

Social Impact of War on The Characters of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* By Khaled Hosseini

Samia Tahir ¹
Qasim Ali Qureshi ²
Neelma Riaz ³
Irram Waheed ⁴

ABSTRACT:

War is a bitter reality, and this bitter reality has been a topic of discussion in many pieces of literature throughout the ages. Decades of war and oppression have caused millions of Afghans to endure pain, trauma and death. It has produced nothing except broken limbs, broken families, and, sadly, broken dreams. The present study examined the social impact of war and how it is showcased in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. A textual analysis was conducted, which portrayed how war affected the characters of the selected novel physically, psychologically, and economically. The findings revealed that war made all of them stand in one row, be it a wealthy business owner, an educated doctor or a poor shoemaker. All suffered equally and adversely. But despite all the atrocities, Afghan people have not let go of hope and want to see their beloved country shine again, as also portrayed in the ending of the selected novel.

KEYWORDS:

Afghan Literature, Social Impact of War, War in Afghanistan, Textual Analysis

¹ Assistant Professor, School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (SEECs), NUST, Islamabad, Pakistan.
Email: samia.tahir@seecs.edu.pk

² Lecturer, Department of Management Sciences, COMSATS University, Islamabad, Pakistan.
Email: qasim.queshi@comsats.edu.pk

³ Lecturer, School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences (SEECs), NUST, Islamabad, Pakistan.
Email: neelma.riaz@seecs.edu.pk

⁴ Lecturer, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering (SMME), NUST, Islamabad, Pakistan.
Email: irrum.waheed@smme.nust.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: Samia Tahir
✉ samia.tahir@seecs.edu.pk

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Introduction

When a war starts in a country, it affects everyone, no matter what colour their skin is, which social class they belong to, or which career they have to opt for. At first, everybody has their individual problems, but "war makes all of them stand in one line" (Modell and Haggerty, 1991). They all become the victims of war, facing the same problems i.e., hunger, poverty, joblessness, physical disability, death, pain, insecurity and loss of identity. In those circumstances, it no longer matters whether a person belongs to a high social class or low social class, whether he is highly educated or not, whether he is a party leader or a common worker. War is something which shatters human life, and the ideas and notions of loyalty, courage, and friendship/brotherhood change. "We see the worst of human nature" (Nasir, 2012), and all the victims become selfish in trying to save their own lives, and then throughout their lives, they try to cope with it. The present research study is based on the highly acclaimed novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. Hosseini is an Afghan doctor and writer who writes in English. He left his beloved homeland when his parents were forced to migrate to the US due to the war in Afghanistan. He felt the pain of his country, and this pain inspired him to write about his fellow Afghans. "Khaled Hosseini presents the struggle Afghan women go through every day by discussing honour, marriage and the place of women in society in Afghanistan" (Bozorova, 2020, p. 422). *Kite Runner* was Hosseini's first novel, based on the friendship of two Afghan boys in a war-torn

Afghanistan. It gathered instant acclaim soon after its publication in 2003. The second novel of Khaled Hosseini was *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, published in 2007. It is the focus of this research and is an account of the tale of two female characters, Mariam and Laila. Hosseini wrote his third novel in 2013 titled *And the Mountains Echoed* which “tells the story of a war-torn poor family who sells his daughter to a wealthy couple in Kabul to escape from hunger and starvation” (Joiya et al., 2017, p. 99). *Sea Payer* (2018) is the latest novel by Hosseini, which was published as an illustrated novel, and viewers can experience it best on a digital screen.

War in Afghanistan: Building the Context

Every Afghan story is marked by death and loss and unimaginable grief...and yet people find a way to survive, to go on (Hosseini, 2007, p. 350). “Whenever Afghanistan is being discussed, it is very common to talk about the issue of endless war situation” (William, 2009), which is shattering the lives of innocent Afghans on a regular basis. Even before the events of September 11, 2001, Afghanistan was suffering from the effects of more than two decades of conflict and an oppressive regime. This wartime situation in Afghanistan has damaged everything, including the economy, society, and the physical as well as psychological health of the people. The war in Afghanistan can be divided into three eras. These eras of war have been accompanied by significant depopulations, along with the destruction of infrastructure and resources, which has led to famine, disease, and death of the civilian population.

