

Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Afghanistan's bumpy ride is still on. The tussle between internal and external actors is disturbing the social and political order of the Afghan society. The present study is an effort to answer questions, like, i-How much role does the factor of political history has in present instability? ii- What type of interests do the external actors have in Afghanistan? iii- How can the institutional building be helpful in managing the present days functionalism? By answering the questions the research will conclude that the present crisis is the outcome of internal strife and external involvement. The traits of current situation can be traced in history, the interest game of the major actors and the conflicting personal agendas of the Afghan leadership. They never allowed institution building in Afghanistan. The present political friction is the outcome of the mixture of these elements. A suggested solution is to develop modern democratic institutions while coping with the traditional political culture of Afghan people.

Key Words: political order, social order, institutional building, Afghan society, Great game

Introduction

The Afghan story is a narrative of missed opportunities, derelict accords and betrayed promises. Countless scheming, personal agendas and shifting alliances shattered the Afghan society. Besides Afghans, many regional and international actors have also jumped into the skirmish derisively promoting their own interest. "The US, favored the Afghans during the 1980s in a bid to defeat the agnosticism of the former Soviet empire. In the process, it conveniently roped in Pakistan as a conduit for arms and equipment by assigning it the status of a "frontline state"¹. Once the mission was accomplished, the Afghan were left in the stumble." They fought the Russians with ferocious passion. After the Soviet with drawl they started fighting one another with equal savor and reprisal. The USA and other Western powers now consigned them to almost strategic stupor to bleed themselves to death and destruction in their intramural fighting"². Domestic actors are equally responsible for present uncertainty.

Afghanistan's importance

"Afghanistan is adjacent to Middle Eastern countries that are rich in oil and natural gas. And though Afghanistan may have little petroleum itself, it borders both Iran and Turkmenistan, countries with the second and third largest natural gas reserves in the world. (Russia is first.) Turkmenistan, until 1991, it was part of the Soviet Union and its gas flowed only north through Soviet pipelines. Now the Russians plan a new pipeline north. The Chinese are building a new pipeline east. The U.S. is pushing for "multiple oil and gas export routes"³. High-level Russian, Chinese and American delegations visit Turkmenistan frequently to discuss energy. The U.S. even has a special envoy for Eurasian energy diplomacy. Rivalry for pipeline routes and energy resources reflects competition for power and control in the region. Pipelines are important channel now a day in the same way as railway building was in the 19th century. They connect trading partners and influence the regional balance of power. Afghanistan is a strategic piece of real estate in the geopolitical struggle for power and dominance in the region"⁴. Afghanistan being the most difficult and challenging region in the world always remained very significant throughout the history of the world. Eden Naby and Ralph Magnus said, 'Afghanistan has been a vital link between Europe and Asia for thousands of year, of prime strategic importance since Alexander the Great's time. In the future, Afghanistan is liable to retain that strategic importance. Think of China, Russia, India, Pakistan and Iran. Think of their hopes and fear, Think of our own. Then look on the map at Afghanistan, and then think again'⁵.

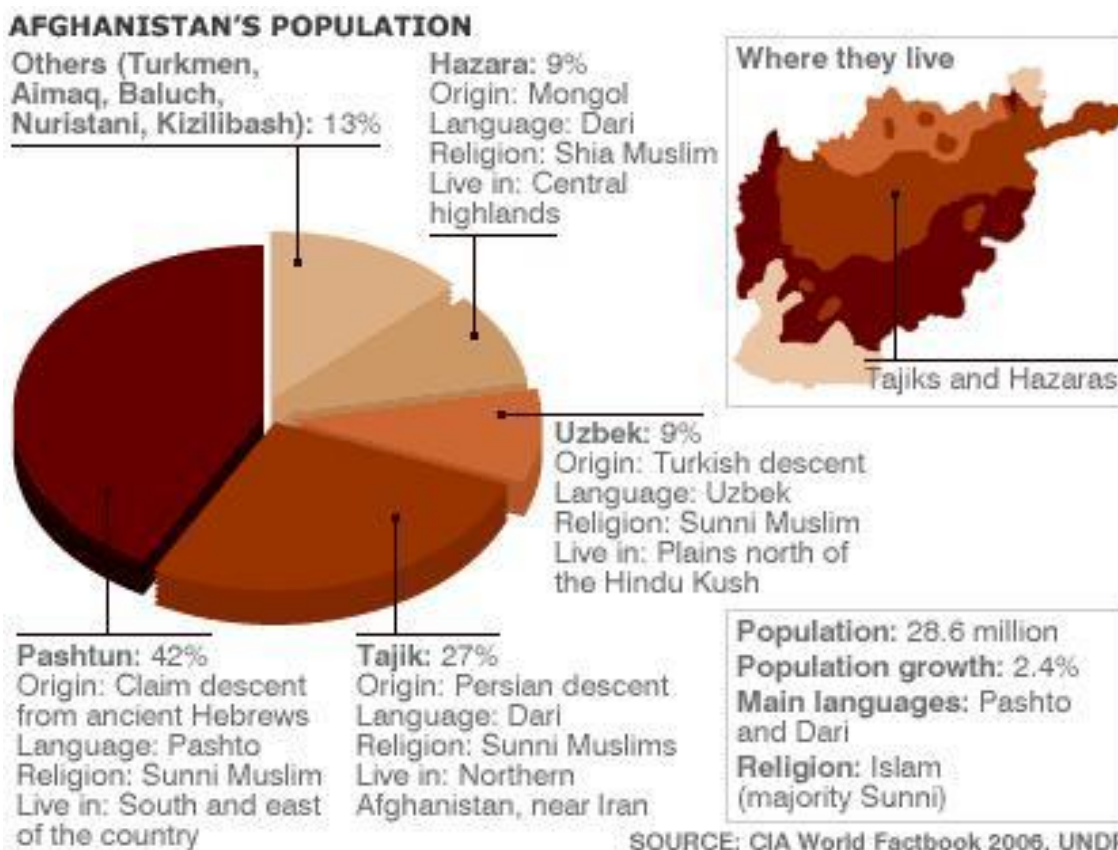
Afghanistan: It's Geo-strategic Significance

