



## Afghanistan's Ethnic Strife Following the Taliban's Resurgence

Waseem Almas<sup>1</sup>, Adeel Irfan<sup>2</sup>, Aneel Waqas Khan<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

The multiethnic makeup of Afghanistan has long thwarted peacebuilding attempts and increased tensions amongst the country's many ethnic groups, and as a result, no policy has yet been implemented to specifically meet the needs of any one of them. After the Taliban rose to power again in Afghanistan, tensions between the country's various ethnic groups only grew worse. The article's theoretical foundation was the theory of Protracted Social Conflict developed by Edward Azars. This idea provides more detail and helps pinpoint the causes of the ethnic strife in Afghanistan. This nation sits at the crossroads of four major Asian landmasses: the Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Its strategic significance stems from its status as a historic and cultural crossroads. Bordering countries included Iran to the west and Pakistan, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan to the east. Over time, its advantageous position attracted people of many various cultural backgrounds.

**Keywords:** Taliban, ethnicity, conflict, Afghanistan, Protracted Social Conflict Theory

### 1. Introduction

The main ethnic group in Afghanistan is the Pashtuns, although there are also significant populations of Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras that feel marginalized by the country's dominant Pashtun majority. The Pashtun community is the source of the Taliban, and the group's history of trying to seize control of the country has prompted pushback from other communities. After the United States withdrew its forces, Afghanistan became a battleground between the Taliban, regional warlords, and new militants motivated by ethnicity. The political and social vacuum left by the United States' withdrawal has given ethnic militants a chance to play their destructive role in plunging the country back into a state of ethnic warfare.

It reminds me a bit of the civil war and ethnic strife that broke out in Afghanistan after the Soviet Union's defeat there in 1989, when a northern alliance of many different ethnic groups rose up against the Taliban government of Mula Omer. From 1996 through 2001, the Northern Alliance worked to topple the Taliban administration. After 9/11, the United States provided backing to the Northern Alliance, which included India, Iran, Israel, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, and ultimately defeated the Afghan Taliban. After Hamid Karzaye's administration took power, the Northern alliance collapsed.

The National Resistance Front (NRF), which includes Sunni Tajiks, Sunni Uzbeks, Sunni Pashtuns, and Shia Tajiks and Hazaras, has opposed and rejected the newly constituted Taliban government. With the help of former vice president Amrullah Salih, Ahmad Masood, the son of Northern alliance leader Ahmad Shah Masoud, has taken the helm of the resistance front. Rural anti-Taliban Afghans are outnumbered by their urban counterparts, who are concentrated in major cities like Hirat, Mizar, and Kabul.

In the northern part of Afghanistan, beyond the border of the Fanjshair valley, new anti-Taliban factions are emerging. The Liberation Front of Afghanistan is one such organization; they are vehemently committed to toppling the Taliban government and hold the Taliban responsible for the deaths and abductions of women's rights advocates, journalists, and other social activists. According to the LFA, Taliban is a terrorist organization that is to blame for the famine in Afghanistan and has no business occupying the country by force. In opposition to the Pashtun majority, this group pushed for a more inclusive form of government.

Former Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dustam's eldest son, yar Mohammad Dustam, has also stated his plans to visit Afghanistan and organize a resistant organization dubbed the Wolf unit to fight against the Taliban government. He claimed widespread support from Afghans in the province of Jowzjan, and it's worth noting that he defended the provincial capital of Sheberghan from a Taliban assault in the summer of 21. He was eventually forced to retire, though, and seek refuge in a neighboring nation.

Also declaring war on the Taliban government, the National Front for Free Afghanistan released a video featuring a large group of people, especially women, from Kapisa province. The women blamed the Taliban for the aggression against their homeland and motherland, while the men called the Taliban occupiers. The members of this armed militant group come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including speakers of the Pushto and Dhari languages.

After the United States withdrew from Afghanistan, the Turkistan Freedom Tiger remained more active than other resistance groups, launching numerous attacks against Taliban check posts and convoys that caused significant damage to the Taliban's infrastructure.

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, School of Political Science, Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup> Corresponding author, Head and Assistant Professor, School of Peace and Counter-Terrorism Studies, Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan

<sup>3</sup> Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, Government College University Lahore, Pakistan

Amrullah Salih, a former vice president of the now-defunct Afghan republic, fled Kabul in advance of the Taliban takeover, retreated to the Fanjshair valley, and eventually fled to Tajikistan. Saih is now Ahmad Masood's second-in-command of the National Resistance Front. According to Salih, the Afghan people do not support the Taliban since they are violent occupiers. He claimed that the death of a vicious loop would occur if the Taliban were to take power in Kabul. Society has been insulted by this power grab, and it has opened profound internal wounds. Ethnic strife in Afghanistan would result from the various armed factions' resistance to their unlawful rule. Salih claims he went into exile in Tajikistan to secure a bigger strategic goal and front of resistance. He added that he often consults with key figures within and outside the anti-Taliban movement.

## 2. Literature Review

The second Anglo Afghan war resulted in November 1878 due to failure of Amir Shair Ali khan (1863-1879) in maintaining his nation's equilibrium in the great power struggles between Russia in the north and British India in the south. Soon after the outbreak of war British occupied Kabul and compelled the dethroned ruler's son Amir Yaqoob to sign the Gandamak treaty. This treaty made Afghanistan a protectorate of Britain. Under this treaty, some of the eastern Afghan territories including the Khyber Pass, Kurram, and Swat (which are now part of present-day Pakistan) were ceded to the British, and Britain obtained the right to station her representatives in Kabul and other vital regions inside Afghanistan (Robson, 1988).

