

## FEAR AND INSECURITY: WOMEN AMID 'THE WAR ON TERROR' IN AFGHANISTAN

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### **Abstract**

War is one of the most dangerous exercises of influence executed by men to kill each other and still men are addressed as “Gentle Men” in intellectual and political debates at national and international level. Besides casualties of life and destruction of the survival, war produces fear and insecurity for those who survive in wars and woman is the most affected victim of contemporary wars around the world. In the contemporary context the scholarly discourse about the empowerment and liberation of woman is at the center of socio- political studies. However in recent studies the sufferings of Afghan women to some extent have been ignored; discussions, debates and research has been done on the human rights and human security; the gender dimension has been overlooked and this provides a patriarchal set of understanding the issues of women’s security. The representation of people as a group masks the differences in that group<sup>1</sup>, and women is ignored. Since the year of 2001, ‘War on Terrorism in Afghanistan has produced massive violence against women that has sowed the seeds of fear and insecurity in the hearts and minds of Afghanistan women. In this framework this paper will through light on the pervasiveness of violence against women that had caused fear and insecurity and forced her to live a meaningless life in distress with human rights abuses, trauma and psychological illness. However the main focus of this paper will remain on the war on terrorism (WOT) which caused fear and insecurity in Afghanistan and the victim is woman. War sufferings and violence against women are global issues and therefore this topic is of great importance in contemporary context.

**Keywords:** women, Afghanistan, war on terror, health, education, consequences of war.

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War is one of the most dangerous exercises of influence executed by men to kill each other and woman is one of the most effected victims of fear and insecurity produced by wars. Afghanistan has passed through spiral of death and destruction for more than thirty years and there is no end in sight of abuses, militarization and torture that has been camouflaged as acts of 'liberation of women' and it is the women who have been caught in this terrible bleak situation. It was in 1980s when USSR intervened and decayed the life of Afghans, people were killed by landmines, bombs and chemical weapons and it were the women who sustained the most disturbing losses. After the withdrawal of USSR, various factions of insurgents manifest themselves and the civil war period started (1992-96), misogynist armed groups used physical assault against women as their weapon to dishonor the communities and to weaken their opponents. Atrocities were to such an extent that when Taliban emerged in 1996 they were welcomed by the people, but soon their restrictions on women began to be protested by the minds of the people, especially in the urban areas. Taliban imposed restrictions on the liberty of women; she was not allowed to go outside without any male member (mehram), there were restrictions imposed on her education, and dress code. Afghan women's hope was once again given a setback and their regard for USA as their savior shattered when on 7<sup>th</sup> of Oct., 2001 USA started indiscriminate air strikes against Afghanistan as retaliation to Sep. 11 attacks. It was the common people who became victims to these error bombardments. There was impersonal and detached killing of the civilians by air strikes without any effect on the killers. The life of the people shattered, women lost her children and bread earners; everywhere dozens of dead bodies were seen, mutilated and burned. Now women look towards the sky fearing when the drones will be seen either to drop humanitarian aid or to drop the bomb.

Women had been suffering from multiple oppressions and are caught between these forces i.e., Warlords, Taliban, Afghan Security Forces and International Assistance Security Forces that abused her physically, socially, psychologically and economically. Reduced food security, natural disasters, infectious diseases, malnutrition, US bombardments and the killing of civilians in its 'the war on terror' operation are of major concern; democracy, western ideals and western structures are of no worth for a half starved city of war widows and sobbing orphans, but what is their need is the security, to survive and to feed their children. Any encouragement for women to be involved in political life of a country without any protection is a mockery of

development in a strife-torn and insecure nation and this will lead to frustration and insecurity among women and children.

The demonization of Afghanistan particularly of Taliban as socially and internationally unacceptable and the claim of US to liberate women from the veil of ignorance towards modernity and liberation is easy to mobilize the support of the international community. It was the US that evokes to the barbaric mental setup of Taliban but dedicated itself to the same brutality and oppression and has glossed its atrocities with the barbaric mentality of Taliban. International Community's rhetoric promises that the fall of Taliban would bring in a new era of empowerment; women and girls would be provided accessible healthcare, returned to schools, workplaces and freed from aggressive restrictions on their lives and bring law and order. This development motto of International Community is without any security of the people. US had justified its atrocities against the common people as the acts for the liberation and development of the Afghan women and these despicable atrocities are also covered by the support for humanitarian aids. US promise of development, upliftment, security and liberation of women dangled when women from civil society groups were excluded from the Bonn Conference (2001). Its claim of working towards the freedom of Afghan women was discredited when it failed to give them political space and legal voice. The rising civilian casualties, increased use of 'night raids' by the ISAF, and abuses by insurgents and government backed militias widened the impact of the war on ordinary Afghans<sup>2</sup> particularly on women. The US military intervention is not the only solution to protect the women this is to harass her and a way to protect its (US) own national security interests.

