Limits of the Liberal Peace Building:

Analyzing the US Initiatives in Afghanistan

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of MS Peace and Conflict Studies

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Thesis Acceptance Certificate

It is certified that the contents and form of the MS thesis titled "Limits of the Liberal Peace Building: Analyzing the US Initiatives in Afghanistan" written by Mr. Muhammad Abdul Wassay (Registration No. 00000320870) of Centre for International Peace and Stability has been vetted by the undersigned, found complete in all respects as per NUST status/regulations, is free of plagiarism, errors and mistakes and is accepted as partial fulfillment for the award of MS/MPhil Degree. It is further certified that the necessary amendments as pointed out by the GEC members of the scholars have also been incorporated in the said thesis and have been found satisfactory for the requirement of the degree.

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Dedication

This research study is dedicated to all the precious lives lost in conflicts around the world regardless of religion, caste or creed. The burden of Afghan lives that have been lost in the last 20 years of this conflict is so much to carry and I hope that someday, we as a nation and as human beings never repeat the mistakes that people before us did. Let's end the violence and let's focus on bringing each other together through love, harmony and devotion.

Abstract

United States and NATO forces withdrew from Afghanistan after 20 years of war and violence and in the aftermath, the Taliban has taken control of the country. The western idea of liberal peace was promoted in the country for the last 20 years, however, the Afghan population remained hesitant towards it. A 2018 estimate of Taliban forces included almost 65,000 fighters which proved to be a reliable fighting and an opposing force and the vacuum that was left by the foreign forces was quickly filled by the Taliban. There have been reasons discussed in the research study regarding the failure of western forces from time to time but the main challenge; inclusivity of all ethnicities during the formulation of government remains the main one. Firstly, the focus should have been on the local community and empowering them rather than focusing on establishing a government that opposed the Taliban movement. During the discussion, there were many grievances, ranging from social, political and religious aspects however, catering to them as a priority was a necessity. People were seen as a human capital for the opposing forces and a human nature of war was never seen. The US had its phases as they wanted to build and sustain a society but the failure of which have been credited to the NATO forces as well. From communism to the western idea of democracy, everything has been far-fetched when it comes to Afghanistan and it's time to realize that Afghans will only let Afghans govern them, that too with a condition that an integrative society is formulated in the right way.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

There is a whole generation that has dealt with conflict throughout their lives, that generation has been bred and born in Afghanistan. The country has seen conflict from time to time and western superpowers have tried to intervene and invade the country in its truest form, however, from Britain to United states, no one has even come close to conquering this land of multiple ethnicities. Afghanistan isn't new to countries invading its territorial sovereignty and to some extent, they have learned and gotten better at pushing the super-powers to a retreating defeat. First, the British empire invaded and fought three Anglo-Afghan Wars, the first one from 1839-1842, the second one was from 1878-1880 and the last one was in 1919 ("Anglo-Afghan Wars | History, Significance, & Facts", 2021). In a nutshell, the reason to invade Afghanistan was to control them, setting up a puppet government and then using that to oppose the Russian influence in the region. Secondly, the Soviet (USSR) invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 to support the Afghan communist government and to further spread communism in the region. They fought with anti-communist Muslim factions but however, just like the British they retreated after suffering heavy losses and by signing a treaty in 1989 ("Soviet invasion of Afghanistan | Summary & Facts", n.d.). The third and the very recent one was United States (US) of Afghanistan which was triggered due to the September 11 attacks at the world trade center in New York. Moreover, this invasion seemed to be pretty organized and had its phases, but just like other, it faded into darkness and yet another superpower suffered a massive defeat in the name of democracy. The whole scenario of these three invasions really puts a question mark on the use of weapons and aggressive measures in order to further spread their own ideology in an area where the superpowers lack the understanding of the people.

So far, the only success that has been seen is only by Afghans who have been fighting for their homeland for decades in the name of statism and self-help. In order to understand how the west used Afghanistan for its own gains disregarding the plight of normal Afghans, we need to assess the situation on ground from the civil war in 1978 to the US withdrawal of its forces in 2021. The civil war that erupted in 1978 was between two groups, the Afghan communist government and the anti-communist Islamic groups and this is when USSR intervened in the internal affairs of the government ("Afghanistan War | History, Combatants,

Facts, & Timeline", n.d.). Afghanistan at this time was a monarchy under Mohammad Zahir Shah who was in power since 1933. This region was very important for USSR and for US due to its strategic location and because of the natural resources. However, after World War II, both the super-powers competed for influence in the region and as US established military-ties with Pakistan, USSR turned towards Afghanistan. However, it wasn't just the super-powers that wanted influence, the local parties were always against each other and this resulted in coups against the regime and a total power shuffle to its core. Case in point; Daoud Khan in 1973 overthrew the then King Zahir Shah and allied with the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) which was a Marxist-Leninist party formed in 1965. Later, the party was divided into two faction which came together again to assassinate Daoud and seize power in 1978 (Byrd, 2012). Seeing the situation, USSR launched its offensive in Afghanistan in 1979 and send its troops towards Kabul and Hafizullah Amin was killed as the Soviets installed Babrak Karmal as president in a bid to install a puppet-government. However, this made the US worry regarding the spread of communism and with the help of Pakistan, Afghan *mujahidin* were trained and equipped with weapons to fight the USSR in their homeland.

This wasn't the first time that civil war erupted in Afghanistan and clearly wasn't the last as well. After the Geneva Accords as USSR made an agreement to remove all of its uniformed personnel, civil war erupted again in 1992 between the Northern Alliance and the current government. Burhanuddin Rabbani, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, Ahmed Shah Massoud and Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum were at the forefront of this civil war and thousands of Afghans were abducted and killed due to the ongoing insurgency (Byrd, 2012). According to the reports, an estimated of 25,000 Afghans were killed in Kabul in 1994 alone and by 1995, the city had been reduced to rubble. In the aftermath, the culture of local "war-lords" was in Afghanistan and the country was divided in multiple factions and it was within this context that the Taliban emerged. Former mujahidin who were trained by US and Pakistan took up arms again to fight these various war lords and to spread their interpretation of *Sharia Law* (Islamic Law) (A. Funk, 1993). This was led by Mullah Mohammad Omar, who was a former *mujahid* from Kandahar. Soon after, the Taliban earned the reputation of winners as they took control by the war-lords and captured areas including the military arsenal (Byrd, 2012).

Pakistan always looked for a way towards Central-Asia for trade and this seemed like the perfect opportunity and in order to seize this, the Taliban attracted the support of Pakistan. In 1995, as Taliban took control of Herat, it seemed pretty clear that their next journey will be towards Kabul and in 1996, Kabul was again conquered by the Taliban. It was within this time, that the Northern Alliance, led by Ahmad Shah Massoud was reconstituted in opposition of Taliban. In 1997, Taliban renamed the country to "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" (IEA) and Mullah Omar assumed the title of *Amir-ul Momineen* (commander of the faithful). The North of Afghanistan was primarily under the control of Massoud and Dostum forces whereas the South of Afghanistan was under the Taliban. Northern Alliance renamed itself to "United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan" a.k.a United Front as they received support from factions that were outside their ethnic constituencies. From 2000 to 2001, fighting continued between the Taliban and the United Front and with victories in North, the United Front was driven further east ("Afghanistan War | History, Combatants, Facts, & Timeline", n.d.). The local Afghans were fatigued and tired of fighting at this time, which eventually drove them towards refugee camps in Pakistan. Furthermore, on September 9, Ahmad Shah Massoud was assassinated and on September 11, attacks were carried out on US soil which killed thousands of civilians, and in the aftermath, US invaded Afghanistan to end the regime of Taliban once and for all.

1.2 United States and the War on Terror (WoT)

There is an argument that states that the invasion for Afghanistan was strategically important for the Bush administration to topple Pres. Saddam Hussein and as well as the Taliban. The actions in Iraq has their bases in Afghan-War as it was also a joint operation to topple yet another government (W. James, 2004).

The US-WoT started right after the September 11 attacks in a bid to kill Osama-bin-Laden; the leader of Al-Qaeda. It was a common misconception that the Taliban and Al-Qaeda were the same faction and hence the first objective of US was to topple the Taliban government in Afghanistan by supporting the Northern Alliance (Constable, 2021). However, Pentagon and Washington devised a three-phase plan to reach its objectives. The first phase was to topple the Taliban as they were allegedly providing sanctuary and safe havens for Al-Qaeda militants. The second phase was primarily built upon the idea of building Afghanistan and ensuring the capacity building of Afghan institutions, this was also in-line with breaking the Taliban militarily. The third phase was the pulling-out phase which primarily focused on

protecting the civilians from Taliban attacks and insurgency and supporting the efforts to rehabilitate the insurgents into the Afghan society (Afghanistan Study Group, 2021). In recent developments, we can see that even this thorough strategy failed in itself and the Taliban took control of the country once again as the US forces were withdrawing ("How the Taliban stormed across Afghanistan in ten days", 2021).