In 1880 the British authorities installed Abdur Rahman as Amir of Afghanistan. He was a pro-British person served their interest and mitigate the threat of Russia penetration and influence in Afghanistan. Amir Abdur Rahman was authorized by British India to strengthened Pashtun dominated ruling and reduces the threat from other ethnic groups to British interest while crushing their hegemony.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Amir Abdur Rahman established a severe centralized authority through force by exterminating other ethnicities in order to ensure Pashtun dominated Afghanistan. He migrated thousands of Pashtuns from south to north to colonize them in those area of the country where other ethnic groups have the command of authority. He established centralized ruling and mitigate regional autonomy. He increased the strength of the provinces from thirteen to twenty eight. Amir Abdur Rahman policies was highly influenced by British and Russian governments. During his reign Durand line was demarcated in order to separate the NWFP from the rest of Afghanistan in 1893. After the murder of Hababuallah, his son occupied the throne and fought the third war of independence against the imperial power of the west. In 1919 Amanauallah sign treaty with them in order to get liberation of Afghanistan.

Present ethnic conflict had long roots in the adaptation of policies by former rulers in order to get centralized authority but resulting negative impacts on the grooming political nourishments of other ethnic groups. Amir Abdur Rahman discriminately treated other ethnic groups and only favored Pashtuns in order to crush their political strength. Hazara community was made a vulnerable sect to maximum level and other ethnic group was pressed to extreme level in order to ensure centralized authority. Due to centralized ruling of Amir Abdur Rahman, he faced forty uprising in his reign. Actually he bowed the seed of ethnic conflicts while adopting centralizing pattern of ruling in Afghanistan (Arsalan, 2017).

Afghanistan's location at a cultural and religious crossroads in the geographic center of Asia makes it an important strategic player. It shared land borders with Pakistan to the east, China to the north-east, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan to the north, and Iran to the west. Its advantageous location meant that people of many various backgrounds eventually settled there. The peace-building efforts in Afghanistan have been hampered by the country's broad ethnic circle. Because no strategy has yet been implemented to specifically address the interests of any of these groups, multiethnicity has served to intensify existing tensions. Afghanistan's power dynamics and internal split were profoundly influenced by ethnic differences. The Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, Turkmen, and Aimaq are the six most populous ethnic groups. There are more than twenty languages spoken there, but the government only officially recognizes Pushto and Dari. The Pushoon wali code of behavior is most strongly held within the Pushoon community. Afghanistan has been plagued by conflict for the better part of four decades, making it impossible to assess the true amount of the country's population, especially in terms of the size of its many ethnic groups (Sinoo, 2021).

Afghanistan is home to dozens of ethnic groups such as Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Hazaras, Aimaqs, Kyrgyz, Arabs, Pamirs, Qizilbashes, Balochs, Pashais, and Nooristanis. The primary groups that make up the majority of the country, however, are the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras. Due to the lack of census, the estimated percentage of each ethnicity is highly controversial (Atlas, 2023).

Pashtun lives in the Eastern and Southern part of Afghanistan is the country largest ethnic group. It occupied 40-50 per cent of the total population of Afghanistan. They speak Pushto as their own language and also speak Dari language in Kabul. Pashtun remained custodian of the Afghan territory since 18<sup>th</sup> century. Ahmad shah Abdali laid

the foundation of Durani empire with the help of British rule. Pashtun dominance is continues till today. Afghanistan has been ruling by Pashtun ethnicity since its creation in 1747. Right now after withdrawal of US from Afghanistan they are center of power in the non-inclusive government of different ethnic groups.

Tajiks occupies 25-30 per cent of the total population of the Afghanistan. They reside in North and the North East of the country. Tajiks had a background of Persian heritage and this community speaks Dari language. This community had never been part to government circle but after the debacle of USSR many new leaders like Ahmad Shah Masood, Amrullah Salih, Burhanudin Rabani, Abdullallah Abdullallah emerged as powerful leaders in Afghan community and the status quo has been changed. Before the US withdrawal, Amruallah Salih was the vice president of the country belong to Tajik community waged war against the Taliban government and still leading the anti-Taliban forces within and outside the territorial boundaries of the country.

Uzbiks are to be considered 8 per cent of the total Afghan population. They belong to the turkic origin and use to speak their own language. During USSR aggression on Central Asian states led them fled to Afghan soil and settled down there. They didn't have any representation in the government circle until USSR aggression on Afghanistan in 1979 which paved the way for Abdur Rashid Dustam as a leader of Uzbek community established his influence in government circle. Dustam emerged a powerful war lord with the retreat of USSR forces and served on various prominent posts in government after the ouster of Taliban government by Northern alliance backing by United states of America. With US withdrawal Dustam fled to neighboring country and still continue opposition to Taliban rule due to lacking inclusiveness.

Hazaras had Mongolian origin possessed 7 per cent of the Afghan population. This is the weakest group in the ethnicities of Afghanistan. This community consist of Imami Shia and Ismaili Shia. Up to 1919 Hazara community were considered legal slaves to other ethnicities of Afghanistan. They were brutally deprived from their rights from the very beginning but Amir Abdur Rahman reign remained very harsh for Hazara community.

The first episode of Afghan state anti-Shia policy was executed by King Abdur Rahman Khan, known as the Iron Amir, to subjugate them to his rule. In 1892, Khan had his Ulema Council issue a *fatwa* denouncing Shias, particularly ethnic Hazaras, as infidels and imposed Hanafi jurisprudence on the Shia population. This led to the large scale massacre and enslavement of ethnic Hazaras.

During Taliban's rule 1990s. The group banned the public proceedings of Shia rituals during the month of Muharram. While Shias were allowed to practice their faith in their mosques and in private, they lived in fear. The Taliban massacred hundreds of Shia civilians in Daikundi, Bamyán, and Mazar-e Sharif in retaliation for armed Shias' resistance to the Taliban rule. In 1998, the Taliban governor, Mullah Niazi, in Balkh denounced the sect and asked the Shia population to convert to Sunni Islam or leave Afghanistan. After the toppling of the Taliban regime in 2001, the Shias of Afghanistan (mostly ethnic Hazaras) not only gained constitutional rights but also assumed public offices and took up government positions. Shias participated in politics, making their way to the Afghan parliament and several government institutions, including the office of the second vice president under President Hamid Karzai and President Ashraf Ghani. The Shia personal status law became part of the Afghan legal system, allowing Shias to have the freedom to be judged by their own laws – Jafari fiqh. In other words, Afghanistan has worked to achieve legal Shia-Sunni parity, which is now at risk because of sectarian posturing by the Taliban and other groups.