Women in Afghanistan are suffering double oppression both at the hands of the conservative tribal people and at the hands of the foreign aggressors. Social atrocities on women are increasing, 87% face physical, psychological and sexual violence in their life time.<sup>3</sup> There is no process of holding the perpetrators of crimes against humanity accountable for their deeds. Thousands of women have been raped by the NATO forces; almost 346 Afghan children were killed in 2009 alone and 131 were killed as a result of air strikes and 22 in night raids by ISAF and ANSF and are at greater risk of exploitation, violence, frustration and abuse<sup>4</sup>. Afghan government in a report (2010) announced its estimate that at least 66% of women suffer from psychological problems.

Woman on whose behalf this war on terror was waged has not been liberated and nothing has been done to liberate her. She has not got the benefits of development and all the initiatives to help her have become doom for her. Even in the presence of US, it has become horrible for women to step out of their homes because of insecurity. The persecution that should have been unabated long ago had persisted even in the presence of their savior forces. Women have been suffering from the insecurities brought by war than from the sartorial issues of US, it is not the veil that makes an Afghan woman suffer but it is the mutilated bodies of her children that make her insecure and frustrated. International Community's promise to bring law and order to Afghanistan has failed in practice because of the atrocities and war crimes that the people are facing day by day, and what is followed by these war crimes is the contrived apology that is unacceptable to the poor and helpless Afghans. Military intervention is only a solution to the imperialistic national security of USA; and a cause of violence, frustration and victimization of the people of Afghanistan, and this does not give way to the liberation or empowerment that the women and children would have dreamed.

### **Consequences of War**

Afghanistan has a strategic position for which it has become the focus of attention and attraction by the Great powers to influence this poverty struck terrain and culturally sensitive nation. Afghanistan is an ethnically diverse country with four main populaces e.g. Pashtus, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras. Before the Soviet intervention, Afghanistan was a politically stable nation that recognized the rights of women; it was religiously tolerant and had a mixed cultural heritage. From 1930s to 1970s Kabul was called the 'Paris of Central Asia', 1960s was a period of modernization and democratic reforms, it was a period when there was no code of dress, no restrictions on education, women were free to work; it was a tourist centre, a place of adventure with its astonishing beauty.

In the late 1970s Soviet Union intervened and tried to impose its own culture on the people of Afghanistan. It banned the burqa of women and beard of men, men were not allowed to offer prayers at the mosque, and religion was rejected. This was followed by the uprisings in the tribal areas that hold culture and religion at extreme heights. There has always remained a clash of culture between Afghanistan and its foreign interventionist country. US which is regarded as culturally ignorant, and when this ignorant intervenes in a culturally sensitive country that adores honor, pride and ethics, there are hiccups and misunderstandings, and even major incidents of

fighting. An Afghan family is sacrosanct and a matter of great privacy.<sup>5</sup> It is this cultural sense of privacy that probably was interpreted by the Taliban into an insistence that women be covered from head to foot when in public.<sup>6</sup> During 33yrs of war every aspect of development was affected and it was the women who had been the subjects of the changing policies whether in favor of them or against them. Women's status and identity had been affected at different stages by the conservative and tribal people, and also by the foreign interventionist.

### **Tarnished Soviets**

Soviet changed its strategy from influence to intervention, and tried to spread communism in the life, culture and economy of the people; and there attempt to impose their will and culture on the people in turn opened the doors for radical and extremist groups who declared war on the communist regime. Women began to resist this occupation, took part in anti-Soviet demonstrations and were put behind the bars as political prisoners; got involved in various social works by providing support to those who were fighting against the Soviets. Red Army committed massive crimes, crimes against humanity, there were human rights violations, physical abuses, torture, use of chemical weapons, destruction of crops, agricultural fields, irrigation; landmines were used and that became the harmful remnants of war. This disturbance that was going on made the women both the direct and the indirect victim. She was raped in front of her relatives, raped even when pregnant, her family members butchered in front of her, her children burned inside locked rooms, her home turned into pyre; it was a period of fear where women was helpless at the hands of the brutal Soviet forces. In order to get the information of the anti-Soviet forces people were tortured, kept like piles and shot, were forced to flee their homelands, they lost everything.

