

Politics of Failure: U.S. Miscalculation of Afghanistan's Dynamics (1979–2021) and Lessons Learned

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between Afghanistan and the United States of America (U.S.) from 1979 to 2021, focusing on U.S. engagements with religious entities referred to as jihadi groups and its influence in establishing a new government post-2001. The analysis reveals that following the Soviet withdrawal in 1992, the U.S. also retreated from Afghanistan, resulting in a power vacuum that precipitated civil war and the emergence of the Taliban. After the Taliban's ousting in 2001, the U.S. facilitated the formation of a new government, national military, police, and intelligence agencies, while also launching disarmament initiatives and development projects. However, these endeavors encountered considerable obstacles, such as corruption, nepotism, and ineffective governance structures. The nation-building efforts faced opposition from the Pashtun ethnic group, many of whom supported the Taliban in opposition to contemporary state-building efforts. During peace talks, the Afghan government was marginalized, which bolstered the Taliban and ultimately allowed for their reconquest of Afghanistan in August 2021. The results underscore that the lack of a holistic approach to governance, security, development, and peace negotiations played a significant role in Afghanistan's persistent political turmoil.

Keywords: Afghanistan, United State, State-building, peace negotiation, government failure.

Introduction

Afghanistan has maintained a long-standing relationship with the United States. Each government in Afghanistan has aimed to enhance bilateral relations with the U.S. due to its status as one of the most developed nations capable of assisting Afghanistan in modernizing its infrastructure. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two nations, Afghanistan has reaped benefits from its connection with the U.S. The United States has offered economic and technical support to fund development initiatives, as well as scholarships for students to pursue higher education in U.S. institutions. The relationship between Afghanistan and the U.S. transitioned into a new phase in 1979, following the establishment of a pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan, which fostered closer ties with Soviet bloc countries while diminishing its relations with the West. The U.S. grew concerned about the Soviet Union's expansion towards the Indian Ocean and, in response, supported Pakistan-based jihadist groups to combat the Soviet-backed regime in Afghanistan.

After ten years of fighting the Soviet-backed government and Soviet forces in Afghanistan, the jihadi groups succeeded in expelling the Soviet forces from Afghanistan and a few years later toppling the Kabul regime. However, due to the lack of an effective mechanism, the jihadi groups failed to establish an inclusive government in Afghanistan and fought each other for political domination of the country. At this time, the U.S. abandoned Afghanistan, which paved the road to the rise of the Taliban that seized control of some provinces of Afghanistan and established their headquarters in Kandahar. Non-Pashtun ethnic groups stood against Taliban while majority of Pashtun welcomed Taliban and support them. Non-Pashtun ethnic groups continued to fight the Taliban until 2001, and in September 2001, Al-Qaida, an Islamic fundamentalist group attacked in the U.S. which caused that U.S. to launch military offensives on Afghanistan because Taliban had sheltered Osama bin Laden, leader

of Al-Qaida. The U.S. with cooperation of non-Pashtun ethnic groups fought and toppled Taliban from power and established an interim administration in Afghanistan under Hamid Karzai.

Nevertheless, the newly established government, supported by the United States and its allies, was unable to fulfill its objectives—namely, combating corruption, nepotism, and lawlessness. The intermittent assaults by the Taliban on government forces represented the most significant obstacles for the new administration, leading to a dependency on U.S. and NATO forces for its survival. Both the U.S. and the Afghan government sought to engage in negotiations with the Taliban to foster peace and minimize military expenditures. In 2013, the U.S. permitted the Taliban to establish an office in Doha, Qatar, marking a pivotal moment in Afghan political dynamics. Concurrently, the Taliban pursued negotiations with the U.S. while continuing their military actions against the government. After eight years of discussions with the U.S., the Taliban ultimately succeeded in overthrowing the Kabul regime on August 15, 2021.

Following their acquisition of power, the Taliban enforced rigorous regulations concerning women, which encompassed the shutdown of educational institutions for girls and restricted women's involvement in the workforce beyond domestic settings. Additionally, the Taliban banned political engagement, limited the operations of civil society organizations, and instituted stringent regulations over both print and broadcast media. Despite the group's attempts to convey a more moderate image on the global stage, only Russia granted recognition to the Taliban, while the wider international community refrained from offering formal acknowledgment.

This research aims to investigate the relations between Afghanistan and the United States from 1979 to 2021. It highlights the involvement of the U.S. in the jihad (holy war) against the Soviet Union and the political void that emerged following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, which facilitated the rise of the Taliban in 1994. The study particularly focuses on the U.S. re-engagement in Afghanistan post-2001, analyzing its contributions to state and nation-building, as well as the factors that led to the collapse of the Afghan government in 2021. Through the examination of these dynamics, the research aspires to enhance the broader discussions surrounding Afghanistan–U.S. relations, the patterns of cooperation, the underlying reasons for the government's failure in Afghanistan in 2021, and the resurgence of the Taliban. The insights gained from U.S. involvement may provide valuable lessons for peripheral nations facing similar challenges as Afghanistan, guiding them towards a new developmental trajectory.

2. Research question

- What were the relations like between the United States and Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989?
- How did the relations between the United States and Afghanistan evolve from 1990 to 1996?
- What influence did the United States' policies have on the emergence of the Taliban?
- What was the involvement of the United States in Afghanistan post-2001, and what obstacles did it encounter?
- What elements led to the collapse of the government of Afghanistan in 2021?

3. Methodology

This research utilizes a historical-analytical methodology to investigate the involvement and the relations between the United States and Afghanistan from 1979 to 2021, as well as the factors that led to the collapse of the Afghan government and the resurgence of the Taliban. This study draws upon both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of

interviews and statements from local politicians and scholars, while secondary sources encompass published materials such as books, journals, government documents, and research papers.

4. Analytical framework

This study investigates the engagement of the United States and its diplomatic relations with Afghanistan from 1979 to 2021. It offers a comprehensive analysis of U.S. participation during the conflict against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, as well as the subsequent American initiatives aimed at establishing a new government in Afghanistan post-2001. The research delves into topics concerning nation and state-building, while also examining the factors that contributed to the government's failure and the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

5. The Soviet Union Invasion of Afghanistan and United States Involvement

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 marked a new phase in United States–Afghanistan relations. The U.S. sought to strengthen ties with religious and tribal leaders rather than with the Afghan government. Its goal was to use these leaders as a force against the Soviet Union forces in Afghanistan and its advance toward South Asia. The nature of U.S. relations with tribal leaders varied: some were prioritized and received more support, while others were marginalized and failed to gain U.S. backing. A key factor in U.S. support was ethnicity, each tribal leader supported by the United States represented a particular ethnic group in Afghanistan, but none were broadly acceptable to all groups. Therefore, this article examines the relations of United State with three major ethnic groups in Afghanistan to provide a comprehensive understanding about the relations of United State and Afghanistan.