During the course of the last year, ethnic and religious minorities in the country have faced the risk of exclusion by Tliban ruling and severe repression by terrorist groups. During this period, ISIS and the Taliban have carried out 13 attacks on Shiite communities. Most of the attacks have targeted Hazara communities across the country in different parts of the country. As a result of these attacks, at least 700 people have been killed or injured. Along with the Shiites, the ethnic-religious community of Hindus and Sikhs has also been subjected to terrorist attacks. The attacks forced this religious minority to leave Afghanistan. In this report, it is said that with the Taliban's takeover of the country, the situation of the Hazaras has been significantly affected and their 20-year move and transformation from marginalization and discrimination to progress has been reversed.

So due to multi communal nature of Afghan society, peace and prosperity could only be ensured with the recognition and participation of all ethnic groups in the governmental representation. But Taliban denial of inclusive government yet pushed Afghan society into another ethnic war for seeking power glory. The study elaborates that ethnic conflict is one of the main reason of Afgan's problems

### 3. Theoretical framework

The researcher adopted Azars's theory of protracted social conflict in order to ensure theoretical basis to research study. This theory elaborates the questions of ethnic conflict in Afghanistan and provides a perfect lens to understand the factors responsible for the ongoing ethnic conflict among different groups after reemergence of Taliban into power.

Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic society had a long history of warfare among different ethnic groups for power glory.

After US withdrawal, Taliban emerged as a dominant force ruling the country. Due to lacking of inclusive government, Afghan society yield to ethnic conflict. This theory provides appropriate lens to understand the causes of ongoing ethnic conflict among different ethnic groups. Theory of protracted social conflict completely covers the overall ambit of research study.

Edward e Azar, scholar of conflict resolution field described the transformation of non-conflict situation into conflict one's by giving the theory of protracted social conflict. He identified the factors responsible for genesis, conflict making and outcomes of social conflict in society. But here we will apply only that portion of Azar's theory which focuses and identifies factors of ethnic conflict in society.

Azar identified that the most significant of all factors that lead towards the formation of protracted social conflict are societies that can be characterized as having a 'multi-communal' composition. Multi-communal societies, whether formed as a result of divide-and-rule policies of former colonial powers or whether through historical rivalries often resulted in the dominance of one group over the others.

Azar prescribed second variable which paves way for social conflict is the dissatisfaction of basic needs and lack of minority group's access to the market, political institutions and recognition of communal existence. If one group enjoys satisfaction of these needs in abundance, while others do not, will result social conflict.

Azar's third variable is political power dominated by one identity group, that uses its resources to maintain power over the other. In turn, to ensure that the group in power remains so, PSC-affected countries will often see attempts by the dominant group to resist participation of minority groups. Azar says, such crisis exacerbate already existing competitive or conflictive situations, diminish the state's ability to meet basic needs, and lead to further developmental crises.

The 4<sup>th</sup> variable is not only the state governance which halt communal groups accesses to basic needs but the extant internal policies being dictated by outsider states. States lose economic autonomy with dependency on foreign economic linkages resulting failure of domestic political and economic system.

Edward Azar theory of PSC is relevant to the nature of questions, developed for the research study. This theory helped in the identification of factors responsible for ethnic conflict in Afghanistan.

#### **4. Factors responsible for the ongoing ethnic conflict in Afghanistan**

Reason of ethnic conflict in Afghanistan can best be judge through Adward Azhar theory of protracted social conflict. He provided a perfect lens to understand the origin and making of ethnic conflict in developing or under developing societies. The researcher focuses all the pre-envisaged factors of ethnic conflict by Azahar are exist in Afghan society and thus become reason of ethnic conflict among different ethnic groups.

##### **4.1. Role of colonial power in sowing the seed of ethnic conflict**

Afghanistan lies between South Asia and Central Asia. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century British India and Russia invaded some of its territories from South and North respectively, which resulted great game between the two great powers.

##### **4.1.1. Great Game and Gandamak treaty**

British rule consider Russia a serious threat to their hegemony in the Indian sub-continent and thus political struggle started between the two in order to increase their influence in Afghanistan became known as the great game. Afghanistan became a buffer state between Russia and British India with the Gandamak treaty signed by Amir Yaqub Khan with British authorities in 1879. The treaty bestowed Afghanistan a protectorate status of British India until 1919 (Azmi, 1984).

##### **4.2. Pushtun dominance over other ethnic groups**

Since the creation of Afghanistan, Pushtoon remained dominant force of the country. They had long history of dominance over other ethnic groups in the country. Apart from the fact of their majority in population, they also remained the ruling class of the country since its creation. Pughtoon ruling privileged their concerned ethnic class from time to time in order to dominate other ethnicities in the country.

##### **4.2.1. Foundation of Afghanistan by Pushtoons**

The foundation of independent Afghanistan was laid down by Ahmad Shah Abdali and was later named Durani was a Pushtoon chief known to his countrymen Ahmad Shah Baba or the father of modern Afghanistan. He was the army general of Nadir Shah and after Nadir Shah's assassination in 1747 he was elected as a chief by the tribal council. Ahmad shah established confederation of different tribes and was not a centralized monarchy.

Afghanistan profoundly remained home to multi ethnic groups of Pushtoon, Tajiks, Uzbek, Hazaras and many other small groups for two and half centuries. The Pushtoo ethnic group laid the foundation of Afghanistan state in 1747 and despite its multi ethnic temperament the Pushtoon's hegemony remained up to 1992. We can categories the past two and half centuries of power politics in to four periods. The first period comprise on the rise and fall of Durani empire from 1747 to 1818, the second period was the era of decentralization of Afghanistan from 1818-1880, the

third period was the consolidation of modern state from 1880 to 1950's, the fourth period was the emergence of nation state from 1963 to 1992 (Abraham, 2013).