### **Disguised Patriots in the Depths of Darkness**

After the fall of the Soviets, fighting among various factions of mujahedeen started and massacres took place especially in Kabul. It were the women and children that became the major victims in that insecure atmosphere, millions of people were killed in late 1990s and again it was the sexual assault that was used to disgrace the opponent community. These mujahedeen who were regarded as the highest form of patriots became warlords and started looting, raping harassing and killing people especially at night. Women of opposite tribes were abducted in the day light in a way to school or somewhere else, ravished, forcibly married; people were tortured and sexually abused and forced to leave their homes especially those belonging to the opposite

tribes. There were no security measures for women who feel unsafe both inside their homes and outside due to the civil war. In the urban areas women used to go out of their homes because there was no organized and systematic structure to enforce the restrictions, but that was at their own risk. These mujahideens became the misogynist warlords who blame women for the diseases around and bad character in the society.

### **Behind the Painted Glasses**

Taliban were the refugees in Pakistan who fled the country during the Soviet war and studied in the madrassas. After the Soviet withdrawal they moved into Afghanistan to fill the power vacuum. They promised to end the instability, corruption, warlords, and to some extent they did it and were welcomed by the deeply discouraged people. Due to their rigid interpretation of religion they imposed a code on dress, behavior, education and work; had a regular police to punish those who deviate from that code. This regime creates fear especially in the urban centers where women were free to wear anything even the western clothes. The restrictions imposed by Taliban were justified by them as a move for the safety and security of women but in reality it had impaired the life of women because all possibilities to receive education, healthcare and jobs were limited for them and they were forced to be shrouded outside their homes. Women's restricted role was termed as the religious duty and religious identity. Women were killed for adultery, publicly beaten for not obeying the law of Taliban, doctors and teachers were harassed, but women started informal clandestine home-based education in that forbidden environment. From 1990-2002 the under-5 mortality rate hardly changed and today Afghanistan is where most developing countries were 40yrs ago.<sup>7</sup>

### **US Intervention: Losing Sanity?**

USA was looked upon by these people as their savior especially by the women of Afghanistan. In 2001 Bonn Conference was held and Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) were established to report on the past war crimes. Women got back into the public life and all latent groups of them became manifest, displaced people came back with a hope to resettle, services were provided to women, efforts were made to enhance women's rights in legal and judicial matters and to make her access to health care services and education. "Back to school campaign" (2003) of US proved to be a success as it increased the enrollment of girls in schools. Since the US intervention many have access to health care, schooling and employment, millions of girls had been enrolled but there

are still millions of girls without any education; even after US intervention Afghanistan is officially among the poorest countries in the world.

US promises to liberate women and bring democratic order failed because there is no democratic order and no security even after a decade of war. Any attempt that has been made to empower her has become a doom for her. She is now free to go outside without burqa but what will US do if she will be attacked with acid. The inclusion of women in Afghan forces by US had exposed them to sexual violence and trauma, they have to give sexual favors to their colleagues and officers. The tribal and domestic oppression is same as it was before 2001 but the one thing that has been added to her deplorable condition is the oppression by the US troops who were regarded as their rescuers. In US airstrikes dozens of houses and dozens of people are being killed, most of the casualties are of women and children. In 2007 booklet 70% of population survive on less than US \$ 2 per day, maternal mortality is 60 times higher than in industrial countries, 77% have no access to safe drinking water, 94% have no access to electricity; adult literacy is 36%-one of the lowest in the world.<sup>8</sup>

During three decades of war women have been victimized and are regarded as subjects from whose shoulders their community is shot. There is a gendered violence and discrimination during war where woman is ignored after being used and subjected to the changing policies, and for their own interventionist goals leaves her aside in an insecure atmosphere. Guarantee for peace, stability and security were undermined by USSR, insurgents and USA and it were not the only radical activists like Taliban who deny active roles to women but it is also the US backed government who are against the empowerment of women. Both inert and overt security for her had deteriorated. Women need physical, social and economic security and status.

