



Parahyangan Catholic University
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
Department of International Relations

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**The Role of United States in Managing the Protracted Social
Conflict between Taliban and Afghani under Trump's
Administration**

Undergraduate Thesis

By:
Cheryl Michelin Pangestu
2017330037

Bandung
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Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik
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ABSTRACT

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Title : The Role of United States in Managing the Protracted Social
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Administration

This research seeks to find the role of United States intervention in the Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) between Afghans and Taliban. As the involvement of United States in Afghanistan has dated back in the late 1990s and thus has spanned for 20 years, the author will only focus on the Trump's administration in 2016–2020. The research question of this research is '*How is the role of United States in managing the Protracted Social Conflict between Taliban and Afghans under Trump's administration?*'. Using Protracted Social Conflict by Edward Azar to define the conflict, the analysis will see the conflict in Afghanistan by focusing on ethnic relations and grievances and the subsequent complex entanglement that has caused the conflict in Afghanistan has sustained for almost a century. The role of the United States in this nature of conflict then will be analyzed using Ho Won-Jeong's theory of Intractable Conflict Management. Ho Won-Jeong sees intervenor needs to adapt their intervention strategy based on the current stage of conflict that existed on ground. Following the latest update of Trump withdrawing United States' troops from Afghanistan soil, this research will try to analyze the type of Trump's intervention strategy and the implication towards conflict management in Afghanistan. This research uses qualitative method and utilizes data obtained from literature, reports, official documents, and digital sources. This research shows that United States intervention strategy under Trump has experienced multiple shift of strategy from time-to-time and it was based on the strategic condition of the conflict in Afghanistan. From increasing the military capacity in 2017, to opening up a line of communication by series of high-level negotiations in 2019, and finally signing the ceasefire agreement in 2020, United States' intervention in Afghanistan under President Trump has moved the conflict transformation level towards a more positive light.

Keywords: United States, Third Party Intervention, Protracted Social Conflict, Afghanistan, Taliban

ABSTRAK

Nama : Cheryl Michelin Pangestu

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Judul : *Peran Amerika Serikat dalam dalam Protracted Social Conflict antara Taliban dan Afghani di bawah Kepresidenan Donald Trump 2016-2020*

Penelitian ini berusaha menjelaskan peran intervensi Amerika Serikat dalam Konflik Sosial Berkepanjangan (PSC) antara Afghanistan dan Taliban. Karena keterlibatan Amerika Serikat di Afghanistan telah dimulai dari akhir 1990-an dan telah berlangsung selama 20 tahun, penulis hanya akan berfokus pada pemerintahan Trump pada 2016–2020. Pertanyaan penelitian dari penelitian ini adalah ‘Bagaimana peran Amerika Serikat dalam mengelola Konflik Sosial yang Berkepanjangan antara Taliban dan Afghanistan di bawah pemerintahan Trump?’. Menggunakan teori Konflik Sosial Berkepanjangan oleh Edward Azar untuk mendefinisikan konflik, analisis tesis ini akan melihat konflik di Afghanistan dengan berfokus pada hubungan etnis dan kompleksitas konflik yang terjadi sebagai yang berakibat pada konflik di Afghanistan berlangsung selama hampir satu abad. Peran Amerika Serikat dalam sifat konflik ini kemudian akan dianalisis menggunakan teori Ho Won-Jeong tentang Intervensi Pihak Ketiga dan Manajemen Konflik Sosial Berkepanjangan. Ho Won-Jeong melihat bahwa intervensi pihak ketiga perlu menyesuaikan strategi intervensi berdasarkan tahap konflik saat ini. Terkait dengan perkembangan konflik terbaru dengan penarikan pasukan Amerika Serikat dari Afghanistan, penelitian ini akan mencoba menganalisis jenis strategi intervensi Trump dan implikasinya terhadap manajemen konflik di Afghanistan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan memanfaatkan data yang diperoleh dari literatur, laporan, dokumen resmi, dan sumber digital. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa strategi intervensi Amerika Serikat di bawah Trump telah mengalami banyak pergeseran strategi dari waktu ke waktu dan didasarkan pada kondisi strategis konflik di Afghanistan. Dari peningkatan kapasitas militer pada tahun 2017, hingga pembukaan jalur komunikasi melalui serangkaian negosiasi tingkat tinggi pada tahun 2019, dan akhirnya penandatanganan perjanjian gencatan senjata pada tahun 2020, intervensi Amerika Serikat di Afghanistan di bawah Presiden Trump telah membawa tingkat transformasi konflik di Afghanistan ke arah yang lebih baik.

