

Introduction

Stability in Afghanistan has eluded the Afghans as well as many concerned foreigners most of the time since the consolidation of the modern Afghan state in the mid-nineteenth century. The country's history is replete with long but intermittent periods of instability that alternated and diluted the achievements of each period of relative calm in which the inhabitants of this region tried hard to rebuild their lives. In ancient eras, marauding invaders traversed its territory from all directions many times over, leaving a trail of unsettling consequences that altered its established patterns of relations and disrupted its stability. Equally, Afghanistan produced its own conquerors that raided the surrounding regions and built great empires centered in the territory of what came to be known as 'Afghanistan' in modern times.

Following the advent of British and Russian colonialism in South and Central Asia from the mid-eighteenth century, the people of Afghanistan had to fight at least three major wars against Britain and many skirmishes with both Britain and Russia in what most of the Afghan historians have termed as a struggle for independence. Yet after Afghanistan's independence in 1919 and the decolonization of both Central and South Asia, the country's stability still continued to be fragile.

The people of Afghanistan share many ethno-linguistic, cultural and historic ties with all the neighbouring countries. These linkages have created strong cross-border affinities between Afghans and the peoples of surrounding nations. Yet despite the cross-border affinities, the Afghan state has had a history of uneasy relations with its neighbours, particularly with those in Central and South Asia. Why has Afghanistan not been able to develop sufficiently amiable relations with its Central and South Asian neighbours, and how has the character of these relations affected the internal stability of Afghanistan? The book draws on a comprehensive definition of the concept of political stability to demonstrate the fragility of the Afghan state throughout its modern history. The nature of Afghanistan's relations with its neighbours in Central and South Asia have continuously influenced the country's political stability. As a landlocked country, dependent on foreign assistance for maintaining a modicum of state apparatus, Afghanistan will always remain unstable so long as it does not resolve the causes of friction with the neighbouring countries. In turn, some of the tensions with the neighbours in large part stem from the very character of the modern Afghan state as an over-centralized, ethno-nationalistic political entity. The book will argue that unless some of the basic characteristics of the modern Afghan state are reformed

and relations genuinely improved with the neighbouring countries, mere security-centric policies will fail to achieve real stability in the country.¹

In the context of this book, the study of Afghan-Central Asia relations prior to the independence of Central Asia in the early 1990s is mainly an analysis of Afghanistan's relations with the Soviet Union. The reason for this is obvious; as part of the Soviet Union, Central Asia did not have an independent foreign policy. To the extent that political stability of Afghanistan could be said to have been affected by the nature of its relations with its northern neighbour, the attitude of the Soviet leadership and administration in Moscow towards Afghanistan had a central role in it. What the native leaders and peoples of Central Asia, particularly those from the neighbouring units of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, might have thought about the imperatives of foreign policy towards Afghanistan remained largely irrelevant to what actually took place in terms of relations between Central Asia and Afghanistan. For example, by invading Afghanistan in 1979, the Soviet forces based in Central Asia played a central role in one of the most unstable periods of Afghanistan's modern history. Yet the people and leaders of Central Asia had little input in the processes leading to the Soviet decision to invade. Similarly, the discussion of Afghanistan's relations with South Asia until 1947 focuses on the country's interactions with British India. Subsequently, Afghan-Pakistan relations will be discussed in detail.

It is worth mentioning that the character of Afghanistan's relations with Central and South Asia is not the only factor which influences the dynamics of political stability in the country. Iran, India and the United States, for example, are all important countries with significant influence in Afghanistan. Nor are the country's foreign relations the only determinants of its internal stability. Many authors have tried to explain the internal causes of chronic conflict in Afghanistan. Nazif Shahrani, for example, has highlighted the incompatibility of a centralized political system, borrowed from the European colonial model, with the self-governing political culture of various ethno-linguistic communities in Afghanistan as a source of internal conflict.² Amin Saikal has spoken about the role of polygamic-based rivalries within the ruling dynasties of Afghanistan since the early nineteenth century as a source of internal strife.³ David Edwards has argued that Afghanistan's 'political chaos' stems from the self-contradictory nature of three distinct moral

1 Apart from the bordering nations in Central and South Asia, two other neighbours, namely Iran and China, also have significant influence in the political stability of Afghanistan. The book mentions these countries where necessary in the context of Afghanistan's relations with Central and South Asia. A detailed discussion of the nature of Afghanistan's relations with these countries is beyond the scope of this book, however.

