

US GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR AFGHANISTAN: A FALSE NOTION OF NATION-BUILDING

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Abstract

The event of 9/11 morphed the dynamics of global politics and forced the United States led western block to initiate a global war against terrorism. For this purpose, the US intervened in the conflict-trodden state, Afghanistan, to punish the culprits of 9/11 and to eliminate the presence of various terrorist outfits operating from Afghanistan. Later on, the U.S. to justify his presence in Afghanistan started propagating the notion of nation building in Afghanistan. However, the seed sowed for nation building resulted in failure. The whole institutional structure of Afghanistan collapsed after the abrupt withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. The purpose of this study is to analyze the 20 years long of the U.S. presence in a war-torn country, Afghanistan. Additionally, this research examines the U.S. two decades' investment in shape of both men and capitals in the prism of nation-building. For this purpose, two theoretical approaches are adopted: the first theory is

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securitization theory, and the second is failed state theory. These theoretical approaches are adopted because to examine how Afghanistan was a failed state and how the U.S. was pursuing its security goal in a war-trodden state in the veil of Nation-building. Moreover, to conduct this study, mix method is used to analyze the statements, facts, figure and key decisions of US Policy makers.

Key words: nation-building, state building, securitization, failed state theory, war-torn country.

Introduction:

The U.S. war in Afghanistan was the response of terrorist attacks on the Twin Trade Towers and Pentagon office in the United States. More than 2,700 people were killed in these brutal attacks. In response, to punish the culprits of attacks and remove the existence of evil groups, such as Al-Qaeda and ISIL on 7 Oct, 2001, the US forces invaded Afghanistan. In a few months, the U.S. forces with the help of the Northern Alliance, an anti-Taliban alliance, swiftly overthrew the government of Taliban. The U.S. administration initially after overthrowing Amir-ul-momineen Mullah Umar, the head of Taliban regime since 1996, perceived Taliban as weak forces and diverted their attention toward the Iraq War. However, after the Taliban insurgency intensified in 2004, the Bush Administration and military establishment which were previously limited to operate against the 9/11 culprits showed great interest towards the nation-building phenomena until the US withdrawal plan was announced

in 2011. The U.S. administration soon observed that the measurements of the victory were changed from the past experiences¹.

However, soon as the U.S. forces withdraw from Afghanistan in 2021, the U.S. backed government fell on August 15, 2021. Taliban, once ousted by the U.S. and its NATO allies, again seized the throne of Kabul after two decades of brutal war. President Joe Biden, at this moment, claimed that the US was not doing nation-building in Afghanistan, and the ‘Nation-Building’ Phrase is senseless for him. President Biden said that the U.S forces were limited to counter-insurgency operations². If the US were not doing nation-building in Afghanistan, then what would it was doing for two decades in a war-torn country. Where it Spent 2.26 trillion dollars, the total cost of war calculated by Brown University? Additionally, if the U.S had pursued nation-building later, then why it would have faced failure. Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyze all these questions and find whether the U.S. was limited to counter-terrorism, or it indulged in nation-building process³.

¹ Conor Keane, “US Nation-Building in Afghanistan,” *US Nation-Building in Afghanistan*, March 31, 2016, 1–247, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315548623>.

² “Nation-Building Ends Dawn News Paper - Google Search,” accessed September 28, 2023, <https://www.google.com/search?q=nation-building+ends+dawn+news+paper&aq=&aqs=chrome.0.35i39i362l8.109617j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>.

³ “The US Spent \$2 Trillion in Afghanistan – and for What? | Business and Economy News | Al Jazeera,” accessed September 28, 2023,

US Nation-building and Afghanistan:

The US nation-building front is always an appalling one. In the post Second World War era, the U.S. indulged in many nation-building projects. Some of these projects were successful such as Western Europe after the war. However, in some case the U.S. faced failures such as Afghanistan. The reasons behind the success of US nation-building in Western Europe and countries like Japan are always told that this part of the world were more civilized and educated than Middle East, African, and Asian regions. In contrast, Afghanistan was totally a different story from all the nation-building projects which the US had pursued.