5.1. Relations of Hazara and US from 1979-1989

Based on the information available, there was no relationship between the Hazara ethnic community and the United States prior to 1979. Certain Hazaras who became affiliated with the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) maintained strong connections with the Soviet Union and perceived the U.S. as an imperialist entity through the lens of the Soviet political doctrine. Following 1979, when Afghanistan was engulfed in civil war and resisted the Soviet occupation, the U.S. refrained from offering support to the Shia Hazara political factions, viewing the Shia Hazaras as clients of the Iranian clerical regime. It is indeed accurate that the majority of Hazara political groups were reliant on Iran; however, Hazara nationalist factions depended on their limited resources to combat the Soviet occupation forces. This included the collection of taxes and the coercion of non-Hazara political groups to pay them under the pretext of permitting their personnel to traverse Hazara territories while transporting military supplies to their bases. There are rumors suggesting that some individual Hazaras may have received financial assistance from the U.S. in exchange for intelligence regarding developments in the Hazara region, yet no political organizations received financial or military aid from the United States.

It is stated that United State lacked knowledge about the Hazaras, and common perception about Hazara was that they are dependent in Iran, and no effort was made correct that wrong perception on the Hazaras. Americans in charge of Afghanistan affairs did not view Hazaras as a reliable ally to United State, and favored the Pashtuns. Hazara political groups remained on margin of international aid and failed to obtain support from the United State.

The neglect of Hazara political factions by the United States led to a strengthening of ties between the Hazara and Shia political groups and Iran. In response, Iran augmented its influence over the Shia community by employing clergymen as informants and leveraging

religious institutions to bolster its presence in Afghanistan, particularly following the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. This strategy included increased support for Shia political factions, resulting in a prolonged dependency of all Shia Hazara groups on Iran. This dependency persisted for several years; notably, between 2013 and 2016, Iran had a significant role in recruiting Hazaras to join the Fatimiyun Brigade, which was subsequently deployed in Syria. The reliance of the Hazaras on Iran had detrimental effects, as they found themselves with no alternative means to safeguard their interests. Consequently, Hazara political groups continued to rely on Iran. While some prominent Hazara individuals expressed a desire to engage in dialogue with the United States, they lacked the necessary channels to establish communication with U.S. officials.

Hazara political groups continued their relations with Iran during 1979-1989, and some with Pakistan, but Pakistan also did not trust them regarding them as Iranian spies. For example, Harakat-Islami, a political group under leadership of Asif Mohsini had relations with Pakistan, but Pakistan never trusted him, and in distribution of military aids Pakistan ignored Harakat-Islami. Pakistan, policy was to support Pashtun political groups, and most of the financial and military aids which provided by the United State and Arab countries were given to the Pashtun political groups.

Between 1979 and 1989, no Hazara political leaders succeeded in establishing relations with the United States; instead, the Hazara remained dependent on Iran. Iranian officials were concerned about the influence of other countries on Shia political groups in Afghanistan and focused on preventing U.S. involvement among the Shias. As a result, Iran radicalized the Hazara and Shia communities, indoctrinating them with the belief that the United States was the enemy of Islam. This perception persisted among the Shias in Afghanistan that clouded their views regarding the U.S. for many years.

Between 1979 and 1989, there existed a potential for both the Hazara and the United States to forge diplomatic relations. This initiative was led by certain democratic elements within the Hazara community who opposed Iran's policies. These democratic figures contended that establishing ties with the United States would benefit the political interests of the Hazara groups, asserting that the formation of a secular government in Afghanistan would align with the long-term interests of the Hazaras, rather than a clerical governance system. However, they never had the opportunity to engage in discussions with U.S. officials, resulting in the Hazara remaining politically marginalized during this timeframe.

5.2. Tajik Relations with the US from 1979-1989

The most important political group among the Tajiks during 1979–1989 was Jamiat-e Islami. Its ideology was influenced by the political philosophy of the Muslim Brotherhood and worked to implement Islamic principles if they seized political power. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Jamiat-e Islami emerged as a strong political group in the country. It succeeded in obtaining financial aid from different countries, however, there is no evidence to demonstrate direct support from the United States; it may have received U.S. financial assistance through Pakistan. During 1979-1989, Jamiat-e Islami had offices in Pakistan and was in contact with Pakistani officials. After 1989, when relations between Jamiat-e Islami and Pakistan deteriorated due to Pakistan's support for the Pashtun political group, Hezb-e Islami, some members of Jamiat revealed that Pakistan was unwilling to support Jamiat-e Islami because it was a Tajik party, while Pakistan's agenda was to support only Pashtun political groups in Afghanistan. However, because of Pakistan's interference, U.S. relations with Tajik political groups did not flourish during 1979–1989. Pakistan distributed international aid to Islamic fundamentalist groups but gave the lion share of aid to Hizb-e-Islami. By the end of 1989, Rabbani received aid through British channels. France also supported Masood during fight against Soviet Union.

However, after 1990, the United States made some attempts to normalize its relations with Masood, but these efforts did not succeed. Scholars believe that two factors acted as barriers in strengthening relations between Masood and the United States: Pakistan and Russia. Pakistan was not willing to support relations between Masood and the United States because it favored U.S. support to Pashtun political groups. Meanwhile, Masood's relations with Russia caused the United States to become suspicious of his ties with Moscow.

5.3. Relations of Pashtun and US from 1979-1989

U.S. ties with the Pashtuns are somewhat different from those with other ethnic groups because the Pashtuns historically controlled Afghanistan, and most of the country's rulers were Pashtun. Additionally, some Pashtun figures, such as Zalmay Khalilzad, have worked with various U.S. presidents since 1979, fostering links between U.S. officials and Pashtun leaders.

Before 1979, the United States had formal relations with Pashtun political figures, but after 1979, it established relations with tribal and religious leaders, marking a new phase in U.S.–Pashtun relations. The United States allocated a large amount of funding for fighting against the Soviet Union, and most of it was allocated to the Pashtun tribal leaders. Hezb-e-Islami, under the leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, was a major recipient of U.S. financial aid during 1979–1989. The United States overestimated the Pashtuns' capability to fight the Soviet forces. It assumed that the Pashtuns were a force for stability in Afghanistan, and this perception has persisted among U.S. political figures. However, this assumption was not correct, as focusing on a single ethnic group had increased instability in Afghanistan.

Non-Pashtun ethnic groups in Afghanistan believed that the United States preferred Pashtuns over non-Pashtuns and condoning most of the Pashtuns' mistakes. For example, human rights abuses committed by Pashtun rulers were never addressed by the United States. In 2004, when I discussed U.S. support for the Mujahidin with a Hazara scholar in Bamian province, he stated that, "The United States paid attention to the Pashtuns and viewed non-Pashtuns as weak political groups." This perception also existed among the Tajiks, who believed that the United States had a deeper relationship with the Pashtuns than with non-Pashtuns in Afghanistan during 1979–1989.

In 1994, U.S. relations with the Pashtuns in Afghanistan entered a new phase. The Taliban, a military group associated with the Pashtuns, emerged in Qandahar with the support of Pakistan and some Arab countries. Initially, the Taliban declared that their intention was to end the civil war in Afghanistan, but soon it became clear that their objective was to overthrow the Rabbani government in Kabul and establish Pashtun hegemony in Afghanistan. Non-Pashtun scholars believed that the rise of the Taliban had tacit U.S. political and financial support; they argued that Pakistan had used its influence and persuaded the United States to recognize the Taliban as a stabilizing power in Afghanistan. However, U.S. relations with the Taliban remain uncertain. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Taliban constituted the Achilles' Heel of the U.S.–Pashtun relations in Afghanistan.