Kata kunci: Amerika Serikat, Intervensi Pihak Ketiga, Konflik Sosial Berkepanjangan, Afghanistan, Taliban

PREFACE

Only by His grace and guidance, the author is able to finish this research, titled “The Role of United States in Managing the Protracted Social Conflict between Taliban and Afghani under Trump’s Administration” as one of the prerequisite to finish her study in Department of International Relations, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Parahyangan Catholic University. This research seeks to find the implications of United States intervention strategy in managing the Protracted Social Conflict between Afghans and Taliban under President Trump as the third-party.

This thesis is still far from perfection and can always be improved. Thus, the author is open for feedbacks and constructive criticism from all readers. The author would be glad if this thesis is used for reference or further research accordingly.

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Bandung, July 2021

Cheryl Michelin Pangestu

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I.1 Background

United States involvement in Afghanistan has lasted for 19 years, one of the longest wars the United States has ever involved in. After the attack in September 2001, the Bush administration decided to intervene in Afghanistan with the objective of overthrowing the Taliban, a Jihadist group that provided exile and refused to extradite Osama Bin Laden.¹ With that, Bush started his bombing campaign with Operation Enduring Freedom, targeted to Al-Qaeda and Taliban via air strikes and assisted by thousands of U.S special forces and the Northern Alliance.² During the 19 years, the United States perceive Taliban as an extremist insurgent group that needed to be combatted.³ This perception then shapes its strategy in achieving its political objective in the country.

United States has suffered an approximate of 2.400 military fatalities and \$137 billion for reconstruction in Afghanistan as of 2020.⁴ At the same time, the Taliban still manages to stand tall and continues its struggle to establish an

¹ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, 2017, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and US Policy," CRS Report by Congressional Research Service, p.6

² Ibid.

³ Katzman and Thomas, "Afghanistan,"

⁴ Ibid.

Islamic Emirate based on Sharia – its withstanding political objective in Afghanistan.

Although US once claimed to have managed unravel the regime as of December 9 in 2001, we have witnessed the Taliban resurrected and now is even at its strongest from a military standpoint than it was in 2001, controlling – or at least influencing – more than 50% of the country.⁵ The Taliban is now even included in the intra-Afghan talks to discuss with the Afghanistan government the idea of reconciliation and political inclusion as of September 2020.⁶ Although this might seem as a positive light to peace, the United States got Taliban to the negotiating table by signing off a peace deal in February 2020 with no proven fulfilled commitment to reduction of violence, as of even at the eve of intra-Afghan talks in September 12, 2020, the Taliban still carried out attacks in 18 out of the 34 country provinces.⁷

With the longstanding involvement of the United States, it is evident that Trump inherited a complex and entangled conflict in Afghanistan. Previous presidencies from Bush to Barack Obama has seen traditional counterterrorism methods in handling the Taliban. Bush launched the War on Terror and the subsequent military operations that only succeeded in at least pushing Taliban forces to Pakistan. Obama followed his similar footsteps by deploying an

⁵ Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan,” p. 1.