Historically, the people of Afghanistan do not like invaders, and all those who invaded this territory have faced harsh consequences. Afghanistan, a state comprising of different lingual groups, is having a very unique culture that resists external influences in any shape whether they are ideological or military. Therefore, if the United States wanted to impose its Democratic and Liberal system on Afghanistan, it would necessary for the United States to understand the norms, culture, values, and traditions of the Afghan society. Despite understanding the Afghan society, The US was inclined toward its goals, striving to introduce a western style of democracy in a traditional and conservative society like Afghanistan. It is one of the reasons for the U.S nation-building failure in Afghanistan.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/8/16/the-us-spent-2-trillion-in-afghanistan-and-for-what>.

There are various reasons for the U.S. Nation-building failure. For instance, the bureaucratic flaws, CIA's support to warlords, and corruptions are some of the mainstream reasons discussed in the following paragraphs⁴.

After two decades of war in Afghanistan, the struggles that were made to implement the western style of democracy and infrastructures that were built, for instance, whether it was administrative institutions or buildings and roads were destroyed by the Taliban. The U.S. President Joe Biden had trolled the Ashraf Ghani's regime, and he said that the nation-building in Afghanistan 'never made any sense to me'⁵. In contrast, he was a strong advocate of infrastructure building and administration institutions, and many times in congress he advocated for a fund for humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. He was also with those congressmen who pushed both President Bush and Barak Obama government to invest more in reconstruction and democratization. He expressed this agenda on interviews with various TV channels and many other platforms. For instance, in an interview on CBS news, an interviewer named Bryant Gumbel asked "should we be in the business of nation-building?" Biden answered: "absolutely, along with the rest of the world" ⁶. He further argued that the world did a mistake when it ignored the volatile country after the

⁴ Keane, "US Nation-Building in Afghanistan."

⁵ "Nation-Building Ends Dawn News Paper - Google Search."

⁶ "Biden's Claim That Nation-Building in Afghanistan 'Never Made Any Sense to Me' - The Washington Post."

Soviet withdrawal, and the Taliban seized an opportunity to take power in the country.

Besides, on many occasions, he pushed the government several times for the nation-building project. At a Senate hearing, on February 12, 2003, Biden said that nation-building is a dirty phrase, and an alternative to it is a chaos, which produced warlords that are having thirst for blood, running drug cartels, and supporting terrorists groups. The world has already experienced it after the soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. The production of drug cartels is increased, and the presence of terrorist groups is widened.

Later in the same year, on 16 October 2003, Biden stressed that we have missed the opportunity, including the senators that are about to sit down, to do what many of us requested from the beginning. However, on the part of some in government, there is overwhelmingly unwillingness to become involved in sincere nation-building. What we did initially, we elected a mayor for Kabul and left the rest of Afghanistan to bloodthirsty warlords, and now we, the US, are paying off for it. In a Wall Street Journal editorial, on Oct 4, 2004, he further emphasized that we have to take nation-building seriously. According to him, this administration came to office and disdained the concept. The reluctance had been shown by many people and also departments. Rumsfeld stopped the military from pursuing an interest in nation-building, and the military was concerned only with

counterinsurgency missions. Therefore, the infrastructure and other projects of the U.S. State Department like USAID and other agencies faced failure because outside of Kabul security was one of the prominent concerns for these agencies ⁷.

The US spending in Afghanistan:

Since the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, the United States of America has spent billions of dollars on various projects. These projects are from building institutions to the construction of different infrastructures, such as the construction of roads throughout Afghanistan. As Condoleezza Rice expressed in her 2011 memoir, “no higher honor” the truth is that in Afghanistan there is more construction than reconstruction because the country had been poorly developed before the US invasion in 2001. According to a calculation made by Brown University, the United States has spent \$2.26 trillion in war projects and other institution-building projects—an investment that has brought a chaotic and humiliating end to the US longest war.