Durani Empire for the first time brought the whole Pushtoon community under the Pushtoon ruling in Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah Durani established a strong military force totally based on Pushtoon ethnicity, which provided basis to his ruling. So the Pushtoon community had offered more privileges as compare to other ethnicities. Relaxation had been provided to Pushtoon community in terms of taxation as Pushtoon especially Durani's pushtoon was the greater land holder in Afghanistan. In short, during Durani's reign Pushtoon enjoyed the dominant role in terms of economy and security. During the reign of Durani's, Pushtoon were the sole contender for power and their political and military might was un-challengeable for other ethnic groups (Fox, 1996).

#### **4.2.2. Attempt to Pushtonize Afghanistan**

The emergences of modern Afghanistan during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman better known as Iron Man for his Ruling had two different results for the Pushtoon hegemony. On the one hand Durand line treaty with the British India in 1893 had deprived Afghanistan from the half of Pushtoon population and on the other hand he tried to Pushtonize the whole of Afghanistan by resettling Pushtoon community in the North. Until Nader Khan the Pushtoon hegemony was challenged briefly by Tajik leader Habibuallah in 1929 but soon Hashim Khan reestablished Pushtoon position. However after 1946 Prime Minister Shah Mahmood and Muhammad Daud tried to modernize Afghanistan and ensured greater equality.

#### **4.2.3. People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan**

Non-Pashtun received primary attention when a communist party "People Democratic Party of Afghanistan" came into power in 1978. The PDPA recognized Uzbaki, Turkkimani, Balochi and noristani along with Dari and Pushto as their official languages. Although it seems that an intentional attempt was been made by communist faction to degrade the status of Dari and pushto. The PDPA under the Babrak Karmal reign even 1980-86 exploit ethnic conflict in order to stabilize his own politics. Apart from giving official status to the languages of minorities, the minorities were also recruited in bureaucracy and national army. The Karmal's government policy was to establish good relation with minorities in order to counter the greater force of Pushtoon in National politics. Such policies reduced the Dominant role of Pushtoon in National politics but also made them tenuous in state institutions (Larson, 2015).

#### **4.2.4. Predominantly Pashtun Taliban 1<sup>st</sup> regime**

Post-Soviet invasion provided conducive environment to Islamic fundamentalist emerging groups to power politics in Afghanistan. Hezb Islami headed by Gulbadin Hikmatiyar, Jamiat e Islami headed by Rabani, Younis khalil group, Ittihad e Islami headed by Abdul Rasool Sayif and Taliban were the main groups fought against Soviet forces before their departure from Afghanistan. when the Russian bear was brought on its knees, the country was pushed into a quagmire of power politics between the upper mention war lords and Taliban. These war lords were been supported by foreign funding for a decade but later on with Soviet disintegration they were left on their own resulted civil war in the country for power gaining. These war lords have started ruling and managing the regions where they have strong following of native people. Later in 1994 Taliban a predominant Pushtoon group emerged and defeated all these war lords and established their own government (Magnus, 1996).

Afghanistan was on the verge of disintegration before Taliban emergence in 1994. There was a tug of war between war lords with switching sides, alliances, betrayal and bloodshed was a common practice. During initial period of civil war, north eastern and Kabul was under control of Burhanudin Rbani while Hirrat and western provinces was under control of Ismail. On the east of Pakistan border three provinces was under control of Mujahideen shura based in jalalabad. South and eastern region to the Kabul came under the influence of Gulbadin Hikmatiyar. In north an Uzbek war lord general Rashid Dustam had clout over six provinces. In the central of Afghanistan Hazara community was controlling the province of Bamiyan. The situation after 1990s in Afghanistan was at peak of uncertainty, lawlessness, fear and perpetual danger to individual lives. The warlords plunder and squander the national assets and resources (Aramajani, 2021).

Afghanistan was in the flames of civil war but in the meantime student of religious Madaris came forward and gave birth to the movement aims peace restoration, disarm the population, Sharia law enforcement and preserve the Islamic antiquity of Afghanistan. Taliban kept their selves apart from party politics of Mujahideen as their movement was not doing politics for grabbing power but to exterminate their mother country from evil practices. Omer is consider the founding father of Taliban movement belong to a landless Pushtoon peasant family of Khandahar, Node village, Hutak tribe and having links with Pushtoon Ghilzai Branch. He went to maiwand district of Khandhar and opened Madrasa. He joined Hezbi e Islami and fought against Dr Najibuallah regime between 1989 and 1992. Omer established Pushtoon hegemony in Afghanistan until ousted by US in 2001(Rahid, 1999).

#### **4.2.5. Anti-Taliban Alliance is a challenge to Pashtun hegemony**

In October 1996 after capturing Kabul by Taliban resulted Northern alliance by ousted president Burhanudin Rabani, Ahmad Shah Masood, Abdul Rashid Dostam and Yiunis Khalili to defend their mother land. After the Fall of Mizar Sharif by Taliban, Abdul Rashid Dustam has been fled to Turkey and Younis Khalili was arrested by Taliban. But Ahmad Shah Masood halted Taliban to the greater extent by sabotaging their strength in the Northern Afghanistan. In March 1996 Taliban invited 1200 religious scholars from all over Afghanistan in order to discuss the future of Afghanistan but this gathering lack any former mujahideen who had fought against Soviet or any warlord and political leadership. These were the new emergent group of local Islamist which raised their voice against the injustice and illegal acts perpetrated by war lords during civil war after Soviet disintegration (Maley, 1996).

The country was now divide in southern and northern lines as well Pushtoon and non Pushtoon lines. The Taliban had exterminated non Pushtoon community while Hazaras and Uzbek massacred Pushtoos. The civil war was exacerbated by neighbors as well by supporting their concerned ethnic group against the others. Iran supported Abdul Rashid Dustam against other ethnic groups especially against Taliban. In June 13 1997 after arriving of Abdul rashid Dustam the northern alliance announced their own government declaring province of Mazar as their capital with Burahanudin rabani as their president, Ahmad Shah Masood as their defense minister and promised to include all other tribal elders, technocrats and former warlords in the inclusive government except Taliban.