2 M. Nazif Shahrani, 'The Future of the State and the Structure of Community Governance in Afghanistan', in William Maley (ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, (London: Hurst & Co., 1998), pp. 212-242.

3 Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

systems underpinning its political culture. In his view, interaction among the three incongruent moral systems including the universalistic teachings of Islam, the indigenous code of conduct such as those related to the concepts of *Nang* or *Ghairat*, and a centralized political system emulated from European kingship models, produces internal discord.⁴ As is often the case with many other countries, and in substantiation of theories advocating the inseparability of domestic politics from international relations, the study of Afghanistan's foreign relations cannot be done without undertaking a good measure of research into domestic politics of the country.⁵ Thus, the book discusses the internal politics of Afghanistan to the extent that they affect, or are affected by, its foreign relations.

As an abstract concept in political science, the discussion of political stability goes as far back into history as the discipline remembers. Almost all the traditions of Western political thought starting from the ancient era to contemporary times have concerned themselves with the issue. Plato's aristocracy, Aristotle's 'best possible state', Thomas Hobbes' discussions in *Leviathan*, Rousseau's egalitarianism, Marx and Engels's analyses of class conflict are all concerned about political stability.⁶ Debate about imperatives of political stability connects a wide range of traditions within Western political thought. It is present in what Dessauer calls 'inherited concepts', denoting the understanding of stability in ancient Greek city states; it is inherent in the ethical laws proposed by Judaic traditions; in the debate about the necessity of secularism and ensuring of checks and balances in Western liberal political thought; in the emphasis on social integration advocated by some French thinkers; and in the thirst for classless society of communism.⁷

Similarly in the realm of International Relations theory, prominent schools of thought such as Realism, Idealism, Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, Neo-Conservatism and Constructivism are all concerned about stability of the international political system. The realists advocate balance of power between nation-states, or alliances thereof, as the key to international peace and stability.⁸ Other schools of thought variously put emphasis on international law and institutions, collective security,

4 David B. Edwards, *Heroes of the Age: Moral Fault Lines on the Afghan Frontier* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), p. 3.

5 For more details about the influence of domestic politics on international relations see Robert D. Putnam, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two Level Games', *International Organization*, Vol. No. 42, Issue No. 3, Summer 1988, pp. 427-460. For more details on the impact of international relations on domestic politics see Peter Gourevitch, 'The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics', *International Organization*, Vol. No. 32, Issue No. 4, Autumn 1978, pp. 881-912.

6 For details see Bernard Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1995).

7 For details see Frederick E. Dessauer, *Stability* (New York: Macmillan, 1949).

8 For a discussion of the principles of Realism in international relations see Hans Joachim Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978). For a history of the development of Realist school of thought see Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

universality of liberal democratic values, international economic interdependence and the power of ideas as some of the important factors affecting international stability.⁹

Stability as a subject of academic interest is one of the most intractable concepts in Political Science. Like many other theoretical notions in social sciences, academic consensus on the exact definition of stability is hard to achieve due to sheer subjectivity of the concept.¹⁰ However there are a number of themes in the relevant literature which, if taken together, could provide for an inclusive set of criteria that would allow us to reach at a comprehensive definition of the concept. Hurwitz has used some of these themes to come up with a basic definition of political stability, which will be adhered to for the purpose of this book. In his view, political stability means 'the absence of violence, governmental longevity, the absence of structural change, legitimacy, and effective decision-making'.¹¹ It is obvious that these aspects of stability cannot be understood in absolutist terms; rather the ratio of their pervasiveness as against the extent of opposite conditions will determine the degree of stability. Absence of violence in a society, for example, is a utopian concept, as is the absence of structural change, and the concept of legitimacy, extremely relative, for that matter. In order to understand Hurwitz's definition fully, it is essential to discuss each one of these themes in some detail and relate them to the situation in Afghanistan historically.