⁶ Max Boot, 2020, “Peace Talks Have Begun in Afghanistan, Major Pitfalls Await,” *In Brief*, Council on Foreign Relations, September 15, available in <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/peace-talks-afghanistan-taliban-pitfalls-await>

⁷ Mujib Mashal. 2020, “Afghanistan Peace Talks Open in Qatar, Seeking End to Decades of War,” *The New York Times*, September 12, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/12/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban.html>

additional 21.000 troops in 2009, and later an additional of 30.000 by the end of the same year before he finally decided to withdraw the troops in 2012 for its failure in defeating the Taliban.⁸ These failures were attributed to the lack of understanding and oversimplified context of the Taliban and their capacity, as well as their political standing in Afghanistan society. More often than not, the use of forces conducted by United States' troops were perceived as unnecessarily excessive, unjustified and invasive.⁹ Between 2007 to 2010, the military operation caused at least 2.500 civilian deaths and it was also considered as evil forces that only strengthened the illegitimate government.¹⁰

It has been analyzed that the failure to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan was caused by myriad layers of structural and fundamental flaws, including political motives of each president, lack of expertise and other organizational issues inside the United States institutions. These systematic failures have caused United States over US\$550 billion, 18.000 wounded service members, and nearly 2.200 death of American soldiers.¹¹ The total Afghan civilians killed from 2007 has added up to 16.000.

Realizing the large cost of the United States involvement in Afghanistan, the latest Trump administration has brought a new arrangement with the Taliban. The peace deal comprises of United States promising troop withdrawal in exchange for Taliban's commitment to stop using Afghanistan as a safe haven

⁸ "Barack Obama and the Afghan War,"

⁹ Matt Waldman

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 842.

to plan and execute terrorist attacks that threaten United States and its allies.¹² Trump frames this as his victory, but later parts of the paper will look further into this. This thesis would like to argue from the different perspective of Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) by Edward Azar to define the (in)security situation in Afghanistan is best defined as PSC instead of mere problem of counterinsurgency. Furthermore, Trump's presidency has also brought new development of the conflict that sees a policy shift from relying on the traditional military intervention to the negotiation with Taliban. This shift during his 4 years of presidency will be analyzed using the theory of Intervention in Intractable Conflict Management by Ho-Won Jeong

I.2 Problem Identification

Limited intervention has become the face of Trump's foreign policy in Middle East and in many other sectors with the slogan of "Make America Great Again" or "America First" that aimed to prioritize rebuilding domestic economy and military projection instead of meddling into other states' affairs. He explicitly expressed skepticism towards international alliance with NATO, pulled away from the international agreement with Iran and that includes the plan to withdraw the troops from Afghanistan and finally end the two decades of involvement in the country.¹³ With no certainty and clear signs of solvency, there has been an attempt to shift the existing approach from time-based

¹² Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan," p. 1.

¹³ "Americanism, not globalism"

approach to limited intervention with strategic withdrawal of troops.¹⁴ In relating to the troop withdrawal, the ongoing peace deals are accompanied by bad faith practice shown by the Taliban's continued attacks in Afghanistan which might indicate that this is just a fluctuating process of the conflict instead of necessarily being the end.

After Trump agreed to troops withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban has managed to establish a new power stronghold along Afghanistan major highways and thus making the Afghan government gradually loses more of its power of Afghanistan key locations.¹⁵ This raises a question on the implication of Trump's decision to limit and disengage U.S military in Afghanistan. If the Taliban still manages to acquire power and is not yet defeated, there still exists some degree of threat towards the United States and its allies. The policy shift from military presence to disengagement and finally to negotiation between U.S government and Taliban bears important question to address the role of intervention in managing a protracted social conflict.

The current dominating discourse on traditional perspective of strategic conflict may to some extent has ignored the ethnicity element of the conflict. Afghanistan is one of the states with strong ethnic diversity along with complex historical context that contribute to the divisiveness between Taliban

¹⁴ 2017, "Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia," *White House*, August 21, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-south-asia>

¹⁵ David Zucchino and Fahim Abed, 2020, "On Afghan Highways, Even the Police Fear the Taliban's Toll Collectors," *The New York Times*, November 12, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/01/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-bribery.html?searchResultPosition=3>

and the Afghan government. In a much broader context, the Taliban is not only a fundamentalist Islamic movement, but it is also an ethnic movement where the vast majority of its members are Pashtuns.¹⁶ Pashtun people are not homogenous but rather notoriously internally fragmented with hundreds of smaller clans and tribes.¹⁷ Some of them appeal with fundamentalist Islamic agenda which we know as the Taliban, some of them became Afghan Pashtun nationalist.