The US used its classic liberal peace and counter-insurgency doctrine hand in hand, ignoring the fact that no matter what they do, they will be foreigners in the area and their ideology would not speak to the masses but rather would be seen as a way to destroy the culture and traditions of Afghanistan. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (N.A.T.O) and allied forces, in collaboration with the US forces coordinated efforts to ensure the fall of Taliban but as a whole, this grand strategy collapsed and failed (Williams, 2021). Civilian causalities were at an all-time high and that effected the US-mission of "liberating" Afghanistan ("Afghan Civilians | Costs of War", 2021). The anti-Taliban/Al-Qaeda campaign initially started when Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) team known as Jawbreaker collaborated with anti-Taliban allies in Afghanistan and bringing in American troops to overthrow the regime (Buckley, 2015). As time passed, US saw its three-fold strategy fail due to lack of ground information and intelligence resulting in various civilian causalities. However, after US forces raid on Osama bin Laden's safehouse in Abbottabad, Pakistan, experts in US started to question the objectives of war again and which also effected the morale of the forces deployed there ("United States of America, The Death of Osama bin Laden | How does law protect in war? - Online casebook", 2021). As this was a notebook guerilla warfare, the enemies were hard to identify and the primary source of information was the Northern Alliance. In the initial months of its operations, the Americans and the Northern alliance saw some victories as Kandahar, the largest city in southern Afghanistan fell and the Taliban regime came to an end. Later, with back-door diplomacy and a United Nations (UN)-sponsored conference in Bonn, Germany, Hamid Karzai was selected to run the country, again without consulting the masses of Afghanistan ("Timeline: U.S. War in Afghanistan", 2021). The war has been the longest one for the US as it went on for 20 years and it concluded by drawing parallels to the The Fall of Saigon, Vietnam ("Why is the Taliban's Kabul victory being compared to the fall of Saigon?", 2021). Due to difficult conditions prevalent in the country, SSR was not able to sustain itself and therefore it compelled many stakeholders, domestic and external, to eventually call for a shift in course. Increasing Taliban control over growing areas of territory started raising eyebrows because knowing that a lot of money has been invested on the War on Terror (WoT) but yet the Taliban resistance doesn't seem to end (Yasa, 2020). Therefore,

the focus moved towards to ensure rapid-deployment of operationally effective security and military personnel, capable of eliminating Taliban influence while securing local support for the Kabul regime

Moreover, the distinction between old and new terrorism has revolved around Al-Qaeda and Taliban since 9/11. Policy makers and academics have argued on the fact that this is the beginning of a new age of terrorism which is absolutely different from old terrorism. In social sciences discipline, what is needed the most is a careful specification of the concept of "new" terrorism and its distinction from "old" terrorism (Crenshaw, 2007). Terrorism is not something that's a new concept but it has been evolving from time to time to cater to the development in terrorist organizations. As the "old" terrorism had a very limited scope to it, the "new" terrorism entails that there should be no value of human life and be dedicated in causing the largest possible number of casualties (Crenshaw, 2007). As Water Laqueur said that the characteristics of new terrorism is different from the old one as it is for the destruction of society and to eliminate large sections of population. In PCS discipline, the association between religion and lethality has been in focus to understand what causes the religious fundamentalists to form a group and go against something they all used to believe in some point of time. Complexities such as there should be a need of consensus over the idea of "new" terrorism, a need to develop definitions that are universally acceptable and which also resonated with the essence of it, need to create boundaries between terrorism and crimes and the rise of labelling terms such as "extremists" and "fundamentalists" have come forward.

1.3 Research Questions

The aim of this research is to understand the underlying reasons of the failure of western powers and their security and governance initiatives in Afghanistan. From USSR to USA, and the factors that caused the ideologies to fall and became inevitable. The research aims to analyze the following questions:

- What are the underlying factors causing the return of Taliban in Afghanistan?
- To what extent the western initiatives were accepted by the Afghans?
- Does Liberal Peace Paradigm have any basis in Afghanistan?
- What will be a sustainable governance model for Afghanistan?

1.4 Research Assumptions

The research would primarily focus on the reasons of the failure of western liberal democracy as the research would analyze and problematize the liberal peace paradigm and the concept of liberal democracy in Afghanistan. The research assumes the following:

- The liberal peace paradigm and the concept of liberal democracy is suitable for all states and it involves integrative society.
- It is also assumed that Afghans accepted the liberal idea of the west whereas backtracking the Islamic ideology.

1.5 Methodology

This particular section refers to a discussion of reasoning to why particular methods were used to analyze the situation on ground. The research is primarily a qualitative one as the factors would be identified and analyzed through which the western ideologies didn't seem to establish s stronghold of their thought, and resultantly costing a lot of human and infrastructural loss. The primary data was collected through one-on-one interviews from respondents that were currently based in Kabul or have been there for quite some time. However, ethnographic data was taken as well from # respondents and a focus group in the form of jirga was also conducted to understand the grievances better. The secondary source of data were the mandates of ideologies that was exported from west towards South Asia and journal articles relevant to the research study.

Moreover, in order to understand the challenges and in fact the failure that US and USSR faced in this region, we need to understand the ground realities first that include getting to know the ethnic groups and their various thought processes. The selection of respondents was primarily done by people on ground in Kabul and Afghan residents since they have seen what the actual situation has been and they are the participants who have suffered the most. The respondents include the journalists and experts as well. The research was conducted by interviewing 5 respondents in Afghanistan to define the Afghan in its truest essence. Furthermore, Afghan students in Pakistan who have been involved in Afghan activism will also be respondents of a focus group that will be utilized to understand the stance further more.

Moreover, the secondary sources will include the mandate of US WoT and analytical researches on the use of military power and might to bring democracy and peace. These will be accessed through online libraries and resource centers.

1.6 Research Significance

Understanding Afghanistan has been one of the most difficult challenges that have been faced by any party or stakeholder**.** The findings of this study will redound to the benefit of society, especially Afghan society considering that the ideological differences among the states plays an important role in international relations. From good governance to capacity building, understanding the ground reality of Afghanistan is a necessity. International relations is an evolving subject and specifically peace and conflict studies definitely entails what has been happening in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is now a post-conflict zone through which future discourse on conflict resolution will be built and therefore, an academic and a realistic approach will be derived from the results of this study to further contribute towards to it. For the researcher, the study will aim at uncovering the critical ideological areas and their importance towards conflict resolution and governing process that has not been explored correctly before. Thus, a new realistic understanding will be arrived at.

1.7 Thesis Outline

The present introduction chapter includes the background of the Afghanistan and its decades long conflict through which Afghans have suffered drastically. It touches upon the role of US and War on Terror (WoT) and how the short-sightedness of this whole mission made the US and its allied forces a failure. It also describes the research questions, research assumptions, research significance and the methodology that will be used to reach the objectives of this study.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature review and the conceptual framework of the study. The section sheds light on the theory of Liberal Peace and discusses its three-fold strategy within the context of Afghanistan. The traditional approach of liberal peace was never suitable in Afghanistan as it effected directly on the peace-building process without taking in consideration the local tribes and communities. The section also describes the relationship between the liberal peace paradigm and security sector reforms, through contextualizing Afghanistan.

Chapter 3 discusses the most important part of this study, Afghanistan. It sheds light on the interventions in South-Asia by western forces and discusses that by linking them with

historical perspective of Afghanistan. It also explains the geography and demography of the country. Its rise to modern-day Afghanistan and the conflict dynamics that existed after the retreat of soviet Army in 1989. The section also sheds light on post-conflict rehabilitation and the use of IHL during the 20-year War on Terror. Within the context of Afghanistan, peacebuilding strategies and the security development nexus that is also discussed.

Furthermore, chapter 4 deals with the data collected and explains the US and peace-building initiatives in Afghanistan. It explains four main aspects of the failure of liberal peace; lack of inclusive approach, nationalism, governance.

Chapter 5 delivers the conclusion of the study and is accomplished by the perspective of the author on the whole situation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Reviewing the Existing Literature

At the end of twentieth century, the western social order evolved into a new ideology that talked about globalization, free-market capitalism and liberal democracy. "The end of ideology" came into power and a new one was proclaimed through which states would interact with each other in a more efficient manner (Dalton, 2005). Daniel Bell in his book talks about the American social thought which would increasingly be adopted by the states, however, some will eventually be successful but most of them would fail as it would result in a variety of ethnic and religious conflicts. He argued that people are now more aware regarding the desirability of a decentralized power and political plurality where representation of every single community has become a necessity. In his work, Bell also expressed that new ideologies are emerging and rather than the end of ideology, ideological competition is increasing rapidly. The cold war between the USSR and US on the basis of communism vs capitalism was clearly a clash between two thoughts where former was the concept of putting society before self-whereas, the later was an individualistic approach ("Communism Vs Capitalism", 2021). Communism was the main driving force for the invasion of USSR on Afghanistan and played a pivotal role spreading the ideology in the region. It was because of this invasion, US collaborated with Pakistan to support *mujahideen* to oppose the Red Army troops. Political experiments in the 20ᵗʰ century on Afghanistan primarily started off from here (G. Weinbaum, 2006). Red army, no matter how strong and how much militaristic power they had, also retreated from Afghanistan.

Within the context of Afghanistan, the only ideology that worked was Islamic ideology. From mujahideen to Taliban, they all had one thing in common, the true essence of Sharia law. Norris and Inglehart argued that the religious dimension of ideology is strongly to left/right orientations of less developed societies (Norris and Inglehart, 2004). The fact that the super-powers chose to ignore this during their quest in Afghanistan speaks volumes about what kind of strategy was formulated. The patterns regarding the religious observance varied in certain parts of Afghanistan but somehow, most of them were integrated in the same way (U.S Department of State, 2019). USSR and US both failed to analyze the main variable in Afghanistan; religion. They could have done it by analyzing the importance of God (Allah) in the lives of masses and whether they would accept anything that is even remotely away from the basic principles of Islam (Dalton, 2005).