Afghanistan with a sizeable chunk of geometrically regular territorial design lies at the intersection of the Indian Sub-Continent (Pakistan), the Middle East (Iran), Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) and China (The Wakhan Corridor). In terms of International borders, the details are Pakistan (2430 km); Iran (936 km); Tajikistan (1206); Uzbekistan (137 km); Turkmenistan (744 km), and China (75 km).

While the theory of buffer states may no longer be effective, but regional balance of power and a country's location affording geo-strategic access to strategically vital regions especially in terms of energy security are inevitable. Afghanistan is more important to US than Pakistan in terms of national security interests and regional strategy. Afghanistan's landlocked location should be no hindrance to the United States which has conquered geographical constraints by air-mobility". American strategic planners seem to view strategic access to Afghanistan, through the long torturous routes through Pakistan emanating from Karachi to Kabul via the Khyber Pass. The United States has now awoken to the much shorter route from Iran (Chahbahar Prot) and then via the Indian constructed link road joining the Iranian border to the Afghanistan circular national highway"⁶. Geo-strategically, if the United States wishes to adhere to Brezezinski's famed guideline of USA retaining prevalence in Eurasia, then Afghanistan with a US-Iran rapprochement in tandem offers the best choice. Foreign troops have experienced failure in Afghanistan". The great game as it was once called pitted the British and Russian empires against one another with Afghanistan as the chosen battleground. During World War II, Nazi Germany even sought Afghanistan as a potential ally in its struggle against Britain, even sending a team of saboteurs to blow up bridges on the Afghan-Indian borders. Of course the Soviets had their failed era and now it is America and its NATO European allies who are entangled in the Hindu Kush. It is much complexed than anyone admit and it would seem as ever, if history is anything to go by, it is the locals that will have the final say, not the outsider"⁷.

Ethnic issue in Afghanistan

Afghanistan having 55 ethnic groups, who speak 45 languages is facing vast ethnic rift in the country. However, the Pushtoons have traditionally ruled Afghanistan and believe that only they are destined to rule the country. The Pushtoons tend to be obstinate and bigoted on this issue, to the extent that they reject the notion of power sharing with the countries other ethnic groups like the Hazaras, Tajiks and Uzbeks. Since 1880, when the British created the state of Afghanistan, there have been massive internal population movements at the instigation of the Pushtoon royalty as part of their plan to Pushtoons the country. Even though King Zahir Shah, the Pushtoon royal ruler, was ousted in 1973, the quest to Pushtoons the country did not end. In fact, it continued with the Taliban government, which seized power in 1996. Taliban is a Pashto word with a Pashto suffix attached to the Arabic word "talib". The Taliban was both an ethnic movement and a religious one. Twenty-six out of twenty-seven members of the Taliban government's leadership were Pushtoon and they were determined to bring the various ethnic groups of Afghanistan under traditional Pushtoon conservative rural culture"⁸.



External interferences and Afghanistan

A preview of Afghanistan's history reflects that it served as a host for external interferences, internal troubles leading to a continued series of hostilities amongst various segments of its population. The situation did not change even in the recent era rather the situation got further worsened due to Soviet invasion. This called for a series of turmoil and disturbance due to the Mujahideen's resistance in Afghanistan. Sequel to it the foreign occupation of US led NATO troops in Afghanistan added fuel to fire with respect to the situation in Afghanistan. The factors like struggle for power, inter segment rifts in society dysfunctionality, parochial political culture and disharmony served as main tools for not letting Afghanistan to move in right direction towards democracy. On analysis of the situation one can find that in 1980s, the two super-powers were at the height of their differences. Followed by evacuation of Soviet troops in late 1990s, the Taliban took control at Kabul. Similarly in late 2001, the Taliban met toppling over by the Northern Alliance. It is pertinent to mention here that the American policy towards Afghanistan is the pivotal cause for its des-stability. It is unfortunate that Afghans are still very far from peace and prosperity even after many efforts by external actors to take control of Afghanistan.

Pakistan is directly or indirectly experiencing impact of the situation at Afghanistan. This is based on geo-strategically realities like sharing of a long border along with common religion-cultural traditions. Barry Buzan while distinguishing between the strong and weak states said 'those states which are internally facing high level security concerned issues should be considered as weak states. On the other side, where institutions and territory are clearly defined, the states are strong.' Buzan concluded, unless the internal dimension is relatively stable as a prior condition, the image of state as a referent object of security faces in to a meaningless blur⁹. Pakistan in line with keeping its internal and external issues stable had to redefine its foreign policy parameters based on the prevailing changing geo-strategic environment. The prevalent changes also badly affected the image of Pakistan both internally and externally. The Soviet Union's intervention into Afghanistan in its pursue to warm waters in 1979 was one of such event. The internal situation of Pakistan did not call for facing red forces but on the other hand it can not keep itself aloof from this situation. The Americans paid Pakistan for its historic role to settle game of chess in Afghanistan by curtailing the Soviet designs through economic and military assistance. The Afghan war was exploited as a Holy war.