Mobilization of identity then becomes one of the influencing factors to the protractedness of the conflict which has not been analyzed using the traditional lenses of strategic conflict used by United States in intervening in Afghanistan. Therefore, before diving deeper into analysis this thesis would like to offer an alternative perspective to give a more contextual understanding towards the ongoing conflict through Edward Azar's theory of Protracted Social Conflict (PSC).

I.3 Problem Limitation

Despite the existing alliances between the Afghan government and many other external actors such as NATO and neighboring countries in the region, this thesis will specifically analyze the United States involvement as one of the most prominent actors in the conflict and how the approach the United States takes under President Trump's presidency from the year 2016 to 2020.

¹⁶ Amy Chua, 2018, *Political Tribes: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations*, Penguin Press: New York.

¹⁷ Ibid.

I.4 Research Question

Based on the background and problem identification laid down previously, this thesis will try to answer the question of **“How is the role of United States in managing the Protracted Social Conflict between Taliban and Afghans under Trump’s administration?”**

I.5 Research Objectives and Use

1. Research Objectives

This thesis aims to explore on the role of foreign military intervention to influence the outcome of the conflict, especially to explain United States role as one of the most prominent actors involved in the Taliban-Afghanistan conflict. Specifically, this thesis aims to discover the factors and dynamics that influence the role of United States in the conflict.

2. Use of Research

This thesis will be useful in informing the readers on the alternative point of view of Protracted Social Conflict to understand the conflict in Afghanistan. It also serves to inform the readers on the factors that influence a policy shift and negotiation outcome that United States has produced in corresponding to its presence in Afghanistan.

I.6 Literature Review

United States and its role in the Afghanistan conflict since the invasion in 2001 has received adequate spotlight in scholarly discussions. This thesis will highlight few of the literatures with different angles of analysis of the

conflict to provide a comprehensive base for the arguments that will be presented in the later parts of the paper. The three literatures will include Warren Chin's elaborative critique towards Operation Enduring Freedom, which was the start of U.S involvement in Afghanistan that is useful to see the implication of U.S traditional perspective that shapes the conflict's current state of the art. The second literature is from Sahranavard and Kazemi that analyzed on the U.S national interest in its presence in Afghanistan and the dynamic strategy that is applied throughout different presidencies. Furthermore, the third literature will be from Henry R. Nau that discusses on Trump's foreign policy trajectory and doctrine that determines his decisions in regards to U.S involvement in Afghanistan.

Warren Chin published his writing on the implication of Operation Enduring Freedom success in 2003, but the author will prove the relevance of his arguments in the present context. For starters, Chin identified the fight against Taliban is an unconventional warfare, and there had been doubts about the effectivity of conventional military forces in defeating them.¹⁸ The Operation Enduring Freedom that succeeded in ousting the 'terrorist group' was recognized to resurrect the optimism on conventional military strategy capability to fight unconventional wars. However, Chin argued that the victory claims were too narrow and too fast, as Operation Enduring Freedom reached a military victory, not necessarily a comprehensive strategic success.

¹⁸ Warren Chin, 2003, "Operation Enduring Freedom: A Victory for a Conventional Force Fighting an Unconventional War," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 14:1, pp.57-76, DOI: 10.1080/09592310412331300566.