6. Civil war in Kabul and United State approach

After the withdrawal of Soviet Union forces from Afghanistan in 1989, the Soviet-backed government was on the verge of disintegration, but it resisted for four years against jihadist groups before collapsing in 1992. The jihadi groups that played a role in the fall of the government included Hezb-e Islami, Jamiat-e Islami, Junbish-e Islami, Mahaz-e Mille, Hezb-e Wahdat, and several smaller groups with limited power. After the government collapsed, these jihadist groups entered Kabul and fought each other to consolidate their bases. They

occupied government offices, looted public and private property, and destroyed military equipment. Within a few days, none of the offices were functional or able to serve the people. The reason for destruction was clear, jihadi groups had not skills and knowledge of governance.

Jihadi groups after entering Kabul failed to compromise with each other and continued to fight for control of the capital city. The conflict had its roots in Jihadi leaders' narrow-minded politics, and lack of a mechanism to share power. Also, jihadi groups were suspicious about each other, each one tried to strengthen its position and undermine the position of rival groups. Although the Jihadist selected Sebghtullah Mojadadi as a president while in exile in Peshawar, but his return to Kabul could not prevent civil war. However, conflict escalated when Burahnuddin Rabbani took the power and refused negotiation on power sharing scheme. According to the Jihadist, Mojadadi should have handed over the presidency to Rabbani after six months. Mojadadi did so but Rabbani did not abide by the agreement and stayed on after his tenure ended in six months. He extended his rule beyond the agreed six months through a council decision, marking the beginning of renewed conflict among the Jihadi groups. Furthermore, there was no mechanism in place to pave the way for an inclusive government in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of Soviet forces.

Jihadi groups called on Burahnuddin Rabbani to honor the agreement and hand over political power to the next person, but he refused. Due to the lack of supervision by a superpower over the jihadi groups, they were embroiled into a civil war. The role of the United States was very important in preventing civil war among the jihadi groups. If the United States had properly used its influence over these groups, the war might not have occurred, and Afghanistan would have been able to preserve its infrastructure for the next legitimate government.

Jihadist were divided in two rival camps: Hezbe-Wahdat, Junbish Mille, and Hezbe-Islami on one side, Jamiat Islami, Etihad Islami and some others on the other sides. Jamiat had sufficient arsenal for fighting compared to rival groups. Hezb-e-Islami was in better position and it had the support of Pakistan. Hezb-e-Wahdat and Junbish were not in a good position and it placed Hezbe-Wahdat in a bad position because it was in the first line of war. The war occurred in western and eastern parts of Kabul; majority of resident in the western part of Kabul was Hazara while those in the eastern areas was Tajik with some Pashtun. Three years' war killed thousands of people from both side and destroyed homes and properties. During three-year war, Iran forced Hezbe-Wahdat to abandon its position and support Rabbani, but Hezbe-Wahdat refused to leave its position and this deteriorated relation between Hezbe-Wahdat and Iran. Deteriorated relations with Iran put Hezbe-Wahdat in a precarious position as lost its ammunition during three-year war, suffered casualties, and there was not any other supporter to provide ammunition and other necessary materials to Hezb-e-Wahdat. According to some Hezbe-Wahdat members, at the end of the three-year war, Abdul Ali Mazari, leader of Hezb-e-Wahdat sought to establish relations with United States but he failed. Also, some other members sought to get support from the United State, but their attempts did not produce any result.

The United States pursued a passive policy during the civil war toward the jihadi groups, which allowed regional players to take a major role in Afghanistan internal development. If the United States had played an active role in Afghanistan after 1989, it would have mitigated the civil war and the rise of the Taliban. It seems that the U.S. passive policy toward Afghanistan after 1989 further encouraged Pakistan to increase its interference in Afghanistan - the rise of the Taliban is a direct result of Pakistan's involvement in the country.

The United States had the means to end the civil war in Afghanistan. It could persuade Pakistan to take a constructive approach toward its neighbor, and this was one of the serious demands by the Afghan people begging the United States to use its influence on Pakistan

to end the civil strife in Afghanistan. Abdul Hussain, who had participated in the war against the Soviet Union believed that after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, they expected the United States to intervene in Afghanistan and help establish a government acceptable to all Afghans. He argued that, at that time, the jihadi groups did not have the capacity to establish a government, and in the absence of the United States, it was clear that armed conflict would break out.

The United States' policy of non-intervention during the Afghan civil war caused significant turmoil in the lives of the Afghan populace. Many believed that the jihadi factions were established by the United States to counter the Soviet Union; however, following the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan, the United States left the Afghan citizens vulnerable to these jihadi groups without any framework to facilitate the formation of a legitimate government in the country. Consequently, the Afghan people harbor grievances against the United States for abandoning them to the jihadi factions and the Taliban.

7. Taliban Rise to Power-1994

The Taliban emerged in 1994 in Qandahar. Their slogan was to end the civil war and bring political stability to Afghanistan. In a short time, the Taliban conquered the southeastern provinces and advanced toward Kabul. The public's aversion to the civil war and jihadi groups helped the Taliban advance. They exploited this opportunity and presented themselves as the saviors of Afghanistan.

The Taliban reached the gates of Kabul. Hezb-e-Islami, which sympathized with the Taliban, paved the way for them to conquer the city. At this time, Hezb-e-Wahdat was engaged in a bitter armed confrontation with Rabbani's forces, and it did not have a strategy to react toward the Taliban's advances. The situation on Rabbani's side was different: they assumed that the Taliban would subjugate Hezb-e-Wahdat forces and then negotiate a compromise with them. Based on this erroneous perception, Rabbani and his defense minister, Masood, cooperated with the Taliban so that their forces enter Kabul and dislodge Hezb-e-Wahdat forces from the western part of the city.

Hezb-e-Wahdat had no option and was compelled to compromise with the Taliban, promising to lay down their arms and leave the area. The Taliban consolidated their base in the western part of Kabul near Hezb-e-Wahdat bases. According to the agreement between Hezb-e-Wahdat and the Taliban, Mazari abandoned the area and left Kabul to visit the Taliban in Char Asyab, south of Kabul. In a complicated political game, Mazari was arrested by some unknown members of the Taliban and was murdered, along with some of his comrades. It is suggested that Marzari's murder was carried out by members of the Taliban with close link to the Inter-Intelligence Services, ISI of Pakistan.

The murder of Mazari enabled the Taliban to enter Kabul without difficulty. They conquered the western part of Kabul and advanced toward the bases held by Rabbani's men. According to evidences, Rabbani's forces initially welcomed the Taliban and were pleased with Hezb-e-Wahdat's defeat and its retreat to Bamian. However, the Taliban were not ready to compromise with Rabbani's forces, and soon conflict arose between them in Kabul. After seven months of fighting, the Taliban conquered Kabul in 1996 and Rabbani's forces evacuated the city.

The perception of Rabbani and his defense minister regarding the Taliban was wrong. They assumed the Taliban's right army would not be able to maintain control of Kabul. However, the Taliban, with the cooperation of the ISI defeated rival political groups. When Rabbani's forces left Kabul, they realized their mistake and Rabbani paid a heavy price for his mistakes.

8. United States' Policy toward the Taliban

The United States did not take a serious stand toward the Taliban when they seized power. There may have been some understanding between Pakistan, the Taliban, and the United States. People in Afghanistan maintained that the United States policy toward the Taliban was fundamentally wrong. The educated elite in Afghanistan argued that the United States' lethargic approach harmed its vested interest in the country and reduced its influence in the region. They believed that Afghanistan had more potential for cooperation with the United States and with the rise of the Taliban this opportunity is lost as it paved the road for Islamic fundamentalism to take roots in the country and region.

