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**Assessing the State of Democratic Institution Building in  
Afghanistan by the United States and its allies**

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## Introduction

In 1985, Steve McCurry released the famed photograph of the “Afghan Girl”, which showed an Afghan girl in a Pakistani refugee camp with green eyes looking straight into the camera. The picture was hailed as a beautiful representation of the fear of refugees or of war, to be seen in her eyes. However, reality was different. The fear in her eyes of the girl was not due to some sad past or story, but rather due to the photographer himself. She was separated from her classmates to be photographed by a man who she did not know and was not part of the family, something culturally frowned upon within Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> Before this revelation in 2002, only the narrative of McCurry was present, as Western audiences were incapable of imagining cultural differences. Instead, they applied a narrative of sadness and trauma rather than shock at a violation of private space. This is what can be considered a failure of imagination, where one party simply does not consider how the cultural other could interpret certain actions, decisions or policies.

The first anecdote showed a relatively small scale, low impact consequence of a failure of imagination, others have a much higher cost. This thesis will assess the effort of the United States (US) and its allies in building institutions in Afghanistan based on democratic principles in the post-Taliban era. As of the time of writing the US has been involved in Afghanistan for almost eighteen years and a half. The country currently has two presidents, as both declared themselves victors and held their own inauguration following disagreements on the latest elections of September 2019.<sup>2</sup> The US government is privately aware of the hopelessness of the current situation in Afghanistan and their inability to create sustainable governance structures.<sup>3</sup> US senators have also expressed doubts that the Afghan government would survive in the case of an integral withdrawal of US troops, as it could most likely not withstand the attacks of the Taliban.<sup>4</sup> However, when the US originally entered Afghanistan, it planned to democratize the country, create civil institutions and functioning security forces, and as a primary goal destroying the forces responsible for 9/11. The aim of the research is to investigate the current state of the US’ policy- and decision-makers in this effort and what factors could potentially

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<sup>1</sup> Cathy Newman, “A Life Revealed,” *National Geographic*, April 1, 2002, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2002/04/afghan-girl-revealed/>.

<sup>2</sup> “Rival Afghan ‘Presidents’ Hold Two Inaugurations,” *BBC News*, March 9, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/51796780>.

<sup>3</sup> Craig Whitlock, “Confidential Documents Reveal U.S. Officials Failed to Tell the Truth About the War in Afghanistan,” *The Washington Post*, December 9, 2009, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/afghanistan-war-confidential-documents/>.

<sup>4</sup> Jason Lemon, “GOP Senator Lindsey Graham Warns Against Trump’s Taliban Peace Deal: ‘Afghanistan Will Fall Apart and Civil War Will Emerge,’” *Newsweek*, March 2, 2020, <https://www.newsweek.com/gop-senator-lindsey-graham-warns-against-trumps-taliban-peace-deal-afghanistan-will-fall-apart-1490053>.

have affected it. One of the measured causes is the failure to contemplate the cultural and societal differences between the US and the subject population. Consequently, there is a de-rooting of the policies and institutions from local reality as experienced by individuals within the subject country. The thesis aims to answer the following question: “What is the effect of US institution-building on Afghanistan?”.

Currently, the US and other countries are involved in state-building and democratisation efforts in countries such as Venezuela, Syria or Mali. These state-building efforts should more seriously consider the effects of mirror-imaging and the failure of imagination. These concepts come from Intelligence Studies and effectively describe biases that stem from cultural differences and are explained in later chapters. Additional research on these concepts on a wider scale than just intelligence studies is beneficial to study their application within the field of Public Administration and nation-building generally. This would also introduce concepts that are mature within one field of study to another, adding another framework through which policymaking can be assessed. This is done through focusing on cultural differences as being active components rather than as a passive “fait accompli” and playing a role as a major factor in a failure of policy implementation. Thus, the answer to this research and the impact of these active cultural differences should be of interest for cultural studies, international policymaking and Public Administration. Additionally, it is aimed at exploring the causes for the current state of democratic institutions within Afghanistan from a perspective of cultural studies.