#### **4.2.6. Establishment of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan by Pushtun Taliban**

Afghan Taliban is predominantly Pushtoon, established their government after twenty years of struggle against NATO forces ousted in 2001 with the help of non Pushtun ethnic groups of Northern alliance. The current government of Tliban is not inclusive one but dominated by Pushton ethnic group resulted resentment in other ethnic group of the country. Other ethnic groups especially Tajak, Uzbek and Hazaras condemned Tliban's exclusion of minorities from government circle. The present regime is totally the opposite reflection of the former democratic government, where government is occupied by single Pushtoon ethnic group and no other ethnicity is made part of the government. The 33 members of the cabinet including the spiritual head and head of the government are not the representative of the people of Afghanistan. They occupied the corridor of power through aggression and force. Taliban government compelled the former leadership of democratic government to fled to foreign countries due to severe threat to their lives. The care taker government of Taliban failed to announce future outline for general election neither they are willing to include common citizen in governing. The country is lacking well learned administrator and no one knew under which law they are holding their offices nor they knew under which law the country is ruling. The contemporary governing style is empty of any democratic norm and value but rather reflect autocracy and totalitarian regime (Basit, 2017).

Taliban government failed to introduce constitution of their own after one and half year. They are ruling the country as per their whims and the common people desired had no value in the present regime. This is very difficult for the new generation groomed in last two decades to comprehend the nature of Taliban governing nor will they adjust their selves with such system. In short, right now Afghanistan has been hijacked by Taliban leadership and rules it without any constitution. Despite the multi ethnic temperament of state Taliban failed to introduce inclusive government after ruling the country for more than one and half years. The country is again on the verge of civil war due to arm resistance of other ethnic groups against the hegemony of Taliban ruling in different provinces of the country. Forty former war lords has formed an alliance in Tajakkistan to fight against Taliban (Noor, 2021)

#### **4.3. Lack of access to political institutions**

After one and half year of Taliban takeover of Kabul, the researcher has observed continuous decline and deterioration in the people accesses to political institutions. Since more than one year, people of Afghanistan has been facing disrespect to their right to live free and equal lives, rejection of livelihood opportunities, lack of accesses to health care, education and continuous insecurity to lives have turned different ethnic group against Taliban ruling (Nations, 2021).

Taliban's policies of inequality had negatively impacted and set the country apart. It is the only country which lacks any member in the ruling cabinet from other ethnic group or female fraternity. Moreover gender based violence is the core problem facing by Afghan citizens. Female has been restricted to high schooling in the country and denied earning opportunities exacerbated their fragile economic standard of life. Taliban overtook Kabul elected government in August 2021 and dissolved the former democratic constitution and parliament. They transform the democratic republic of Afghanistan to Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and installed the unelected cabinet for ruling the country. Habituallah Akhundzada was named the supreme leader and Muhammad Hassan Akhund was declared the prime minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. All the citizen of Afghanistan was banned to have accesses to political institutions, only a group of Taliban was to be allowed to run the country. Taliban are the predominantly Pushtoon are about to few thousand in strength occupied the ruling power by force.

##### **4.3.1. Nondemocratic government**

Before Taliban takeover, President Ashraf Ghani was elected to office of the president for five years and his cabinet ministers was to be appointed with parliamentary approval. Independent Election Commission declared Ashraf Ghani as president with 50.6 percent of votes. Before Taliban emergence into power, previously Afghanistan was ruled by elected government representing the parliament but right now no elected body functions under Taliban, who appointed unelected cabinet and prime minister (Worden, 2021).

#### **4.3.2. Lack of constitution**

The previous two decades was a democratic era represented by a Constitution of the democratic Afghanistan. The last constitution was enacted by both houses of the parliament in 2004 with the approval of all 14 ethnic groups recognized by constitution. Constitution manifestly defined the ambit of all democratic institutions. The constitution provides the overall governing structure of the country with flexibility in nature in order to be changed with the changing circumstances of the citizen needs and desires (Diplomacy, 2021).

The present governmental machinery is un-constitutional. Taliban failed to provide any constitution to the new established Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. There is severe ambiguity regarding distribution of power among different institution. No one knows in the present government of Taliban under which law they held the concerned offices. Actually constitution is a body of rules prescribes how government is to be carried on but Taliban government failed to provide such document which specify the pattern nature of their working in the country.

#### **4.3.3. Lack of democratic parliament**

The constitution of 2004 provides bicameral house of parliament, where representative to the lower house were to be directly elected by people, the citizens through general election elect 249 representatives to the Wolesi Jirga or House of the People. The upper house 102, whose two third members were elected by provincial assemblies and remaining third were to elect by president. All ethnic groups were allowed to take part in general election to parliament. 10 seats of lower house were reserved to Nomadic Kuchi including 3 womens, and 65 seats of lower house were reserved for women. But the present Taliban regime, which run the government are not the representative or popular body of the country. They dissolved the parliament and ruling the country through force. The cabinet of the contemporary Taliban government is composed on loyalist of the Taliban having no criteria for the concerned offices occupied by them. This is not the democratic government having no representation from other ethnic groups. The former constitution allowed women and all ethnic groups to have participation and say in the national politics. But the present regime do not allow any person to take part in the governmental activities. Restriction has been imposed on the free movement of women even they were not allowed to do job in the present regime of Taliban. There is no parliamentary body in the Taliban government. people of the country have no say in the present political set up in the country. Citizen were allow to criticize the government policies in the previous democratic government. Even people had the power to change any particular minister of the cabinet or the whole government through public opinion pressure and parliament. The present political machinery don't have such space to be criticize by common people neither people had the right to change any cabinet minister or the whole government. Prime minister and most of the cabinet ministers of present government are the declared global terrorist by United Nations Security Council (Mena, 2022).

#### **4.3.4. Lack of independent Election Commission**

Under the republic, general election was used to be held under the supervision of independent election commission. Reservation of candidates was addressed by electoral complain commission. Taliban dissolved both these electoral bodies and neither have they introduced any alternative institutes in order to make sure general election in the country. Lack of such electoral bodies, it would be impossible for ruling Taliban to determine the citizen behavior in favor of Taliban government (Popalzai, 2021).