The cost of the war is much, but the blood is far more precious. The images highlighted people moving toward Kabul airport, trying to flee from Taliban’s rule. This situation had seen across the world, and a large number of sums that had spent by the U.S.

⁷ Conor Keane and Steve Wood, “Bureaucratic Politics, Role Conflict, and the Internal Dynamics of US Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan,” [Http://Dx.Doi.Org/10.1177/0095327X15572113](http://Dx.Doi.Org/10.1177/0095327X15572113) 42, no. 1 (March 10, 2015): 99–118, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X15572113>.

to convert Afghanistan into liberal democracy went into ruin. Apart from that, the lessons learned in the case of Afghanistan would be forgotten and the same mistakes would be repeated.

In nation-building, the most important objective is security. If the people living in a state feel unsafe, the instability will intensify, the corruption will flourish, and the economy will wither. Similarly, despite all the dollars spent, the Afghan economy was still fragile because it was entangling with same issues. For instance, the Ashraf Ghani's statement in 2020 is an evidence of Afghanistan's economic situation. He said that after spending billions of dollars still 90% of the Afghan population lives on less than \$2 per day.

Afghanistan's economy was in a bad situation. Since the war in 2001, the U.S had allocated the largest chunk in 2.26 trillion, calculated by Brown University, around \$1 trillion dollars to the overseas contingency operations. Apart from it, the second largest chunk, \$530bn, was the estimated money the US government borrowed to fund the War. In addition, the US had appropriated more than \$144 billion to the Afghan reconstruction process. Much of this money has been given to various contractors of government and different NGOs for various programs like improving governance, increasing and training the Afghan security forces, funding economic and social development, and combating illicit drugs. In the case of the military, the US expenditure had reached \$88.3 billion. This

money was spent to equip and train the Afghan forces, from May 2002 to march 2021. The Afghan army was tasked with repealing the Taliban and other militant groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIL. However, the way through which the 300,000 forces laid down their weapons shows how much trust they had on the institutions that are working to serve the national government⁸.

The birth of current war in Afghanistan:

Afghanistan, called as graveyard of empires, is located in the heart of Asia. It is surrounded by different states: in the north of Afghanistan is Central-Asian countries, in the South-East is Pakistan, and in the West is Iran. These neighbouring countries shares long-land borders, culture, and history with Afghanistan. People residing near the borders have relations with people on the other side of the border, and sometimes share similar culture and language. For instance, in the case of Pakistan and Afghanistan, Pashtuns are living on both sides of the border; Similarly, the people living on border with Tajikistan share culture with the people on Tajikistan side.

The roots of the current situation prop up when the centrist government of President Muhammad Daud khan was overthrown in April 1978 by Noor Mohammad Taraki, who belonged to the leftist wing of the military. After this overthrow, the situation became distorted. The new government was made by the coalition of the People's (Khalq) Party and the Banner (Parcham)

⁸ "The US Spent \$2 Trillion in Afghanistan – and for What? | Business and Economy News | Al Jazeera."

party and made strong ties with the Soviet Union. The coalition government launched several social and political reforms and ruthlessly purged all the domestic opposition. The conservatives and anticommunists resented the reforms that were introduced by the coalition government. As a result, the insurgencies arose both in urban and domestic centers against the government, Islamic in orientation. Thus, it led to the USSR intervention in 1979 to intact the government now headed by Babrak Kamal, a Soviet backed leader. The fighting intensified and spread all over the country that finally came to an end in 1989 after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union. In the following years, the last President of Afghanistan Dr. Najeeb Ullah, who had succeeded Kamal in 1986, was executed in 1996. Afghanistan became the epicenter for different groups involved in terrorist acts, and the struggle for power continued amongst them. However, in 1994, the faction of Mullah Omar became successful to make its rule over all of Afghanistan, which was later in 2001 after the 9/11 attacks toppled by the US forces ⁹.