The thesis is divided in seven parts, literature review, hypotheses, methodology, historical overview, analysis, discussion and conclusion. Within the literature review key concepts are introduced and briefly discussed, as these need to be defined. The concepts come from various fields, including intelligence studies and the literature review is aimed to clearly frame the concepts taken from this field and cultural studies. Based on this literature review, the hypotheses are formulated and their relevance explained. In the methodology, the research design is described and the use of interviews for additional evidence explained. Furthermore, the choice for a within-case analysis and process-tracing as methodologies is justified within this section. The historical overview serves to introduce the reader to the history and context necessary to understand the current situation in Afghanistan. The research aims for this thesis are to show the impact that cultural differences can have on policymaking. However, these are the results of complex histories which need to be described to justify the inferences made in the analysis, hence vindicating the presence of a historical overview. A large portion of the papers used within this thesis that treat the topic of Afghanistan include a similar chapter, stressing the

importance of historical context when discussing this country. As this history is consistently subject to change, a mix of newspapers and academic books are used in support of this overview. The analysis chapter will examine United states policies on the democratisation of Afghanistan as well as the possible factors that could have hindered their effective implementation. These are assessed in face of cultural literature and their results, both in the long and short term. In support of the claims made the interviews used throughout serve to illustrate the analysis and how these failures were experienced by individuals on the receiving end. As this thesis deals with cultural differences emphasized through failures of imagination, the presence of local voices is crucial to justify the analysis. The discussion overviews the results of the analysis based on the formulated hypotheses and reviews some of the limitations that are inherent to the chosen research design and identity of the author. Finally, the conclusion suggests areas where new research should be conducted to improve the academic knowledge-base on this topic and further links concepts that are more commonplace within Intelligence Studies to the field of Public Administration.

## Literature Review

The literature review is divided in four parts. The first describes the literature and research conducted on some of the concepts introduced here, such as mirror imaging and the ‘failure of imagination’. These are then linked to existing Public Administration concepts or their relevance to the field highlighted. These connections between analytic techniques and biases from intelligence studies and the process of public-administration are not explored enough and could benefit from more cross-analysis. The second part will touch upon state-building in general and state-related concepts. This also includes factors that influence the capacity to build institutions effectively and to ensure successful policy implementation. State-building is linked to Public Administration as it is a governance effort where a principal is responsible for building the administration of the agent following a pre-defined model of governance. The third is an examination of the literature about Afghanistan pre-invasion and how it was characterized. It also includes a brief overview of the justifications for the invasion to give a view of the ‘entry perspective’ of the US and other countries. The fourth and final part is an examination of Afghanistan as a country and what its characteristics are, specifically demographic and religious ones. Whilst this section is not necessarily an overview of literature, it is necessary to understand the historical overview and the complexity of Afghanistan.

## Review of main concepts

This thesis is informed by several concepts from the field of Intelligence Studies and, to a lesser extent, Crisis and Security Management such as mirror imaging and a ‘failure of imagination’. Therefore, those concepts need to be explained and their link with Public Administration and this thesis topic clarified. These concepts are also used as potential causes for the current state of democratic institutions within Afghanistan and form the focus of this thesis. Mirror imaging can be defined as an analysis conducted through the filter of the analyst, which is based on his own personal experience, cultural background and biases.<sup>5</sup> As a consequence, the framework created is adequate only within the constraints of that filter. The resulting data and analysis are then made to fit the existing framework, often with considerable distortions, oversights or poor planning.<sup>6</sup> In 1968, during the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the CIA believed that the USSR would make the same rational choice as they would by not risking European relations to crush a reform movement.<sup>7</sup> However, the reasoning of the USSR was significantly different and rooted in a different cultural experience and reading of the situation in Warsaw Pact countries, catching the CIA unprepared, chiefly due to mirror imaging.<sup>8</sup> Whilst the initial scope of the concept is limited to a single analyst in the intelligence field, its effect can also be broadened to an institution or policymaking organ that aims to implement a measure or policy to a culturally different population group. This concept can be operationalized by assessing the planning or policy of one party and another one, subsequently comparing the different lenses through which the environment and action is interpreted. Mirror-imaging manifests itself when the difference between both, especially regarding cultural experience, is significant. Such an occurrence of mirror imaging can happen in Public Administration presented as functional fixation, where a decision-maker in the public sector fills in lapses of information with his/her own experience.<sup>9</sup>