The most common theme in the study of political stability is concerned with the frequency and intensity of civil strife and absence of political violence in a given polity. In this regard, Russett and Bunselmayer developed a rudimentary way of measuring the relative level of political stability in different countries by counting the number of deaths directly as a result of intergroup violence per 1,000,000 units of population.¹² While not without merits, the technique is evidently an insufficient indicator of political stability; for there could be many political actions that may not necessarily lead to a loss of life, but which could undermine the stability of a political system. As Claude Ake observed, members of a society support or undermine a political system in so far as they obey or disobey the laws which it produces. 'If the incidence of violations of law continues to increase, political authority eventually atrophies' – political system is destabilized.¹³ Therefore, mere

9 For details about various theories of international relations see Scott Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave, 2001). Also see Paul Viotti & Mark Kauppi, *International Relations Theory* (London: Allyn & Bacon, 1999).

10 Frederick E. Dessauer, *Stability*.

11 Leon Hurwitz, 'Contemporary Approaches to Political Stability', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. No. 5, Issue No. 3, April 1973, p. 463.

12 Bruce M. Russett and Robert Bunselmayer, *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 97-100.

13 Claude Ake, 'A Definition of Political Stability', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. No. 7, Issue No. 2, January 1975, p. 271.

counting of fatalities cannot be a sufficiently-reliable indicator of political stability in a country.

In regards to the definition of political stability related to civil strife, a more useful attempt was made by Ivo K. Feierabend and Rosalind L. Feierabend, who invented a scale of 0 (extremely stable) to 6 (extremely unstable) ratings for eighty-four nations over a time span of seven years (1955-1961).¹⁴ They defined the concept of stability vs. instability as:

[The] degree or the amount of aggression directed by individuals or groups within the political system against other groups or against the complex of officeholders and individuals and groups associated with them. Or, conversely, it is the amount of aggression directed by these officeholders against other individuals, groups or other officeholders within the polity.¹⁵

Hence, the Feierabends define instability in terms of aggressive behaviour which ensues from 'systemic frustration' in a political system. Systemic frustration in turn results from the disparity of 'social want formation' being bigger than 'social want satisfaction'. In the words of Duff and McCamant, 'the system ... must have the power and ability to meet the demands and needs of the society as well as the flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances'.¹⁶ Aggressive behaviour might be inhibited by devices associated with the notion of punishment in the frustration-aggression formula. It could also be 'displaced' against targets other than the perceived agents of frustration —i.e. scapegoating the minorities or a foreign threat. In Feierabends' view, however, a polity where coercive methods are the prime means of solving problems is not stable. A stable polity is capable of relieving systemic frustration through constructive methods. Hence, the availability of a plethora of political, administrative, entrepreneurial and other devices that induces non-aggressive and non-violent behaviour for addressing problems becomes an essential requisite of political stability.¹⁷

In view of this definitional theme, the discussion of whether or not Afghanistan was stable politically at any particular period of time becomes a highly subjective one. It could be argued with good justification that the country's domestic politics has often been marred by coercive and violent problem-solving methods

14 Ivo K. Feierabend and Rosalind L. Feierabend, 'Aggressive Behaviors Within Polities, 1948-1962: A Cross-National Study', *Journal Of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. No. 10, Issue No. 3, September 1966 pp. 249-271.

15 Ivo K. Feierabend and Rosalind L. Feierabend, 'Aggressive Behaviors Within Politics', p. 250.

16 Ernest A. Duff and John F. McCamant, 'Measuring Social and Political Requirements for System Stability in Latin America', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. No. 62, Issue No. 4, December 1968, p. 1125.

17 Ivo K. Feierabend and Rosalind L. Feierabend, 'Aggressive Behaviors Within Polities', p. 250.

historically. However, the question of just about how much violence—if it could be quantified at all—would be enough to qualify a country as unstable, still remains a subjective issue. Answering this question at the minimum would require a comparative study of Afghanistan in relation to other countries. In Feierabend's study, during 1955-1961, Afghanistan's stability rating stood at 4 in the scale of 0 to 6, which indicated its place more on the instability side of the continuum. This is an interesting finding because it contradicts the general view of Afghanistan being one of the most stable countries during 1930s-1970s. Irrespective of the extent to which Afghanistan experienced stability, or lack thereof, at any particular period of time, the concept of violence in the sense understood above is an integral part of any discussion of political stability.¹⁸ Therefore, to the extent that manifestation or inhibition of violence in Afghanistan could be connected to the nature of Afghanistan's interactions with Central and South Asia, the book will argue that the country's political stability/instability was affected by its relations with these regions.