The western liberal democracy, that the US tried to export to Afghanistan is argued to be based on competition between individual and groups in which they compete for political power among themselves (Karlberg, 2006). In the case of Afghanistan, the competition wasn't just between the political parties but rather it was between warlords, militias and armed groups that restored their power in the specific area by violence. Karlberg argues in his works that liberal and competitive democracy becomes unsustainable and unjust as it is anachronistic in nature, especially in the case of Afghanistan. Moreover, Deborah Tannen argues that this sort of democracy brings in combative culture in politics and certain conflictual patterns of interaction among different leaders arise. This results in the spread of corruption and give birth to unwritten rules of civility and cooperation among different stakeholders (Tannen, 1999). Furthermore, within the context of Afghanistan, these unwritten rules took an unexpected turn and fighting among the militias became a never stopping occurrence. The nature of democracy has been abused by the developed countries for ages and exporting that to Afghanistan was merely just a recipe for another failure / disaster. The environmental injustice that took place in Afghanistan was also a setback for the super-powers as well. Jonathan Petrikin in his book argues that the environmental racism and injustices are the costs of political competition where ethnic minorities, poor and women tend to suffer the most (Petrikin, 1995). There is no doubt that Afghanistan suffered the worst case of environmental degradation because Afghans living in rural areas were more likely to work in conflict hit areas due to lack of option. This particular segment of the society had the least influence on the politics of the country due to economic disenfranchisement and due to the fact that these people were politically, socially and economically marginalized. This resulted in grievances among the people. Jean Rousseau wrote the book "Discourse on inequality" in 1755 and argued how certain limitation are paved by inequalities that exist within a society and how their absence would help in the flourishment of the state as whole (Rousseau, n.d.). The basic concept of offensive realism also existed when we draw the parallels between the invasion of USSR and US. John Meirsheimer argued that offensive realism is the concept when military might and power is utilized to achieve its objectives (Snyder, 2002). Offensive realism is a concept that was put forward which advocated that considering the anarchic nature of the world, states seems to adopt the "offensive" view of thought in their foreign policy, keeping in view the human nature, in order to maximize their military capabilities and to weaken the lesser power states (Snyder, 2002). This concept gives birth to the term "civilized anarchy" in the world which says that the crown of the super power in the world

will keep rotating to one state to another but the ultimate power of getting what you want will always stay the same (Walt, 1998). Offensive realists do not believe in balance of power and only advocate for strong vs weak and seeks to acquire more power and capabilities to ensure their dominance in the world arena. These realists are all for aggression and believe that the show of power and military capabilities is the only way of survival. Within Afghanistan, US used its offensive realism to target the spread of communism from USSR via proxy wars within and later used it to enhance its stronghold in Afghanistan even after the main objective of WoT was achieved (Rahman, 2018).

The political economy also plays a vital role in post-conflict decision making. Political economy is a term that is used when there is an ongoing discussion about the commodities and the trade goods and their relationship with the political dynamics of a specific defined area. In basic words, the political economy is a relationship between the citizens and the people of the country with the policy making mechanisms of the same country in the context of intrastate conflicts (Auvinen, 1997). Now in these types of conflicts there are certain things involved that play a very integral role in this, such as the grievances that are being dealt by the people in form of lack of resources and the concept of greed that is a result of lack of economic opportunities for the people. The two main factors that play integral role in defining the political economy are self-financing and the economic structure of a civil war economy (Choudhury & Adenan, 2017). Conflicts basically erupt where there exists an unstable economy and socio-economic differences and using these dynamics, the rebels are able to have access to materials like precious gem stones, timber, oil or a fertile land where certain drugs can be manufactured such as opium in the case of Afghanistan (Frotan et al., 2019). Here, we need to be very critical of the point that perspective about the grievances is a very relative term and it varies from community to community. If such conflicts where self-financing exists, remain in any specific area then it is very unlikely that it will ever stop because this whole phenomenon keeps going around and around and the only people who are affected by it are the people that are neutral and just want to live their life peacefully and in harmony. Sometimes a systematic and an organized version of this whole cycle is seen in the political economy and that is known as civil-war economy where certain element of economic value are materialized in a way where they become a tool to finance the war (Biswas et al., 2016). Now this type of economy basically operates in the black and gray areas of the trade market and it does not play a role in the country's economy because that's not its purpose. Its sole purpose is to finance the war for one side or both of them. And just

like self-financing, civil-war economy also works in the same way as it helps in the expansion of the conflict since the greed for more money is raised and rebels starts expanding their operations to gain more natural resources. Hence, targeting military installations and natural resources depositories. This is how the cycle of self-financing and civil-war economy keeps operating to empower the political economy of a conflict.

2.2 Liberal Peace Paradigm

Afghanistan's case study has been a very important one since the western powers tried to conquer. First, the rise of communism and now, liberal and democratic peace through reforms that would somehow benefit the whole society. The framework of this research study generally revolves around the fact that no matter what happened, all the assumptions and values of liberal peace collapsed when challenged by the Taliban. Theorists have believed that there is an inevitable outcome for liberal peace and that is that eventually, liberal peace reforms would bring people closer, develop effective economic reforms and establish capacity building of the institutions. US, in this very case put in efforts to associate Afghanistan with modern states disregarding the influence of masses. In the third phase of WoT, the allied forces were focused on nation building and to have a more integrative society where they can protect the civilians from Taliban fighters (Monten, 2014). They made these investments for a comprehensive nation-building strategy by ensuring social cohesion between the communities and strengthening the ongoing dialogues between the stakeholders. Afghan Peace Process was a clear example of this when the Afghan government under Ashraf Ghani negotiated with the Taliban in Doha talks.

The concept of Liberal peace after the cold war rapidly evolved into the intervention of foreign states in a sovereign country. Whenever there was a conflict, international agencies intervened to restore the law and order situation of the country, establishing peace contracts between the stakeholders and building the state structures according to their own ideas (Hill, 2010). However, As the data suggests that Afghan have always been opposed to foreign boots on ground regardless of the concept or the idea that they might be exporting (Dorronsoro, 2009). However, during this time, theorists argued that the fragility of the state is a massive indicator to understand whether they are ready to accept it or not. Afghanistan suffered a lot, and not just in the past 20 years but for the past 40 years, with new conflicts arising and competitive democracy in place within the local context. The problem with the US narrative was the fact that they believed that the solution to the fragility of the state is

through liberal peace and they tried to push forward this idea through its investments in Afghanistan (Khalid, 2020). First and foremost, we need to understand liberal peace step by step to analyze exactly what went wrong. Liberal peace paradigm basically is a threefold transformation of a nation which includes peace, democracy and market economy in order to strengthen the processes of peace for an effective sustainable development (Bisoka & Giraud, 2020). From Central America to Africa to Afghanistan, the failures of this concept have been the same and primarily because of the fragility of states. In Afghanistan, the development patterns were unequal and varied across the provinces and democratization of Afghanistan cannot enabled when all the stakeholders are not on board. Within the context of Liberal Peace paradigm, the concept's framework is largely based on the history of Western Europe and their idea of political and economic efficiency (Nascimento & Simão, 2019). Therefore, all the research that have been done regarding liberal peace does not cater to the demographics of Afghanistan and hence, the fall of every great super power becomes inevitable. Furthermore, nation building strategies that were adopted by the US underestimated the influence of competing dynamics in the country which again, varied from province to province. The development of hybrid regimes in Afghanistan that opposed the government resulted into the renewal of traditional patterns of violence in the country (Daudzai, 2021). This was evident by the fact that as the US withdrawal started in May, 2021, the Taliban started their offensive and very steadily took control of provinces and main cities. The fall of Mazar-e-Sharif, a gateway to Kabul manifested the fact that their still existed different structures of violence between the Taliban and the Ghani government.

The driving force behind this nation building strategy was a major emphasis on market-oriented policies and an effective promotion of liberal democratization but rather than learning and analyzing the ground reality and deep-seated causes of civil conflicts, the US pushed its narrative aggressively and not just diplomatically but also through military measures (Mac Ginty, 2010). One of the main challenges that US faced was the universalization of this concept. Instead of formulating strategies that are context-specific in nature, they relied on their own idea of liberal peace. Parekh in his works talks about how these ideas are culturally and historically specific and a political system that has been based on them cannot claim universal validity. In order for it to be universal, region-specific, country-specific and context-specific strategies needs to be evolved if globalization is the end goal for the western super-power. Democracy based on liberal ideas was unsuitable for many Afghans as the majority of the masses have a very religious thought process (Mac Ginty, 2010).

Another aspect that serves as pre-requisite for the Liberal Peace Paradigm is the end of violence of all kinds in the region for an effective nation building strategy to take place. In a post-conflict setting, the violence occurs in a very gray area of the conflicts, which also entails that the mechanisms to provide security becomes very fragile or are minimized to a point where it has no effect on the prevailing environment. Furthermore, in order to cater to this, reforms of public security become less effective and the effective response is analyzing and identifying the specifics and the new elements of the violence, actors and stakeholders involved and their function (Avi-Guy, 2021). US in a bid to export their idea of liberal peace failed to diagnose the real problem that existed within the society. They pre-maturely planned the security sector reforms resulting in a non-effective demilitarizing campaign against the locals and the Taliban.

2.3 Liberal Peace and Social Sector Reforms

The Liberal peace model talks about how liberal democracies form a coalition via economic and political settlements and treaties with each other, hence minimizing the risk of war among the democracies. The US used this theory to form a strategic bond in South Asia via Afghanistan and planned up nation building strategies which brought in different political and security reforms (Murphy, 2020). However, there existed a number of risk factors that proved to be a catalyst for more conflicts. Structural risk factors such as the population size, its resentment towards the new government and the way the whole structural framework of the population was categorized played a very integral role. Afghanistan has been a focus point since decades for western powers. There are certain pre-requisites that are required for an SSR implementation and it is highly influenced by the history, domestic and international issues of that specific country (Sedra, 2007). The concept of SSR revolves around re-building and reforming the already existed institutions but the ground realities in Afghanistan was way too far from this which is why it was very difficult for SSR to function properly and so was the Liberal democracy that the US was so focused on exporting.

Security Sector Reforms have many dimensions, but the most crucial of it is the hard-powered military structures. When the history of Afghanistan is analyzed, the state's relationship with subnational, non-state security actors has evolved throughout time and the importance they hold in the state structure is so fundamental that they cannot be separated while formulating an effective SSR policy (Mehran, 2018). In the modern Afghan state

military, there are certain new components that includes a regular army, tribal levies and community militia (Empowerment of Pashtun Wali concept) and each of these forces has their own distinct role in the society and none of these can be ignored. The importance is such that the Tribal levies often overshadow the regular army. History shows that throughout different eras the military sector was attempted to be reformed. Two models can be drawn- the modernization model that favored the creation of centralized army and the hybrid model that favored fusion of traditional actors, tribal levies and state army. The latter model has been very successful throughout modern history of Afghanistan. Which was misunderstood by the USA while formulating policies regarding Afghanistan.