A failure of imagination is a slightly different yet similar concept to mirror imaging. However, it has other implications and potential consequences. Within Plato’s Republic, the “Imprisonment in the cave” is an adequate analogy. The individuals within this cave have never seen anything other than shadows, and thus know nothing else, not realizing that the shadows are representations of what lies outside.<sup>10</sup> A failure of imagination can thus be described as a

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<sup>5</sup> Lauren Witlin, "Of Note: Mirror-imaging and its Dangers," *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 28, no. 1 (2008): 89-90.

<sup>6</sup> Witlin, "Of Note."

<sup>7</sup> Christina Shelton, "The Roots of Analytic Failures in the US Intelligence Community," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 24, no. 4 (2011): 644-48.

<sup>8</sup> Shelton, "Roots," 644-48.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Barnes and John Webb, "Management Information Changes and Functional Fixation: Some Experimental Evidence From the Public Sector." *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 11, no. 1 (1986): 11-18.

<sup>10</sup> Plato, *The Republic: Book VII* (Charlotte Hall: Recorded Books, 1988).

lack of consideration for options that seem outlandish within the paradigm of the analyst or the decision-maker.<sup>11</sup> It can also be interpreted as norms and values that block the repealing of previously accepted and functional solutions despite the fact that they do not fit within the local current reality.<sup>12</sup> This means that the policymaker fails to imagine that an enacted policy might not be welcomed by a subject population group as its benefits are obvious to them. It differs from mirror-imaging in that the first is the imposition of an image on another whilst the latter is the failure to recognize the possibility of a divergent one. The concept was used to describe a World Bank policy on development agriculture, which was argued to incorrectly grasp why and how rural poverty occurred, resulting in flawed recommendations that did not respond well to the local state of affairs.<sup>13</sup> It can also be compared to an over-reliance on the known-known and known-unknown categories within the Rumsfeld Matrix.<sup>14</sup> It can be operationalized through the assessment of enacted policies and their wording. Indeed, if these show that values are taken as a fact, such as the will to move toward US defined democracy or capitalism, despite their still liminal position within the subject country, then there is a failure of imagination.

Both of these concepts are fundamentally related to ‘bounded rationality’ which is used to describe rational choice that is limited by the cognitive framework of the policy- or decision-maker.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, both the failure of imagination and mirror imaging denote a limitation on the part of the person in charge or providing the analysis in the field of intelligence studies and security. It is not limited to individuals however, as organisations can also be guilty of committing these cognitive biases to the detriment of the policy to be achieved.<sup>16</sup> Bounded rationality is indeed well suited as a linkage between these intelligence-related topics and Public Administration. As Jones explained, bounded rationality discusses the fact that despite the goal-oriented mentality of people, in this case democracy in Afghanistan, they can fail to reach that goal due to the underestimation of complexities of the environments they face.<sup>17</sup> This is a different take on the idea of a failure of imagination though, with other criteria and a different focus on the understanding of the policymaker himself. Indeed, one difference is the ‘active’

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<sup>11</sup> Martin E. Dempsey, "A Campaign of Learning: Avoiding the Failure of Imagination," *The RUSI Journal* 155, no. 3 (2010): 1-9.

<sup>12</sup> John B. Richardson, *Real Leadership and the US Army: Overcoming a Failure of Imagination to Conduct Adaptive Work* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Veltmeyer, "The World Bank on 'Agriculture for Development': A Failure of Imagination or the Power of Ideology?" *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36, no. 2 (2009): 393-410.

<sup>14</sup> James A. Hampton, Bayo Aina, J. Mathias Andersson, Humaira Z. Mirza, and Sejal Parmar, "The Rumsfeld Effect: The Unknown Unknown," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 38, no. 2 (2012): 340.

<sup>15</sup> H. A. Simon, *Models of Bounded Rationality: Empirically Grounded Economic Reason* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997).