Nation-building and the history of Afghanistan:

To understand how the US nation-building failed in Afghanistan? At first, it is necessary to understand the Afghan society, which is divided from the very beginning among different lines; the land is comprised of various ethnic and sectarian groups. Pashtuns, who

⁹ "SIGAR Questions Millions Spent in Afghanistan | News | Al Jazeera."

are the majority in the country, are divided between different tribes, and tribal conflict, throughout history, is one of the important issue between tribes. Though Pashtoons indulged historically in tribal menace, there were some rulers who had tried to bring the people of Afghanistan on one page whether it is through peaceful means or the coercive ways. Ahmed Shah Abdali is among the leaders who tried to reconcile the Afghan society. He was the head of the Durrani tribe and the founded the current state of Afghanistan in 1747. He installed a government over a territory that was previously divided into semi-autonomous provinces and regions, ruled by different chieftains. He achieved this by manipulating and managing a chain of strong tribal groups. In his regime, the methods he used for manipulating were violence, diplomacy, and the spoils of war. Additionally, justice was dispensed through the tribal army of his chieftains; who enforced justice through their wills. A group of nine-term advisers and a prime minister were always present in his council to assist him. He was the source that select these peoples among the chiefs of the tribes¹⁰. In essence, he was a totalitarian ruler of Afghanistan, and the system of governance that he created lacked the capability to be institutionally self-propelling and self-generating ¹¹.

¹⁰ "Ahmad Shah Durrani | History, Empire, & Accomplishments | Britannica," accessed September 28, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ahmad-Shah-Durrani>.

¹¹ Keane, "US Nation-Building in Afghanistan."

After the death of Ahmed Shah Abadali, his son Taimur Sher became the king and a new period began that is known as the time of corruption and opportunism. It was a period in which different factions were fighting for power, and the opportunism was the hallmark of the period. However, in 1826, Dost Muhammad Khan rose as the ruler of the Afghan State, and he restored some political stability in the Afghan society. He introduced reforms, but they were limited in scope and area, and the same tribal conflict fluctuated in other societies of Afghanistan. In 1839 the British intervened and toppled the government of Dost Muhammad Khan, and they installed Shah Shuja. The people of Afghanistan were considering him as a British puppet that was supported by British bayonets and gold. The mullahs that were ousted depicted the British as infidels; on the other hand, the tribal authorities were angered because the British has disrupted the clan's hierarchy. In this context, the British were the first to experience the destructive guerilla tactics of the Afghan people and faced failure which resulted in the withdrawal of the British from Afghanistan after four years in 1842. Dost Muhammad Khan was restored to the throne of Kabul. This time he placed priority on the unification of Afghanistan and building an excessive military power. After the death of Dost Muhammad Khan, a period of chaos started again ¹². This period

¹² "Dōst Moḥammad Khān | Emir of Kabul, Afghan Reformer, 19th-Century Monarch | Britannica," accessed September 28, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Dost-Mohammad-Khan>.

of chaos continued for six years, and Sher Ali Khan emerged as a new ruler of the Afghan state in 1869 from this situation. The new leader walked on the same path as the previous leaders. At first, he started consolidating the army to amplify his government. Then, he introduced some reforms and moved forward to improve the communication and infrastructure of the country, but he was also constrained by the traditional forces of the country¹³

The same situation was faced by the other rulers who came after Sher Ali Khan. A ruler died and a period of chaos took place. When a new leader sworn to the throne, he would try to maintain influence over the country through chieftains and militias. Some leaders like Sardar Daud and King Amanullah introduced some liberal ideas in Afghan society, but these ideas were restrained by the traditional and tribal leaders as these changes were a threat to their dominance. Living in a conservative society, the people hate those liberal ideas that were in contrast to the religious and traditional society of Afghanistan. For instance, the reforms introduced after the Sur Revolution in 1978 were one of the reasons for the early uprising against the government. The people of Afghanistan always show great resistance to foreign invaders whether they are in the shape of ideology or combatants.