The Mujahideens were recipient of financial, logistic and military support coupled with training to fight against the communist regime. The guidance and support of CIA and ISI with respect to Mujahideens expeditions during their war to defeat Soviet Union remained the salient feature. The features of foreign policy of Pakistan during the Afghan Jihad were contoured by its intelligence Agency ISI. The role of ISI remained inter mediatory between Americans and Afghan Mujahideens. The Afghan Mujahideens remained in access of weapons provided by CIA through Pakistan¹⁰. The officials of CIA were dependent upon ISI with regard to the progress on the ongoing performance. Subsequently, Islamabad enjoyed maximum concessions from America. The Indian Government obsessed with Pakistan centric raised objections on the US military assistance to Pakistan. India argued that it will disturb the balance of power between the neighboring countries. On the other hand Washington was fully bent upon availing this opportunity to dismantle Soviet ideology. The concerted efforts of America in this regard made Soviet Union to sign Geneva Accord. However, the Soviets continued to assist Najeeb Ulla's government in Afghanistan as it was following pro-Soviet policies. The Taliban based on the exit of Soviet troops from Afghanistan dropped Jihad and tilted for negotiations with Najeeb Ullah for future. This was the turning point for Pak-Afghan relations because majority of the Afghan Muhajireen left Jihad.

However, some Afghan Mujahideen were still in support of continuation of Jihad. This was based on pro-communist ideology of Najeeb Ullah and indirect Soviet support to him. This difference of opinion amongst Mujahideen created divisions which turned out to be a new challenge for Islamabad. It may be added that some of the Mujahideen groups started opposing ISI. These particular groups of Mujahideen were not contented due to Pakistan Pushtoon ethnic orientation with respect to future government in Afghanistan. The prominent amongst these anti ISI groups were Ahmad Shah Masood and Abdul Rasheed Doustum. Their point of view was based on ISI efforts for a Pro-Islamabad government. They also argued that Pakistan is promoting Pushtoon ethnic factor for forming a government in Afghanistan. Larry Goodson, in one of his articles (entitled: *Foreign Policy Gone Awry: The Kalanskanikovization and Talibanization of Pakistan*) said, 'Over time, the ISI come to view situation in Afghanistan as its own domain, driven by its own institutional responsibility for Pakistan's involvement in the war there, the high percentage of Pushtoon officers in key ISI positions and the instability of Pakistan's post Zia governments. This initiated the process that led to the situation today, where Pakistan finds itself supporting a movement in Afghanistan which it cannot control and which often pursues policies counter to Pakistan's interests'¹¹.

The Historical context

William Malay expressed an interesting note in writing ‘acknowledgement’ in his famous book entitled: *The Afghanistan Wars* that late Louis Dupree warned me “Once Afghanistan gets into my blood, I could never be rid of it”¹². Subash Chakravarty in his book (entitled: *Afghanistan and the Great Game*) argued that Afghanistan geographically and culturally locates the Northeast Portion of the Iranian Plateau through which India linked with Middle East and China and Central Asia. In late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Imperialist powers always designed the Great Game Imperial Chess board on this region. With reference to the context, it is noteworthy that Ralph Magnus and Eden Naby drawn the following five phases of Afghan history, i.e.:

- From 500 BC to 700 AD is called Pre-Islamic Period.
- From 700 to 1709, Afghanistan had remained committed to the Medieval and late Medieval Islamic Period.
- The period of Afghan Empire begins from 1709 and ends at 1826.
- Between 1919 and 1973, Afghanistan is studied as categorically under constitutional monarchies, e.g., 1923, 1931 and 1946.
- The period 1919-1973 revealed around world changes scenario, e.g., to 1919, the Great Game period appeared on world atlas, which is also known as European Imperial period.⁷ decolonization, rule of self determination and two great wars including beginning of the cold war¹³.

Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan

The bureaucratic ruling elites in the state machinery, lacking public support, relied on imperial powers for economic, military and political assistance. An hodgepodge of conventional and rising regal powers since the eighteenth century subjugated the situation to advance their own agendas. It undertakes an analysis of the dynamics of political development in Afghanistan and policies of imperial powers that influenced the direction of development in the country as well as the contributing issues of tribalism, ethnicity and regionalism that constituted the very fabric of Afghanistan’s society¹⁴. Since the day of its inception, Afghanistan never remained colonized however in pre and post-colonial periods, it remained as Buffer Zone with challenges. The defensive and economic perspective of Afghanistan was ensured by the drawing of Durand Line by Indian British Government in 1893. The basic concept of drawing of this line was based on keeping Soviet forces away from Arabian Sea in addition to it was meant to ensure the status of an independent state to Afghanistan. The British achieved assurance for mutual respect and friendship through Anglo-Afghan Treaty in 1857¹⁵. The British government was concerned over the Russian expansion through its support to Iranian aggression. The revolt against Britain in 1857 by Indians did not enjoy the support of Afghan government inspite of strong criticism from its population.