<sup>16</sup> Simon, *Models*, 162.

<sup>17</sup> Bryan D. Jones, "Bounded Rationality and Political Science: Lessons from Public Administration and Public Policy," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 13, no. 4 (2003): 395-412.

nature of the object in a failure of imagination (culture, sentiment...) whilst bounded rationality assumed a level of passivity. This thesis thus also serves as an example of the active nature of the subject that needs to be understood to enrich the literature on bounded rationality.

Othering is a more specific concept that describes the exclusion of another individual or population group from the group that the self is seen as part of.<sup>18</sup> Its opposite is cognitive empathy or perspective taking, where an individual attempts to understand emotional states or decisions from the perspective of the 'other'.<sup>19</sup> This idea behind this concept is derived from post-colonial theory and studies, as it was alluded to by Edward Said in his writings about *Orientalism* or the practice of stereotyping and simplifying complex cultural populations.<sup>20</sup> This practice identified an in-group (the 'Self' or 'us') and an out-group (the 'other' or 'them') where the traits of the former are simplified, mystified or generalized instead of being valued as equal. It can be defined as the practice of exclusion, simplification and marginalization of a non-hegemonic group, by a hegemonic group, based on differences in geography, culture or even race.<sup>21</sup> This phenomenon was also noted in Public Administration in the promotion of health campaigns, where already healthy respondents would 'other' less healthy ones and describe them negatively as problematic citizens rather than as individuals such as themselves.<sup>22</sup> This phenomenon can be noticed by a tendency to homogenize a population group ('the Afghans', 'the Sunni's',...) in policy papers, thus denying them their culture and heterogeneity. Furthermore, traits of a population group that are cultural and the result of historical processes are also mystified or denied instead of considered as aspects to be taken into account in policy analysis.

### Review of state-related concepts and state-building

The efforts of the US in Afghanistan to build democratic states, possible with the influence of the two aforementioned concepts, is considered as state-building. However, this concept is demarcated differently depending on the operational context and the situation at hand, hence the need for its definition. Within this thesis, the state is defined in Weberian terms, meaning that its legitimacy depends on the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force.<sup>23</sup> State-

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<sup>18</sup> Mary K. Canales, "Othering: Toward an Understanding of Difference," *Advances in Nursing Science* 22, no. 4 (2000): 16-31.

<sup>19</sup> Adam Smith, "Cognitive Empathy and Emotional Empathy in Human Behavior and Evolution," *The Psychological Record* 56, no. 1 (2006): 3-5.

<sup>20</sup> Edward Said, "Introduction to Orientalism," in *Media Studies: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham, Caroline Bassett, Paul Marris (New York: NYU Press, 1978), 111-15.

<sup>21</sup> Michal Krumer-Nevo and Mirit Sidi. "Writing Against Othering," *Qualitative Inquiry* 18, no. 4 (2012): 299-309.

<sup>22</sup> Lee Thompson and Anjeela Kumar, "Responses to Health Promotion Campaigns: Resistance, Denial and Othering," *Critical Public Health* 21, no. 1 (2011): 112-17.

<sup>23</sup> Max Weber, H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Lexington: Ulan Press, 1946), 1-5..



building is therefore inherently linked to the capacity to provide security and stability within a given territory. Indeed, this legitimises the existence of this built state (according to the literature), the linking between state-building and security is also called peace-building in post-conflict environments. However, in post-invasion Afghanistan (and much of the prior period), the capacity for violence was never entirely controlled by the state, with warlords and remnants of the Taliban still operating with varying intensity throughout the years. Indeed, seven years after the initial invasion violence was still common, as shown by a 64 per cent increase in insurgent attacks and mounting casualties for both Afghan and international parties.<sup>24</sup> This lack of adequate human security, according to peace-building literature, needs to be present for post-conflict peace-building and state-building to take place.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the security that the Government of Afghanistan did manage to offer was often dependent on militia commanders or warlords, which made security provision indirect and less controllable, compounding existing issues and difficulties. This fact also demonstrated the difference between the drafted constitution and the limits imposed by operational realities.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, aid which was seen to be marred with corruption was delivered by external parties rather than the local government, further decreasing its legitimacy and hampering state-building efforts.<sup>27</sup> These are some of the other potential factors that can thwart effective state-building that will also be investigated within this thesis.