#### **4.3.5. Banned on Political parties**

Political parties are consider wheel of democracy and democracy is means liberty of will, so Afghan Taliban banned all political parties in the country in order to deprived the commoners from their liberty of will. This is very brutal and tantamount to slavery while depriving them from their free will.

The election commission of former democratic government had recognized 57 political parties in 2016 representing the multi ethnic society of Afghanistan but the interim government of Taliban didn't include even a single person from all the recognized and register parties of the nation. Neither a single member has included from the last two decade of democratic history of Afghanistan, only Pushtoon loyalist to the Taliban were made part of the interim government. Expert says that inclusive government is very important for Taliban in order to make sure end of resistance to Taliban from different ethnic group. For the broad base government by Taliban with stability in the country and peaceful relation with neighbors and the world at large demand inclusive government in order to legitimacy from its own people and the international community. The Taliban government has not been yet recognized by any state due to lack of inclusive government and deprivation other ethnicities from representation especially female fraternity (Larson, 2022).

#### **4.4. Centralization of power**

Ahmad shah Abdali laid the foundation of Afghanistan with confederation, where all the tribal chiefs were totally autonomous in their authorities but the seed of centralization had been sowed by King Amir Abdul Rahaman. That's why he is also known is the Iron Amir of Afghanistan. While centralizing central authority he crushed forty uprising against his campaign of centralization. He colonized Pushtoon in the area of North and West in order to reduce the influence of other ethnic group against his centralized polices in different provinces of the country. He marginalized other ethnic fraternities to the ought most extent. He made ethnic cleansing of other ethnic communities especially Hazara's were brutally sabotaged in Abdur Rahman's reign (Kundi, 1996).

##### **4.4.1. Abduction of king Zahir shah and end to constitutional monarchy**

The abduction of King Zahir Shah by his military general Dawood of central command brought an end to constitutional monarchy. In 1977 he introduced a constitution concentrating all the power to his own office. The era people had seen during Zahir Shah was democratic in spirit and nature. His constitution of 1964 was the most democratic ever Afghan people had practiced. For more than a decade people had enjoyed all their fundamental rights and were living happy life with liberty under constitutional code of conduct. His constitution had the reflection of universal declaration of human rights and bill of rights. But the era people of Afghanistan had got in Dawood reign was not acceptable to them. Dawood was brought by People Democratic Party of Afghanistan but his centralized approach degrade him in his own party and the public in large. People belong to different groups condemned his centralized government and revolt against him which resulted murder of Dawood in presidential palace. The same fate has been followed by Tarakye government which was rejected by people and uprising occurred which paved way for Russian intervention.

##### **4.4.2. Taliban first regime**

The USSR intervention followed by the formation of Talban emergence to power in 1994. They also installed severe centralized government with no flexibility for female fraternity and other ethnic groups. Taliban government was dominated by Pushtoon and rest of ethnicities were kept deprived from becoming part of it. National resistance front was established by Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara groups, though some Pushtoon leaders were also remained part of it. NRF waged war against Taliban supported by US and further speedup by US involvement in Afghanistan after 9/11. Due to severe centralization of federal setup, Taliban led government collapsed in 2001 and opened a chapter to democracy for 20 years (Zain, 2006).

##### **4.4.3. Democratic era of twenty years**

In 2001, the United States re-established a highly centralized administration in Afghanistan out of concern that greater autonomy for the country's regions could lead to the creation of multiple independent states and the eventual breakup of Afghanistan. Hamid Krzye controlled Afghanistan from 2001 until 2014 with an iron fist. Both the 2004 general election and the 2009 general election were run without regard to political affiliation. Karzye's administration had believed in patronage rather than party based politics, despite the fact that decentralization was essential due to the country's multiethnic character and the need for its various regions to have authority over tax collection and spending the local revenue on the development of local areas through their increased participation in local politics. It took a decade for the country's various ethnic groups to learn that regional autonomy could only be accomplished with the removal of US soldiers, despite their initial enthusiasm upon the Taliban's 2001 overthrow. To guarantee regional autonomy and increased people's involvement in the voting system, many ethnic groups united and forced them to withdraw. After the United States and its allies withdrew their soldiers in August 2021, the Taliban quickly took control of Kabul (Shah, 2012).

##### **4.4.4. Taliban post-US withdrawal**

Since the United States and NATO withdrew its forces, the Taliban have taken control of the country. Of course, they're also adherents of a centralized government in which no individual regions have any power. Even in provinces with significant representation from other ethnic groups, the Taliban had firmly entrenched their authority. The Taliban have altered the whole administrative system put in place during the free Taliban era. Parliament is irrelevant to the current political climate and played no previous role in the administration or politics of the country. The Taliban have eradicated all provincial assemblies, rendering such structures ineffective. The foundations of democracy at the local level have been obliterated. Under the current Taliban rule, the election commission has been rendered completely ineffective. Islamic clerics have taken the role of secular judges in both the highest and lowest tribunals (George, 2022).

The lack of decentralization, a constitution, and inclusive administration has significantly worsened the situation in modern times. The government is dominated by Pushtoon, and no other ethnic group has been allowed to join it, which ignores and diminishes Afghanistan's true ethnic makeup. The Taliban have a unified government that controls the entire country. People were denied the right to vote in the election of their government after the United States withdrew support. They imposed their harsh control on the country by force, alienating both its citizens and



the international community. The Taliban regime ruled without popular support. They stormed Kabul and took over the government without actually representing the people. The Taliban abolished the previous constitution and are currently running the country without anyone being aware of the current constitution. Even after 1.5 years in power, the Taliban have yet to produce a constitution. All of the ministries were given out as favors, rather than being granted based on qualifications. The severe economic catastrophe, humanitarian crisis, human rights violation, and so on that ensued from the appointment of incompetent people to high-profile government positions was the direct outcome of a lack of professionalism at the highest levels of government. Instead of concentrating on governance and other pressing matters, the government has been more concerned with restricting women's freedom and the range of careers open to them (Francis, 2023).