Followed by the Iranian adventure in Herat, the British government waged a war to restore Herat under Dost Muhammad. Lord Lytton expressed the British view about Afghanistan as, ‘Afghanistan is a state for too weak and barbarous to remain isolated and wholly uninfluenced between two great military empires.... We cannot allow Sher Ali to face under the influence of any power whose interests are antagonistic to our own’¹⁶. In 1878, Afghan Amir Sher Ali declined to follow the line of action drawn by British Indian government and opted for negotiation with Moscow. This was enough to force the British government to oust Amir Sher Ali. He was replaced by his son Amir Yaqoob Khan as a new ruler. This obliged Amir Khan to sign Gandumak Treaty with British Government, called as ‘eternal peace and friendship’. In fact, Lord Lytton’s statement and frequent Anglo-Afghan wars represented great game concept which turned Afghanistan as a complex issue thus making it as a significant character of entire ‘Great Game Novel’.

The contribution of Amir Habibullah Khan’s (1872-1919) proved as milestone feature in the history of Afghanistan. Amir Habibullah Khan adopted a modernization route followed by introduction of good governance in Afghanistan. He was the first ruler who played an important role to establish the Afghan society on the concept of modernization and liberalization. Subsequently, he developed strong trade relations with Soviet Union, Central Asia and the British Indian government. Mahmood Beg Tarsi was the main instrument to introduce modern education, establishment of press with pragmatic and politically motivated debates during Amir Khan’s regime. Mahmud Beg Tarsi based on his deep inspiration from Pan Islamic movement utilized all of his focus and efforts to transform the Afghan society by combining modernization with Islamization. In Afghan newspaper named, *Siraj ul Akhbari Afghanistan*, he expressed his view point through articles to expose imperialist designs and the British Indian policies. Furthermore, he advocated to Japanese forces against Russia and declared Japan’s triumph as victory of Asia over Europeans¹⁷. The passage of time always results in the circumstantial changes. Subsequently, Tarsi faced criticism over his policies by few Afghan young men who returned from Turkey.

These young men demanded abolition of Royal absolutism by replacing it with the constitutional state machinery. Similarly the British Indian government conveyed its strong critical reservations against his Anti Britain policies at international level. The First World War served the main reason to collapse Ottoman Empire. Sequel to it the European power bent upon gaining complete domination and control over the natural resources of the Muslim World successfully designed imperialist infrastructure. Subsequently, the Muslim World falls under the direct and indirect influence of European imperialism. These changes in the scenario of world politics made Amir Habibullah Khan to draw policy features in order to draw advantages. The Bolshevik revolution was considered a hope for him to counter European Imperialism. However Afghanistan status as a Buffer zone remained still. Amanullah Khan (1892-1960), in pursuance of policies of his father-in-law Habibullah Khan also adopted Pan Islamic thoughts. His assistance to Amir of Bukhara continued. It remained a reality that Bolshevik revolution successfully captured the entire Russian society. This made Amanullah to reshape his foreign policy after establishing strong diplomatic relationship with Russia. King Amanullah appropriately faced the prevailing challenges by signing Afghan Bolshevik Treaty in 1921.

It is interesting to note that on one hand he pressurized Russians with reference to returning Afghan Territory being seized by Russia in 1885¹⁸. While on the other hand, he kept his connection with Amirs of Bukhara and Khiva who were strongly against Bolshevik revolution. However, it remained a fact that a large number of Afghans disowned his policies and declined to follow the clauses of the treaty. This did not affect the stance of Amanullah and he continued his own way and decided to provide shelter to Ibrahim Beg and thousands of the Central Asian insurgents found involved in fighting with Red forces. His regime was known for establishment of constitutional monarchy and introduction of modern reforms in education. However, state and Islam relations remained the pivot of his policies with regard to institutional changes. During this process, Hizbi Niqadbar (veiled party) established a revolt against the modern thinking of Amanullah through challenging the writ of government. He later on remained successful in over throwing the government of Amanullah in late 1928. Although Amanullahs sought help form military, religious leaders and Pushtoon tribes but all his efforts went in vain. The political observers labeled Amanullah Regime as a reformist and modern regime which genuinely tasted the word 'Independence'¹⁹.

A short period of Amir Habibullah II reflected a reversal of social reforms in marriage custom, education and status of women. He abolished corporations, lowered taxes and reforming courts under the jurisdiction of Muslim Ulema. In addition, he made journalists obligated to carry out the journalism but strictly as per teaching of Islam. Any contradictory article with respect to Islamic teachings will not be published. Amir Habibullah II faced bad economic conditions which were ultimately hampering the institutions of the state. The British Indian government and Russians started considering Afghanistan as non relevant due to its poor economic condition as they cannot benefit with respect to strategic and trading factors. This called for replacement of Amir Habibullah II regime. Amir Habibullah was considered a person with a charismatic personality but he was found not able to regulate state matters efficiently. Nadir Shah (1883-1933) regime reflects efforts and concrete measures with regard to check mal administrative practices and to avoid circumstances leading to a civil war. Nadir Shah signed a non-aggression treaty with Russia. However he continued to provide financial and military assistance to leaders of Central Asian fighting against Red Army²⁰. After Nadir Shah Assassination, Shah Mahmud Khan (1890-1959) established his regime.