The phenomena of Nation-building:

¹³ Mohammad Hassan Kakar, "A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901," *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, May 1, 2006, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047409830>.

The term nation-building is always mixed with different concepts such as state-building and peace-building, and it is interchangeably used with this concept. The term, nation-building, is vague and has a vast meaning. It covers a large area of academia in which the stabilization, institutionalization, democratization, construction, and operations processes come. However, the concept, which is more conflated with nation-building, is “state-building” accounts for the increase in the capacities of the state with the help of or without external influences¹⁴. Some other definitions are also given in different books, and for different people the definition of the nation-building phenomenon is something else. As Europeans, they often criticize the American form of nation-building in which they are building new identities, cultures, and traditions. A nation—that is to say, a group of people with shared values, traditions, and cultural and historical aspects— evolved through a planned evolutionary process. On the contrary, what Americans are doing they are building a state, where the reconstruction of political institutions or the development of economic promotion takes place ¹⁵. There is also another definition of the nation

¹⁴ Keane, “US Nation-Building in Afghanistan.”

¹⁵ “Nation-Building: Beyond Afghanistan and Iraq - Google Books,” accessed September 28, 2023, [https://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=OWvZuT3jTesC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Nation-Building:+Beyond+Afghanistan+and+Iraq+\(Forum+on+Constructive+Capitalism\)+1st+Edition&ots=PpB5x2njvp&sig=vsB1_bG2fCIKlgwhdNOco0S-Vjg&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Nation-Building](https://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=OWvZuT3jTesC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Nation-Building:+Beyond+Afghanistan+and+Iraq+(Forum+on+Constructive+Capitalism)+1st+Edition&ots=PpB5x2njvp&sig=vsB1_bG2fCIKlgwhdNOco0S-Vjg&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Nation-Building).

building. According to World 101 Website, nation-building is a significant undertaking that government employs to develop political, economic, security, and social institutions in other countries—especially those emerging from conflict in order to achieve its own interest¹⁶.

Previously, the notion of nation-building existed in 19th-century's Germany, the United States, Japan, and some other states. Although, it was only in the context of making political boundaries with regards to the cultural identities, modernizing the political economy of newly nation-states. The recent phenomenon of nation-building can be traced back to the decades after the second World War when Western Europe was devastated by the 2nd World war. The notion of nation-building transformed and it was a global-political development that brought it into the lexicon of academic and popular audiences.

Two immediate happenings were responsible for this development. At first, after World War II, most states of Africa and Asia became decolonized. In these states, new governments were forged, but these newly independent states were having a lot of problems. To find solutions to these problems, nation-building was sought as a solution for it. Indifference to all other things, these problems include poverty, lack of economic development, lack of unifying under a single identity, questionable legitimacy of state power, and fragile social and political institutions of

¹⁶ BY Francis Fukuyama, "Nation-Building 101," n.d.

states. The specific problems of every state were different to other states. Irrespective of the problems, the solution to the problems was understood under the rubric of such notions, resembled with development and modernization.

The post-war developments after 1945 were the military occupation of Germany and Japan that led the phenomenon of nation-building as response to such problems. The Axis Power was defeated in the World War II, and it suffered huge physical devastation. The governments and leaders of these countries that were leading the war were replaced. During the Cold War, when the competition intensified between the two superpowers, the U.S. and USSR, the U.S. decided to rebuild the devastated economies of Germany and Japan and to build liberal democratic institutions in these countries, containing soviet communist threat. Thus, they would be a bulwark in front of the communist expansion. To accomplish this goal, the two countries Japan and Germany were given financial aids under Marshal Plan in order to facilitate democratic institutions.