In 2011, I was a student at Kabul University and experienced heated debate about civil war and the rise of the Taliban among students at the university campus. One of the lecturers in the History Department, used to tell his students that, "The United States is not a trustworthy ally; it left Afghanistan in 1990 that facilitated the return of the Taliban to power and will leave Afghanistan again and allow the Taliban to seize power and rule the country." Another lecturer from the Department of Sociology argued that neglect by the United States catapulted Afghanistan into the vortex of a prolonged conflict that would not be resolved soon. He argued that United State had the means to control Taliban in 1994, but it did not do so.

The United States approach toward the Taliban convinced the Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks to believe that the Taliban is a U.S. puppet and its anti-U.S. rhetoric is to cover their true identity. In 1999, after the Taliban conquered Bamian, they established a military base in the Shebar district of Bamian province, and the commander of their base Mullah Samiullah was a guerrilla fighter of Hezb-e-Islami. In a gathering he publicly stated that the United States supported the Taliban while some Arab countries provided money to the Taliban.

In a similar view, members of the Uzbek community believed that the Taliban's emergence is co-related to United State neglecting Afghanistan. After the Taliban's opposition to Rabbani's government in Kabul, most of Tajiks were convinced that the Taliban was backed by the United States. In 2012, I was in Bamian and discussed about civil strife in the region with a Tajik resident of the province who was involved in the Rabbani's government and Hezb-e-Wahdat, he strongly believed that the civil war and the rise of the Taliban were the result of the United States' policy of neglecting Afghanistan. He argued that once the Taliban realized that the United States' departed Afghanistan and its interest to the country's internal affairs dissipated which allowed the Taliban to consolidate their forces and with coordination with Pakistan's intelligence service fought and defeated rival political factions in Afghanistan.

Throughout its five-year reign, the Taliban perpetrated war crimes across the territories under their control. In 1998, they murdered thousands of innocent individuals in Mazar and carried out a massacre of numerous Hazaras over a span of two to three days. In 2001, the Taliban executed hundreds of Shia Hazaras in Yakawlank, Bamian, and also killed hundreds of Tajiks in Parwan province. There was an expectation that the United States would utilize its influence to curb the Taliban's actions; however, the sluggish response from the United States revealed its complicity in the Taliban's oppressive regime in Afghanistan.

9. Failure of Rabbani Government to Counter Taliban's Advance

Shia Hazara chief Mazari, and Rabbani initially welcomed Taliban into the western part of Kabul as Rabani intended to use the Taliban against his government foe – Hizb-e-Islami and Hezbe-wahdat. However, the Taliban had their own agendas: they wanted to force Rabbani to leave Kabul and disarm his men. As a result, fighting broke out between the Taliban and Rabbani's forces in Kabul. Rabbani was not in a good position to expel the Taliban from Kabul, but soon he was forced to flee Kabul to the safety of the northern regions still under

his and his allies control.

Rabbani's defeat convinced his defense minister, Masood that fighting the Taliban alone is difficult task, hence he contacted other Mujahidin leaders from Hazara and Uzbek community so they form a coalition of force and fight the Taliban. After few months non-Pashtun political groups formed a strong coalition against Taliban and succeed in forcing the Taliban to retreat from some areas they controlled earlier.

10. New Resistance Force to Fight the Taliban

Rabbani and Masood believed that a successful resistance against Taliban necessitated unity among non-Pashtun ethnic groups, and they knew that no one alone was able defeat the Taliban; therefor, three major non-Pashtun ethnic groups: Hazara, Tajik and Uzbek formed a new political structure – united front against Taliban.

Non-Pashtun groups mobilized their forces and each ethnic groups had a designated area of operation. Hazara forces were mobilized in Central Afghanistan, and established six battlefronts throughout Bamian and they fought the Taliban. Tajik forces were responsibility to fight the Taliban in north, northeast and western parts of Afghanistan while Uzbek forces to engage with the Taliban forces in the northern areas of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, three headquarters were established for non-Pashtun allies for fighting the Taliban: Bamian for Hazara, Panjshir for Tajik and Balkh for Uzbek forces.

The Taliban were determined to take control of all parts of Afghanistan. They were in a stronger position compared to their rivals because they had the support of Pakistan and some Arab countries, which allowed their forces to advance rapidly and seize control of territories in Afghanistan. Taliban also forged alliance with Islamic militants from Uzbekistan, Chechnya, Arab countries, Pakistan, and Central Asia and they helped the Taliban to remain a force for their rivals to wreak with. Ghulam Abbas, a Hazara commander in the Shaikh Ali district, had first-hand knowledge of the Taliban forces that were composed of various militant groups who showed no concern for their own lives while fighting believing that being killed on the battleground would entitle them direct entry to paradise. "Taliban believed that Hazara are infidels and that killing them is the religious duty of every Muslim fighter".

The anti-Taliban group had encountered serious challenges fighting the Taliban as they lacked sufficient equipment and resources compared to the Taliban. Rabbani's men abandoned most of their equipment in Kabul after withdrawing from the city while some arsenal in their possession were destroyed during the civil war. The Hazara forces were likewise in a weak position, having lost much of their military equipment in the Kabul conflict. In Bamian, they were left with only basic fire arms and equipment and a year later they managed to obtain some military supplies through smugglers, which placed the Hazara forces in a relatively stronger position. However, Uzbek forces were in a better position than the Hazara and Tajik forces because they were in possession of more military equipment soon after Najibullah government collapsed and they seized control of the government military supplies. Uzbek forces under Abdul Rashid Dostum was one of the most equipped force against Taliban though its member had weak moral and they had no clue as to why they fight the Taliban. This factor contributed to low morale among Uzbek forces and helped the Taliban to buy off some Uzbek commanders and with their help the Taliban conquered Balkh province in 1998 without of any effective resistance.

Meanwhile, the anti-Taliban opposition groups did not have access to substantial financial resources. Although some regional countries such as Iran, Russia, India, and Tajikistan provided limited military support, it was insufficient to sustain the war against the Taliban. In a 2020 interview, a former member of Rabbani's government stated: "We did not have access to resources; our commanders emphasized the need to carefully ration each bullet."

He added that during the conflict, there were times that for several days they had nothing to eat and they were forced to fight.

Hazaras in Bamian resisted the Taliban for two years, and they suffered setback after their defense lines were broken down in Aqrabat pass near to Saighan district by the Taliban. With the help of local Tajik militia the Taliban moved toward Bamian and seized control of the city. Gulbuddin, a local resident of Bamian and former Taliban ally in Bamian in 2021) highlighted the role of local trojan horse in helping the Taliban to capture Bamian. He stated that Taliban were unfamiliar with Bamian geography, and they did not know how to enter in Bamian, but they entered with the help by local disgruntled Tajiks. "Taliban come to our village and we joined them, we encouraged them to pressure Bamian to surrender". When I questioned him why did you cooperate with Taliban in the conquest of Bamian, his reply was poignant stating that "we had suffered under the Hazaras and we cooperated with the Taliban so they kill Hazaras in Bamian".