There were many small factors that accumulated themselves into a resultant failure reforms but the main reasons that impacted the whole things were; a proper baseline of security was absent, limited nature of human and institutional capacity, sound political foundation and inconsistent resource levels (Khalid, 2020).. Due to difficult conditions prevalent in the country, SSR was not able to sustain itself and therefor it compelled many stakeholders, domestic and external, to eventually call for a shift in course. Increasing Taliban control over growing areas of territory started raising eyebrows because knowing that a lot of money has been invested on the War on Terror (WoT) but yet the Taliban resistance doesn't seem to end (Yasa, 2020). Therefore, the focus moved towards to ensure rapid-deployment of operationally effective security and military personnel, capable of eliminating Taliban influence while securing local support for the Kabul regime. The paramilitary nature of this training deferred focus on human rights, accountability and rule of law, with the primary parameters of successful implementation being measured in terms of the quantity of Afghan 'boots on the ground'. The west failed to recognize the tribal makeup of the Afghan society, which had its roots in dominant Pashtun tribes of Pakistan; Popalzais and Barakzais and missing an opportunity to cater to the minority groups of "Tajiks", this resulted in ensuring that SSR never becomes a success in the case of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a mixture of many different ethnicities, power structures, tribal and factional groups and they all have various expectations. The rapid implementation of SSR without identifying the true dynamics of the country was the biggest irresponsible thing in the history and then immediately, within months, changing the focus from Afghanistan to Iraq was another one (Lebovic, 2019). The focus shifted which resulted in policy changes and lack of understanding of ground realities; once combined together, it's no more than a recipe of disaster. Furthermore, as violence never ended in the country then the possibility of having continuity in peace process also suffered.

Another fault line that US touched was the fact that they failed to looked at Liberal peace and nation-building as what it actually is; a political process. In any political process, the stakeholders are primarily the local parties and community however, the external influence in Afghanistan was extensive as well. Security arrangements, capacity building of institutions, basic understanding of historical perspective and exclusion of minority groups in Afghanistan remained the underlying issue of the conflict (Khalid, 2020).. Liberal peace can only be sustainable in nature when a long-term strategy is in place and an exit option is not looked upon as an absolute necessity. The fault lies in the fact that US brought in short-term strategies which was favored by most of the external actors as resource allocation was also adjusted by the allied forces and so did the political priorities. Spoilers that existed within the Afghan society endangered the peace process which caused the collapse of US forces and Kabul was over-run by the Taliban. Moreover, nation-building strategies must be catered in such a way where internal actors are oriented towards it and external actors are only playing the role of mediation. Short-term strategies never worked, and looking at the last 20 years, we can see that even though the mandate of US presence was very extensive in nature but it lacked the basic understanding of Afghanistan and its people.

Chapter Three: Understanding Afghanistan

From Britain to USSR to United States of America, the empires have fallen like dominoes when it came to conquering Afghanistan and trying to spread their own doctrine in the region. However, the reason of their failure was primarily lack of understanding of the local area. The haste of introducing reforms and setting up their own favorable governments before studying the internal politics, ulterior motives and political changes was the major cause of every single failure. Historically, we can see that political instability has always stayed in Afghanistan in one form or another; from the era of Zahir Shah till the US invasion. (Khan, 2021). Religion is deeply rooted in the core of Afghanistan and religious scholars (*Mullahs*) always had a very distinct role in the society building their loyalty is only stays with Islam, no matter what. Communism, Capitalism, Liberalism and many others are just concepts that cannot be comprehended by an ordinary Afghan who only relies on the one authority of God (Allah).

Afghanistan have a lot of history that needs to be looked at to understand the basic demographics of the country. The local militias, let that be Taliban or any other, always had a constant feeling that they stand for their own country and they will not let anyone change their way of life. The Taliban have outlasted the super-powers, most recently the United States. Attachment to a place, its traditions, its culture and its way of life is very powerful constant that has existed within the Afghan people and that's never going to change. USSR and US, in a bid to expand their ideology accidentally got stuck and involved in a counter-insurgency war fighting an enemy that used the most specialized guerilla tactics. They were fighting an enemy that knew and understood the topography in its finest sense. The superficial approach adopted by the US and USSR led the people to have an uprising against all forms of governance that have been imposed people.

Moreover, the internal conflicts inside Afghanistan were caused over appointments of government positions, electoral reforms, revenue distribution which resulted in a mis-trust and grievances that got instilled in the Afghans (Yusufzada et al., 2019). These issues were not effectively addressed by any of super-powers and thus gave rise to insurgency in the form of militias and the Taliban. The fault lines that existed between rural communities and the government failed to serve any of the masses. Thus, the political experiments by the super-powers failed over and over again.

3.1 South Asia Intervention

South Asia has been in question due to its nature of being crisis prone on 21st century. It has seen conflicts after conflicts due to the undecided nature of the events that has been happening here. There exists a lot of interlocking and new security risks considering the nuclear powers in this region too. The strategic location of Afghanistan seems attractive through the lenses of western powers as a major land route is connected via Iran, Central Asia and India. In the era of globalization, trade and inter-connectivity is a major concern for super-powers to increase their growth and to have an upper-hand in a competitive world market. However, regionalization in this context has proved to be a really problematic in nature for South Asia, and it has failed because the extra-regional powers such as the United States has made sure to intervene in this region in the form of economic and security relationships, however, they have little to no interest when it comes to getting involved in the local domestic conflicts but in some cases, military cooperation with extra-regional powers has proved to be an obstacle for security collaboration among south Asia countries (Connah, 2020).

The prevailing environment in South Asia, caused by the western intervention has greatly affected Afghanistan as various motives of various stakeholders have come in play and the only one that suffered were the Afghan people. This research would aim to understand how Afghanistan suffered the most due to interventions and what were the factors due to which it is largely known as "The Graveyard of Empires".

3.2 Historical Perspective and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation

Afghanistan is a country that has been challenged by many western empires so that it can be conquered, however it has proved time and time again that's it very hard and difficult to govern this country. Empire by empire, the country has proved that none other than Afghans have the right to govern and formulate policy for the country. From the first Anglo-Afghan war to the very recent WoT, Afghanistan now has a reputation of "Graveyard of Empires". However, the approach that Mughals had, known as the light-handed approach through means that weren't universal but merely the need of the time. They payed off various tribes but stayed clear of a centralized control, which the British, USSR and US tried to do (Konarovskii, 2020).

3.3 Geography of Afghanistan

Before we dive into the dynamics of the conflict and explaining the study, it is important to understand the geography of Afghanistan. Afghanistan exists in a region where trade between the countries is of utmost importance. It is primarily a landlocked country and various trade forums look towards Afghanistan as its location serves as a crossroad for them. Afghan consists of many ethnicities which is a testament in itself how the people from all points on the compass settled here since the beginning. The terrain of Afghanistan is mostly mountainous region and consists of almost 75% of Afghanistan's terrain and some of the mountains are also the extended part of the Himalayas. The local Afghans understand this terrain better than anyone and to some extent, it has been the reason of victories over western invaders. Afghanistan's geography is also a complex chapter. It consists of agricultural and irrigated land, deserts, high plateaus and many snow covered mountains to its east. Eastern Afghanistan is known for its mountain ranges; Hindu Kush and Pamirs, with peaks up to almost 24,000 feet. Hindu Kush mountains runs from the northeastern part of Afghanistan to southwest and the highest peaks of this series exists in northern Vakhan which is also known as the Wakhan corridor. Moreover, the main river drain are located in the southwest, crossing through Helmand province through Arghandab valley. *The Amu Darya* (Amo River) shares its border with the central Asian republics to the north as well ("Afghanistan | History, Map, Flag, Capital, Population, & Languages", 2021).

Afghanistan is a very resource rich country however; the extraction of those resources has always been a challenge. Natural gas, petroleum, coal, barites, lead, zinc and various precious and semi-precious stones are a part of the treasure in Afghanistan. These resources, if utilized correctly can bring a lot of economic growth for the country and would make Afghanistan a self-sufficient one ("Afghanistan geography, maps, climate, environment and terrain from Afghanistan | - CountryReports", 2021). It consists of thirty-four provinces and each province has a distinct element attached to it. The following table jots down the provinces and their respective capitals:

S.No	Province	Capital
1	Badakshan	Faizabad
2	Badghis	Qala-e-Naw
3	Baghian	Pol-e-Khomri
4	Balkh	Mazar-e-Shariff
5	Bamian	Bamian
6	Daikondi	Nili
7	Farah	Farah
8	Faryab	Maymana
9	Ghazni	Ghazni
10	Ghowr	Chaghcharan
11	Helmand	Lashkar Gah
12	Herat	Herat
13	Jowzjan	Sheberghan
14	Kabul	Kabul
15	Kandahar	Kandahar
16	Kapisa	Mahmud-e-Raqi
17	Khost	Khost
18	Kunar	Asadabad
19	Kunduz	Kunduz
20	Laghman	Mehtar-Lam
21	Lowgar	Pul-e-Alam
22	Nangarhar	Jalalabad
23	Numruz	Zaranj
24	Nuristan	Nuristan
25	Panjshir	Bazarak
26	Paktia	Gardez
27	Paktika	Sharan
28	Parwan	Charikar
29	Samangan	Aybak

30	Sar-i-Pul	Sar-i-Pul
31	Takhar	Taloqan
32	Uruzgan	Tarin Kowt
33	Wardak	Meydan Shahr
34	Zabul	Qalat

Table 3.1

Just like geography, the demographic understanding of Afghanistan is also important. In recent years, the most commonly cited estimate of Afghanistan's population is approximately thirty-one million which is composed of many ethnicities with 42% being Pashtun, 27% being Tajik, 9% being Hazara, 9% being Uzbek, 4% being Aimak, 3% being Turkmen and 2% being Baloch. Islam is the most common religion and the Sunni Islam is the majority. Since, the demography includes a number of ethnicities, the languages are various as well with various dialects ("Geography of Afghanistan", 2021). However, Pashto and Dari have been the two official languages of the country and is used widely. On the other hand, Persian is also widely spoken in the country. Furthermore, there still exists an ambiguity in the total number of population and its related aspects primarily because of lack of representation of communities. This has also resulted as a pre-requisite of civil-wars that have been fought between different war-lords.