### **Impact of War on Women**

War has serious consequences on the life and its survival. It had destroyed the life of women and had brought violence, loss of relatives, loss of communities and had made them vulnerable socially, physically and individually. During 33yrs of war Afghans lost everything that was dear to them and were forced to displace because of the fear of the persecution and security violations. They had nothing to lose, nothing belonged to them, the only thing they inherent is the fear for one's own life, fear of separation, fear of war that had exposed people to violence, poverty, injuries, destruction and displacement. In 2011 Global Survey, "world's most dangerous country in which to be born a woman is Afghanistan". Women are suffering at the hands of

politicians, security forces, orthodox fanatics, patriarchal structures and insurgents; there is insecurity in their homes and injustice outside. Problems faced by Afghan women are child marriages, illiteracy, lack of education, isolation, few economic opportunities, deprivation and misbehavior and the cause behind this is tribal attitude and war. Access to outside is limited due to bombardment, detonation of anti-personal landmines, attacks against schools and hospitals, and little attention is being given amid this paradigm where women and children are direct and indirect victims of war due to exploitation by Insurgents, Afghan Security Personnel and International Security Assistance Forces. Afghanistan had instituted a number of constitutional and legal reforms in order to protect and empower Afghan woman, but the condition of over 80% of Afghan women remain relatively similar to their state ten years ago under the Taliban.<sup>9</sup>

During Soviet era, entire villages of Afghanistan were bombed and every basic facility was destroyed. People were killed and forced to leave their country. Roughly 2 million Afghans have crossed the border and registered with the Pakistan authority as refugees since the beginning of the civil war in 1978.<sup>10</sup> Some 65% in the camps are women, who usually came with their children and elderly relatives.<sup>11</sup> In these camps conditions are terrible for women they are exposed to cold weather, there is no proper rehabilitation, no sanitation and no clean water facility; cold, malnutrition and diseases have killed several children at the camp. After June 2013, these refugees will be forced to repatriate to Afghanistan and those who don't wish to go back will be treated as illegal immigrants with no rights and no basic services. Majority of these refugees are widows who are vulnerable to depression, poverty, physical violence and gender based violence. Many Muslim refugee women feel that main stream service providers misunderstood them, do not understand their beliefs and neglect to see the persons behind the veil.<sup>12</sup> Refugee woman faced trauma, guilt, poverty, fear of life and the past memories where many family members were tortured and killed. In this situation what will the widow refugee do who had no male member in her family? In these situations refugee women face various constraints such as economic instability which causes starvation, diseases and social problems.

Rape as a weapon to disregard the opposition has no regards for the victim who is given invisible injuries and is humiliated and marginalized in the present and for the future. Woman had been the victim of this weapon since the rule of the Soviets. Women till now had not been empowered despite various media public shows. But infact this is of less importance than violence and exclusion they experience in Afghanistan's socio- political and economic



reconstruction. Sexual violence against woman is gender based that had dire consequences on her life even after the war is over, it shattered her social, physical and mental life, let her traumatized and frustrated. These abuses are not just confined to the insurgents but the US troops who had come here to save her from domestic atrocities are harassing and abusing her and as if the death verdict is issued by orders from the International Community.

The current US “way of war” is less precise than we are given to believe as shown by the mounting evidence of thousands of people having been killed in Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup> Around 1.6 million are left orphaned in Afghanistan.<sup>14</sup> Bombing campaign of US caused several civilian casualties but the media reporting is biased, restricted and not accurate; details of the war are slow to emerge and this increases the agony of the people. From “Crusade against Terrorists” to “Operation Infinite Justice” to “Operation Enduring Freedom” of the Bush administration, it had created fear among the people of Afghanistan. Human Rights Watch 2004 concluded that US administered system of arrest and detention in Afghanistan exists outside the rule of law. US created 20 detention centers in their major military bases.<sup>15</sup> The International Committee of Red Cross is not allowed to enter into 19 of these 20 detention facilities. It is now clear that the US troops practiced such acts contrary to the Geneva accord of the prisoners of war, and these were methods approved by the Pentagon and White House.<sup>16</sup> American treatment of their prisoners has been probably worse than their Afghan allies.<sup>17</sup> There is mass killing of prisoners of war, e.g. near the city of Mazar, the American jets in November 2001 bombed to death approximately 500 prisoners. The impact of these killings is indirectly on the women who lost her relatives in these brutal acts of ISAF, suffers an ignorable loss and is veiled in the fear and insecurity by those who are pretending to be her savior.