He introduced liberal political system so as to gain the actual essence of democracy. Shah Mahmud Khan focused on educational and institutional reforms under the agenda of 'constitutional democracy'. Sardar Muhammad Daud Khan being his cousin ousted him under the changed circumstances of the country. Daud Khan emphasized on establishing a modern and advanced Army. His modern ideas were based on upgrading the socio-economic issues. In order to win the support towards legitimacy to his programs, he exploited the emotions of East Pushtoon with respect to achieving Pushtunistan without accepting Durand Line established to divide Pushtoon population by the British government. Daud Khan accepted the notion that all successive agreements on Durand Line were between the Afghan and British government in the Sub-continent. However after its division, Durand line stands with no legitimacy. So the Afghan government is not obliged to follow Durand Line Agreement with Pakistan. Subsequently on Durand Line issue the Daud government sorted assistance from American camp during cold war. However it failed to win American support. The engagement of Washington in Middle East politics made it over occupied. This resulted in the tilting of Daud government towards Soviet Union. It seeked help from Soviet towards improving its economic and military capabilities to counter Pakistan. This ambition and autocratic style of Daud government focused on countering Pakistan on Pushtoon issue made him a liability and risk for Afghanistan while the Pakistan government ignored Pushtunistan issue. However it remained a continuous source of concern to security issue. The security at Pakistan's Western and Northern borders ensures stability in the region.

Since independence, Pakistan's leadership remained inclined to seek peace, stability and normal relations with Afghanistan. On December 3, 1947, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah said, 'I desire that relationship between these two sister states, i.e., Pakistan and Afghanistan may be of the greatest and most lasting friendship and I do hope that coming negotiation may take place will secure and strengthen all the more the goodwill and friendship between these two countries which already exist'²¹. The independence of the Sub-continent led to the denouncement of British government with respect to boundary agreements achieved after successive diplomatic negotiations. The Afghan government traversed an extra mile to oppose the entrance of Pakistan in United Nations. Afghans showed their decline to honour the Durand Line as international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Hence the AF-PK relations always remained under the shadow of issues like Durand Line and territorial claims over the areas of NWFP. The Afghan government dilated on the legitimacy of the Durand Line turned questionable after the creation of Pakistan as an independent state. The Afghan government based their argument that the formation of Durand Line was pertinent to the presence of British Indian government. After the ousting of British Indian government and announcement of partition, the credibility of the Durand Line does not remain relevant.

In response, Pakistan remained logical by accepting that Durand Line agreement was adopted by the British government under the title 'forward foreign policy'²². This policy was aimed at curtailing the Russian sphere of influence. Pakistan also argue in this regard that all of the Afghan successive governments honoured the Durand Line agreement in true letter of spirit. It is pertinent to mention that the areas included in Pakistan remained under the domination of the British government. In light of 1935 Government of India Act, the political and economic reforms were introduced. This entitled Pakistan to legally possess these areas. The official status of Durand Line under the international law cannot be challenged. Based on this international law, Pakistani stance towards Durand Line turns more valid concerning boundary lines remains valid and all rights and duties arising from such treaties of the extinct state devolve. The International Law states '**retransit cum oere**' treaties '**of extinct states an absorbing state**'²³. The British government supported and advocated the legality of Durand Line Agreement and appreciated it at regional and global level. The foreign policy makers of Pakistan were facing uphill tasks like Lack of financial resources, Kashmir issue and Durand Line conflict. Ian Stephen said, 'It was evident that if, on Pakistan birth, coordinated movements opposed to them could be produced in Kashmir and Afghanistan both of them predominantly Muslim territories and near to one another, the new state might be still born, crushed by a sort of pincer movement'²⁴.

New Great Game and Afghanistan

The geographical status of Afghanistan reveals that it is a land locked state with features like vast mountainous range where the Hindu Kush series encircles Afghanistan from North East to South West. It is a reality that Afghanistan remained the most strategically important region in all eras. It is also a known fact that Afghanistan being land locked state enjoying the status of a 'buffer zone'²⁵ made it as an important segment of Old Great Game. It is also serving as component of the New Great Game. The citizens of Afghanistan are identified as Afghans. The literary meaning of Afghanistan is 'lamentation'. The international border between Afghanistan and Russia was recognized after the diplomatic efforts between United Kingdom and Russia. After the partition of sub-continent in 1947 the forward policy of the British government resulting in Durand Line Agreement in 1893 always served as a major source of friction. The population of Afghanistan upto 1979 was believed to be approximately 13.05 million, including 0.8 million nomads.

Declining social order

The salient features of Afghan society are multi-ethnicity, tribal split clans and families with their own ethnic, cultural and social values²⁶. These features convert the Afghan society with uncompromised social environment. It is observed that cultural and ethnic dominancy prevails all over Afghanistan. Anthony Smith defined ethnic groups as 'pointed to a collective name a common myth, of descent, a shared history, a distinctive and a sense of solidarity as the salient makers of ethnic distinction'²⁷. The etc shared culture, association with a particular territory ethnic and traditional values regulate the social order of Afghan society. These factors enjoy a very meaningful importance not only in running day to day matters but also are effective in institutional frame work of the Afghan government. This relationship between state and society produced a disorder. The factors responsible for the declining social disorder were the lack of accountability of the state due to absence of any institutional mechanism and the national political elites do not enjoy credibility amongst the entire political system. Max Weber, a German sociologist says, 'social order in sustained if individual behavior is patronized in the myth of acceptance by the ruled, is often called "legitimate" domination'²⁸. According to Max Weber, a sound disciplined historical institutional mechanism is the heart of social order of society and state.