The first era started with the rule of the Soviet Union in 1979, as they used Afghanistan as a proxy war area during the Cold War time (Maley, 1998). They continued to use the land of Afghanistan for their troops for almost nine years. To end the rule of the Soviets, the local Afghans formed groups of Mujahideen who came forward in 1989 with the aim of demolishing the rule of the Soviets, thus giving birth to the second era of war. Although their goal was a free and peaceful Afghanistan, this aim was not achieved. As soon as the Soviets left the country, the groups of Mujahideen started fighting with one other for power.

The third era (as described in the novel) came with the Taliban in 1996, as they aimed to fight against Mujahideen. Many Afghans had this false belief that the Taliban could finally bring peace to their homeland. But they were wrong. Taliban could be better termed as extremists as they enforced strict religious laws which were not even a part of the religion Islam. “This third era saw the worst of humanity as people were forced to live in crucial circumstances” (Gohari, 2000). They were neither living nor dead. Taliban were very strict in the case of women. Education was banned for women; they were enslaved in their own houses, and if found travelling without *mehram*, they were stoned to death. Historically, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is based on the setting of this third era of Afghan history, i.e., the time of the Taliban.

Research Question

In this research, the researcher seeks to find an answer to the following research question:

What are the social impacts of war on the characters of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini?

Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are as follows:

- ▶ To explore the psychological impact of war on the characters of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini.
- ▶ To investigate how war physically affected the characters of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini.
- ▶ To find out how the lives of the characters of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini changed due to war economically.

Significance of the Study

Literature has always played an important part in bringing the hidden realities of society to people. This research aims to explore the social impact of war in Afghanistan on the characters of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled

Hosseini. Winston Churchill once said that history is written by the victors, but this research will acknowledge the fact that we should explore both sides of history. Afghanistan is not all about drug dealers and people against human rights. There are numerous other innocent Afghans as well who want peace in the world, but sadly, they face death and destruction due to war. This research will also honour Hosseini's writing style. His artistic character sketching has allowed the readers to share and feel the pain of all Afghans.

Literature Review

The following section will shed light on literature related to the present study.

Atrocities of War

Imagining heroic uniformed men marching in parades, winning glorious battles, and bringing peace and democracy to the world is what anybody would think of war, especially if s/he is not being affected by it. But this is not the reality. War is a very bitter thing (Cooley, 2000), which can only be felt by the victims and cannot be expressed in words. Yet many researchers have tried to define it. Gloris (n.d.) defines war as "[An event in which] a lot of people kill each other in armed conflicts between two or more states" (p. 1).

Browne (2000), an American researcher, says that war is a very tragic event, and it can be best explained through painful images.

It is when the children die before they're even fully adults. It is the brothers and sisters being taught to kill other people and to hate people who are just like themselves and who don't want to kill anyone either. It is the children seeing their friends' limbs blown off their bodies (p. 5).

A limb being blown up is a very painful image, and it can actually be felt only by those who experience the cruelties of war. One can imagine that war is not only about a single generation or for a few years; it is a generations-long event. Although war might finish in five or ten years, its impact lasts forever.

Cruelties of War in Afghanistan

It all started after World War II, which was one of the greatest wars in world history. It totally changed the course of the globe. Two world powers came to the face of the earth: the United States and the Soviet Union. Even after the demolition of World War II, both world powers continued their rivalry for each other. This rivalry had been in the form of a Cold War. The United States and the Soviet Union involved other countries in the war by using their land for a proxy war. The better term used for this war in Afghanistan could be termed the 'Soviet War in Afghanistan', which continued for nine years, i.e. December 1979 to February 1989.

"Availability of weapons and victimization are [the] only two determinants of influence and power" (Bhatia & Sedra, 2008, p. 1). The Soviet Union wanted to show the power it could assert over people around the world, and it was one of the reasons for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Soon, the peaceful land of Afghanistan faced the brutalities of a war in which they were not even a direct part but were getting affected by it. Innocent Afghans were killed on a daily basis in counter-attacks between the Soviets and the Mujahideen.

The National Human Development Report (NHDR) in 2004 presented the serious matter of security conditions in Afghanistan, highlighting the plight of the local people of Afghanistan, who are living a life of insecurity from dawn to dusk. Their job is at the stake of insecurity, and children don't know if their father, who went out to buy food for them, will come home or not. An important clause in the report states:

The security problem in Afghanistan had been interpreted narrowly as the security of the 'state' from internal and external aggression... Often neglected had been the human security needs of the population at large. Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought safety and dignity in their daily lives (Warikoo, 2007, p. 35).