War on terror had not minimized corruption, there is no access to justice, no emphasis on the rights of women, and dependence on the donor community is increasing day by day though the donor community had reduced its aid. The vast majority of aid went to the Afghan security forces and not development.<sup>18</sup> Constant total military cost of war in Afghanistan in 2011 went to \$321 billion.<sup>19</sup> Wars are ended but landmines are left behind to terrorize and traumatize the people, had eroded the peace of mind and leads to frustration, it had impacted physically, socially, economically and psychologically the life of women. In Afghanistan nearly 60, 0000 landmine related casualties have occurred during the last 15yrs, a third of victim being women and children, approximately half of these victims lost their lives, while the other half remained

seriously disabled with amputated limbs and blindness.<sup>20</sup> In Afghanistan more than 30% of the landmine survivors are children<sup>21</sup> and is one of the heavily impacted countries in the world with contaminated lands.

US celebrated the liberation of the Afghan women and glorified the militarization in a society as the savior of the burqa clad women after its intervention. The important thing for a woman is not to remove her burqa but to see her relatives, her children and her husband alive, to be without any frustration without any abuses that had been deprived to her by the US troops. It is the militarization that is becoming the greatest threat to the security of a nation; it is the cause of insecurity and the consequence of it. It is not the burqa that the woman of Afghanistan mind but it is the insecurity, poverty illiteracy and prenatal deaths that bother her. The liberated environment that the US had promised failed as nothing had been done except showing some images of the women in the western clothes and shouting that women have been liberated. At least 97% of women in Afghanistan are suffering from major depression<sup>22</sup>, 86% have significant symptoms of anxiety and nearly quarter frequently thinks of committing suicide.<sup>23</sup> Violation of rules in the detention centers is increasing and for which no one is held responsible. A woman who has lost her husband, children and property; has seen the mutilated and burned bodies of her children; has been physically abused both by the insurgents and by their rescuers will be frustrated and depressed and to be shrouded or not will have no meaning for her. Woman of Afghanistan has gone through tragic events that are invisible on her body but can be seen in her eyes.

US magazine 'the rolling stone' had released pictures of so called American rogue soldiers posing for photographs with injured or dead innocent Afghan children, and then covering up the murderers by planting ammunitions on their dead bodies to give the impression that they were the combatants. We believe that the brutal actions of these "kill teams" reveal the aggression and racism which is the part and parcel of the entire military occupation.<sup>24</sup> While the photos are new the murder of innocents is not.<sup>25</sup>

### **Bleak Victimized Women: Impact on Health and Education**

Rights of women were violated during insurgents and Taliban rule in 1990s but the attention of the International Community towards these abuses was laid only after the terrorist attack in Sep 2001. Women at all stages of time had been suffering from double oppression at the hands of the conservative and orthodox community on the one hand and the foreign invaders on the other

hand whether in the form of rescuers or in the form of depressors. To evade the abusive and violent human rights situation women displace from their homes and became refugees. Since the late 1970s many decades have passed but the new generations have no idea of the peaceful environment, mental health has degraded, families and communities have been devastated. Women who are witness and victims to the deaths, injuries, suicide, immolation, and rapes are becoming refugees and internally displaced persons that increase their anxiety, depression and traumatic stress.

In a war like situation a girl is not allowed to go outside whether schools or elsewhere and if she goes, she can be beaten, attacked with acid or bombs or be poisoned. Even after 9/11 the extremist groups pose threats to women and girls and halted their progress but the attention of the government is not sufficient. Though after 2001 many girls had been enrolled in the schools but the Afghan government's efforts and the aid from the donor community had declined and efforts to improve the education system had slowed down. The incidents of poisoning water and throwing grenades on schools is the life of those who dare to continue their education. Being in power, Northern Alliances have done nothing to improve the conditions of women. Health access is the basic need and the basic right of the people because it is related to the economic development of a country. Around one in three children under age 5 is moderately and severely under weight (31%), one in two is moderately stunted and almost one in five is moderately or severely wasted (18%).<sup>26</sup> The main causes for this condition of children are the illiteracy and poverty where woman is helpless. More than 60% of births were delivered with the assistance of non-skilled personal<sup>27</sup> 73% people lack access to clean drinking water and 95% don't have access to sufficient sanitation.<sup>28</sup> According to UN Consolidated Appeal 2012 there is one health female worker per 23000 females.