Resistance within the society

The Afghan society became a symbol of resistance against the social and political order of the central government. The traditional cultural and ethnic factors remained important towards formulating any policy. The introduction of moderate educational and social reforms by the political elites met serious criticism from the Afghan Ulema. It may be added that these Ulema enjoy more weightage and credibility in Afghan society as compared with the rulers. King Zahir Shah and Prime Minister Daud introduced a modernization model for patronizing socio-economic areas. They opted for three fold strategies which comprise expansion of education, infrastructure development through foreign aid and agricultural development. The ideological inclination towards communism was contrary to the features of a traditional Islamic society. The Afghan society possess a historical legacy of the strong traditions which cannot be ignored. By compromising on the traditional social aspects, the possibility of achieving good results is less. The social order of Afghan society faced serious problems due to a wide Gulf between national political elites with clan's or tribal chiefs.

The empirical study of Afghanistan reveals the possible threats due to the imperialist's powers. The internal and external strategic benefits pertaining to gaining maximum economic advantages lead to state's exploitation throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The internal divisions of the country produced a series of tempting opportunities for intrigue and influence. This influence when blessed with backing of the military force creates more foes than friends. Moreover the Afghan supporters of imperialism were considered allies of the infidels. Afghanistan turned as a final victim to the external interference²⁹. It also was an ultimate and final victim of the Cold War due to the game of chess designed for global hegemonic power. The Afghan Mujahideen proved to be the main factor to resist the idea of Soviet expansion. The Mujahidin factor enjoyed financial and military assistance under the auspices of two intelligence agencies, i.e., CIA and ISI. After the evacuation of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, Washington abandoned Afghanistan and ignored its social, political and economic infrastructure. The Afghan society suffered with a continuous process of human capital destruction.

Soviet withdrawn and its impact

The expulsion of Soviet forces by Afghan war lords further deprived the down trodden Afghan society. The war lords were following their vested interests towards earning money and personal gains through smuggling, puppy cultivation, and the formulation of militant groups. The Afghan government failed to implement its legitimacy amongst Afghan warlords. Although Islamabad played a pivotal role towards bringing Afghan lords for the peaceful agreements but due to the non existence of internal political harmony for institutional mechanism, the positive results were not achieved. In this regard, Islamabad Accord and Peshawar Accord failed to remove differences amongst the Afghan warlords. The main reason for not reaching to a consensus was due to ethnic factors. However an Afghan layman met frustration with respect to search for peace, stability and economic growth due to the lowest credibility of the Afghan warlords. Sequel to it the mal-administrative practices of the Afghan warlords resulted in establishment of an organization called Taliban organization by the few militant Mujahideens.

In spite of a large number of publications on Taliban organizations, it always remained mysterious. It was believed that Taliban Organization was organized by Pakistan. A former Pakistani Federal Interior Minister Naseer Ullah Babar during Benazir Bhutto's regime was considered architect of this organization. The idea was based on bringing peace and stability in Afghanistan after supporting Taliban will ensure better conditions and environment for the construction of oil and gas pipeline projects derived from Central Asian States. This project was financially supported by the US multinational oil companies. The emergence of Central Asian Republics created a new environment. It may be added that these republics were characterized by weak economy, secular governments, mal-administrative practices, poor human rights conditions and ethnic identities. In spite of these characteristics apart from these facts the Washington remained focused on its objective to ensure a dominating position in the regional politics. The geo strategic importance of land locked central Asian states went multifold due to the rapidly increasing global challenges. In presence of china and Russia, Washington found it obligatory to seek for its economic and strategic interests.

Afghanistan: New transitional phase

America received a license to attack Afghanistan with reference to 9/11 Terrorist attacks at its soil. The military expedition was focused on eliminating the organization infrastructure of Al-Qaeda. It is noteworthy that the Americans always follow their national agenda. The changing pattern of regional political realities enforced Washington to redefine its policies with respect to the regional political matters. According to the American myth, the national interests can not be ignored at the expense of respective ideology. The difference between two ideologies, i.e., capitalism and communism created a tense environment. It also produced block politics which was contrary to the cause of United Nations.

The anti-communist ideology with new characteristics was launched in Afghanistan. The situation turned worst when the American political think tanks manipulated the new ideology. George Bush Senior stated officially that Washington will treat China as strategic competitor and India has placed as strategic partner. This policy signifies the reshaping of the American methodology to examine the ground realities with reference to the politics in Central Asia and South. Bill Clinton recognized China not as strategic competitor but as strategic partner while dealing with regional issues. This consummated in a change in the China's response towards India. While visiting New Delhi, the Chinese leadership focused on interlinking 'Trilateral Alliance'³⁰ (China-India-Russia) to articulate common interests and challenges after the dissolution of Soviet Union and emergence of Central Asian Republics on the world map. The Chinese leadership not opted to dominate the region after 9/11 tragedy rather it treated the entire regional political environment as a social reality. China treated the Taliban government as a social reality and asked for their accommodation at regional and international level. However China remained peeved due to the growing influence of Washington which developed strategic and economic ties with India. The pre-standing feature of the Indian policy was focused on growing influence in Central Asia and South Asia. In line with this policy, India remained focused on marginalizing Islamabad's interests in Afghanistan rather persuading its own national interests with reference to economic factors.