3.4 Rise of Modern Afghanistan

There are three main factors which even though are important to remember, are often neglected by the foreign forces. First is the strategic location of the country as it serves as one of the major land routes between Iran, Central Asia and India and this land route is inhabited by various tribes which are hostile to one another to some extent. Secondly, its experience in fighting off the foreign troops. The natives have dealt with a number of invasions and they seem to be prepared for any sort of assault or ambush that comes their way. Thirdly, the topography and the physical terrain of Afghanistan makes it very difficult for foreigners to conquer, on the other hand, the tribes are well informed and well equipped to fight. The topography of Afghanistan includes series of mountains and historically, the valley in between has been used by tribes to ambush every foreign force ("Afghanistan geography, maps, climate, environment and terrain from Afghanistan | - CountryReports", 2021). In order to understand the terrain of Afghanistan, we need to look at the series of mountains that run through. Hindu Kush dominates the country and run through center and south of the

country. Whereas, the Pamir mountains run through the east of Afghanistan. In the northeast of the country Hindu Kush, Pamir, Tian Shan, Kunlun and Himalayas all meet which is also known as The Pamir Knot (Badakhshan province).

Afghanistan wasn't always a Muslim majority country as the it was controlled by the Maurya Empire from India and on the other hand, a Greek kingdom arose in Balkh (Bactria) in northern Afghanistan. Hinduism and Buddhism quickly spread out in Afghanistan. For Islam, it took almost 200 years to spread and that too with the help of Ya'qub ibn al-Layth al-Saffar from Zaranj and Mahmud from Ghazni. The only time that Kabul was controlled by a foreign force was during the time of Mughal emperor Ẓahīr-ud-Dīn Muḥammad Babur and it was only successful for two decades because the formula to conquer they used depended upon paying the tribes and controlling few of the urban centers. Later on, the Birtish were also inspired by this and they tried to replicate it in their conquest of Afghanistan. However, in 1747, the foundation of modern-day Afghanistan was laid by Ahmad Shah Durrani and combined the territories from Nader Shah's descendants in Persia, Mughal empire and Uzbeks in the north (Khan, 2021).

3.5 Modern-day Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a landlocked country and is surrounded by mountains, deserts and empires on the borders. It has seen war and diplomacy in its truest essence since the Afghan Empire was founded in 1747. Analyzing the history of Afghanistan gives us an idea that it has seen conflicts and war since the very start and no matter what the occupying force is, the result has always been the same. As we see that during the ninetieth century, The Great Game existed between the Russia and Great Britain and power politics was the rise. During this time, both the empires competed to take control of Afghanistan and got themselves into a geopolitical struggle with each other. However, as the British fought its three wars in with the Afghans, the forces withdrew in 1919 resulting in an independent state of Afghanistan. However, this wasn't the end of the invasion, six decades later, USSR invaded the country to support their ideology of communism and armed the unpopular communist regime which was in power then. In response to that, US and Pakistan establish a mujahideen force to fight the forces of USSR resulting in a decade long battle of Afghan mujahedeen with the Red Army. After the retreat of USSR forces, it was seen a victory for US and its allies and things were looking smooth for a while (Klass, 1988). However, the invasion gave rise to warlords of different tribes and civil war and violence even after the retreat didn't seem to end. Decades later, after

the September 11 attacks, Operation Enduring Freedom was initiated by the US and with the help of Britain, missiles and bomb rained down on Afghans, killing and wounding thousands of civilians. In August, 2021, US retreated its forces back home and Taliban took full of the country again. As history suggests, resisting foreign troops and dominating through terrain knowledge warfare is now an essential part of Afghanistan's national identity.

3.6 Conflict Dynamics: Taliban and War on Terror

Conflict in Afghanistan isn't new as the country has been in turmoil since decades. Civil war and western invasions have contributed towards the culture of war-lords and achieving objectives through violent means. The rise of Taliban as a governing voice in Afghanistan to decide the external and internal affairs prior to 9/11 was essential to determine post 9/11 situation. Therefore, examining the rise of Taliban is essential to this study.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was tackled by a sense of homeland in Afghans, specifically Pashtuns as its base was founded by Prime Minister Daud Khan in the name of "Pashtonistan" in the 70s during his government. Primarily, the Pashtun population fought whole-heartedly against the Soviet oppression and suppressed the establishment of a communist government in Afghanistan. This reaction by the Pashtuns established the fact that the tribal social structure in Afghanistan is strong and sustainable and has its own hierarchy. However, in order to help Afghans in achieving their freedom from USSR, United States with the help of Pakistan started training and preparing a force of local Afghans to fight the invaders and thus the foundation of Taliban was built (Young & Kent, 2020). Moreover, the incompetence showed by different factions in Afghanistan was unable to form an inclusive government which could have been a way forward in pre-9/11 era. Anarchy spread-out all through Afghanistan and gave a platform to the rise of violent war crimes done by the local militias to achieve a goal that was only favorable to them. In 1994, Mullah Omar was also active and his followers that were a group of students of local *madrasas* took their arms against a warlord due to the crimes committed. This movement of Mullah Omar rapidly gained momentum and spread throughout the country, starting from the Kandahar province. The source of the turmoil that happened there were the inter-factional conflicts that enrolled a number of Pashtun tribes and its youth. Looking into it deeply, we see that there were three main factors that gave rise to the Taliban; preference of Islamic oriented law *(Sharia Law),* financial and logistical support by the United States and Pakistan and the call for national activism (Scanlan, 2021). Resultantly, the Taliban formed a party of religious leaders, also

called as *"Ulema Shura"* at national and sub-national levels which gave them the power and the authority to legitimize themselves and formulate policy that's suitable to them ("Taliban | Definition, History, & Facts", 2021). However, the social structure of tribes remained the same and were automatically restored in their old form when the US-WoT started and Taliban were ousted by the invading foreign forces.

After the invasion, the Taliban didn't disappear to vanish from the country but rather came in the form of a guerilla movement that fought for the territory that they believed was their homeland. With grievances against the invading forces and the Government of Afghanistan, guerilla warfare started and sustainability in the country seemed impossible to many. Taliban, fighting a guerilla warfare was stated as an anti-government element that fought with the Afghan and US-Allied forces in every way possible. However, the instability in Afghanistan cannot be blamed all on Taliban and their anti-government stance, as there were also many additional forces that were in play and were independent of Taliban. These forces primarily existed of smugglers, narcotics traffickers and other social and political elements. The conflicts prior to Taliban take-over of Kabul on 15th of August, 2021 was a result of inter-ethnic and tribal dynamics as each tribe called for an absolute tribal autonomy at the local level. Power-distribution has been an existing challenge in Afghanistan and this was exploited by the ideologically motivated actors as grievances played a vital role. Furthermore, NATO and US forces played their part towards the increasing grievances of people as their military operations in certain areas of Afghanistan resulted in numerous civilian causalities and their failure to mitigate the important humanitarian and development issues.

The research study has also explored the failure of international community and the Government of Afghanistan to establish inclusivity and integrity among various communities in the country. The international allied forces came with an idea that they will consolidate the power equally among the masses and hence peace will prevail, however, the failure of this have the chance to Taliban to regroup and reformulate their strategy. The nationalism of Taliban, mixed with grievances of local population was a lethal combo for the opposing forces. Their campaigns regained support from the population as the international community ceased to function when it came to developmental and political aspects of grievances.

3.7 Protection of Civilians Under International Humanitarian Law

International humanitarian law was put in place in order to ensure that certain SOPs (Standard operating procedures) are being followed in a way that the protection of civilian is in its main core. Basic human rights and the securitization of those rights was done through different conventions that came from time to time which helped IHL to evolve and grow with the changing world. It also tries to contain the effects of military objectives so that it does not result in any collateral damage by discussing the distinction between civil and military objectives. There are six main principles to IHL that govern its implications on armed conflict areas, those principles are: Proportionality, Neutrality, Distinction, Military necessity, Precaution and Humanity ("The Geneva Conventions and Enforcement of International Humanitarian Law", 2019).

Jus ad bellum entails the meaning of "right of war" which sets a criterion that determines that whether the state's intention of going into the war is permissible or not or rather it's just going to war for more capitalistic reasons. This is used in order to make sure that any party engaging in a declared war is doing so by fighting in a "just war". There are total of four conventions that govern the body of IHL. The 1st convention protects the wounded and sick on land and sea at all costs which means that no one who is being vulnerable to disease or is injured must be subjected to torture or killing. The 2nd conventions is what supports the 1st convention and states that there should be no discriminatory violence during the time of war so that human rights could be protected, this is also supported by additional protocol 1 which came out in 1977. The third convention came in 1949 which called for the protection of prisoners of war.

The Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions ensures the protection of civilians under conflicts against a guerilla army. The 4th convention is where the Jus ad bellum is more relevant since this convention deals primarily with question of sovereignty. This convention states the right of protection of civilians or any other individual or party that is stuck in between an armed conflict. Civilian rights are also protected by the addition of article 50(1) of additional protocol 1 which states all civilians as non – combatants ("Treaties, States parties, and Commentaries - Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions, 1977 - - Part IV : Civilian population - Section I -- General protection against effects of hostilities - Chapter II -- Civilians and civilian population", n.d.). In the case of Afghanistan,

3.8 Post-Conflict Rehabilitation

The post-conflict recovery and rehabilitation are very much important and essential to sustain peace. Countries believe that it's hard to end a conflict and find a way to minimize it but mostly the challenge comes when the maintenance and sustainability of that peace comes into question. In Afghanistan, this happened because the policy making mechanisms were not well equipped to remove the resentments and the frustrations that existed even before the WoT. Natural resources played a vital role in Afghanistan too considering how their exports actually is connected with the risk of conflict. Within this context, natural resources come under the policy dependent risk factor because its trading is controlled by policies made by the government and if the locals feel any social injustice then the conflict would be brought back again. Now conflict recurrence is related with pre-conflict and post-conflict risk factors that are inter-related with one another (Stanicic, 2005). Some of the risk factors, according to the CH Model 2000 that exist in a post-conflict society are: "Structural risk factors", these risk factors are the ones that include the population size, its resentment towards the new government and the way the whole structural framework of the population is categorized. "Lack of alternative economic opportunities", this risk factor, is the most important one because this is directly linked with economic stability. Policies and action should be taken to empower youth by education and to make sure that the human resource of that society is being efficiently used. "Ethnic dominance", this risk factor comes into play when a society is being characterized by a certain ethnicity. Now a researcher would understand that in a post conflict era, the generalization and the dominance of a certain ethnicity might have changed because people tend to leave their houses and their lands for a more "safer" place and this immigration might change the whole dynamics of demographics (Singh, 2020). The CH model 2000 argues that the risk of ethnic dominance basically doubles the chances of a conflict happening again.

Now focusing on the post conflict risk factors, we can see that there exists a general understanding of the risk that exists which are mainly focused on the inheritance (from pre-conflict to post-conflict) and the lack of ability to make a better society and make it flourish in the post conflict era. If individuals are compensated and are given their right in the post-conflict era then the likelihood of a conflict happening again becomes very low. Certain recommendations that are needed to ensure that the rehabilitation and economic retention stays and the risk of conflict is minimized would be to first reducing the dependency of the people on natural resources and ensuring that there are other alternative substitute commodities to replace it. This will help in the diversification of the economy and the interest

of the people would be divided among them. Secondly, people who have been thrown away from their homes during the conflict must be given accommodations and must be restored back to their homes as soon as possible before the idea of social injustice starts. Thirdly, constitutional rights for individuals and as well as minorities must be taken care of. Last but not the least, the role of international institutions is very important here when it comes to restoring the war-torn areas. In Afghanistan its clearly because of the risk factors that have been discussed above. There exists ethnic dominance of Pashtun tribes and they had a resentment against the Ghani government because they believe that it was nothing but a puppet government of the United States. Youth is not empowered there and there exists a major lack of economic alternatives in that particular area.

3.9 Peacebuilding

Effective and successful peacebuilding is a result of a very thought out set of processes which sometimes may overlap each other without having any effect. These phases are Stabilization Phase, Transition Phase and the Consolidation phase. Over time of peacebuilding, these phases have their own specified objectives specific to the area/region they are operating. Since peacebuilding's end result is to maintain a sustainable society where peace prevails, an organized and long-term solution is always necessary. A secure and safe environment is a pre-requisite for the transition to the Stabilization phase, and the end of hostilities from the counterparties can only ensure that. During this, immediate humanitarian assistance is provided to cater to the conflict's fall, and initial rehabilitation activities are carried out. However, with regards to long term planning and development, assessment and observational activities are undertaken. Typically, the stabilization phase lasts 90 days, but it varies from mission to mission.

The Transition phase deals with the transfer of power to new legitimate and a socio-political leader who has the best interest of its people in his/her mandate. An interim government appointment followed by an interim election so that the concept of democracy prevails and public opinion can get a voice, also the formulation of a new constitution (if necessary) or laying the foundation for further political development. According to De Coning, this phase typically takes around 1 to 3 years to reach its conclusion. The functioning of an effective bureaucracy and the prevailing rule of law is primarily the objective of this process (de Coning, 2007).

The Consolidation phase includes nation-building tasks, consolidating the rule of law and supporting development programmes across different peacebuilding dimensions. It consists of various programmes that have one shared goal of strengthening the internal actors and providing them with enough capacity to sustain and support themselves. Moreover, the role of external forces is reduced to just technical support (de Coning, 2007). The consolidation phase typically ranges from four to ten years, but in most cases, countries are tackling post-conflict-related consequences for decades thereafter and it can be seen in the case of Afghanistan as well.

3.9.1 Security-Development Nexus

Security and development are two terms that are interlinked, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Long-term development is regarded as depending upon security, and lasting security depends upon sustainable development in Afghanistan. Donors that are bilateral and multilateral in nature have integrated these two concepts in response to intra state conflicts and to cater to such conflicts, United Nations agencies i.e. UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has considered the linkages between these two terms. Post 9/11 & the 1990s, interest into the "security-development nexus" has been in line with the intervention of western countries in non-Western states. Leaders of the developed regions have finally understood that development and security are inextricably linked and to have a safer world, poor countries should be given a real chance to develop (Mergenthaler, 2015). This will help in bringing stability in the region that are affected and will also try to maintain the security situations in west or "rich" countries. "Securitization of development" is the term that is used widely in this context and it was more visible during the 1990s in relation to the importance of internal armed conflict in under-developed countries and the growing resentments related to crime and violence.

At the same time as development has been securitized and radicalized, the concept of security has also undergone changes, which has resulted in the broadening of this concept to include more stake-holders than just the state. For example, the concept of "human security" has helped in the development of the security in a way that the focus has shifted towards a number of basic human needs which are necessary for the survival of the individual. Unlike the traditional concept of (national) security, the human security agenda focuses on the safety of people rather

than states, and on a concept of sovereignty that enforces that the state must respect the rights of every citizen rather than just focusing on its power over the citizens (Bartenev, 2015).

The term "security" has been used in many different ways and contexts, but mostly it is used when a threat that is being perceived dangerous by the majority and it has to be catered to, so that the survival of the individuals and states can be re-assured. This has resulted in a new definition of security which embeds the individual security in it as well which is the reason a number of peacekeeping missions with different priorities and mandates have been deployed around the world to ensure human rights element ("The Security-Development Nexus on the Policy Track", 2016).

However, there has been an increasing emphasis on the implementation of conflict prevention strategies which has resulted in addressing the structural and as well as operational causes of conflicts and the formulation of development policies as a priority in in conflict prevention agenda. Institutions that are dealing with security and development initiatives have now adopted a more comprehensive approach and has expanded their mandates by integrating security and development with each other. Integration of these two concepts has given a rise to three distinct sectors defines the whole security-development nexus; good governance, security sector and rule of law.

Chapter Four: US and Peace Building Initiatives in Afghanistan

4.1 Findings

The findings were primarily based on interviews by three officials of Afghan government and two journalists on ground and three former officials of Pakistan, including former ambassadors. Moreover, a focus group was established which consisted of Afghan students and youth in Pakistan. The questions that were asked from the interviewees answered the research questions of this study in an effective manner. Regional connectivity and the ideology of west in the region as the basis of a new governance model in Afghanistan were the theme of the questions. During the analysis of the interviews, four main themes were found through which the research questions will be answered. The four themes are:

- Lack of inclusive approach
- Nationalism
- Governance
- Liberal Peace

The participants of this research answered keeping in mind the aim of this study and how well they can be explained.

4.2 Lack of Inclusive Approach

Inclusivity of communities and ethnicities is very important within the context of sustainable government. Representatives of all the aspects of society must be included in the policy formulation mechanism of the government and that's exactly the participants referred to. Within the context of policy formulation in the region, the participant was asked whether the policy formulation and implementation take in consideration the plight of Afghans? The rhetoric was that the policy formulation has been done by ensuring that the civil government and its military counterparts are on same page. However, when asked about the influence of local tribes on policy making, the participant simply stated that are being kept in the loop. However, when the same concern was asked by the focus group of youth, they answered that the locals in Badakhshan and Kandahar have no idea of any policy that is being formulated. This data was collected pre-Taliban take-over of Kabul and therefore the purpose of this was to analyze if the local Afghans were kept in loop through their representatives. Ghani's regime is known to support its narrative by fake news in recent times as we saw from his interviews on how the successes of Taliban during the US withdrawal were kept from the

locals and in his words, it was "contained" and the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) are ready to fight however, when the time came, the promises fell as well.

Secondly, the participants were asked about the liberal peace system's sustainability in Afghanistan and how it has affected the Afghanistan's relationship with the western countries. He answered that Afghans have been getting a preferential treatment in Europe therefore ensuring that the local economy can also be groomed up in a way where domestic goods can be exported. He said that the support that we have seen from west in terms of trade and market flexibility has been phenomenal. However, when we analyze the underlying reasons for it, it's pretty clear that in order to have liberal peace as the dominant ideology, trade among the countries is a primary goal. However, when asked from the focus group, it was evident that none of the benefits are being given to the locals and they have been living in the same poverty situation that they have seen for decades. Here, it was again very clear how much disconnected was the Afghan government from the locals. The lack of integrative society during the US occupation of Afghanistan was the main thing due to which they were not able to sustain themselves in the face of Taliban offensive.

Social integration and inclusivity is a complex idea in itself and its understanding varies from system to system and individual to individual. Sometimes it is one of the main and positive goals for a sustainable society and at times it becomes unwanted. However, in the case of Afghanistan equal opportunities for all ethnicities and developing that balance between the locals and government where the voices of an ordinary Afghan can be heard was the ultimate positive stance. If the US and allied forces would have focused on increasing integration and developing a framework through which the locals will be be able to stay connected to their tribal culture, it would have resulted in improving the life quality of Afghans and a new democratic country. In any given society, there are distinct patterns of human interaction depending upon the demographics of the area. As discussed previously, multiple ethnicities live there and the most humane context can only be understood if all of them would have come together and worked for a better Afghanistan while sharing a single ideology. There is no right way or wrong way of social integration but however, challenges are to be catered in the most suitable way and in the case of Afghanistan, it was necessary.