A second definitional element of political stability is related to the longevity of government. Russett has developed a relatively simple way of measuring the average level of stability over a given period of time.¹⁹ Number of years over a selected period of time divided by the frequency of succession of what Russett calls 'chief executive', gives an indication of how stable that system has been on average in that period. 'Chief executive' in this context is the political figure who wields real executive authority as opposed to the nominal ones in some political systems. Russett is aware of the shortcomings of his approach. In many instances, he admits, the government or even the regime could change without causing the replacement of the chief executive. In communist systems, the head of state is less significant than the general secretary of the communist party. In some countries the head of state is a titular figure and the real executive authority lies with the head of the government while in other countries the inverse of this is true. It is difficult to determine which of these two offices is more relevant to the analysis of stability at a given instance in a particular country. By the same token, some political systems have assigned shorter, and others longer, terms of office for their chief executives. This further complicates a comparative study of stability in different political systems. Russett believes, however, that an attempt to address these reservations will raise more questions than they could answer.

Hurwitz criticizes Russett's approach for its failure to make a distinction between legal and illegal successions of heads of a state.²⁰ The objection is well-founded because preservation of stability in itself needs continuous accommodation

18 Dessauer's concept of stability embraces security and peace, reinforcing Feierabend's views about absence of violence being an integral part of stability. See Frederick Dessauer, *Stability*, pp. 104-105.

19 Bruce M. Russett and Robert Bunselmayer, *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators*, pp. 101-104.

20 Leon Hurwitz, 'Contemporary Approaches to Political Stability', p. 453.

of non-fundamental changes that would allow a political system to keep pace with the requirements of time and space. In the words of Edmund Burke, '[A] state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation'.²¹ Russett's approach is useful, however, if the actual frequency of government succession or head of state in a given polity is counted against its ideal rate as enshrined in the relevant legal provisions of that polity. The frequency of snap-elections and incomplete terms of office, even if they occur within constitutional provisions, is a useful indicator which could point to the incongruence of a country's political culture with its political institutions; the wider the cleavage the less stable a political system.²²

If the frequency of both constitutional and unconstitutional changes in the office of the head of state alone would be considered in the period between Afghanistan's independence in 1919 and the overthrow of the Taliban regime in late 2001, a headcount of the occupants of the position will yield a total of 17 heads of state including Kings, Emirs, Presidents and interim military and non-military rulers in Kabul alone.²³ That is 17 changes in the office of the head of state over a period of 82 years; excluding many other violent and non-violent claimants on leadership outside Kabul. On the face of it, the average turnover rate of 17 heads of state over 82 years (4.8 years on average) seems a good record. Nonetheless, the fact that few of these heads of state relinquished power in a normal fashion and since most of them were either pressured into leaving office or violently overthrown by internal and/or external forces, points to political instability in Afghanistan. However these statistics are viewed, the book will rely on the dynamics of interaction between Afghanistan's relations with Central and South Asia on the one hand and the durability of the Afghan heads of state and prime ministers' tenures on the other, as evidence of the impact of the country's relations with these regions on its political stability.

Drawing on the arguments advanced by Lipset and Needler, Hurwitz believes that legitimacy of the political system and its outputs in the eyes of public is another criterion used by scholars to define stability.²⁴ Indeed, not only the legitimacy but also the effectiveness of political system is often associated with the degree of its stability by many writers. Ernest Duff and John McCamant, for example, maintain that 'in a stable political system, the members of the system consider

21 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: J. Dodsley, 1790), p. 29.

22 For a discussion of the concept of political culture and its usage in relation to various political systems see Stephen Welch, *The Concept of Political Culture* (London: Macmillan Press, 1993).