Adopting Sir Michael Howard's thinking, victory can only be achieved if three conditions have been met: the opponent must be incapable of physical and moral resistance, the defeated power must be deprived of all outside support that may reverse the military verdict, and the government must take on the responsibility to impose peace terms among the population and that includes taking into account the interest and honor of the defeated party.¹⁹ In a war-torn and weary Afghanistan, the problem of Taliban was not the only existing concern. In 2001 when OEF was launched as Afghanistan was essentially a failed state that had been locked in a 23-year long civil war. While Taliban was defeated due to questionable strategy and apparent military and political weakness at the time, it was undeniable that Taliban's religious programs and ideas actually appealed to a wide cross section of Afghan society which translated into a reliable source of power and hence giving them a capability of moral resistance. Furthermore, U.S overemphasis on military campaign and presence in Afghanistan was not well-received by the locals, as they felt alienated rather than supported. These grievances then become a potentially strong mobilization tool to reject U.S involvement in the region that might be utilized by the Taliban. Conclusively, Chin argued that Operation Enduring Freedom and United States involvement in Afghanistan could help worsen the political instability instead of reducing them due to being overly reliant on the use of military power. It is then evident, that Chin's arguments, although have passed 17 years of conflict development can still serve some

¹⁹ Ibid, p.58.

relevance on how U.S base approach in the conflict as well as the risks of overemphasis on military power.

The second literature from Sahranavard and Kazeem is useful to tell us the national interest of United States for involving in the Afghanistan and how the changes in strategy throughout different presidencies adapt to fulfil those interests. Quoting from President Bush, it can be identified that United States ultimate goal in Middle East is to replace political suffocation, dogmatism and pervasive corruption in the region with freedom, democracy and welfare, and war against terrorism is only a part of the extensive agenda.²⁰ The world which United States envisions is to create international peaceful order and security in which the sovereignty of nationals to be respected and the most risky terrorist to be alleviated.²¹ But in more general terms, United States has always prioritized improving domestic potential of the country, spreading liberal democracy and achieving world leadership through active presence around the world.²² This interest then explains the incentives of United States to oust the Taliban that provided safe haven for Al-Qaeda within the timeframe of 9/11 attacks. Sahranavard and Kazeem identified that from Bush presidencies to Trump's, there has been a constantly changing strategy but with a strong base of paradigm of hegemonic stability, that as the most powerful country the United States is to assume global leadership with respect to necessity of

²⁰ Behnam Sahranavard and Ali Asghar Kazeem, 2017, "The Constant Changes in US Strategy in Afghanistan: Achievement or Failure," *Journal of Politics and Law*, Vol.20 No.2, ISSN: 1913-9047.

²¹ Ibid, p.43.

²² Ibid, p. 42.

efficient performance on international vital systems and to keep superiority of its power to do this task.²³ This literature then is useful to give a grounded understanding of why United States has strong interest in involving in Afghanistan.

In the third literature, Henry Nau identifies the traditions of United States foreign policy approach throughout the different presidencies. This is useful to understand where Trump stands and understand his decisions in regards to his strategy in Afghanistan. The foreign policy tradition as Nau argues revolves around four approaches; nationalist, realist, liberal internationalist, and conservative internationalist.²⁴ Donald Trump – who rejects multilateral agreements including the JCPOA, the Paris Agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, to minimum focus towards human rights and democracy – falls within the line of nationalist-realist divide where his approach is more nationalist and defensive rather than global and strategic.²⁵ In the endless war with the Taliban, Nau argued that Trump's focus is solely on the counterterrorism instead of nation-building hence Trump is willing to withdraw the troops from Afghanistan in the exchange for Taliban's commitment to stop training terrorist that can attack United States and its allies. Nau also stated that Trump's policy in Middle East in general aims for an offshore balancing strategy. This literature then tells us that Trump's approach

²³ Ibid, p. 52.

²⁴ Henry Nau, 2020, "Trump and American's Foreign Policy Traditions," in *The Trump Doctrine and the Emerging International System* ed. by Stanley A. Renshon and Peter Suedfeld, New York: Routledge.

²⁵ Ibid, p.81.

to the conflict in Afghanistan still revolves around traditionalist methods that – although differs in the means and strategy – still falls into the same perspective of conflict.