In 1998, the Taliban entered Bamian and caused the Hazara forces to retreat into the safety of mountains. I vividly remember that day; I was in grade 5 at school in the Shebar district of Bamian province. At first, I was not aware of the situation, but on the way to school my friends and I learned that the Taliban seized control of Bamian. It was a sad day for the Hazaras because they believed the Taliban would kill all of them. Most Hazara families left their homes and sought shelter in high mountains, abandoning their properties and only wanting to save their lives. My family and I also left our home and stayed in the mountains for four days, and no one knew what was happening in our village. After four days, a few people dared to go to the village, and when they returned and the Taliban did not bother them, others decided to return to their homes.

When the Taliban seized Bamian they burned some houses and looted people's property. They also beat some elders and forced them to surrender their fire arms. Ali Ahmad, one of the elders captured by the Taliban in 1998 said, "The Taliban told me to surrender his machinegun, and I told him that I don't have one because I am an elderly man, they beat me until I no longer had the strength to move". He said, "other elders came and carried me to my house". Taliban also searched for soldiers of Hezbe-Wahdat. During four to five days Taliban killed thousands of Hazaras. Hasan Ahmadi, a resident of the Bamian said that the Taliban massacred thousands of people and hundreds of others died of hunger during their escapes from Bamian city.

Hasan said "we fled to Bamian mountains and I saw some children died from hunger and cold weather and their fathers buried the dead body of their children under stone in the mountains and there was not time for funeral". He added that "we tried to go to Behsud district of Maidan Wardak province because it was a safe place to stay". I remember the Taliban brutalized people causing them to abandon everything and flee to Kabul and some to Pakistan and Iran. Taliban derided people, molested women and children and arrested men and demanding ransom for their freedom.

After two years of fighting in Bamian, Taliban realized that defeating Hezbe-Wahdat forces was difficult, hence they continue to push forward to Bamian to defeat Hezbe-Wahdat forces. Taliban wanted to remove Hezbe-Wahdat forces from Bamian, hence in January 2001, Taliban started one of the most prominent attacks in Yakawlank district, Hezbe-Wahdat forces experienced shortage of ammunition and other equipment and retreated from Yakawlank center and this helped the Taliban to seize Yakawlank. Taliban summoned ordinary persons and accused them of having link with Hezbe-Wahdat and summarily executed them. According to the Human Rights Watch about 170 person were murdered by Taliban. But according to local people, the number of people killed was over 300. Locals

believed that only 300 bodies remained in one place, while others were left in the bazaar, mountains, demolished houses, and some suburbs that were not counted by international agencies.

In March 2001, the Taliban destroyed the colossal Buddha statues in Bamian, intending to use this act as leverage against Hezb-e-Wahdat forces and to also pressure the international community to recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. The Buddha statues were part of the major historical heritage of the Buddhist civilization in Bamian and played an important role in attracting tourists from around the world. The Buddha statues were considered a symbol of the great civilization of the region, and for centuries, thousands of pilgrims visited Bamian. The destruction of the Bhuddas shocked the world, especially the Buddhist community around the world. Although some countries demanded Taliban not to destroy the Bhuddas, they did not heed the international call and destroyed the Buddhas.

In 1999, Taliban defeated Rabbani forces in Parwan and conquered most parts the province. Taliban deployed thousands forces to Parwan and settled in Shamali desert near to Charikar city to further pressure the Rabbani forces still in the provincial center. Taliban gathered thousands of militias in Shamali, and some Hazara were also forced to join in the war against Rabbani. According to Mohammad Ghafour one the Hazaras who was forced to participate in war against Rabbani in the Shamali district, noticed the presence of thousands of foreign militia from Uzbekistan, Chechenia, Pakistan, Central Asia and Arab countries to fight Rabbani. He said "Taliban told him to destroy the vineyards, burn houses and destroy everything in the area". When Ghafour asked Taliban why to destroy everything, the Taliban's answer was that Rabbani and his forces are not Muslim and it's the responsibility of Taliban to eradicate them from this land.

11. U.S. Absence Created a Vacuum that Empowered the Taliban

Afghan scholars believe that absence of United State after 1994 in Afghanistan provide opportunity for Taliban to consolidate its position and take control of the country. Rahmatullah Rafat believed that Taliban knew that United State is not willing to engage in Afghanistan after Soviet Union withdrawal; therefore, Taliban prepared its militia with the help of Pakistan and attacked in Afghanistan. He believed that abandoning Afghanistan during the civil war was a mistake by United State. Afghanistan lost much of its capability during the war against the Soviet Occupation and lacked the ability to form an independent government, making cooperation essential for stabilization. Rahim Wasiq, an Afghan scholar, argued that the absence of the United States left Afghanistan at the mercy of regional powers, which had no coherent policy toward the country and continued to support the proxy war in Afghanistan. According to him regional countries are responsible for Afghanistan's civil war and they were not willing to work toward stabilizing Afghanistan. A weak Afghanistan is in the interest of its neighbors, hence they provide opportunity for terroristic groups to operate there. Pakistan had longed for Afghanistan to remain weak. A strong government in Afghanistan is a challenge for Pakistan because the two countries have had differences regarding the common border: The Durand Line and the Pashtun population in Pakistan. The two issues motivated Pakistan to ensure that the government in Afghanistan remains dependent on Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan used the Taliban as a proxy to undermine government institutions in Afghanistan, believing that the Taliban would not be able to establish a strong government that could challenge Pakistan interests.

Massoma Mosavi believes that the absence of the United States in Afghanistan in the 1990s led to the rise of the Taliban, who abused women's rights, closed schools and universities for girls, and deprived minority groups of their basic right. She believes that abandoning Afghanistan was a mistake, and the expectation of the Afghan people was that United State

to support Afghanistan until stability is restored. Massoma accused regional countries for exploiting Afghanistan and the proxy war. She added that none of the regional countries had capability to stabilize Afghanistan and they just supported their proxies in Afghanistan.

Abandoning Afghanistan in the 1990s by the United States is considered a mistake by some U.S. officials. Robert Gates, former Secretary of Defense is one of them who told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the United States must not repeat the mistake of 1989. So, the absence of the United States caused the Taliban to form alliance with other terrorist groups to use their potential to advance its objectives. Al-Qaida was one of those terrorist groups which exploited the absence of the US presence in Afghanistan regarded the country as a safe haven for advancing his agendas. His men attacked in the United States that killed thousands of people on September 11, 2001. The Taliban transformed Afghanistan into a base for terrorist groups, increased the cultivation of narcotics, and provided an opportunity for smugglers to use Afghanistan as a conduit for transferring opium to Central Asia and Europe and onward to the US.

12. US involvement in Afghanistan from 2001-2021

After the US overthrew the Taliban regime in 2001, relations between Afghanistan and United States entered in a new phase. The United States established a new government under the leadership of Hamid Karzai. The United States with its European allies invested billions of U.S. dollars in different sectors in Afghanistan. The United States endeavored to establish a democratic government where political power be equally shared by all ethnic groups. Girls and boys attended schools and universities, civil society organizations were established, human rights and women rights were promoted by the government. Afghanistan that experienced five years of Taliban brutal rule looked for a better future and were happy with the United States' active involvement in the country. The United State support helped Afghanistan to chart a new path and it was expected that the country would become one of the developed countries in the region. However, the United State policy experienced challenges and committed some mistakes that put Afghanistan in a slippery road downward. For a better understanding of the issue I want to argue that major sectors which supported by United State in Afghanistan failed to produce tangible results and caused for failure of government in 2021.

