based government. The civil war lasted until 2001. After 9/11 attack in NY, the USA and coalition partners attacked to Taliban forces. After USA attack, Northen Coalition provided superiority against Taliban forces. The Bonn agreement was signed in 2001 to provide stability and bring democracy in Afghanistan. According to UN resolution 1386 (UN, 2001), the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) has been established to support the Afghan government for providing peace and stability inside the country. The main body of ISAF is NATO-led forces.

Taliban is the largest opposite armed group in Afghanistan and tries to control southern and eastern part of the country. Taliban and other terrorist groups have attacked to Afghan government and coalition forces.

After this general historical background, it is important to give some other basic facts about country to understand and make better comments on conflicts.

Afghanistan is one of the southwestern Asia countries. Its size is about 647,500 m². She has 6 neighbouring countries; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan are at north, China is at north-east, Pakistan is at east and south, and Iran is at the west. Its border is about 5,529 kms (see Figure 1) and has no sea cost. See Figure 1.

First of all, it is possible to see different kinds of geographic structures in Afghanistan, great plains at the north, mountainous at the central region, and plato/desert area at the south. The mountainous area covers about 75% of the country. Hindikush Mountains is the second highest (highest point 7,485 m.) mountain series of the world. It is very difficult to pass between north and south without using mountain passages (CIA, 2012).

Because of its geographical structure and climate conditions, it is very difficult to perform security operation except spring and summer seasons.

Its population is about 30 millions. The Afghanistan has 34 provinces (see Figure 1).

The birth rate in Afghanistan is to high (about 5%). About 45% of population is under the age of 14, the age of 15-64 is about 52%. The 65 and over is about 2%. The life expectancy is to low (average 42) because of poor and unhealthy living conditions. The medical facilities are in poor condition and medical staff are not well enough as quality and quantity. About 20% of population lives in cities, 20% has nomadic life, and others are living in villages (ANDP, 2006).

The biggest ethnic groups are Pasthuns (38%), Tajhik (25%), Hazaras (19%), Turkmensand Uzbeks (10%), and other small groups (8%) (ANDP, 2006). The Afghan nation notion is too weak. Everyone tries to keep its ethnic belonging. The biggest group is Peshtuns, about 10 millions of them are living in Afghanistan, 14 millions of them are living in Pakistan. There have been many problems among ethnics groups throughout history. The Figure 2 shows the ethnic groups and living area in Afghanistan. See Figure 2.

There are about 31 different languages and dialects in Afghanistan. The main languages are Dari, Pasthu, and Turkish (ANDP, 2006).

About 80% of the population lives in rural area and about 70% work in agricultural sector. The main issue is poppy cultivation (see Figure 3). The production ratio is about 87% of the world (CIA, 2012). See Figure 3.

Infrastructure system is too poor. It is very difficult to reach clean water and electricity.
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