The three literatures above have given us the preliminary understanding towards the issue. However, there are two gaps that exist within the existing literatures. First, it shows the United States has always held on to traditional perspective of the conflict without engaging to the ethnic reality of the conflict between Taliban and the Afghanistan government. This particular gap will be filled by using the theory of Protracted Social Conflict by Edward Azar. Second, too much literatures argued on the interest or the involvement of United States and Donald Trump in the conflict based on separate analyses between idiosyncratic characteristic of Trump, international pressure, and U.S counterterrorism interest. Separating these three factors into different account of analysis will only lead to partial understanding of the conflict. This thesis will show that these factors have a complex entanglement between them and there is a certain dynamic that needs to be analyzed using Ho Won Jeong's theory of intractable conflict management.

I.7 Theoretical Framework

1. Protracted Social Conflict by Edward Azar

To understand the conflict between the Taliban and the Afghan government, this thesis will use the theory of Protracted Social Conflict by Edward Azar. Azar characterized Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) from the patterns of hostile interaction that emphasizes on the socio-cultural ethnic relationship within an environment that is deprived of development. This is different than the traditional perspective of conflict that focused on clashes of national interest. Further, Azar identified six key features of PSC, including temporal protractedness, fluctuations in intensity and frequency, conflict spillover from one realm to another, a tendency towards partial equilibrium, absence of explicit termination, and blurred demarcation between internal and external sources of conflict.²⁶ This definition and characters of PSC will be useful in giving alternative definition and point of view towards the conflict between the Taliban and Afghan government, which previously had been viewed as a fight against insurgent movement.

Azar provided four steps of analysis into his model of Protracted Social Conflict, which are communal content, deprivation of human needs, the state or the government, and international linkages. Azar emphasized on the multicommunal composition is one of the preconditions of which a protracted social conflict may arise. The multicommunal content usually

²⁶ Edward Azar and Chun-in Moon, 1986, "Managing Protracted Social Conflicts in the Third World: Facilitation and Development Diplomacy," *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, Vol.15 No.3.

Ibid.

stems from the colonial divide-and-rule policies which there exists a historical pattern of rivalry and uneven access to state power.²⁷ In this context, usually a single group or a coalition of few communal groups dominate the governance of the state and unresponsive towards the needs of the other groups in society that will eventually lead to fragmentation.

The second important factor is the deprivation of human needs as the underlying source of conflict.²⁸ Azar argued that the failure to address the grievances of which some communities experience due to unmet needs will be expressed collectively and cultivates a PSC. As all human beings have certain needs to strive, the common basic needs that include the physical security of human beings are not enough. Azar further classifies them into two categories: acceptance needs and access needs that has close interrelatedness towards each other. The former refers to the needs of recognition and a social acceptance of their communal identity, which is crucial so they can be granted access. The access needs include the ability to effectively participate in politics, economy, and decision-making institutions. To put it simply, one can't work if one is not recognized by the society and by then one does not have access to fulfil the basic needs. Usually those who do not receive social acceptance or recognition by those in power will automatically lose the access to be included in the policy-

²⁷ Jolle Demmers, 2017, *Theories of Violent Conflict: An Introduction*, New York: Routledge, p.86.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

making, which may result to exclusionist policies that will never satisfactorily meet the needs of certain discriminated groups.

The third step into understanding Azar's model is the role of the government or the state. As the state is the authoritative actor to govern and use force to regulate the society, to provide collective goods and to protect the citizens,²⁹ state is supposed to be the responsible actor to satisfy the human needs regardless of the identity cleavages. However, it is often found that states in a Protracted Social Conflict are incompetent, parochial, fragile and authoritarian.³⁰ The biggest possibility for a PSC can break out is when the political authority is monopolized by a dominant identity group and it uses the state as the instrument to fulfill their interest without including the other existing groups. Therefore, in such context the government may also experience loss of legitimacy that will exacerbates states' inability to satisfy needs and worsen the developmental crisis.³¹ States' ability is also influenced by availability of resources and policy capacity. In the vast majority of instances, Protracted Social Conflict often happens in developing countries, marked by rapid population growth and limited resources. Poor resources added with large population then limits the state's policy option, a fuel for favoritism and again, fragmentation.