13. 2001-State building and United State

There were two theories regarding state building in Afghanistan in 2001. The first theory supported a presidential system and the second a parliamentary system of governance. Rabbani and his allies wanted a parliamentary system, but Pashtun elites opposed the latter approach as they were interested in a presidential system. Pashtun representatives had the support of the United States, succeeded in persuading other participants at the Bonn Meeting to opt for presidential system. Pashtun's representative views on the type of government system was largely influenced by Ex-King Mohammad Zahir (toppled in 1973). They expected that Zahir's government would restore both stability and hegemony of Pashtun in Afghanistan. Representatives of Tajiks and other ethnic groups considered government under Rabbani to be their ideal type of government system in Afghanistan and they argued that parliamentary system would divide political power and is a cause for stability. However, a broad based government as a stabilize entity in Afghanistan did not materialize.

Non-Pashtun scholars believed that first step at the Bonn Meeting for choosing the right type of government system was wrong because presidential governmental system is not suitable for Afghanistan. According to this scholars, Afghanistan is a co-federation of ethnic groups and presidential system can't delegate equally political power among ethnic groups to the satisfaction of everyone. They argued that a parliamentary system was suitable for Afghanistan because it divides power between the prime minister and the president, and it

keeps a balance of power so that no ethnic group dominates the political system. But, it was not considered by United State and its allies as they opted for presidential system and appointed Hamid Karzai as president.

According to Abduraziq Waqif affiliated with Burahnuddin Rabbani government the United State agents bribed Mohammad Qasim Fahim representative of Rabbani to persuade Rabbani to accept the United State plan including the type of government, and he convinced Rabbani to accept the United State plan. It showed that the right type of government was not selected, but supporting presidential system option was preferred due to some political expediency.

In 2020, when I talked with a member of Rabbani government about the Bonn Meeting, he said “the United State plan was that a Pashtun should take the power and other political groups be under control of a Pashtun president”. He added “unfortunately some member of Rabbani government played very badly, they were bribed by the United State and they convinced Rabbani to accept the United State plan”. Also, this claim substantiated by Robert L. Grenier, Ex director of CIA office in Islamabad that United State had plan to support Hamid Karzai as head of new government in Afghanistan. It seems that some influential individuals may have convinced the United State about the type government system in Afghanistan. Non-Pashtun scholars believed that Zulmay Khalilzad persuaded the United State officials to select presidential system for Afghanistan because he assumed that it is in the best interest of Pashtun in Afghanistan.

Robert L. Grenier writes that United State was struggling to bring Karzai in the battlefield shows the seriousness of the United State to have select a Pashtun as a president in Afghanistan. Critic of Afghanistan government system argued that United State did not hear the voice of other ethnic groups in Afghanistan for selecting government system, the United State just heard the voice of Pashtun through Zulmay Khalilzad.

In addition to the two paradigm regarding future system of governance in Afghanistan the concept of federal system of government resonated loud among certain members of the political spectrum. They argued that for a stable Afghanistan there is need for federal government system because it decentralize power and every ethnic group have the freedom to vote for provincial governor and president. In the presidential system where president is a Pashtun he appoints Pashtuns from South as a governor in a province which majority of its population is not Pashtun and it creates problem because non-Pashtun ethnic groups would not support appointment of a Pashtun governor in their provinces. In a federal system of government people would be able to vote for their own choice of governor. In the presidential system all power rests in the hands of president and due to lack of a system to limit presidential powers s/he can do anything s/he wishes to do with regard to development in other ethnic community.

In practice, the presidential system encountered significant structural challenges in the execution of governance in Afghanistan until 2021. For instance, during the last five years, the government was unable to appoint governors without consulting jihadi leaders, as such decisions often provoked public protests. A clear example was the appointment of the governor of Balkh, which faced strong resistance, and the appointee never assumed office in the province; it destroyed the authority of government and escalated public dissatisfaction.

Critics of the presidential system also accused both presidents, Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, of discriminating against non-Pashtuns. They argued that both men misused their authority and their policies helped the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan. Such practices undermined the government's popularity and eroded public trust, and there was no mechanism to control power of presidents and rebuild peoples trust.

The dysfunctionality of the government system was evident, as none of its goals were achieved due to corruption, nepotism, insecurity, and arbitrary appointment of government officials. Non-Pashtun ethnic groups generally did not perceive the president as the leader of all people of Afghanistan but rather as a representative of the Pashtun community. Consequently, they did not support the most of government decisions and expressed dissatisfaction with its policies. Overall, it appears that the public demonstrated limited support for the president's unilateral decision-making.

14. Jihadist-United State-DIAG program

Jihadist had an important role in the collapse of the Taliban. Without them the United State could not defeat Taliban. Tajik Jihadist in north, northeast and western parts of the country, Hazara in Central region and Uzbek in the northern parts of Afghanistan defeated Taliban by allying with the United State. They supported United State until the Taliban was overthrown. So, United State involved some jihadi and tribal leaders in senior position in the government. Tribal leaders and jihadist were satisfied with the United State and supported its decision on some issues in Afghanistan. Non-Pashtuns Jihadis were also happy with the United State policy on Afghanistan because it mitigated Pashtun ambitious policies in Afghanistan.

Pashtun jihadis and tribal leaders were in a weak position because they had played little role in the collapse of the Taliban. The appointment of a Pashtun president was seen as a privilege granted by the United States, along with a few key positions such as the Ministry of Finance and later the Ministry of Interior. However, many Pashtuns remained dissatisfied with the United States, believing that it had shared political power with non-Pashtun groups, thereby weakening Pashtun dominance in Afghanistan.

United State considered all of the jihadis and tribal leaders, and divided political power among them. Ministries and provincial governor divided between jihadis and tribal leaders. Every jihadi had power in his hometown. The United State initiated Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) in Afghanistan and its aim was to collect fire arms from illegal groups. DIAG was implemented smoothly in some provinces and in some places it failed to collect illegal weapons, and most of the Pashtun refused to submit their weapons to the government.

Most of the Pashtun were not persuaded to surrender their fire arms, and they resisted government's incentive programs and the government could not implement its disarmament policy completely among Pashtun. But, DIAG program was implemented in the Hazara, Tajik and Uzbek regions, and people surrendered their weapons to the government and their leaders became part of the armed forces of the country.

According to the evidence, non-Pashtuns fully cooperated with the DIAG program, although a few local figures may have kept their weapons with the intention of selling them later at a good price. Non-Pashtun felt there is no need for weapons anymore and surrounded them to the government, but Pashtun local leader according to advice their local leaders did not submit their weapons. The government of Afghanistan and United State made a mistake for not forcing Pashtun warlords to surrender their weapons. According to local sources, the weapons that were not surrendered to the DIAG program were later used by the Taliban against U.S. soldiers and Afghan government forces. DIAG program remains a truncated and its outcome was weak and it caused some problem later for Afghanistan government and United State forces.

15. Development and consolidation of infrastructure

The United States considered development and infrastructure as top priority in Afghanistan. The Australian parliament report, citing the World Bank, states that Afghanistan received

approximately \$77 billion in official development assistance (ODA) between 2001 and 2019. Also, SIGAR reports indicate that from 2002 to 2021, the United States allocated over \$145 billion for reconstruction activities in Afghanistan. The allocated amount would enable Afghanistan to recover its institutions and rebuild the infrastructure that was destroyed during the civil war.