According to Amnesty International, a global NGO focusing on human rights, the Afghans who are displaced have to face a lot of problems. Many humanitarian organizations are trying to cater to the needs of these displaced persons, but the number of displaced persons is rising each day, due to which it is very difficult for the humanitarian organizations, or let alone the government, to be able to fulfil the requirements of each and every individual.

About 400 people are displaced every day in Afghanistan. With the conflict intensifying in recent years, entire communities have fled their homes in search of greater security – and their numbers are rising. Tens of thousands of people have sought shelter in slums in the capital, Kabul, as well as other cities. “Working with international donors, Afghanistan must take decisive action to provide displaced people with adequate housing, protect them against forced eviction, and ensure that their rights to food, water, health, and education are fulfilled” (Mosadiq, [2012](#), p. 1).

Poverty remains one of the greatest human rights challenges in Afghanistan. War has shattered the lives of the citizens economically and financially. Warikoo ([2007](#)) in a recent report based on 5,846 interviews conducted in 2005 by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) on economic and social rights indicates,

Half of the respondents do not have access to safe drinking water; lack of adequate house is widespread, compounded by insecurity of tenure and lack of protection against unlawful evictions; that accessibility and quality of clinics and hospitals is insufficient (p. 316).

War in Afghanistan and the Publication of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

A Thousand Splendid Suns is an intermix of story and history. As Stuhr ([2013](#)) exclaimed, “The story of their [characters] lives run parallel to the story of Afghanistan” (p. 53). *The New York Times* says, “Once again, the setting is Afghanistan, but this time [Hosseini] has taken the last 33 years of that country's tumultuous history of war and oppression and narrated it on an intimate scale, through the lives of two women” (See, [2007](#)). *A Thousand Splendid Suns* can best be seen in relation to its historical background. In relation to its historical context, Jabberwock ([2007](#)) says, “The converging stories of these two women are told against the backdrop of an Afghanistan that is lurching from one era of instability to another...fighting that turned the country into a war zone” (p. 3).

A Thousand Splendid Suns is a novel which talks about war and its impacts. The biggest social impact is oppression, and it is told through the lives of two female characters, Mariam and Laila. Both of the main female characters in the story are brutally victimized, and one really feels their pain after reading this novel. It is unimaginably tragic; *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a sad and beautiful testament to both Afghan suffering and strength.

Methodology

The following section will outline the research methodology of the present study.

Research Design

This research study is qualitative in nature, as relevant lines from the selected text were quoted and discussed in light of the research objectives. Creswell ([2003](#)) defines a qualitative study “as a study based on building a complete and detailed picture with the help of words, reporting detailed views of research participants and it is conducted in a natural setting” (p.68).

Sample

The sample is a subset of the population. It is the selected work which the researcher wishes to investigate and analyze. The second novel by Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* ([2007](#)), was taken as the sample of the research.

Analysis of Selected Work

At a general level, society is a very broad term that takes into account a variety of aspects, such as physical, psychological, and economic aspects. Each of these aspects is involved in shaping the lives of the people living in a society. In this research, the focus was on the psychological, physical and economic impact of war. The selected novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, was analyzed by focusing on three variables. On a general level, the social impact of war on the characters of the selected work was analyzed. Under the heading of social impact, three aspects are taken into account. The impact of war on the characters of the selected work was analyzed physically, psychologically and economically. A thematic analysis of the novel in light of these three variables was conducted.

Findings and Discussion

The following section will present the research findings and discuss them. The three headings of this section will highlight how war has affected the characters of the selected novel physically, psychologically and economically.

Physical Impact of War

Whenever war is being discussed, it is impossible not to talk about the physical injuries it causes to the victims. An injury from land mines is yet another sad part of war. Although land mines are used at the borders of a country during the war so that the enemy cannot enter, these land mines have always harmed the citizens of Afghanistan. The map of the land mines is commonly not known to the common people, and anybody who would step on the land mines could injure their body parts. Tariq, in the selected novel, when he was only five, stepped on one such mine, and he lost his left leg. Laila in a magazine once sees,

One photo, Laila remembered, showed a man in a long white coat handing a lollipop to a legless little boy. The caption below the photo reads children are the intended victims of the Soviet land mine campaign. The article went on to say that the Soviets also liked to hide explosives inside brightly coloured toys. If a child picked it up, the toy exploded and tore off fingers or an entire hand (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 109).