The rapid economic recovery and political stability in both of these states, and their presence in the U.S. camp in the Cold War were later presented as the nation-building model, portraying what can be been achieved through external intervention in the areas such as post-conflict zones like Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the important distinction between the two zones is not considered such as the countries like Japan and Germany that constitute

liberal institutions for a long-time in comparison to countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and other rogue countries. Both the states, Japan and Germany, despite huge destruction and loss of life had a highly educated literate population. These states having technologically advanced and industrialized economies, historically modernized political institutions, and the capital and will, easily rebuild. In contrast to countries such as Afghanistan, a state which is multi-ethnic in character and internally divided into sects - factors responsible for the political mobilization and division-, Germany and Japan were having populations that shared language and national identities, regardless of regional differences¹⁷.

Objective of the Study:

The study is aimed at providing an understanding of the political and economic aspects of the US nation-building in Afghanistan. To identify the reasons that how US nation-building failed after investing a huge amount of money in various projects, such as construction, reconstruction, and institution building. Also, how these projects became the eye-catcher of the corrupt politicians and contractors, whether local or international, who were involved in nation-building projects and played a big role in corruption? It would also provide a brief insight into the Afghan unique culture and history. As the Afghans always showed great resistance in the face of interventionists, whether these

¹⁷ Keane, "US Nation-Building in Afghanistan."

interventionists intervene through combatants or an ideology. For instance, those who intervened in the 19th century and before, and those who did an intervention in Afghanistan in the 20th and 21st centuries are examples of the Afghan resistance.

Conceptual Framework:

To analyze the U.S. presence and the 20 years long war, two theories have been cast-off. The first is Securitization Theory, given by Olive Waiver. In this theory, he describes that how an issue is securitized which then get out of the sphere of normal democratic principles. When a referent object is declared as a securitizing issue then any attack against it would have severe consequences. The aim behind it is that if we did not save the referent object then we will not be present to save the remaining¹⁸. It has both social and political implications. At first, the issue is politicized; then, it is converted into a security issue. Therefore, various events are considered as security issue, such as 9/11 and the weapon of mass destruction in Iraq.

The second lens is the Failed State Theory. In this study, the failed state theory is applied to understand How US nation-building failed in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a country that is completely characterized as a failed state. Such states are those states that do not have any central government. If these states are having central governments, these governments are not capable

¹⁸ "Securitization Theory: 20 Years in Security Dialogue: Security Dialogue: Sage Journals," accessed September 28, 2023, <https://journals.sagepub.com/sdi/securitizationtheory>.

of controlling the borders of the country. Failed states like Afghanistan are having ethnic, sectarian, and tribal conflicts, and the societies are conservative and traditional¹⁹. Russians and the British were pursuing communism, westernization, and democratization without understanding the fabrics of Afghan society in the 19th and 20th, and in the 21st century. These mistakes were repeated by the US which led to the failure of the US nation-building in Afghanistan.

In this regard, Conor Keane makes the most important work. In 2016, he published a book named “US Nation-Building in Afghanistan.” In this book, he discussed the whole story of the U.S. 2001 intervention in Afghanistan. He discussed the military establishment approach, the State Department’s role, the attempts made by USAID, and the bureaucratic struggles between the U.S. agencies to influence the decision-making because of which the whole of the government approach- an approach in which all departments of a state collaborate to achieve a single goal- was missing. Additionally, he also discussed the corruption done by local and international contractors, and the reasons for the U.S. nation-building failures in Afghanistan.

However, the latest work was made by SIGAR, a department that was created in 2009. The purpose of the department was to audit the U.S. construction projects in Afghanistan. SIGAR has also

¹⁹ Anthony Daniel Tindall, “CORE Metadata, Citation and Similar Papers at Core.Ac.Uk Provided by Via Sapientiae: The Institutional Repository at DePaul University,” 2010, <https://via.library.depaul.edu/etd>.

issued 427 audits, 191 special project reports, 52 quarterly reports, and later 10 comprehensive lessons-learned reports on Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the department's criminal investigations have resulted in 160 convictions. The work of the SIGAR has cumulatively saved \$3.48 billion for American taxpayers. After taking more than 760 interviews from various individuals and scrutinizing thousands of documents of government and different agencies, the lessons-learned analysis had revealed an uneasy reconstruction struggle that has yielded some success but had also been distinct by too many failures. Undertaking the working of these departments, as well as the work of other working organizations, the department had identified seven key lessons that span the entire war of 20-years campaign and that would be used in future conflicts that would take place around the globe.