The Problem of Institution Building in Afghanistan

Most primarily, there is a dire need for civil and state institutions that would give ordinary Afghans a greater say in their affairs, in law making and resource distribution. Equally urgent need is to address judicial and developmental need. Frequent and violent political change in Afghanistan for more than three decades has resulted in the destruction of most institutions of state and civil society. After the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan, which led to the ouster of the extremist Taliban regime, it was correctly perceived that Afghanistan could slide back either to chaos or once again victim to a retrogressive regime. The US and its allies therefore resolved that to stabilize the country and prevent the resurgence of extremist political Islam, it would be necessary to create a progressive government. The Bonn Agreement of December 2001 was the first step towards this direction. This Agreement led to the formation of an interim government and under the Bonn Agreement the Afghan Constitution Commission was established to draft a new constitution in consultation with the public. The Bonn Agreement called for a loyal Jirga and a new constitution was drawn up in 2003. In the following Hamid Karzai was elected President. In September 2005, Parliamentary polls were held and it seemed as the country was on the right track. The country is effectively governed through a bureaucracy almost completely controlled by the President's office. The President also appoints the all powerful provincial governors, who call the shots outside Kabul. The executive in Afghanistan today not only remains emasculated but is also considered immensely corrupt. This has meant that ordinary Afghans do not feel that they have a say in governance or policymaking.

Path towards Governance

Civil institutions are basic to any modern nation state, and constitute the structural frame of states. Institutions are crucial to solve disputes to resolve conflicts and formulation of a common set of rules and regulations. The other big role for modern governments is the formation and preservation of public assets. Another function is to actively aid economic activity and provide utility services like education, healthcare, public transport, etc. As societies and nations evolve, so does the need for such institutions. In Afghanistan, some of the modern state institutions have never existed. The traditional structures that prevented anarchy and served as civil institutions have long been destroyed. Existing informal and formal civil institutions have been corrupted and are currently unable to provide the average Afghan proper causing further alienation and increasing the distance between the common Afghan and Kabul. There is serious problem of governance in Afghanistan. At the national level, corruption exists at unacceptable levels. At the provincial and district levels, especially in contested areas, government, particularly police, too often is weak, ineffective, sometimes nonexistent, and sometimes even predatory³¹.

Traditional Governance in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a tribal society. It has been mainly a Pushtoon state. Despite existing for many centuries as a loosely federated state, Pushtoos, after the unification of the country by Ahmad Shah Durrani, who in 1747 founded the monarchy that ruled the country until 1973, were united by the notion of being Afghans and subscribing to certain common traditions and cultural mores. Even Ahmed Shah was chosen leader of his clan by consensus and not by force. In his vast empire stretching from Punjab in the east to Meshed in the West, the center was not able to formalize relationship with the provinces. Some historians are of the view that "political and social dynamics in Kabul have always been out of sync with the processes at the provincial and rural levels.

The rural Afghans have traditionally gone their own way, isolated in their far flung villages and remote, difficult to access settlements. Over the centuries, the tribes of Afghanistan, starting with the Pushtoons, have devised their own way of resolving conflict, adjudicating disputes and making collective decisions. The best known among these traditional mechanisms is the *Jirga*, meaning assembly, usually of elders. One contemporary Afghan scholar has defined the *Jirga* as a “traditional institution and gathering of the Afghans, which over the centuries, has resolved our nation's all tribal and national political, social, economic, cultural and even religious conflicts by making authoritative decisions”³². The jihad of the 1980s in Afghanistan and its implications were the first blows to the traditional system of conflict management. This was because, the new set of commanders financed by external powers were usually not local community leaders or chieftains but either outsiders or upstarts fattened with jihad money. Foreign military and financial aid bestowed selected militant factions with unparalleled magnitude and eminence of military to Institution Building

Hurdles in Political Development

The main hurdles in the way of political development are; lack of political will, ethnic division, role of local leadership, crisis of legitimacy, and lack of political participation. The Western perception regarding anarchical situation is that the restoration of law and order in the provinces has to precede developmental work. The democratic political institutions and the gradual easing of ethnic tensions will facilitate aid agencies to function. “Most developmental projects are way behind schedule and all this has had a negative impact on Afghan public opinion. The problem, many claim, is the failure of the military to create necessary conditions for the implementation of administrative, developmental and other processes. This, however, is not entirely true for both institution building and military activities at times need to go hand in hand.”

Lack of Political will

The difference between theory and practice to implement political reforms is obvious in the case of Afghanistan”. While in theory the Constitution adopted by the last *Loya Jirga* envisaged a democratic Afghanistan with a multi-layered political decision making and conflict-resolution structure. In practice what is in place can only be described as a top heavy administration where all power emanates from Kabul”³³. For the functioning of democracy institutions are vital at every level. In Afghanistan, the very basic indicator to democracy and national level interaction is missing. Lack of communication, poor transportation and telecom infrastructure have added to the rural disconnect. Millions of Afghans simply cannot participate in the democratic process or any other national process because of the physical impediments. “Afghanistan is administratively divided into 34 provinces, near 364 districts and around 20 to 40 thousands villages. The number of districts and villages are still disputed because of the politics of the power and ethnicity in the country. On the other hand there has never been a very clear definition of a village either by size of land or by population. Villages range from 25 families to 5000 families. On top of all, villages have continuously been disconnected with the district centers because of the accessibility problems. The average distance between a district centre and a village in Afghanistan is from one to two days walk”³⁴.