One of the physical tortures by the Soviets was the burning of villages. People were burned alive while they were sleeping. "...[A] young mujahid was saying that the Soviets had dropped gas on his village that burned people's skin and blinded them. He said he had seen his mother and sister running for the stream coughing up blood" (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 100).

War has always inflicted physical pain on its victims, be it any war taking place in any part of the world. The tortures of pain are also depicted in depth in the novel *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad. Marlow, the narrator of the novel, relates the account of his trip to Africa, where he sees the horrors of a colonized country under war. The Africans were turned into slaves to collect ivory. This ivory was then exported to Britain. The Africans were forced to work all day long without food and rest. Marlow, at the beginning of the novel, meets the captain of a Swede ship in Africa, who tells him about the poor condition of the people being forced to work as slaves. He says, "The other day, I took up a man who hanged himself on the road...Hanged himself! Why, in God's name? I cried. He kept on looking out watchfully. "Who knows? The sun too much for him, or the country perhaps" (Conrad, [1994](#), p. 32).

In the book *My Life with the Taliban*, the writer talks about the physical impact of war by saying, "Poor Afghans are killed in many ways: they have been ambushed, kidnapped and detained; foreigners are attacking their homes, killing and injuring their wives and children; they have been made to leave their country" (Zaeef, [2010](#), p. 221).

Coming back to the cruelties of war in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the torture of the conquerors left the civilian population with nothing good to remember. One of them could be depicted in these lines from the novel, "The Mujahideen are...they torture them. I heard they electrocute them...that they crush [their] balls with pliers" (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 227). After the rule of the Soviets was demolished and they were thrown out of the country by the Mujahideen, Afghanistan and its people celebrated. Laila's mother cooked meals and invited the whole street for a

lavish feast. But who could have guessed that their happiness was momentary? Soon, the groups of Mujahideen started fighting against each other for power. The city of Kabul is, in fact, a valley. The different groups of Mujahideen were settled among the mountains surrounding Kabul. They target rockets at each other. Usually, nine out of ten rockets became detractors, and they used to hit the city buildings in between, taking the lives of many Afghans each day. "Then the blast, blissfully elsewhere, followed by an expulsion of breath...there was a scrambling, a bare-handed frenzy of digging, of pulling from the debris, what remained of a sister, a brother, a grandchild" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 156). Laila's parents also died due to a rocket blast, which totally changed the course of her life.

Then Laila struck the wall. Crashed to the ground on her face and arms, a shower of dirt and pebbles and glass. The last thing she was aware of was seeing something thud to the ground nearby. A bloody chunk of something. On it, the tip of a red bridge poking through thick fog (Hosseini, 2007, p. 174).

Physical injuries mixed with psychological trauma were what enwrapped the lives of the war-inflicted Afghans. As Shabanirad and Seifi (2014) believed, "The author makes it obvious that he is engaged with the circumstances of females in Afghan society" (p. 250). "Rape of young females as well as their mothers" (Devi, 2005) was a physical impact of war highlighted by Hosseini. "Sisters. All three raped. Their throats slashed. Someone had bitten the rings off their fingers. You could tell, they had teeth marks" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 157-158).

For almost three decades, the "Afghan refugee crisis has been one of the most severe around the globe" (Machel, 2001). War, hunger, anarchy, and oppression forced millions of people Tariq and his family –to abandon their homes and flee Afghanistan to settle in neighboring countries Pakistan and Iran. Today, this displacement has caused more than two million Afghan refugees to remain in Pakistan. There were numerous problems faced by the refugees in the migrated countries. To name a few, they had to face no clean drinking water, no shelter, no sanitary conditions, and, eventually, an outflow of viruses and diseases. Tariq, after coming back to Afghanistan to meet Laila, narrates to her, "TB, dysentery, famine, crime. And that's before winter. Then it's frostbite season. Pneumonia. People turning to icicles. Those camps become frozen graveyards" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 193).