4.3 Nationalism

Within the context of Afghanistan, whenever academics have talked about nationalism, it is distinct in a way that it is always related to "Pashtun nationalism" and further correlated with the Pashtun resentment against any foreign force that invaded Afghanistan. This resentment has a long history dating back to the British invasion in the 19th century during which three Anglo-Afghan wars were fought. Since the start, the Pashtun nationalism in Afghanistan has been based on local's loyalties towards their tribe and an utmost commitment towards their tribal code of ethics, *Pashtunwali.* Pakistan has been in a back and forth relationship with Afghanistan, from hostility to a supportive neighbor. This shift in the dynamic was primarily due to the soviet invasion of during which Pakistan supported and helped the Afghan *mujhaideen* through American and Saudi support. The Pashtun nationalism which operated against Pakistan prior to the Soviet invasion, changed in a way that the same ideology and its followers started looking at Pakistan through the lens of a loyal and a reliable friend. Recently, the divided and an unequal approach of the Ghani regime which was mixed with corruption and inefficiency gave Taliban a platform to gain its support from the local Pashtun population and therefor reigniting the nationalism to drive out the foreign forces yet once again.

Participants discussed the main reason of the failure of western ideology in Afghanistan. They stated that the same mistake was made the USSR and then by USA to explain their concept in a way that is suitable to them but not with the Afghan people. For years, the plight of Afghan people always had a backseat and they were given a certain set of ideas to believe in but they never given the chance to set their own standards. A way forward for the Taliban is to get the Afghan people in confidence where every single ethnicity that exists in the country, has a seat on table. Yes, the Taliban are worried to lose this chance again but if they ensure that the people and the Taliban government are on the same page, then there is no way they can be defeated now.

Moreover, the participants that were part of the Ghani government were asked about a potential come back of Taliban into the country? They showed their utmost confidence in the ability of ANDSF to thwart off attacks of Taliban effectively. The fact that ANDSF was heavily equipped with state-of-the-art equipment funded by the US and its military was enough for them to believe that they will put up a good fight against the rising insurgency of Taliban. However, as provinces and cities fell, it was pretty clear that the loyalties were never with US-backed government but with the nation itself. These loyalties were utilized by the

Taliban through the whole concept of not just Pashtun nationalism but rather Afghan-centric approach towards nationalism so that the nationalism is directly in line with inclusive societies.

4.4 Governance

Good governance has primarily three main factors that shows that a society has a functional and a good governance mechanism to formulate policy for society building; accountability, transparency and rule of law. Policy-makers and Political theorists have debated the true definition of good governance but they all have a growing consensus that good governance includes democratic processes, equality, liberty, political participation, effective of mechanisms and transparency among the institutions. In order to have a sustainable security-development nexus model, good governance entails the strengthening the electoral and legislative systems, improvement of access to justice and public administration and supporting the decentralization to develop greater capacity. This deals with the whole spectrum of the societal institutions which targets everything; centralized de-centralized and local public, private and civil institutions (Engdaw, 2021). Furthermore, rule of law is one of the integral concepts of good governance. The implementation of law in a fairer and more equal basis to all the legal citizens of a certain community is the general principle of it and it has been supported widely by the international community after seeing the situations in conflict-struck countries. Its mechanisms include advice on constitution and legislation drafting, judicial and law enforcement reforms, support to civil society and human rights organizations, and the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms. The main focus of rule of law programs is on the fundamental and basic freedoms that every human being is entitled to and also paying more attention towards the central power structure and how it serves as a cause of human rights violations in a specific area (Addink, 2019). Afghanistan in post-9/11 context needed a good governance model to sustain itself from everything that happened. Hence the focus of all the allied shifted towards "post-war construction" of the country. The problem that came forward was that the international community aimed at promoting liberalization in all the aspects of the country such as socio-political and economic fields. State institutions and capacity building of these institutions is necessary under the Taliban regime so that the functionality of these systems is sustained. These functions also include having a productive and an effective regional approach so that global forum can also be catered to.

After the fall of Kabul and the take-over of Taliban, participants were reached out and asked that what are the new challenges that will be faced by the Afghan people now. They replied that the war that has been happening in Afghanistan cannot be blamed directly on Taliban as there were many externals at play. This time when Taliban took over Afghanistan, the Taliban had a new manifesto and new way to set up their system. One of the main challenges that has been faced is the belief of people on the new system and on Taliban. Some people left looking for a better future and to some extent that is understandable because of what has been happening for the past four decades. The second challenge is the future of Taliban and what would be the stance of foreign countries on this takeover; will they help the people of Afghanistan in this time or will they again leave Afghanistan just like they always do after a war-torn decade. The third main challenge is by the immediate trade barrier that has been stopped with our immediate neighbors; Pakistan, Tajikistan. One of the main concerns also include the fact that different blocs have already been made to control this region, one being Pakistan-China-Russia-Turkey-Iran-Afghanistan and the other being US-India. They also stated that any blocs if made will take the integrity of Afghan away and this time, the only decision-making power should be left with the Afghan population.

A former ambassador of Pakistan was asked that what does he sees in the future of Afghanistan and what has been the main reason for the US failure? He said the first thing we have to realize that in international relations, an ideal situation is very difficult to achieve. Taliban needs to realize that the interests they have can be harmed by the spoilers that have been or will be installed by the foreign governments to destroy the peace of the country again. The super-powers right now, USA and China will mobilize to have this region in control and that puts Afghanistan on the center stage once again. He said that there are many international players that wouldn't want Afghanistan to be in peace and the spoiler elements would make sure that a civil war erupts once again and exactly in this moment, the Taliban needs to be very sensitive about the things they do and how they handle their affairs. The world can disagree with the Taliban ideology but the way forward is only through integrating the masses of Afghans there. They cannot possibly make a government where they ignore the 25% of Tajik population and formulate a government. Afghanistan must realize that the game is not over and they must stay careful as they deal with their challenges. The problem why US failed was primarily because they failed to integrate whole of Afghanistan and took control of major cities. Their concept of western democracy was by far only suitable to the liberals of Afghanistan which constitutes a very minimum number of population and the rest of the majority has always been in favor of freedom and saying no to the foreign occupation.

It's a very big challenge for any nation to withstand four decades of war and the Afghan population have proved that no matter what, they will never let foreign occupation dictate them.

This is exactly how good governance comes into focus as understanding the ground reality becomes a pre-requisite for it and only a deep understanding of issues and challenges can be way forward to establishing worthy government institutions (Engdaw, 2021). The participants were also adamant for a way forward. They discussed that the brain-drain in Afghanistan due to the ongoing evacuations will have major effects on the progress and effect of Afghanistan as the contributions in Afghanistan becomes essential when intellectual innovations are coming through and the country could bank on them. Another challenge as Afghanistan moves forward would be through women empowerment and it has been an ongoing issue for the last couple of decades. There is 20% of economic participation in Afghanistan through women and to some extent, it has improved in the last decade but how well it can sustain itself remains a mystery as the Taliban has taken over now. The model that exists in Pakistan for women empowerment can be replicated in Afghanistan for the progress of women which is also in-line with the law that Taliban formulate (Sharia-law). Talking about the rehabilitation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, they said that the foremost challenge would be the lack of resources for the major influx of refugees that will be coming back to Afghanistan. One of them would be the food security, health security and their re-integration into the society with the limited resources that the Taliban government is making use of right now. The same challenges would exist in the internally displaced people in Afghanistan. Capacity building of institutions is the necessity right now and in order to have an effective government, integrative society is also of utmost importance.

4.5 Liberal Peace

As discussed above, liberal peace as a democratic process in Afghanistan was promoted by the western forces post 9/11. The participants were asked about the fall of western ideology and why the Taliban has been able to succeed so well and so fast? They stated that the differentiation between Taliban and normal Afghan people is something that has no basis in itself. Afghanistan is a reality and everyone resisted the rule of foreign troops. The differentiation that the west does between Taliban and locals on the basis of religious militia is definitely wrong. *Talibs* and local Afghans pray the same every day to the same God and have their beliefs aligned. Moreover, if Taliban are labelled as conservative then the rest of

the Afghan society is by large conservative as well. The difference is very less. The foreign ideologies have failed because every single empire that invaded Afghanistan, USSR or US, acted in the name of mentor but their only focus was power politics. In academia and in politics, we need to focus on the ground reality rather than publishing and thinking of the narrative that is emotional in nature. This is the responsibility of Pakistan and other regional powers who wants to see Pakistan sustain itself. Moreover, there is a very prominent difference between the Taliban of 2001 and 2021 and the reason for that is that 12 regional players are in contact with the Taliban regime and their embassies are still operational there. However, the big concern is that how will Taliban formulate their governance model? If they go back to the old one then it won't be sustainable. The mistakes made by US and USSR were also about imposing their ideology but the same mistakes cannot be repeated by the regional states and cultural connectivity is also important. Regarding the governance model, he believes that the inspiration will be taken by Iran where the supreme leader has the final authority over the three pillars of the state; judiciary, executive and parliament. However, as we move forward, the electoral process would also be on the basis of Iranian model, which also entails the concept of "controlled democracy".

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The US withdrawal of Afghanistan is a testament in itself that the western ideology has failed drastically to have its footprints there. From the western idea of liberal democracy to exporting concepts that were not suitable to Afghans, the cause of lack of integration among the Afghans have been pretty clear. The US authorities failed to resolve the immediate threat that they saw after the 9/11 attacks. They counted majorly on the limited successes in this war which were to some to some extent, tactical but failed to provide a solution for Afghan war. The human cost of war has been too much on every single stakeholder that was involved and many principles and ideals were compromised here as well.