23 A full list of the Afghan heads of state since 1919 is given in Appendix 1.

24 Leon Hurwitz, 'Contemporary Approaches to Political Stability', p. 455. For Needler's discussion of the topic see Martin C. Needler, 'Political Developments and Socioeconomic Development: The Case of Latin America', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. No. 62, Issue No. 3, September 1968, pp. 889-897.

it to be both legitimate and effective'.²⁵ In Lipset's words 'legitimacy involves the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society'.²⁶ Needler posits legitimacy, and therefore stability, in the constitutionality of a political system accompanied by its capacity to allow genuinely for general political participation and to affect economic growth.²⁷

Lipset and Needler's sentiments about the constitutionality and appropriateness of institutions in public eye find resonance in Dessauer's description of the 'normative systems' as a foundation of stability, which he classifies into three categories of ethical, customary and legal rules.²⁸ The latter also appreciates the relevance of economic growth and public participation to political stability. However, he does not believe that economic growth and public participation would necessarily strengthen political stability at all times. Progress, including economic growth, he believes, could become incompatible with stability if the two are 'undefined and refer comprehensively to the whole of social conditions'. In specific fields, however, progress does not logically exclude stability. Increased economic output and better education, for example, do not unavoidably threaten stability of the government and continuity of full employment. Similarly, while increased public participation in the political processes can help a political system better develop its self-regulatory mechanism, essential for ensuring continuity under changing circumstances, it could also unsettle the forces of public inertia that maintain stability under certain conditions.²⁹

Linking legitimacy with the study of political stability evidently has its share of criticisms just as the above two other criteria do. There is only a fine line between the concept of legitimacy as one of the wellsprings of a stable political system and its existence as the identifier of whether or not such stability exists within a country. As is the case with Needler's analysis, proponents of this approach generally cannot resist sliding down the slippery slope of indulging in a discussion of liberal democracy as a measure of how legitimate a government and its decisions are among public. Availability or lack of liberal democracy is of course an insufficient identifier of stability in any given polity. Equally problematic is the extreme relativism of democracy and its connection with legitimacy, which renders the task of measuring political stability all the more difficult. For the purposes of this book,

25 Ernest A. Duff and John F. McCamant, 'Measuring Social and Political Requirements for System Stability in Latin America', pp. 1125.

26 Seymour Martin Lipset, 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. No. 53, Issue No. 1, March 1959, p. 86. Or see Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (London: Heinemann, 1960), p. 77.

27 Martin C. Needler, 'Political Development and Socioeconomic Development: The Case of Latin America', pp. 889-897.

28 Frederick Dessauer, *Stability*, pp. 144-171.

29 *Ibid*, pp. 106, 137-140.

however, it is enough to know that the legitimacy of a polity—stemming from the perceived extent of its adherence to normative systems, its role in affecting economic mobility for better or for worse, and its propensity to increase or limit public participation in politics—is related to the political stability of the society in which it operates.

Applying this criterion to Afghanistan once again reveals its political fragility, for there have hardly been any significant periods in the modern history of the country when all the political elites and citizenry have accepted the legitimacy of the political system and its outputs unequivocally. Indeed, many political systems and leaderships of Afghanistan came to prominence because of support mainly from the colonial powers, the Soviet Union, Pakistan and, currently, the United States and other international forces. The dynamics of politics in Afghanistan have always played in such a way that relative consolidation of power is attained in the immediate wake of a new regime coming into existence on the back of strong foreign support or outright intervention. However from the moment such a regime comes to power, the political landscape is rendered fertile for the seeds of dissent which finally culminates in the removal of the leadership and the regime altogether. Therefore, at best the country has seen only intermittent stability since the nineteenth century.

Another approach to the study of political stability draws attention to the importance of the basic structural arrangements in a polity. Hurwitz agrees with the relevance of this approach to the study of political stability; however, he dissects it further to highlight imprecision in its application. He poses the questions as to what actually constitute basic structural arrangements in a political system, and to what extent can small variations occur before it could be admitted that a basic structural change has taken place? Furthermore, he questions the sheer dichotomy of the approach by saying: ‘a country will either be free of structural change, in which case it is classified as “stable”, or its basic patterns are changed, in which case it is classified as “unstable”.’³⁰ In other words, are we to attribute political instability exclusively to change in basic structural arrangements of a polity, or could scope be made for the causal effects of less fundamental changes as well?