In Afghanistan woman's maternal mortality rate is very high and stands at the second number in the world. Prenatal conditions account for the number one health related cause of death in Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup> In Afghanistan 13% of all deaths are attributed to prenatal conditions.<sup>30</sup> People under the age of 5 are malnourished, there is low immunization, malaria, respiratory infections and measles are the leading causes of child death. Every 30 minutes a woman dies in Afghanistan because of lack of health care environment, early marriages and illiteracy<sup>31</sup>, malnutrition and poor hygienic conditions during pregnancy. National challenges are most serious for the health and education of its woman and children. Due to lack of education there is

under representation of women in public sphere and this leads to denial of fair justice. Parents are not willing to send their girls faraway for education because of insecurity. There is gender discrimination against women since her birth. 70% of school age girls do not attend school.<sup>32</sup>

Despite many efforts by the US government the number of Afghan children that are out of school are put to 4.3 million<sup>33</sup>. There is shortage of teachers because most of the teachers are females and they are afraid of the war conditions and conservative environment to come out of their homes and this hampers the education of girls whose parents do not allow her girl to get education by male teacher. Domestic violence and violence caused by war had serious repercussions on the life of woman; inflicted by abuses and violence, a woman chooses the safer way to get rid of this chaos and made suicide bids; in Afghanistan the number of suicides are higher among women than in men. Based on the Health Ministry and hospital records some 23,000 women and girls are trying to kill themselves each year, “a several fold increase in three decades ago”.<sup>34</sup> Despite some changes by the foreign government women are still jailed for moral crimes, denied basic education, denied health services, and forced into marriages. In a society of political and social upheavals, domestic and psychological problems, low social and economic status, instability and fear of war, the only option for a depressed woman is to end her life.

Refugee women have no access to safe drinking water, proper education and are more vulnerable to diseases like malaria, measles, TB, AIDS and other **gynecological problems**. Lack of protection and poor rehabilitation of these women often resulted in sexual abuses; a widow refugee is turned into a prostitute because of acute poverty, because she had no other way to feed her children and old parents. Accordingly, 34% of refugees are food insecure, 85722 are in global acute malnutrition and 19330 in severe acute malnutrition.<sup>35</sup>

Women are regarded as the guardians of culture and honor. A woman who is raped is seen as a shame and dishonor to her family, this result in hiding the incidents of rapes, or the victim will be forced to marry the rapist. Women during conflict are subjected to violence and frustrations; war is in no way a solution to humanity it does not solve the problems of the people. People in millions have been killed in the war resistance against Soviet occupiers and later on in the civil war (1992-1996) when civilians were caught amid the fundamentalist groups who were enjoying the support of the foreign powers especially of the US. Now the killing of innocent Afghan people by NATO is termed as the frustration of the NATO forces and for this no one is

blamed but there are certain incidents where dozens of soldiers have killed dozens of innocent civilians, as revealed in Panjwani Massacre probe in 2012, this act of dozens of soldiers cannot be the act of the few rogue soldiers but it is the hate for the 'others' who are conservative and backwards. Military forces, whether American or Afghani, are accused of committing atrocities and murders in Afghanistan, but neither the government nor the US is paying serious attention to these atrocities.

### **Setting the Theme: Women amid the War on Terror.**

From the late 1970s till the 21<sup>st</sup> century Afghanistan has been passing through wars and conflicts either because of the internal disturbances or due to the external aggression. Till 21<sup>st</sup> century women had been rendered absent and was excluded in the decades long war; due to the works of feminists, journalists, human rights activists, it had entered into the International Community's consciousness and the condition of women has been highlighted. The setting up of AIHRC by the US to watch the past war crime abuses was not able to limit these war crimes in the future and almost all its attempts to liberate women have become doom for her. Till date the focus of the research has been mostly on the atrocities committed by the conservative people, insurgents and Taliban and by the external forces. But the important issues related to women is ignored as, what is the impact of the killings, rapes, displacement, casualties, destruction etc. on the mind of women which have caused her fear and insecurity.