Research Methodology:

The study is based on the qualitative method, and the deductive approach is adopted for this study. Most of the data is taken from secondary resources which includes books, articles, research papers, websites, and official documents. The secondary resources are used due to far from the research area and less availability of resources. The data is analyzed, in this study, by using thematic analysis because in this paper the themes are taken

from theory and the subject²⁰. Furthermore, the data is collected for this paper through manual means, for instance, searching the relevant themes.

Discussion:

The US pursuing of nation-building in Afghanistan had many flaws. These flaws later became the reasons for the U.S. failure in Afghanistan. These flaws were also reported by the SIGAR Department in his publication “Lessons Learned”. Conor Keane in his book the “U.S. Nation-Building in Afghanistan” has also discussed these reasons of the U.S. failure in Afghanistan. For instance, the first and foremost reason is security. The cornerstone of every nation-building is security, if the people feel unsafe, instability increased, and corruption flourishes; the future of the society is nothing but devastation. The contractors, which were hired by the State Department or another agency, were not able to work outside of Kabul because the military establishment was not providing security to these international and local contractors. That’s why most of the work was done inside the capital, Kabul, of the country.

The poor evaluations and monitoring of the US efforts are also able to blame for throwing billions of dollars after bad. For auditing and assessing Washington’s efforts in different construction and reconstruction projects in Afghanistan, an agency was called SIGAR—the Special Inspector General for

²⁰ Mohammed Ibrahim, “THEMATIC ANALYSIS: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF ITS PROCESS AND EVALUATION,” n.d.

Afghanistan Reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. It had been working in Afghanistan since 2008. In 2017, it churned out a report on the US struggles to train the Afghan military and found that the superpower forces had overestimated the capabilities of Afghan forces and underestimated the insurgency. SIGAR has also pointed to some other errors of the U.S. efforts, for instance, the SIGAR said that providing and grafting an illiterate army with advanced weaponry is err and useless.

Furthermore, with assessment and evaluations, the SIGAR marked some “intangible factors, such as corruption and will to fight”²¹. In 2021, SIGAR published another report that was the 10th report of the SIGAR, named “lessons learned” in Afghanistan. In this report, Inspector General John Sopko wrote in the executive summary that in an unpredictable and chaotic society such as Afghanistan weak oversight and undesirable implementation can worsen relationships with the local people in the country. As a result, the lives of U.S. and Afghan officials will become in danger. The report also admitted that the U.S. was involved in large-scale reconstruction²².

Corruption was the third most prominent issue. Both local and international contractors and politicians were indulged in looting the money of the U.S. projects in Afghanistan. Due to the

²¹ “SIGAR Questions Millions Spent in Afghanistan | News | Al Jazeera,” accessed September 28, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/8/1/sigar-questions-millions-spent-in-afghanistan>.

²² “SIGAR Questions Millions Spent in Afghanistan | News | Al Jazeera.”

massive corruption, a mini-class of millionaires came into existence, as a result, in the country²³. On the other hand, the CIA operations and war-lord strategy also produce harsh results; brutal leaders like Rashid Dostum got a place in the Afghan national assembly which further destabilize the political landscape of the Country. Such development play vital role in the U.S. failure in Afghanistan²⁴.

The shortage of the staff was an reason behind the unsuccessful U.S. nation-building in Afghanistan. Many agencies that were hired for the construction and reconstruction projects were having very less number of staff. For example, the USAID possessed 4,300 officers in 1975 which declined to only 1300 in 2010. The agency had lost approximately 35 percent of its staff in the 1990s alone. When the US nation-building initiated in the rough terrain (Afghanistan), USAID was having only full-fledged 16 experts in agriculture and 6 engineers in comparison to those hundreds who were employed in the 1980s to serve the agency. Later, the number grew at a very slow rate to only 100 in 2006. Other shortcomings of the manpower and cultural understanding also persisted due to which most of the USAID projects were given to

²³ "9/11 Millionaires and Corruption: How U.S. Money Helped Break Afghanistan," accessed September 28, 2023, <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/09/10/9/11-millionaires-and-corruption-how-us-money-helped-break-afghanistan.html>.