The notion of basic structural arrangements becomes more intelligible through Dessauer’s discussion of its equivalent — foundations of a society. He admits that there are no standard variables attributable to the foundations of a society. ‘It may be representative government or private property or freedom of trade or sacramental order of life [determined by religion]’.³¹ However, they become apparent at critical times when, attacked by change, the prospect of their loss provokes fear and uncertainty in the minds of people whose reaction in turn undermines political stability. Dessauer’s choice of the word ‘attack’ in his analysis of the foundations of society is important. It denotes the quickness with which change is introduced.

30 Leon Hurwitz, ‘Contemporary Approaches to Political Stability’, p. 457.

31 Frederick Dessauer, *Stability*, p. 126.

In Dessauer's view, an attack against the foundations of a society is not the only means of shaking political stability. Radical change, even if not directed against foundations of a society, can also destabilize a political system. '[S]tability has to depend on the actual changes being few, slow, and not fundamental'.³² Hence, radical change is that which, by virtue of its sheer quantity and speed, could frighten people and overwhelm their fortitude. From this it could be deduced that an attack against the foundations of a society, or the fundamental character of a polity, is essentially a radical undertaking because it contains both elements of radicalism, i.e. enormity and swiftness. However, not all radical measures are directed against foundations of a society.

Dessauer's analysis of the foundations of society could go some way to address Hurwitz's criticism about imprecision in the concept of the basic structural arrangements. Accordingly, any attribute of a political system that, while threatened by change, provokes backlash by the society, could be among its basic structural arrangements. Political instability can also ensue from radical changes that might not necessarily be aimed at changing the basic foundations of a political system.

Claude Ake's deductive analysis of basic structural arrangements of a polity and their relevance to stability can help further clarify the subject. Ake starts his analysis by clarifying some of the ingredients of political structure. In his view, 'political behaviour is any act by any member of a society that affects the distribution of power to make decisions for that society'.³³ Political behaviour takes place in an organized society as opposed to a society where contacts are random, and behavioural variations infinite. Members of an organized society live in the context of shared expectations which help provide a basis for predictability of behaviour. The congeries of standardized shared expectations are called 'political roles'. The network of political roles constitutes political structure—the basic structural arrangements of a political system. Since political roles act to control the flow of transactions and communications among political actors, we can refer to political structure as the 'system of political exchanges'. Finally political stability is:

... the regularity of the flow of political exchanges. ... Alternatively, we might say that there is political stability to the extent that members of society restrict themselves to the behavior patterns that fall within the limits imposed by political role expectations.³⁴

Viewed from this perspective, Afghanistan's modern history seems replete with instances of basic structural changes. Since Afghanistan's independence in 1919 alone, the country experimented with many different political systems possessing

32 Ibid, p. 125.

33 Claude Ake, 'A Definition of Political Stability', pp. 271-283. Also see Claude Ake, *A Theory of Political Integration* (Homewood, Ill: Dorsey Press, 1967).

34 Claude Ake, 'A Definition of Political Stability', p. 273.

completely distinct constitutions and normative practices such as the official flag and emblem, official title of the state and foreign policy orientations. Major radical changes which disrupted continuity of the Afghan political system during this period included the independence from British suzerainty in 1919, the overthrow of Amanullah's reformist regime, the brief rule of Habibullah-e-Kalakani and his execution by Mohammad Nadir, the monarchy of the Musahiban brothers and assassination of Mohammad Nadir, Mohammad Daoud's coup and his republican regime, Daoud's bloody end and the rule of the pro-Soviet PDPA regime, the overthrow of the PDPA regime by the Mujahideen and establishment of the Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA), ascension of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda regime and, finally, the current Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as the successor to the Transitional Administration and Interim Administration headed by Hamid Karzai since late 2001.