#### **4.5. Non recognition of communal existence**

The post-US-withdrawal law and order situation is deteriorating rapidly. Communities outside of the Taliban's control became increasingly angry by the government's exclusion of them. Pushtoons, who make up 40% of the country's population, have already begun reigning without being recognized by the majority ethnic group. The Taliban was unable to win over the support of its own people or those of other countries. They did not succeed in keeping the peace in the country.

The Taliban leadership broke its agreements with the international community. The democratic culture of the country was not able to overcome their efforts. They were unable to be trusted with the responsibility of include people of other races in government. Only two people out of a total of 33 in the cabinet are members of a minority group. They have no plan or strategy for how to exercise power in the future. Civil war could break out again if Taliban is elected because he cannot keep the country's other ethnic groups under control for long. After a year and a half in power, they still hadn't given the country a constitution. The legal system under which the Taliban rule is unknown to the public. In reality, Afghanistan does not have a constitution (Amnesty International, 2022).

The international community's efforts to alleviate Afghanistan's economic crisis were stymied by sanctions and bounties placed on 17 of the country's 33 cabinet members, including the Taliban's spiritual leader and prime minister. After the Taliban took over in Kabul, the international community imposed sanctions on the country, devastating the banking sector and the Afghan economy. The Afghan economy is in turmoil despite the fact that the United States and Britain issued reserves to the country afterwards. The country is about to completely disintegrate. There is not enough money in the government budget to cover employee salaries. The economic crisis has caused thousands of people to close their enterprises. Ninety-five percent of the country's population is living in extreme poverty. The finance ministry has been vague about its plans for the future economy. After Kabul's defeat at the hands of the Taliban, a plethora of rival organizations arose. They said their violent actions against the Taliban government had increased. In addition, Ahmad Masood's National Resistance Front formed a new coalition with the most powerful war lords. Uzbekistan is home to some 40 war lords and ex-politicians who supported their fight against the Taliban and are now staying there. According to Ahmad Masood, terrorist attacks by the Taliban have increased in over a dozen regions. Former leaders in the Arm establishment and in politics are either starting their own terrorist network or aligning with existing ones. When faced with the ISK terrorist group, the Taliban did not come to the aid of the minority population (Donnell, 2022).

After 1.5 years in power, the Taliban's situation has only gotten worse. Due to a lack of foresight, the situation is becoming increasingly precarious. The economic catastrophe was not mitigated by the leadership of the Taliban. They limited women's basic liberties. The government's failure to safeguard the Hazara people from the ISK purge has contributed to a deteriorating law and order situation. There is no document outlining the structure of government. The Taliban's hard stance on some issues has strained its relationship with the rest of the world. Extreme instability and a humanitarian disaster have forced thousands of people to flee their homes. Uncertainty has gripped the country since a crisis erupted as a result of growing opposition to the Taliban's rule among various ethnic groups.

After the United States left, the forces fighting the Taliban grew stronger and vowed retribution. Currently, the Taliban are being opposed by over a dozen different insurgent factions. Afghan Freedom Front, led by ex-defense minister and Chief of General Staff Yasin Zia, is another significant anti-Taliban militia. Recent significant attacks against the Taliban have been claimed by AFF. Abdul Mateen Sulaiman Khail, a former commander of the Afghan army's Special Forces, leads the Afghanistan Islamic National & Liberation Movement, the only Pashtoon organization. The formation of this organization is a reaction to the reported Taliban killing of soldiers. According to the report, this Pashtoon ethnic minority is the only one in Afghanistan that is fighting against the Pushtoon rule. The Freedom and Democracy Front, Soldiers of Haziristan, Freedom Corps, Liberation of Afghanistan, etc., are only a few examples of other organizations fighting for freedom in Afghanistan. The organisations mentioned are the main ones opposing the Taliban in Afghanistan (BBC, 2021).

#### **4.6. Coercive repression**

Since takeover of Kabul by Taliban a year ago, people has been deprived from basic human rights including persecuting minority groups, violently clamping down on peaceful protests, suppressing women's rights and using extrajudicial executions and disappearances to spread fear among Afghans.

Taliban placed restriction on peaceful protests of other ethnic groups. Since Taliban's emergence in power, recurrent use of force on peaceful protests by beating and shooting unarmed protesters of Tajik, Uzbek and Hazaras are become very common in present day Afghanistan. Amnesty International quoted a person, while saying, he saw many people killed by Taliban, lies in pool of blood in a street of Hirat province during a protest and he himself avoided hospital to cure his injured arm due to fear of arrest for protesting against Taliban repression. Taliban has suppressed the social activist either by threatening, detaining, and even killing for raising voice for human rights protection after the US withdrawal in Afghanistan. Government media and information center issued order on 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2021 directed severe restriction on criticism on Taliban ruling and publication literature against their interest by speaking against Islam and its teaching (Human rights watch, 2021).

During last year more than 80 journalist has been arrested and tortured for propagating Taliban crackdown against peaceful protesters and curbing fundamental human right provided by constitution of 2004 of the country. Taliban use to beat journalist and compel them to sign document promising that they will not speak what happened to them during Taliban custody of incarceration and if they did so, Taliban would be entitled to arrest their whole family.

Since August 2021, Taliban warriors have been extremely brutal with all former Afghan government employees who have refused to continue working for the Taliban administration. There have been thousands of random arrests and illegal detentions of ordinary people. Without a written constitution, a body of criminal law, or established court procedures, Afghanistan's judicial system is in a state of flux. Presently, the Taliban government structure does not include a functioning judicial system. The Taliban established a system in which force was the ultimate deterrent, leading to the wrongful imprisonment of many people who were denied access to legal counsel, family, or due process. Amnesty International reports that after being arrested by the Taliban, hundreds of innocent women never returned to their own homes. Since the Taliban took power, the crime rate has skyrocketed as they exact daily vengeance on members of minority ethnic groups who they accuse of resisting their rule. There has been a dramatic uptick in cases of torture or extrajudicial executions. Since those who have ever worked for the formal government are automatically suspects in any rebellion against the Taliban's rule, the Taliban have disappeared hundreds of people. Where these people have been hiding away is still a mystery. Despite receiving a pardon letter, hundreds of people have vanished, most notably members of the previous Afghan National Defense Security Force. There have been many reports of innocent persons being beaten while their hands were tied behind their backs in front of their family members, causing the siblings to weep and become distraught (Amnesty International, 2022).