The Afghan government lacked the capacity to implement development projects; therefore, the private sector was allowed to participate in these sectors. Within a few years, hundreds of companies were registered to carry out development projects. However, the private sector was still new in Afghanistan, and many of the individuals involved lacked sufficient skills. In addition, there were some fictional companies that received grants but failed to implement projects, instead deceiving the government through bribery. Some companies were even registered by government officials, which created further challenges in project implementation. These companies relied on officials as intermediaries to secure projects, but ultimately failed due to a lack of skilled personnel.

There was no mechanism to monitor the implementation of development projects. Monitoring in the provinces was the responsibility of the relevant sectoral directorates, but most of these directorates had limited ability to oversee large projects, and some lacked monitoring capacity altogether. This situation created opportunities for corruption and increased people's distrust of the government. The government was unable to strengthen the monitoring capacity of the relevant directorates in the provinces due to corruption; therefore, millions of U.S. dollars were lost without producing any significant outcomes. It had been assumed that Afghanistan's infrastructure would be completed after some years, but this did not happen.

The Afghan government and the United States failed to prevent corruption and were unable to establish an effective mechanism to combat it. Although some institutions were created to address corruption, they were unsuccessful in preventing both corruption and the misuse of development project budgets. Misuse of development project budgets widened the gap between the people and the government in Afghanistan. Citizens witnessed how funds were misused by certain individuals, while they themselves continued to live in poverty and without basic necessities. Moreover, corruption had penetrated the judicial sector, which was never able to hold those involved in development-sector corruption accountable.

The target which defined by United State for institutional development and infrastructure in Afghanistan not achieved because of corruption and some completed project had less Quality due to lack of a comprehensive monitoring, and some projects needed repairment after few months of use. For instant in 2012, when I worked at the Aga Khan Foundation, Bamian-Parwan road built by a construction company related to relative of Mohammad Qasim Fahim and it was in need of repair after six months, and government report showed that company did not use original asphalt and it destroyed.

Additionally, the Taliban posed another major challenge to development projects, as they destroyed many projects across various provinces. The Taliban claimed that using infrastructure built by the United States and its allies violated Islamic principles and should be destroyed. They detonated hundreds of intake structures along the Kabul–Bamian road and destroyed or burned hundreds of schools in different provinces. The Taliban also made certain areas insecure, making it impossible to implement development projects, as no one dared to work in these unsafe regions.

However, corruption, the lack of effective mechanisms to prevent it, insecurity, and the Taliban's policies regarding development projects all acted as obstacles to achieving the intended goals of development initiatives in Afghanistan. The slow response of both the Afghan government and the United States to the existing corruption further exacerbated the

misuse of development project budgets, ultimately contributing to Afghanistan's failure to achieve its development targets.

16. Afghanistan army and support of United State

Establishing a new National Army was one of the top priorities for both the Afghan government and the United States. The process began after the Bonn Conference. Unlike in the past, the new National Army was a salaried force, which was a new concept in Afghanistan. Before 1979, members of the Afghan army were conscripted from young men between the ages of 20 and 22, as military service was compulsory. However, after 1979, this system broke down. The government was no longer able to enforce conscription or recruit effectively, as it had lost control over parts of the country.

The Afghan National Army was established quickly, and a fundamental military structure was put in place. In its early operations, the National Army performed acceptably, achieving successes on the battlefield against the Taliban and other insurgent groups. Its ranks included members from various ethnic groups such as Hazara, Tajik, Uzbek, and Pashtun. This diversity was significant, as for the first time Afghanistan had a truly national army that represented most of its ethnic groups.

In addition, the structure of the police and intelligence forces was established simultaneously with the formation of the National Army. The police played an important role in providing security in cities and villages and were later involved in combat operations to support the National Army. Similarly, the intelligence forces played a crucial role in thwarting Taliban attack plans and supporting both the National Army and the police in their operations. Among Afghanistan's security forces, the intelligence forces were considered one of the most vigilant and effective.

However, the situation changed quickly with the escalation of the war against the Taliban and the rising casualties within the National Army. After 2006, the Taliban regrouped in southern Afghanistan, and following 2014, they intensified their attacks on the army, police, and intelligence officers. The Taliban's attacks led to desertions within the army. Families were deeply concerned about the safety of their young men serving, and many pressured them to leave the army.

No mechanism existed to stop soldiers from deserting the army, and it was a big challenge and put the Afghanistan National Army in a fragile situation. According to members of the Afghan National Army, desertion quickly weakened the force, as many army bases were soon left empty, especially when the war with the Taliban escalated. Mohammad Nabi who served three years in Afghanistan National Army said "400 soldiers were in the base but after two months it decreased to 225 persons, some killed by the Taliban and most left their job". He added that we share our concern with our commander and he said I am aware but I can't do anything. Nabi believed that lack of mechanism to prevent desertion put Afghanistan National Army in a bad situation.

Experts believed that paid army was not suitable for Afghanistan because people were not familiar with it and it was a pressure to financial system of Afghanistan government. Abdullah, who served in the National Army in Afghanistan in 1985, believed that a paid army might have weak morale because soldiers fight for money. He argued that it would be better if military service were compulsory, with all young men serving for two years. He said that in the past, when a person left the army without an excuse, he and his family were responsible for persuading the government; otherwise, he had to pay a penalty or go to jail but now it is different. Members of National Army leave service easily without any penalty or judicial process.

According to members of the Afghan National Army, low morale was another significant problem among soldiers. In Afghanistan's tribal society, soldiers did not share the same level of commitment. Non-Pashtun soldiers, such as Hazara, Tajiks, and Uzbeks, generally had high morale and were willing to fight against the Taliban and other insurgent groups. However, some Pashtun members had weaker morale, as they often viewed the Taliban as protectors of Pashtuns in Afghanistan. In some cases, Pashtun soldiers in the army refused to fight against the Taliban. Mohammad Nabi stated, "When the Taliban attacked our military bases, only Hazara, Tajiks, and Uzbeks fought against them; the Pashtuns refused to fight." He added that a nearby military base manned by Pashtuns refused to assist them during the attacks.

Corruption was also a serious challenge for the National, police and intelligence forces. Unqualified individuals were appointed as commanders, while qualified personnel remained in low positions, which weakened the morale of soldiers. In addition, corruption in logistics meant that thousands of Army members were killed by the Taliban due to a lack of ammunition and food supplies. Evidence shows that soldiers implored president Ashraf Ghani to help them and provide ammunition to fight against Taliban. These types of evidence weakened moral of soldiers and create doubt about ability of government for defense of country.

According to available evidence, Afghan officials were aware of what was happening in the army, police and intelligence forces, but they often refused to take action and, in some cases, did not share the problems with U.S. officials. There were opportunities to reform the Afghan National Army, yet the neglect of both Afghan officials and the United States left it in a fragile state. Implementing mechanisms to prevent desertion and improving morale through the appointment of capable commanders could have mitigated the problem.