While discussing the physical impact of war on the characters of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, there is a gruesome incident of Laila's second delivery when she had a caesarian operation, which was carried out without anaesthesia. Including the long list of strict laws imposed by the Taliban was also the separation of men's and women's hospitals. Things would have been fine if it was only about the separation of men and women in hospitals. But sadly, this was not the case. The Taliban made all the hospitals of Kabul 'men-only' hospitals except one. This one 'women only' was the 'Rabia Balkhi' hospital, which could hardly be termed a hospital. The lines from the novel are, "THE WAITING ROOM at Rabia Balkhi was teeming with women in burqas and their children. The air stank of sweat and unwashed bodies, of feet, urine, cigarette smoke, and antiseptic" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 255). Screaming with pain, Laila was being cut open with cutters without any anaesthesia as anaesthetic medicines were not available. The lady doctor told Maryam,

What do you want me to do? They [Taliban] won't give me what I need. I have no X-ray either, no suction, no oxygen, not even a simple antibiotic. Hospitals and stores holding medical supplies were getting shelled. Vehicles carrying emergency food supplies were being barred from entering the city...raided, shot at (Hosseini, 2007, p. 227).

Just like lady doctors were having a hard time in Afghanistan, teachers were also not given the respect they deserved, which could have multifaceted results. As Skaine (2002, p. 9) argues, "One of the most destructive effects of the Taliban's restrictions on women working is that a generation of children is growing up uneducated because most of Afghanistan's teachers were women". The Taliban even prepared a long list of rules and regulations for the people to follow, and if these rules were not respected, public thrashings were used to be the result. When Laila admitted her daughter Aziza to an orphanage, she went to meet her once a week. In the initial days, Rasheed willingly went with her, but soon, he refused as it felt more like a burden to him. So, Laila had to go along with the constant fear of being caught by the Taliban, as they did not allow women to step out without a male member of the family.

Once, she was caught by the Taliban alone on the street and was beaten up very torturously. After that, it became a common happening.

[A] young Talib beat Laila with a radio antenna. When he was done, he gave a final whack to the back of her neck...Laila never would have believed that a human body could withstand this much beating, this viciously, this regularly, and keep functioning (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 286-287).

Psychological Impact of War

Among the various impacts of war, the impact on the psychological state of the people is the most significant one. "War upsets the mental order of the people, making them act in a way which cannot be termed as normal" (Kakutani, [2007](#)). Among the civilian population, women and children are the ones being affected the most. Victims of war often state that they live in a state of constant fear. War has a deep psychological impact on its victims, which takes a very long time to heal. In *Afghanistan, Arms and Conflict*, Bhatia and Sedra states,

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 95 per cent of the Afghan population has been psychologically affected by the conflict, while 20 per cent may 'suffer...from mental health problems' and 30 per cent may suffer from anxiety, depression, psychosomatic problems such as insomnia and forms of post-traumatic stress disorder (Bhatia & Sedra, [2008](#), p. 21).

Talking about the war situation depicted in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the characters felt fear of being killed every time they stepped outside their homes. Even living inside was not safe, as rockets could at any time track their way to anybody's house, taking many innocent lives. The continuous mental agony and the fear of rocket blasts were the two things that surrounded Laila's childhood. Her best friend, Giti, died in a similar rocket blast. Whenever her family used to hear a rocket blast, they thanked God that it did not strike them, and they waited when it dreadfully would.

Then the blast, blissfully elsewhere, followed by an expulsion of breath and the knowledge that they had been spared for now while somewhere else, amid choking clouds of smoke, there was a scrambling, a bare-handed frenzy of digging, of pulling from the debris, what remained of a sister, or a brother, a grandchild (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 156).

After mental agony and the fear of being killed, what followed were the sleepless nights. Even when they got to sleep for an hour or two, the horror-filled dreams made the characters of the novel agonized. Laila saw many rocket blasts in front of her own eyes, and their memory settled permanently in her mind. "Laila's dreams were suffused with fire and detached limbs and the moaning of the wounded" (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 157).

One can relate the psychological state of the characters of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* with the character of Septimus Warren Smith of *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf. Septimus is portrayed as a World War 1 veteran suffering from shell shock. Before the war, he used to be a lively and aspiring poet, but the war-shattered his mental state completely. He becomes an introvert, assuming human nature to be evil. His anguish and despair make him commit suicide. One of the other characters, Clarissa says in the novel, "This late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears. Tears and sorrows; courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing" (Woolf, [1925](#), p. 8). She reads these lines from Shakespeare's play *Cymbeline* (Marcus, [2014](#)). According to these lines, everyone, regardless of their class, has to suffer the cruelties of war in one way or the other. Most of them suffer from depression and become mentally unstable.