²⁴ "Millions in CIA 'Ghost Money' Paid to Afghan President's Office: New York Times | Reuters," accessed September 28, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-money-cia-idUSBRE93S00K20130429>.

local or US civil contractors²⁵. For illustration, USAID is an agency that maintains a unique developmental creed. The agency work for the importance of local autonomy, community development, empowerment on social and economic bases, carried-out long-term development projects like institution-building which are self-sustaining and creates productive relationships with local partners. The US nation-building in Afghanistan also increased the worth of the USAID. The budget it possessed previously in 2001 was increased from \$10 billion to almost triple, \$27.5 billion in 2005, but like the other agencies of the U.S. the USAID was also confronted with the problem of staff shortage.

Apart from these flaws, one of the important causes for the U.S. failure was the unique history of Afghanistan. The Afghan people do not like invaders that's why throughout the history of colonialism none of the imperialist power such as Britain, French, and Russia had colonized Afghanistan. The reason behind it was that Afghan society is highly disintegrated. The state is divided on different bases such as ethnic, sectarian, religious, and tribalism. The history of the Afghan state was already discussed earlier. The division between groups is the main driving force for the mobilization of politics in the failed states (Putz 2022). However, the United States repeated the same

²⁵ "USAID Contractors Denounce Agency's Betrayal of Afghan Workers," accessed September 28, 2023, <https://theintercept.com/2022/01/23/afghanistan-usaid-contractors-staff/>.

mistake as it was done by the previous invaders; they swiftly took the control of the country and tried to implement their own system over the territory without understanding the politics of the country. Introducing Western systems in a traditional society through guns and tanks was highly ineffective which had been experienced by the world previously. that's why U.S. President Biden declared that the United States' offshore operations, saving other nations far from the U.S. shores, came to an end. However, if the United States wanted to pursue democratic changes in a country in the future, the U.S. would do it through supporting liberal or democratic institutions in such countries ²⁶.

Recommendations:

The US nation-building failed in Afghanistan. The attempt toward democratization of the tribal society that was made by the US faced failure. However, democratization and liberal institutions can be pursued in a war-torn mineral-rich country through certain paths. The first is to support the democratic and liberal institutions through different aid and scholarship programs. Having less investment in the human resource in Afghanistan, the state lacks educated people like Japan and Germany. Through the support of liberal intuitions, the conversion from a rogue state to a democratic state is possible. It is possible to support liberal institutions in the country because various previous leaders had made attempts , from king

²⁶ "Nation-Building Ends Dawn News Paper - Google Search."

Amanullah to Ashraf Ghani, to introduce some liberal changes in the country²⁷.

The second recommendation is “Loya Jirga” which was recommended by Hamid Karzai after the Taliban seize control again in Afghanistan. He said that if the Taliban wants the legitimacy of Afghan people and international actors, Loya Jirga is the answer²⁸. Loya Jirga is the traditional way of resolving conflicts in Afghanistan for centuries. The people also accept the results of the Jirga; In Afghanistan, Jirga is the consensus develop among different groups of people. Currently, for the future of a healthy and wealthy Afghanistan, a consensus is necessary to build among different factions of the society, and it is necessary for liberal and democratic developments in the country. Without democratic changes, neither nation-building projects of any superpower nor any government can become succulent in contemporary Afghanistan.

²⁷ “Nation-Building Ends Dawn News Paper - Google Search.”

²⁸ “Taliban Can Only Gain Recognition through People’s Support,” accessed September 28, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2325390/taliban-can-only-gain-recognition-through-afghan-peoples-support-karzai>.

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