West believes that in Afghan, present political reforms will be left the nation to relapse to fundamentalists and warlords. And that undesirably does not seem very far off the mark. For Afghan, and in particular Pushtoon, society remains highly traditional. Assaulted by conflict, foreign intrusion and a pastiche of often conflicting ideologies, the Pushtoons have obstinately clung on to their time tested ways and beliefs. It has also delayed the evolution of more progressive mindsets. The role of religion accordingly remains vital. Besides, there are the local commanders and warlords, who in recent years have climbed to the top of the socio-political pile in Pushtoon tribal society. In fact, every recent attempt to “modernize” Afghanistan's socio-political structures has ended in complete failure³⁵.

Failure of Modernization

Political engineering in Afghanistan introduced alternate models, but the level of success remained low. The communists in the 1970s wanted a progressive country, shorn of tribalism and religion. The more the communists tried to change Afghan society, the greater the resistance they faced and this process ultimately led to a revolt. One reason why the Taliban managed to establish order, especially in the Pushtoon areas, was because they themselves were traditionalists, who had no desire whatsoever of being progressive or modern. If anything, the Taliban grafted a form of strict Wahabi principles on the Pushtoon tribal base. The idea that a Westernized, democratic model could be successfully implanted in Afghanistan is in itself questionable. One school of thought believes that political engineering is destined to failure, while the others argue that Afghanistan will remain a problem for the world as long as its conservative, backward polity is not replaced with something better. Apart from the debate over the ethics of tampering with socio-political realities, there is a real problem of governance. The Taliban model did not suggest that it had any merit when it came to governance. Problem is that the current set up too falls short on this count.

Reflections and Findings

Unfortunately, instead of seeking viable solution to the problem of institution building in Afghanistan, the country has been subject to several weird experiments. One being the out sourcing of governance to NGOs. A prominent example for outsourced statehood is the National Solidarity Program (NSP). The National Solidarity Programme was one of the original twelve National Priority Programmes (NPP) of the government³⁶. The above given deliberations reflects that the multi ethnic factor prevalent at Afghanistan is making it a complicated region. There are certain ethnic tribes enjoying financial and military assistance from across the state e.g., Pushtons, Hazaras Uzbeks and Tajiks tribes. The cultural and lingual ties have made Islamabad focused on establishing Pushtoon Government in Kabul. It is a reality that this aspect of Pakistan foreign policy has produced strong reservations with other ethnic identities of Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah Masood (Late) always showed his annoyance on unprecedented support to Pushtoon elder Gull Badin Hikmat Yar with respect to provision of weapons and financial assistance with reference to waging Jihad against Soviet Union. It may be added that Gulbadin Haykmat Yar having Pushtoon identity received maximum support³⁷. This policy was also well reflected during dialogue process with respect to establishing interim government at Afghanistan under Peshawar accord and Islamabad Accord, when the important post-folium were reserved for Pushtoons.

The Islamabad assistance to Taliban created discontentment for Pakistan in Afghans. Iran formulated its own line of action to deal with Afghanistan issue while opposing the Taliban regime state The Taliban government did not pay any heed to Pakistan's reservations in their policies. It is a known fact that Pakistan paid more than its capacity to Afghanistan. The analysis revealed that the internal peace of Afghanistan was much associated with ethnic factor amounting to ethno-politics instead of national politics. It remained a reality that the ethnic disturbance challenged the stability of Afghanistan resulting in producing a depressed Afghan society.

According to Aabeha Dixit, 'Even the Gods in despair have not been able to stop the warring factions in Afghanistan. The core issue of Afghanistan is its national and state building. Hamid Karzai after the ousting of Taliban government established and interim government with the efforts and support of international community. The major short coming of the Bonn Conference was the absence of representation of Pushtoon population of Afghanistan. On the other hand, Northern Alliance was given full autonomy and confidence to deal Afghanistan. However the representatives of Taliban were not invited. Every passing day at Afghanistan enjoyed continuous disturbance in its law and order situation. This made the reality felt that unless each fraction of the Afghan society is not included in institutional framework, the desired results cannot be achieved. Afghanistan lacks the transitional process of democracy. However, Afghanistan is known for constitutional democracy, authoritarianism, monarchy, and totalitarianism. It is unfortunate that every political regime in Afghanistan lacked legitimacy. Each government did not remain indigenious towards their own policies with respect to the social values of Afghan society rather they always borrowed economic, education and institutional programs from abroad.

The process of state and nation building suffered badly due to the power sharing centric policies of different ethnic groups. The role of a common Afghan get pressed due to the permanent lacking of consensus with in state. The Afghan political elites showed a clear dichotomy between their words and actions, ideas and thoughts along with attitude possessed by a common Afghan. A common Afghan posed a serious question mark to the international community based on the widespread disintegration of Afghan society. In spite of unprecedented support of international community to Karzai government with respect to providing financial assistance, each program failed due to the opportunist attitudes of the Afghan warlords who preferred to continue with a prolonged civil war in the county. It is observed that Afghan warlord alliance is not based on some ideological similarities rather it is a tactical alliance. Here the important issue is developing a better understanding of the Afghan society. At Afghanistan the religious element coupled with traditions prevail in a balanced environment but in different self perceived context.

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