State-building as a concept includes the creation of a functioning economy and political system in order to achieve a state of peace and prevent violence, as a more inclusive definition of state-building.<sup>28</sup> Regarding Afghanistan, this included efforts to build a representative democratic system within the country. This means building participatory democratic processes that empower Afghan citizens, are transparent and accountable to civilians whilst also serving their needs, according to USAID.<sup>29</sup> Democracy can also be defined as the correspondence between the people who are affected by acts of governance and those who commit them.<sup>30</sup> This aforementioned definition includes a level of communication and respect between the affected

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<sup>24</sup> Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, "'Unity of Effort': The Missing Link in the Afghan Counter-insurgency Campaign," *Strategic Analysis* 32, no. 5 (2008): 855-78.

<sup>25</sup> Keith Krause and Oliver Jütersonke, "Peace, Security and Development in Post-conflict Environments," *Security Dialogue* 36, no. 4 (2005): 447-62.

<sup>26</sup> Roger Mac Ginty, "Warlords and the Liberal Peace: State-building in Afghanistan." *Conflict, Security & Development* 10, no. 4 (2010): 577-98.

<sup>27</sup> D'Souza, "Unity of Effort."

<sup>28</sup> Anders Persson, "Enabling Occupation or Building a State? The EU's Support for Palestinian Institution-Building and a Future State," paper presented at *The 6th ECPR General Conference, University of Iceland, Reykjavík, August 25-27, 2011*, 1-2.

<sup>29</sup> "Democracy and Governance," USAID, September 16, 2019, <https://www.usaid.gov/afghanistan/democracy-governance>.

<sup>30</sup> John D. May, "Defining Democracy: A Bid for Coherence and Consensus," *Political Studies* 26, no. 1 (1978): 1-14.

population and decision-makers, which is not included in the USAID description of democracy. Another way of looking at the concept of democracy is through a set of principles, such as popular control and political equality according to Beetham or popular sovereignty according to Holden.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, the difference between the practical application of democracy (-promotion) and the theoretical ideals of democracy are also key within this thesis, as their 'image' is constructed by both the US and the subject country and could be different for each party.

State-building is linked to other dimensions that relate to its efficiency and implementation. Whilst the central part of this research mostly focuses on the building of democratic institutions per the aforementioned definitions, this is also part of the more general state-building process. The importance of state-building as a concern for the international community was highlighted by Fukuyama in 2004, in which he discussed the potential risks coming from weak states and the dire need to establish qualified institutions in the developing world. To reinforce and stabilise the state, these risks include the proliferation of drugs within the failed state, which was the case for Afghanistan.<sup>32</sup> These state-building efforts can be gauged through assessment of mechanisms such as the creation of new institutions, the capacity of the previous ones and a democratic political system.<sup>33</sup> However, these efforts are dependent on the existing state capacity, as a democratic and representative state cannot easily emerge from a complete vacuum, which was the case in Afghanistan post-Soviet and post-Taliban.<sup>34</sup> It is important to note here that a democratic and representative system does not simply signify the holding of elections, but rather the creation of organisations that enable representation and are not merely tools for the continued existence of the existing authority-in-place.<sup>35</sup> However, these theories, conceptualizations and ideals of democracy, state-building and state capacity are Western concepts, which also means that they can be subject to the same pitfalls mentioned previously. Therefore, the application of these ideals on a global scale also has to be assessed as potential results of cognitive biases that were highlighted before, thus creating unrealistic expectations and 'imagery' of subject countries such as Afghanistan. Indeed, whilst these ideals are espoused by international actors and the United State alike as underpinnings of their mission in

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<sup>31</sup> David Beetham, ed., *Defining and Measuring Democracy* (New York: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1994), 6-10.

<sup>32</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "The Imperative of State-building," *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 2 (2004): 17-31.

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Monten, "Intervention and State-building: Comparative Lessons from Japan, Iraq, and Afghanistan," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 656, no. 1 (2014): 176.