## 5. Conclusion

The Pashtun community is the source of the Taliban, and the group's history of trying to seize control of the country has prompted pushback from other communities. After the United States withdrew its forces, Afghanistan became a battleground between the Taliban, regional warlords, and new militants motivated by ethnicity. In an effort to better understand the root causes of the current ethnic strife, this essay applies Azara's pre-defined variables to the situation. In light of the colonial preference for Pashtun over other ethnic groups during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahaman, we can conclude that the current Pashtun hegemony and ethnic conflict in Afghanistan are the result of this choice. Abdur Rahman had to deal with forty rebellions from different ethnic groups because of his Pashtun-centric policies. After the United States withdrew from Afghanistan, the country reverted to a multicommunal society dominated by the Taliban. Since then, the country's various ethnic groups have shown serious resistance to being putted outside of the power corridor. After the Taliban seized command in Kabul, the Pashtun-dominated society of today became extremely vulnerable to attack from other ethnic groups. The current dominance of a single ethnic group poses a serious threat of driving ethnic war in modern Afghanistan. Azar,s believes that a society where non-democratic values predominate is the most crucial component for the transformation of society in ethnic conflict. Therefore, the current Taliban administration has not ensured a system based on democratic patterns but has instead imposed a theocratic one. They botched the job of making sure all groups were represented in government; the current cabinet is almost entirely Pashtoon. Another ethnic conflict is inevitable given the country's lack of a constitution, parliament, electoral commission, and legal political parties. The current state of affairs in Afghanistan, including issues such as a lack of acknowledgment and coercive repression, are driving ethnic conflict. All the erstwhile warlords were now fighting against the Taliban administration. The Taliban are currently being opposed by more than a dozen distinct ethnic terrorist groups. Ethnic strife persists in Afghanistan because of government crackdowns on free speech and assembly, extrajudicial killings, persecution of religious and ethnic minorities, and restrictions on women's rights. The only way to end the spike in continuous ethnic strife is via reconciliation with other ethnic groups.

## References

- Azmi, M.R. (1984). Russian expansion in Central Asia and the Afghan question (1865-1885). *Pakistan Institute of International Affairs*, 37(3), 2-1.
- Arsalan, M. (2017). The modernization of Afghanistan from Abdur Rehman reforms to 2015. *Research gate*, 20-22.
- Atlas, W. (2023). The ethnic groups of Afghanistan. World Atlas.
- Abraham, R. (2013). Politics of ethnicity in Afghanistan: understanding the Pushton and other ethnic groups. *Defense and diplomacy journal*, 2(2), P8-10.
- Armajani, J. (2021). The Taliban. *Brill publisher*, P11-20.
- Amnesty International. (2020). Afghanistan: Taliban Must Immediately Stop Arbitrary Arrests of Journalists, Civil Society Activists, Former Government Officials and Those Who Dissent.
- Amnesty International. (2022). Afghanistan: Taliban must immediately stop unlawful killings and arbitrary arrests in Panjshir.
- Amnesty International. (2022). One year of Taliban broken promises, draconian restriction and violence. Action Afghan news release press South Asia.
- Basit, A. (2017). Afghanistan. *Counter terrorism trend and analyses*, 9(1), P23.
- BBC News. (2021). Anti-Taliban resistance force says it has thousands of fighters.
- Dannell, L. O. (2022). Afghanistan war lords prepare their comeback. *Foreign Policy analysis*.
- Dawi, A. (2022). Women in Afghanistan faces numerous Taliban restriction in 2022. *Voice of America*.
- Diplomacy. (2021). Taliban will never support democracy in Afghanistan. Salaam Times.
- Fox, J. (1996). Pushtoon in Afghanistan. *ResearchGate*, P3-5.
- Francis, E. (2023). Poor US planning in Afghanistan helped Taliban takeover watchdogs says. The Washington Post.
- George, S. (2022). Taliban puts on show of force to calibrate anniversary of US withdrawal. The Washington Post.
- Human Rights Watch. (2021). Afghanistan: severely restricted restrict media.
- Kundi, M. A. (1996). Afghanistan: Power struggle among rival groups. *Pakistan Horizon*, 49(3), P12.
- Larson, A. (2022). Political Parties in Afghanistan. United State Institute of Peace.
- Larson, A. (2015). Political parties in Afghanistan. US institute of peace, p2-3.
- Magnus, R. H. (1996). Afghanistan in 1996: A year of Taliban. *University of California Press*, 37(2), p1-8.
- Mena. (2022). Taliban dissolve parliament in Afghanistan. *Al Maydeen English*.
- Maley, W. (1996). Taliban triumphant. *Royal institute of international affairs*, 52(11),P3.
- Noor, S. (2021). The Taliban ascendance in Afghanistan implication for Pakistan. *Counter terrorism trend and analyses*, 13(4), P14.
- Nations, U. (2021). Taliban response to protest increasingly violent. UN news Global perspective of human stories.
- Popalzai, E. (2021). Taliban says no need for Afghanistan Election Commission and peace ministries. CNN.
- Paul, A. (2005). The Constitution of Afghanistan. Digital Commons @ University of Nebraska – Lincoln, P6-54.
- Rashid, A. (1999). The Taliban: exporting extremism. *Council on Foreign Relations*, 78(6),P8.
- Robson, B. (1988). The Road to Kabul: The Second Afghan War 1878-81. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Cambridge University Press, 2-3.
- Sinoo, A. (2021). How ethnic and religious divides in Afghanistan are contributing to violence against minorities. The conversation academic rigour, journalistic flair.
- Shah,A. (2012). The Post 9/11 Democratization in Afghanistan: Challenges and Expectation. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity studies*, 4(1), P13.
- Worden, S. (2021). Democracy s the Afghan government best defense against Taliban. United States Institute of peace.
- Zain, O.F. (2006). Afghanistan: from conflict to conflict. *Pakistani Horizon*, 59(1), P19.