17. Nation-building

Nation building was a problematic issue because Afghanistan had a tribal society and many time modern nation building failed on it. People in Afghanistan especially, Pashtun ethnic groups resisted against modern types of nation building. Amanullah was the first leader who was a sacrifice of modern nation building in Afghanistan, he fled from Afghanistan after failure in his plan about modernizing and nation building in 1929 in Italy. The most prominent challenge in modern nation-building has been the Pashtun ethnic group, which has adhered to traditional Islamic thought and remained socially stagnant. Despite experiencing various upheavals, they did not abandon their tribal mindset. As a result, the Pashtun tribal structure was the Achilles' heel for nation building in Afghanistan.

The United States positioned Western discourse against Afghanistan's traditional discourse in nation building process, and most prominent tools for nation building were, education system, media, civil society groups, women right activist, human right activist, and democratic institutions. United State and its allied had focus on these tools, promoted media and very soon it grown, TV channel, radio, newspaper, magazine and Cinema established. Education system established, schools and universities built in different provinces and modern education fisted in new curriculum of Afghanistan education system. Women found the rights to participate in activities, and become minster and member of parliament. Political parties and civil society found the rights of activity, and some democratic institution established.

The United States' nation-building approach in Afghanistan produced two contrasting reactions. Non-Pashtun ethnic groups generally accepted it, while most Pashtuns rejected it. Many Pashtuns believed that modern nation-building would undermine Pashtun hegemony in Afghanistan; therefore, they emphasized preserving the tribal system as the true Afghan heritage in opposition to modernization. Although some Pashtun elites

cooperated with the United States in the nation-building process, the majority of Pashtuns viewed it as a tool of Western domination.

Resistance against modern nation-building had negative consequences among the Pashtun. The masses of Pashtun did not participate in civil activities compared to other ethnic groups, and they had a negative view of human rights and the rights of women. In TV programs like music, dance, and other types of artistic programs, participation of Pashtun was low, and they were not ready to accept the new phenomena for establishing modern nation building; they considered music and dance against Islamic values and those who were willing to participate faced adversity from their families.

The education system was also largely unacceptable to many Pashtuns. They believed that Afghanistan's education system was designed by the United States and was contrary to Islamic principles. As a result, many refused to send their children to formal schools and instead enrolled them in religious madrasas. In 2018, in Maidan Wardak, I asked a Pashtun man about the education of his children. He replied, "Two of my children are in a religious madrasa, and I hope they will become reciters of the Quran." When I asked why he did not send them to school for modern education, he said, "Our village mullah told us to send children to madrasa because it is virtuous, and God would be pleased."

Human rights also faced serious challenges among the Pashtun. Violations of women's rights were widespread, including child marriage, forced marriage, and even honor killings. In most Pashtun villages, no one dared to speak about women's rights or human rights. People had little access to social media or television; only a few men listened to the radio. Women were restricted from participating in social and political activities. According to a survey conducted by the Human Rights and Eradication of Violence Organization in 2019 about women's rights, it showed that most Pashtun women did not have access to their basic rights, and most Pashtun women believed that their husbands had the authority to do everything and no one in the family should resist their decisions. The survey showed that women from Hazara, Tajik, and Uzbek communities also had problems, but Pashtun women's problems were at a higher rate than others.

Rate of participation in democratic process also was weak, for instance in election Pashtun women did not participate completely and most of them did not allowed by their family. In 2010, election held for selecting of parliament members, and I was staff of election in commission in Kabul city in the area majority of population was Tajik and Pashtun, but participation of Pashtun women was very low. I with my supervisor asked from local person to encourage women to participate in election, they said that women would not participate because their family would not allow them.

Nation-building in Afghanistan was only partially implemented and partially successful; it remained incomplete and truncated. The Pashtuns' rejection of nation-building polarized Afghan society into two camps: those who supported it, such as the Hazara, Tajik, and Uzbek communities, and those who opposed it, primarily the Pashtuns. This division created an opportunity for the Taliban to exploit the gap for their own benefit. The Taliban also regarded modern nation-building as a Western phenomenon and sympathized with the views of many Pashtuns who opposed it. As a result, the Taliban recruited thousands of young Pashtuns to fight against what they perceived as a Western project contrary to Islamic principles. The modern nation-building process that began in Afghanistan in 2001 came to an end in 2021, when the Taliban took over political power.

18. Negotiation with Taliban and United State

When Donald J. Trump came to power in the United States, he sought to end the conflict with the Taliban. In 2018, the United States entered into direct negotiations with the group.

Trump was determined to end the war and withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan. After Trump lost the 2020 election, the new president, Joe Biden, continued the negotiations with the Taliban. He retained Zalmay Khalilzad as the U.S. representative for peace talks. However, Khalilzad's approach sidelined the Afghan government and focused instead on direct negotiations with the Taliban.

When the Taliban realized that the United States intended to leave Afghanistan, they intensified their attacks on government forces. Within a few months, the Taliban managed to capture several districts and soon began advancing on provincial capitals. The absence of a comprehensive peace negotiation framework from both the Afghan government and the United States, combined with declining support for Afghan security forces, accelerated the collapse. On August 15, 2021, President Ashraf Ghani fled the country, effectively handing Afghanistan over to the Taliban. After 20 years, Afghanistan once again fell into Taliban control.

Experts believe that if the United States had maintained even a small presence of about 100 soldiers in Afghanistan, the Taliban would not have been able to overthrow the Afghan government. Unfortunately, the United States withdrew from Afghanistan without maintaining even a small presence, which gave the Taliban the opportunity to take control of the country in a short time.

19. Conclusion

The relationship between the United States and Afghanistan entered a new phase after 1979, when the U.S. began supporting tribal and religious leaders against Soviet occupation. Between 1979 and 1989, the U.S. focused primarily on defeating the Soviet Union, and when Soviet forces withdrew in 1989, the U.S. also disengaged from Afghanistan. This absence created a power vacuum that led to civil war among jihadi groups and the rise of the Taliban. The Taliban ousted Rabbani's forces from Kabul and governed most of Afghanistan for five years. During their rule, the U.S. did not intervene, which allowed the Taliban to consolidate power and commit severe abuses.

In 2001, the U.S. removed the Taliban from power due to their support for Al-Qaida, and a new government was established in Afghanistan. With U.S. support, the government began building national institutions, including the army, police, and intelligence forces. Disarmament and development projects were initiated, state-building and nation-building became key priorities. However, these programs faced significant challenges, including corruption, nepotism, entrenched tribal culture, and the lack of effective mechanisms to prevent malpractice.

Nation-building efforts encountered strong resistance, particularly from the Pashtun population, who largely rejected them and often aligned with the Taliban against the central government. Peace negotiations with the Taliban were also poorly managed, with the Afghan government sidelined, giving the Taliban a stronger position. Eventually, the Taliban reconquered Afghanistan and toppled the government. The findings of this research indicate that the lack of a comprehensive strategy for governance, peace, security, and negotiation with the Taliban left Afghanistan in crisis once again.

In 2021, it was demonstrated that poor decision-making by the United States destroyed achievements in Afghanistan and failed to bring stability. Afghans had expected the U.S. to remain as an ally and supporter, but this did not happen, and the country was handed back to the Taliban once again. The Afghan people are now experiencing a difficult situation under Taliban rule, with no reliable option to reduce the group's pressure. Afghan scholars believe that the U.S. has the authority to pressure the Taliban and hold them accountable, which remains a serious demand in Afghanistan.

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