The fourth precondition for a PSC is international linkage. Azar also added that a PSC is not exclusively determined by the domestic or internal

²⁹ Ibid, p.87.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

process of a state, but rather also by the pattern of linkage with the international system.³² States that want to pursue development often create economic dependency or even political and military relationships that contradict the will and the needs of the general public. Or in another scenario, the international linkages typically create unbalanced rapid-growth development that distorts the resource allocation and worsen the inequality within the society. Protracted Social Conflict then is the result of complex causal relationship of these four factors.

Azar's theoretical thinking of Protracted Social Conflict will be useful in giving an alternative view towards the conflict between the Taliban and Afghan government where previous existing research have not yet provided. The preconditions of conflict which includes the communal content, the deprivation of human needs, the role of the state and international linkage will be used to analyzed on whether the conflict can be identified as a Protracted Social Conflict.

2. Conflict Intervention & Transformation by Ho-Won Jeong

Ho-Won Jeong analysis on external intervention tries to answer what type of intervention would lead to a change in different party's calculus and conflict dynamic. Different phases of conflict require different types of intervention. Intervention can be used to prevent conflict escalation by keeping opposing forces apart. In the context of conflict

³² Ibid, p.88.

settlement and resolution, intervention may start with activities related to stopping violence or ceasing hostilities in forms of military and non-military.³³ The resistance of scaling down the hostilities will require the actor to intervene with the aim of creating **negative incentives** (i.e. economic devastation and fatigue) and finally bring the related parties to the negotiation table. Means of forceful intervention are often used in this case, where it is particularly necessary when the two adversaries face relative power differentials. Negotiated settlement will happen when they reach a symmetry of vulnerability, hence **mutual readiness** to sit on the same table to discuss a possible ‘win-win’ solution. Usually, negative peace via negotiated settlement to a ceasefire is a sufficient prerequisite to open a line of communication for a more substantial agreement. Hence, external pressure then is one of the important aspects in creating the environment and/or motivation towards the related parties to finally achieve conflict transformation and sustainable peacebuilding process.

Conflict transformation, especially in the cases of protracted social conflict, requires more than cessation of hostilities and restoration of order. If external intervention is successful in mitigating further violence, system transformation is needed for a conflict rooted in socioeconomic and political structures, ensuring there’s a fuel of competition to reduce disparities and alienation.³⁴ This means conflict transformation can only

³³ Ho-Won Jeong, *Conflict Intervention and Transformation: Theory and Practice*, Rowman & Littlefield: London, 2019, p.2.

³⁴ P. 5.

be achieved when the resolution addresses the root causes of the conflict through sufficient understanding of human motivation and alienation deduced from the existing competitive social processes.³⁵ The prospect of ending the protracted conflict will increase as there is a change in the said motivation. Without this aspect, the efforts would be superficial as it only separates real concerns from the existing disparate social structure, hence a short-term response that might resurface antagonism in the future.

3. Intractable Conflict Management by Ho-Won Jeong

In a deep-rooted conflict, which is usually signified by the long duration of war, the challenge is to change the dynamics from negative to positive interaction, especially in cases where it is seen as a struggle for survival.³⁶ The negative inter-group interaction entails four characters; **ontological** by denying each other's identity and security, **cognitive rigidity** which is affective factors such as feeling of hatred, anger and fear, **cessation of communication** that intensifies distorted perception and **the rise of hardline factions** that's strengthened by external allies.³⁷ These four factors complicate the transition from coercive power to win-win solution and at the same time becomes the reflective of what components need to be modified to bring an end to the fighting. The modification can be done

³⁵ P. 7

³⁶ Ho-won Jeong, *Conflict Management and Resolution: An Introduction*, Routledge: New York, 2010, p.18.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.18.