Target killing also caused continuous mental instability, which became a common thing in the era of the Mujahideen. No family was lucky enough to have all its family members sitting together at the table for lunch or dinner. Some lost one or sometimes even six to seven members of the same family due to the blasts and target killing. Mujahideen targeted people while they drove their personal cars. Soon, people started painting their cars yellow

(transforming them into taxis) to save themselves from target killing. "...[R]ecent rash of people spraying their cars yellow" (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 158).

It is one of the effects of war which makes a person forget the difference between right and wrong. They become trapped in the intricacies of war to such an extent that they no longer are able to think sanely (Thompson, [2009](#)). It is evident through Mariam's actions that she hated her father extremely but eventually forgave him. His act of marrying her off to an old man in a strange city seemed petty to her now, all due to the horrid war around her.

What would have been the harm to let him in, sit with him, let him say what he'd come to say? He was her father. He'd not been a good father, it was true, but how ordinary his faults seemed now, how forgivable when compared to Rasheed's malice or to the brutality and violence that she had seen men inflict on one another (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 275).

Laila's depiction of psychological imbalance in the novel is the other side of the same story. When Tariq offers her his love, she feels no harm in accepting it, as it is less sinful than all those killings around her. It made her forget her mother's lesson that a girl's chastity is a pearl to be taken care of, not to be destroyed. "In the midst of all this killing and looting, all this ugliness, it was a harmless thing to sit here beneath a tree and kiss Tariq. A small thing. An easily forgivable indulgence" (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 159).

Laila's father was a teacher by profession in the novel. But due to the ever-increasing rape and murder cases in the city, he forcibly forgets to give priority to education and compels Laila to leave school. From this, one can imagine the psychological pressure on her father's mind that he commits this hideous task of letting her daughter stay out of school. "The streets became so unsafe that Babi did an unthinkable thing. He had Laila drop out of school" (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 160).

The incidents of rape and murder became so high in number that mothers were killing their own daughters before anyone came and made them suffer. A high suicide rate was reported by the authorities. "Mariam heard of women who were killing themselves out of being raped. . . (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 227). Laila, as a mother, feared for her daughter Aziza. She had dreams where she would find herself burying Aziza alive in fear of being caught and abducted by the Taliban. "...this time, it Aziza they're lowering into the ground" (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 268).

Economic Impact of War

With the psychological and physical impact, one cannot ignore the economic impact of war. Starting from leaving jobs, Laila's father had to resign as a teacher because the communists were against education. "...[H]e was a university-educated man. He'd been a high school teacher before the communists fired him-this was shortly after the coup of 1978, about a year and a half before the Soviets had invaded" (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 103). Like Laila's father, Rasheed, who was a well-reputed shoemaker, had to do a part-time job as a doorman outside a hotel in order to fulfil the needs of his family. "This was his first week as a doorman for the Intercontinental. From noon to eight, six days a week, Rasheed opened car doors, carried luggage, mopped up the occasional spill" (Hosseini, [2007](#), p. 289).

Also, the cinema business of Mariam's father, Jaleel, was forcibly shut down by the communists. Once, Jaleel used to have a big villa in the city of Herat, with a dozen housekeepers and a Benz to drive, but war totally shattered his elite lifestyle. Similarly, in *Kite Runner*, Hosseini's first novel, a university professor becomes a street beggar as universities are closed down.

The old beggar nodded. . . I remember the first time I saw them rolling into Kabul. What a joyous day that was!" he said. "An end to the killing!.. I used to teach it at the university." "From 1958 to 1996. I taught Hāfez, Khayyām, Rumi, Beydel, Jami, Saadi. Once, I was even a guest lecturer in Tehran in 1971. I gave a lecture on the mystic Beydel. I remember how they all stood and clapped (Hosseini, [2003](#), p. 178).