Firstly, the focus should have been on the local community and empowering them rather than focusing on establishing a government that opposed the Taliban movement. As discussed, there were many grievances, ranging from social, political and religious aspects however, catering to them as a priority was a necessity. People were seen as a human capital for the opposing forces and a human nature of war was never seen. The US had its phases as they wanted to build and sustain a society but the failure of which have been credited to the NATO forces as well. The withdrawal of western military forces is not new as the cases of which have been seen in the past as well; Algeria in 1962, Vietnam in 1975, Iraq in 2011 and Sudan in May 2021 but Afghanistan was different. Afghanistan was a war-torn country even before the US invasion and was still trying to recover from the Soviet invasion and civil wars that kept its grip on the people on Afghanistan. The US efforts were first focused on ousting the Taliban from the current government and then revolved around nation and state building. Both of these concepts are very distinct in their own way but are so inter-linked with each other. Civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism are the basis of these concepts, respectively. The United States policy and decision makers tried to mix this nationalism with their own concept of peace liberalism and overlooked the population's stance on it. As liberal peace is a theory that is considered or at least was considered to be an all-out universal approach, the framework proved its faults in practice. Peace is not a trickle down process that approaches from top to bottom but rather it's an approach that focuses on people in the localities and they are given the preference over anything else. The conflict of Afghanistan has helped in understanding various mistakes and flaws that have practiced by the western states and as well as by the local Afghans which hindered with the process of peace in the country. State building if done right, has certain concepts embedded into it; sovereignty, legitimacy,

transparency, accountability and ownership. However, when even one of the concepts is absent or lacking to any extent, then the idea of state building is jeopardized and failure becomes inevitable. In the case of Afghanistan, instead of helping the people, these aspects brought divisions between the local communities through which the hope of an integrative society was lost. State building has been a focus for almost two decades now, mainly under the focus of Liberal Peace, and however, the results of this process have been very dull and unsatisfactory by the stakeholders involved. As discussed in this research study, the liberal values that were exported in Afghanistan and were then imposed on Afghans alienated the people and showed them that every step that is being taken is due to power politics and not merely just for humanitarian purpose. An effective liberal peace framework can only sustain itself when there is a shared and an increased role of common people which directly ensures the ownership and accountability of the government and its institutions. Moreover, in line with, a more productive approach would have been where its "universal-ness" is abandoned and its framed specifically for the Afghans. This is the exact reason the understanding of Afghanistan is necessary because without it, no process would be sustainable. Afghanistan has been at crossroads because of confusion on what and who to believe in? The western experiment on Afghans of Liberal Peace Framework did not prevented them from conflict but rather it was more of putting fuel to the fire approach. Hence, the insurgency and conflicts has only increased in size.

As discussed, it was not just insurgency but also the lack of governance that caused such violence in the country. The government institutions were incompetent and lacked the trust of the Afghans. Lack of governance, rule of law, accountability and transparency further fueled the turmoil in Afghanistan, which effected the Afghans in a way that's unimaginable.

The Taliban or how the western forces like to call it "insurgents" divided their respective their territories and had an influence over them and its residents through which they challenged the writ of the previous Afghan Government and western "democratic" forces. As those forces did not align themselves with the actual ground realities. It is recommended through this research study that the situation in Afghanistan should have been handled in a way that people of Afghanistan and its society must be an integral part of the peace process. Even if Liberal Peace was to be successful, it would have been temporary because no flexibility towards the approach of its framework was shown by the any western forces. National building and capacity building of the institution, and ensuring that they are capable

enough to sustain rule of law is the only way to have peace and have a functioning and a stable sovereign state of Afghanistan.

Every single country that tried to invade and conquer Afghanistan has always left as a defeated Army. From communism to the western idea of democracy, everything has been far-fetched when it comes to Afghanistan and it's time to realize that Afghans will only let Afghans govern them, that too with a condition that an integrative society is formulated in the right way. Taliban were a very major threat to national security of US and it was during this time that US decided to give them democracy, nowadays, the concept of national security has thoroughly changed and the threat from terrorists is being overshadowed by new challenges. As Russia and China are putting up a very aggressive policy towards US, the return of rivalries among the super-powers seem pretty inevitable and in academic studies, it is being discussed more and more. This research found out that the primary reason for the failure of USSR and US was merely because of the reason that both of them tried to impose their own idea of culture and governance into Afghanistan disregarding what actually Afghans think. In the case of Afghanistan, rule of law reforms was addressed as technocratic in nature, lacking attention towards the political dynamics and specific socio-economic contexts. International actors, who are the policy makers in this context picked up one single model and tried to apply it without taking in any consideration of the dynamics and ground realities of Afghanistan. Also, in the case of governance, the politicization of legal reforms and processes and the conflict interests were ignored and neglected.

In today's world society, the "capitalist" ideology has been kept alive by many major super powers primarily to ensure their survival in the region and in the world. However, in order to reach their objectives, certain superpowers resort to means that are legal in nature, but unethical in reality. The command and control of weaponization of a country rests with its head of state and therefore, at the end of the day, it all comes down to the fact that super powers are in a weapons race with each other.

Superpowers like US realized that they have to be self-sufficient in what they do and in order to sustain themselves, they have to be independent of themselves. Incorporating civilians into the decision-making process through militaristic initiatives is integral for them to achieve success in the whole concept of "peace liberalism". Furthermore, the involvement of Civil-Society in the military production plays a very integral role as the government is entrusting these manufacturers for their growth which resultantly give these corporations the influencing

power towards policies and government's decisions. Furthermore, we must look into the effects of the post-cold war era as that has been a defining era for modern technologies in weapons and as well as a weapons race. During the Cold War, bipolarity and nuclear weapons created contextual effects that contributed to the emergence of a semi global system. The regionalism that came out on the top post-cold war was coined as "new regionalism" which gave rise to open and flexible trade, social integration and poverty eradication. This happened primarily because of the fall of USSR which ended the cold war with USA. This in turn resulted in a multipolar system in the world and the concept of bloc and barriers to trade with countries outside of the regions started to vanish. However, the competition among the states increased in this era as most powerful wanted to have an authority and a defining / veto vote in world affairs. Globalization has increased the information flow but it has also given rise to unhealthy competition among states where wars are waged on smaller states to achieve their own capitalist goals. US and its allied forces funded the Afghan National Defense Security Forces (ANDSF) however the disruption that was felt all throughout Afghanistan was primarily felt in the security sphere where the Afghan military and Police forces worked. The security mechanism failed to provide protection or any sort of safe-environment for the people. This resulted in Afghans losing their trust in the state and rather they looked up to the alternates, which in this case were the Tribal groups or Taliban. Tribes are distinct through their shares lineage as it is also a form of mutual support by association.

The United States in a bid to bring Peace Liberalism to Afghanistan was wrong from the very start. They destroyed the country by their policies primarily because the local Afghans were often ignored and their feelings towards the western forces were negated. When the United States does something like this, it sets up a precedent for other countries as well as they would like to do exactly how the super-power in the world is behaving but the question that is it right? Is it ethical? Is it acceptable? And to what extent would the world leaders would accept this behavior from the "imperial" states? Destroying another nation regardless of any reason is not right, destroying their culture and heritage in the name of democracy is not ethical at all. Democracy is the idea which advocates for the right to live and United States negated that very essence of democracy while also advocating for the same thing.

As we move forward, Afghanistan cannot fall into turmoil again. Too much war and conflicts have been seen by the Afghans and it's about time that peace prevails in the region. From mass civilian causalities to western forces defending them in the name of collateral damage. The civilians that were killed were protected by the governing body of IHL, however the

irony is that these laws were formulated and coined by the west and yet they are the parties that are found violating it the most. The right of war or "jus ad bellum" as we like to call it means nothing when it comes to spreading the ideology that they believe in, it's merely just a word that can utilize to strong arm any country or nation they want in ways that can only benefit them. If however, these rules and laws were not a myth then it would have been safe to state that 90% of the conflicts happening in the world right now, wouldn't have happened in the first place. IHL governs the weakest in its group and makes sure that strongest one keeps it strength while also safeguarding its objectives. The same was seen in the Iraq war, where the United States of America believed that Iraq has huge stash of Weapons of Mass Destruction that will be used against its soil. This rhetoric was used by the state officials to win over worlds and its local's support so that it may justify the act of declaring war on sovereign state. However, later it was found that none of the weapons ever existed and yet another country in the region was destroyed. Peace must prevail in Afghanistan and in the region and it can only be done when people around the world and in Afghanistan sees Afghanistan for what it actually is, a land of hope, bravery and courage that even after decades of war, Afghans still stand tall for the prosperity of their nation and for the progress of it. Pakistan, being the immediate neighbor has formulated projects that will be implemented in due course of time and as human beings, we can only hope that the hope of Afghan turns into reality and peace prevails.

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Abstract

United States and NATO forces withdrew from Afghanistan after 20 years of war and violence and in the aftermath, the Taliban has taken control of the country. The western idea of liberal peace was promoted in the country for the last 20 years, however, the Afghan population remained hesitant towards it. A 2018 estimate of Taliban forces included almost 65,000 fighters which proved to be a reliable fighting and an opposing force and the vacuum that was left by the foreign forces was quickly filled by the Taliban. There have been reasons discussed in the research study regarding the failure of western forces from time to time but the main challenge; inclusivity of all ethnicities during the formulation of government remains the main one. Firstly, the focus should have been on the local community and empowering them rather than focusing on establishing a government that opposed the Taliban movement. During the discussion, there were many grievances, ranging from social, political and religious aspects however, catering to them as a priority was a necessity. People were seen as a human capital for the opposing forces and a human nature of war was never seen. The US had its phases as they wanted to build and sustain a society but the failure of which have been credited to the NATO forces as well. From communism to the western idea of democracy, everything has been far-fetched when it comes to Afghanistan and it's time to realize that Afghans will only let Afghans govern them, that too with a condition that an integrative society is formulated in the right way.

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