Finally, mention should be made of another approach to the study of political stability, which draws on the pattern of relations between the political system and the society in which the system operates. Hurwitz uses the title 'political stability as a multifaceted social attribute' to underline the multiple variables which proponents of this approach use to explain stability/instability.³⁵ He criticizes the advocates of this approach for failing to define stability rather than explaining its sources. Hurwitz's criticism notwithstanding, however, the proponents of this approach have spoken lucidly about manifestations of stability/instability. Duff and McCamant, for example, speak about symptoms of political instability in the following words:

Instability may be reflected in increased repression by the authorities, by violent or nonviolent demonstrations, by runaway inflation, by coups d'etat, by civil war, or ultimately by social revolution. The nature of the manifestation depends on the political culture, the peculiar balance of political forces, the sequence of events, and the decisions of key actors. Violent social revolution is the most definite and unambiguous manifestation of system instability ... Instability produces pressures which in a democracy will be met by a policy that gives in to all demands and leads to inflation while in a dictatorship the demands are suppressed, coming to the surface only in the form of anomic demonstrations. On other occasions instability may remain latent or unexpressed.³⁶

This approach—since it infers the manifestation of stability/instability from multiple indicators and attributes its causes to a variety of factors rather than any single one—is more or less a synthesis of various other approaches. Duff and McCamant draw attention to the pattern of state-society relations with which Feierabends' frustration-aggression formula, explained earlier, was familiar. 'The

³⁵ Leon Hurwitz, 'Contemporary Approaches to Political Stability', p. 458.

³⁶ Ernest A. Duff and John F. McCamant, 'Measuring Social and Political Requirements for System Stability in Latin America', p. 1125.

demands that the population places on its political system are of two types', they assert. One is 'political-political' and the other is 'political-economic'.³⁷ Duff and McCamant's discussion of the political and economic demands is reminiscent of the debates, mentioned earlier, by Lipset, Needler and Dessauer in relation to the legitimacy of a political system. In their study of the imperatives of political stability, they underline the importance of political participation, societal welfare, economic growth, reasonably equal income distribution, broad-based institutionalization of politics and the adaptive capacity of the political system to changing circumstances.

In his case study of the stable democratic political system in Norway, Eckstein also finds a range of overlapping causative features, rather than any single factor, for political stability. They include: continuity of the political system including its capacity to adapt to changing circumstances; legitimacy of the political system, which not only precludes the chances of anti-system dissent but also evokes active support for, and commitment to, the political system as a whole from the population; effective decision-making which demonstrates the political system's ability not only to make consensus-based policies but also to implement them competently; and finally the genuineness, rather than superficiality, of the participatory institutions and processes of the political system.³⁸

In a separate study, Eckstein develops his theory of congruity between the patterns of government authority with that of the society in which it operates as a basis of political stability. Comparing two different countries in the interwar period, namely the United Kingdom and Weimar Germany, he concludes that Britain was much more stable than Germany because its political system mirrored, largely accurately, the pattern of authority in the British society—British political culture, including its social stratification, and the shape of political and non-political institutions such as the political parties, pressure groups, friendly societies, clubs and business organisations. On the other hand, Weimar Germany, in Eckstein's view, was an 'unalleviated democracy' with a 'plebiscitary President', superimposed on 'a society pervaded by authoritarian relationships and obsessed with authoritarianism'.³⁹ At the time, though the German political system was justifiably recognised as the most perfect democratic system, it did not produce stability because the system was not congruent with the society in which it operated.

Eckstein combines his studies of a stable democracy—emphasizing the 'persistence of pattern, decisional effectiveness, and authenticity' rather than superficiality of the democratic system—with his theory of the congruence of

37 Ibid, pp. 1127.

38 Harry Eckstein, *Division and Cohesion in Democracy: A Study of Norway* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 11-32.

39 Harry Eckstein, *A Theory of Stable Democracy* (Princeton: Center of International Studies, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, 1961), p. 18.

authority patterns—stressing the need for the political system to accurately reflect the patterns of authority in the society. He maintains that there is no such thing as a pure democracy or a pure totalitarian system; much the same as there is no absolute congruence or incongruence in the patterns of authority between the state and society. The difference is rather in the degree of participatory governance to which a political system adheres and its ability to fulfill at least the minimum requirement of state-society congruence, namely a pattern of ‘graduated resemblances’. Political stability is militated on the degree of participatory governance being congruent with the pattern of authority in the society.⁴⁰