Soon, people started selling their household things even at low prices just to leave the war-trodden area and migrate to safer places. Houses were destroyed due to rocket blasts, so "people [were] living under scraps of cardboard" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 193). In the third part of the book, we can see the worst economic condition of Rasheed's house. There was nothing to eat all day except raw vegetables. Sometimes, boiled rice used to be a rare treat for them. "Rice, boiled plain and white, with no meat or sauce, was a rare treat now. They skipped meals with increasing and alarming regularity. . . They ate raw turnips sprinkled with salt. Limp leaves of lettuce and blackened bananas for dinner" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 272).

There was a high rate of robbery and looting, which caused many Afghans to lose all their savings, thus suffering economically. "There was looting, murder, and, increasingly, rape, which used to intimidate civilians and reward militiamen" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 226-227). People were giving in to their daughters and sons for street begging, which could help them buy one-time meals. Rasheed also talks to Laila about making Aziza a beggar, but she completely refuses him. Instead, they admitted her to an orphanage. Laila and Mariam started selling their furniture and clothes to buy food. "First to go were Mariam's things, then Laila's. Aziza's baby clothes. . . Rasheed's watch too was sold, his old transistor radio, his pair of neckties, his shoes, and his wedding ring" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 271).

Mothers were killing their own children in order to end their days of hunger. "Mariam heard of a neighbourhood widow who had ground some dried bread, laced it with rat poison, and fed it to all seven of her children. She had saved the biggest portion for herself" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 272). Apart from the economic condition of individuals, the country as a whole also collapsed. "In Kabul. . . fires raged. . . Embassies were closing down" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 207). Due to the closing down of embassies, foreign relations were also being damaged. As there were weak foreign relations, so was the weak situation of foreign trade. One of the main tourist spots in the country, the Buddhas of Bamiyan, were also destroyed by the Taliban. These Buddhas were almost three thousand years old, and used to attract tourists, hence generating income. ". . . [T]aliban had planted TNT in the crevices of the giant Buddhas in Bamiyan and blown them apart calling them objects of idolatry and sin" (Hosseini, 2007, p. 278).

Psychological, physical and economic impact of war together made the lives of Afghans worse than anyone could imagine. By writing such a novel, Hosseini has exposed the pain of his people to readers all around the world. Such a type of literature helps gain global attention, which could help solve the crisis of the poor Afghans, who are trapped even today.

Conclusion

Throughout the history of this world, war has never reached a successful end. It has never satisfied the two opposing enemies, as both have to suffer equally. The war in Afghanistan followed the same pattern. Everybody came forward to intrude into life in Afghanistan and made her bear the consequences (Team, 2007). First, the Soviets, the Mujahideen and then the Taliban each made the innocent lives suffer even more. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, changed the world scenario as well as the scenario in Afghanistan. The US army declared war against Afghanistan and sent its troops to Afghanistan to fight the Taliban in order to take revenge on them. At the end of this novel, Laila and Tariq go back to Afghanistan in order to help their war-trodden fellow Afghans. This ending is an enlightened one where Laila is shown teaching in an orphanage where they admitted Aziza (Dharmani and Singh, 2018). The end of the novel also provides the readers with a certain kind of hope that as the rule of the Taliban was starting to weaken, it could help the Afghans to resettle their lives. Though everybody knows that the situation in Afghanistan is still worse than before and after the American troops left the country in 2021, the Taliban have once again come into power, but by inflicting hope among the readers, Hosseini wants us to realize that there is certainly an end to everything, be it war. It seems as if he is giving hope not just to the readers but to the common people of Afghans as well. He still wants them to aim for high dreams and try to make them real.

The war in Afghanistan can come to an end only if the people of Afghanistan become united and consider themselves as only 'Afghans'. If they forget being Pashtuns, Hazaras, Uzbeks and Tajiks, only then could they find the solution to the problems in Afghanistan. According to the researcher's point of view, unity is the only solution to all the recent problems in the world, including in Afghanistan. Taliban should understand that they are not the only ones living in Afghanistan, and Mujahideen should forget to think that they can live in peace by eradicating the Taliban from the country. The heads of all the regional groups should make policies that make it clear that the intrusion of foreign forces into their land should not be allowed in any circumstances whatsoever. As per the title of this novel, Hosseini calls his people 'splendid suns'. As the sun falls every day with the hope of rising again the next day, similarly, he wants all the thousand splendid suns living in Afghanistan to have faith. They need to have faith that soon they will see a day that will bring them news of peace and independence. That day will finally mark the end of war in their beloved country, and all this could be accomplished by standing up for their rights and by being united.

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