Landmines that have been used by various factions indiscriminately during post Soviet occupation targeted mainly the men and the children, women by seeing the mutilated and dead bodies of her children and loved ones became the victim of the psychological depression and mental illness. Women and girls who are landmine survivors are socially dejected and neglected and left insecure because of the disablement and mutilation. The cases of detention are common during war, after 2001 people who have been detained have become missing for their family members and there is no hope to see them again, they are tortured contrary to the rule of law. The fear of losing loved ones, the fear of becoming widow, the fear of their relatives being tortured makes her life deplorable and every second she is passing through the fear regarding the health of her relatives, this is the inflicted insecurity and not her liberation. The egregious abuses of human rights in Afghanistan and the howling of children are increasing amid this war of terror.

There are the mass killings of the people in the rural areas either by the aerial bombardments or by the rogue/racist soldiers. The majority of casualties during these killings are of women and children. The blowing up of the entire villages and the war crimes by various factions whether insurgents, USSR or USA, the use of chemical guns to kill innocent and ignorant people had a deep impact on the life of the people and they had become victims of post traumatic stress disorder(PTSD). This 'war of fear' had no ethics and in this war every country took stake in the brutal game of security and insecurity.

Women are still kept behind the bars for doing moral crimes as going against the wishes of her family members. She is not allowed to take the decisions of her life and it is the patriarchy that prevails. Afghanistan which is a tribal and patriarchal society had been oppressing and suppressing the women from the times unmemorable especially in the rural areas. The patriarchs in the name of honor and pride, ethics and morality are degrading and abusing women of their own tribe and the women of the others tribe in order to revenge the opponents. It were the USSR, the Insurgents and the Taliban who have done this, and now it is the US to liberate and empower Afghanistan women is discredited when it does not reach that target and focused on fighting the insurgency and Al-Qaeda rather than providing the humanitarian services. And its atrocities are covered by the benevolence support for human rights, liberation of women and nation building of Afghanistan. International Community's criticism of the Soviet invasion that it was the violation of the international standard was of no use because it itself intervened in this country and is abusing the human rights.

To empower the women of a nation and to liberate her it is important to make her life secure so that she can move freely in a cordial environment where she has no fear and insecurity, where she has access to health care and education, where she is economically and socially stable, and protected from being exploited. The alternative to the fear and insecurity is the peace building and nation building, and not the war, aerial bombardment, killings, violence and night raids that make women insecure. Laura Bush's statement for the liberation of women is limited to putting off the burqa and using nail polish. There is no concept of the sisterhood where the liberation and empowerment will be the same among all the women of the countries because different conditions apply to different women and there is a difference between the liberation of an Afghan woman and the liberation of a western woman; if the liberation for Laura Bush is not to wear burqa, this liberation is of no use to an Afghan woman who has been caught in the turmoil

of war. The West does not want to hear the plight and howl of the Afghan women inside their burqa. The 'Operation Enduring Freedom' should have been the 'Operation Enduring Fear' because it had created fear that can be seen in the eyes of every woman where this operation operates.

### Conclusion

The findings of this paper are concluded as war has serious impact on life particularly the life of women and it is suggested that it should be addressed on priority. In case of Afghanistan there are strong scholarly evidences that Afghan Women had been suffering from multiple oppressions and are caught between these forces i.e., Warlords, Taliban, Afghan Security Forces and International Assistance Security Forces that abused her physically, socially, psychologically and economically. Any encouragement for women to be involved in political life of a country without any protection is a mockery of development in a strife-torn and insecure society. US regards the Afghan men as barbaric, conservative, patriarch and orthodox and that this barbarity can be ended only through its intervention, but it is the patriarchy of the US which holds that women can be liberated only through the foreign and modern men. It seems that women always pay a special price in war, and in this the 'war of/on terror' is no exception.<sup>36</sup>

International Community can help her to come out of the chaos through developmental works, building new structures/ institutions for empowering women and not by relying on the military intervention to harass her. Such conditions should be made by which women will be empowered, will be free mentally and psychologically, without any stress, without any chaos, in which she will be free to choose her own destiny and do not depend on the alms of the neighborers. If the women of Afghanistan are not kept out of this quagmire the whole Afghanistan that had seared will be left with confusions and there will be no solution.

## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Hudson, Heidi. (2005), "Doing Security as Though Humans Matter", *Journal of Security Dialogue*, Vol. 36( 2), p. 157
- <sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch, World Report 2012, p. 288.  
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