Arend Lijphart is another political scientist who subscribes to the study of political stability as a multifaceted social attribute. In his study of political stability in the Netherlands, Lijphart draws on lessons from multiple approaches reminiscent of those we have covered above. He defines a stable political system (democracy) as the ‘one in which the capabilities of the system are sufficient to meet demands placed upon it’.⁴¹ Stability of a political system, he suggests, depends on more than its coercive capability to maintain a stable order. Rather it should be able to resolve problems, tensions, and conflicts, before they pile up to threaten the system. Lijphart studies ‘cabinet stability’ of the Dutch political system from 1848 to 1965. Further dividing this period into four distinct episodes of 1848-1868, 1868-1918, 1918-1945 and 1945-1965, he calculates the rate of turnover of key government leaders including prime ministers, finance ministers, ministers of internal affairs and ministers of foreign affairs for each timeslot separately. Lijphart believes that a stable country is characterized not only by a lack of negative indicators such as violence, revolutions, coups and political movements opposed to the political system as a whole but also by positive indicators in the form of continuity of the constitutional order, government longevity, active social support for the political system and the ability of the political system to make effective decisions which could penetrate the society.⁴² Lijphart’s approach for the study of political stability synthesizes elements from other approaches variously emphasizing civil strife, government longevity and basic structural changes, as studied earlier.

Relying on Hurwitz’s definition of the concept of political stability as explicated in our discussion above, the book will endeavour to discern the impact of Afghanistan’s relations with Central and South Asia on aspects of political stability in the country. In other words, the book will focus on how the nature of Afghanistan’s relations with the two regions, in different periods of its modern history, impacted on the country’s domestic political violence, the longevity of its government, changes in the character of its political system, legitimacy of the political system and its capacity for effective decision-making.

40 Harry Eckstein, *Regarding Politics* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 179-224.

41 Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1968), pp. 71.

42 *Ibid.*, pp. 71-77.

It is perceptible from the outset that Afghanistan's relations with Central and South Asia have not followed a consistent pattern in its modern history. The strength of its friendship and political ties has fluctuated between the two regions in various periods of its history, depending on the saliency of different issues involved in relations. In order to convey an accurate understanding of the country's relations in the context of history, the book is divided into six chapters.

Chapter one studies the existence of historical, ethno-linguistic and cultural ties between Afghanistan and its neighbours in Central and South Asia. It also covers the dynamics of Afghanistan's relations with Central and South Asia under the Russian and British colonial domination until mid-twentieth century. The emergence of Afghanistan as a result of the colonial powers' rivalry, the consequences of that rivalry for Afghanistan's relations with its Central and South Asian neighbours and the impact of the character of these relations on the internal stability of the country will be analyzed.

Chapter two discusses Pushtun ethno-nationalism and its role in pushing Afghanistan to a deadly embrace of the former Soviet Union. It covers Afghanistan's relations with Central and South Asia from the partition of the British India in 1947 until the late 1970s. It focuses on how the interplay of the Afghan domestic and foreign policies with the then-prevalent geostrategic environment in the region impacted on the country's relations with Pakistan, leaving profound consequences for the political stability of Afghanistan.

Chapter three analyses Afghan-Soviet relations in the context of a three-pronged strategy, encompassing military, reconstruction and diplomatic efforts, by the leaderships of the two countries to affect political stability in the country, and the reasons for the failure of these efforts during the 1980s. It will also study the impact of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan on the nature of Afghan-Pakistan relations, the ideational transformation of Pakistan and its ultimate implications for the prospects of political stability in Afghanistan.

Chapter four analyses the difficulties and dilemmas inherent in the Mujahideen government's policies, the nature of its relations with independent Central Asia and Pakistan, and the impact of these relations on the political stability of Afghanistan. It also studies critically the prevalent notion among sections of the media and academic community that the Taliban rule had brought stability to the country.

Chapter five focuses on Afghanistan's efforts to elevate regional cooperation with Central and South Asia as a key contributing factor to its internal stability and the political and regional challenges and trends that impede such cooperation with Pakistan. It examines aspects of the process of stabilization of Afghanistan since late 2001 and its impact on Afghan-Pakistan relations.

Chapter six studies the emerging dynamics of Afghanistan's relations with Central Asia and the domestic and international challenges that may undermine a progression of Afghanistan-Central Asia ties. Consequently, the implications, for political stability of Afghanistan, of the new dynamics of relations are explained.