through a series of conciliatory events to mitigate the destructive aspects of struggles so there can be a positive environment for the peace talks.³⁸

Conciliatory dynamics can be done through several efforts that include withdrawing the existing negative sanctions such as trade embargo and offering new rewards such as economic assistance. The efforts can kick off a probability of a mutual cooperation, which is only possible when the other side is willing to reciprocate as they perceive the counter-reward they need to give is not going to cost them a high price. The real test to end the intractable conflict is, that is to create a successful settlement, is by having a balanced opposing interest or values that are acceptable to all sides.³⁹ As the protagonist, it might be necessary to offer concessions on the issues an adversary considers crucial.⁴⁰

In the best of scenario where positive interaction has been made and both parties have sat on the same negotiating table, intractable conflicts may have tracks of lingering doubts and suspicion as there will still be uncertainty of the future. If the negotiation has been accompanied with commitment to cessation of violence, there still lies bigger challenges of dealing with land, electoral, constitutional or security reform.⁴¹ In other words, the end of hostilities after the so-called positive interaction may simply result in the restoration of order and mitigation of further violence

³⁸ Ibid, p.18.

³⁹ Ibid, p.21.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.21.

⁴¹ Ibid, p.24.

rather than systematic changes in the political and economic system that are most of the times the root of the conflict. In cases of conflicts that involve ethnic pluralism, the resolution can be institutionalized by power-sharing mechanism, along with economic opportunities and respect for cultural traditions of diverse groups.⁴²

I.8 Research Methods and Data Collection

This research will use qualitative method as an investigative process to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction.⁴³The method includes collecting data, inductively analyzing the data and interpreting the meaning of the data using emerging questions and procedures.⁴⁴ Author as the key instrument has role in collecting data through examining documents and making observations through multiple sources of data, including public documents; credible news sources, official governmental documents, speech acts, books and journals. The analysis and data gathering will be conducted simultaneously to produce a holistic account of research, that is an attempt to develop a complex picture for U.S involvement in Afghanistan by identifying many factors involved in the situation and from multiple perspectives.⁴⁵

⁴² Ibid, p.24.

⁴³ L.F. Locke, W.W. Spirduso and S.J. Silverman, 1987, *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals* (6th ed.), Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE. M.B. Miles and A.M Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*, Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 1994.

⁴⁴ John W.Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, California: SAGE Publications, 2014, p.214-216.

⁴⁵ John W. Creswell, *Research Design*, p.218.

I.9 Thesis Outline

Chapter 1 will consist of the introduction of the topic, to explain the current state of the art which tells the existing problems of U.S involvement in Afghanistan. Other than that, this chapter will also include the fundamentals of the research including the research methods and data sources that will be used in this thesis, the theoretical framework as well as the research objectives.

Chapter 2 “Complex Entanglement in Afghani-Taliban Conflict” will lay out the conflict between Taliban and Afghan government by using the perspective of Protracted Social Conflict by Edward Azar. This chapter will be the groundwork of understanding the conflict before moving on to deeper analysis, divided into 4 sub-chapter: **(2.1)** A Century-Old Ethnic-Based Grievances in Afghanistan; **(2.2)** The Rise of Taliban and the Endless Fight Since Then

Chapter 3 “Towards Conflict Transformation in Afghanistan” will analyze the role of U.S involvement in the protracted social conflict during Trump administration from 2016 to 2020. Specifically, this chapter will answer the research question of the thesis, which is how is U.S role in the conflict management process of the PSC based on the theory of intractable conflict management by Ho-Won Jeong. The chapter will be divided into 4 sub-chapters: **(3.1)** United States Troop Withdrawal: The First Step to Peace? ; **(3.2)** Possibilities of Sustainable Conflict Management in Afghanistan

Chapter 4 will constitute the conclusion of the findings, that will be based purely on the opinion of the authors after conducting their own observation and analysis towards the main idea.