<sup>34</sup> Monten, "Intervention," 177.

<sup>35</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 7-9.

Afghanistan, the general environment of the country was not necessarily conducive to them, as the thesis will show.

### Review of the state of Afghanistan pre-invasion and reasons for invasion

The reasons for invasion need to be reviewed as this initial step is the starting phase of the state-building effort. Thus, its framing in the beginning is important to understand the intent of the US in its initial entry within Afghanistan and its positioning toward the effort. The conflict in Afghanistan went through several stages from the start of the US' invasion to the current stage. Whilst it initially started as a counter-terrorism operation aimed at dislodging Al Qaeda and the Taliban who sheltered them, it evolved to become an effort in nation-building and reconstruction. In 2001, the invasion was legitimized under the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) against Al-Qaeda and related to non-state targets that had a part in 9/11. This invasion was explained as an act of self-defence to preclude any further attacks on US personnel abroad and within the country.<sup>36</sup> At the time of the invasion, the country was controlled by the unrecognized Taliban government, which ostensibly did not have a direct role in the attack on the US. The Taliban government was consequently judged unable to stop attacks by Bin Laden or his affiliates and accused of harbouring them. As a consequence, it allowed the US and the coalition to directly engage them as well.<sup>37</sup> To justify this argument, George Bush classified the relationship between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda as a principal-agent relationship, which further justified an armed response to the attack of the latter. Furthermore, the non-cooperation of the Taliban fulfilled the requirement of a request for redress, which was thus unfulfilled and laid the legal grounds for an invasion.<sup>38</sup> This argument was also supported by the United Nations Security Council, which voted in favour of seeing this as a threat to international peace.<sup>39</sup> The invasion was thus a defensive act framed in counter-terrorism terms to prevent further attacks by Al-Qaeda, under the leadership of Osama Bin-Laden, which were harboured and supported by the Taliban in a principal-agent relationship, with the support of the United Nations Security Council and NATO.

Before the invasion, Afghanistan was consistently referred to as a failed state. Some of the reasons were its lack of infrastructure, reconstruction and inflation during the reign of the

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<sup>36</sup> Jordan J. Paust, "Use of Armed Force Against Terrorists in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond," *Cornell International Law Journal* 35, no. 3 (2001): 538.

<sup>37</sup> Paust, "Armed Force," 539-41.

<sup>38</sup> Michael J. Kelly, "Understanding September 11<sup>th</sup>: An International Legal Perspective on the War in Afghanistan," *Creighton Law Review* 35 (2001): 284-86.

<sup>39</sup> SC Res 1373, UNSCOR, 56<sup>th</sup> Year, UN Doc S/RES/1373 (28 September 2001).

Taliban and the years before their ascent to power.<sup>40</sup> For others, and as argued by Fukuyama, the importance of the production of poppy to be used as a drug precursor was another reason to see it as a failed state, despite attempts by the Taliban to forbid the cultivation of the crop.<sup>41</sup> This was due to multiple factors, one of them being the abandonment of the country after the expulsion of the Soviet army and the government it supported, effectively leaving the country rudderless and in the midst of civil war, with several factions and warlords vying for power.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, post-Najibullah Afghanistan left foreign-supported Afghan Arabs, local warlords and other groups without a common enemy, setting the stage for a continuation of the civil war.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, the government model of the Taliban, based on ancient Islamic law and a modicum of nationalism with regional representation, was not conducive to stability within the country.<sup>44</sup>

In the midst of these post-Soviet years, the US applied increasingly harsh sanctions on the country due to the links between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, aggravating the situation within the country.<sup>45</sup> Its nature as a failed state with a government led by a group that did not have control over the entirety of the country nor international recognition further supported the case of the US in invading the country post-9/11. However, it is important to note here that the initial goals of the invasion were not directly linked with state-building but were instead focused on the removal of the Taliban and its Al-Qaeda allies. This is a different starting position than the one that was initially envisioned and can have an effect on policymaking by increasing uncertainty.

### Brief overview of characteristics of Afghanistan

To acquaint the reader with the complexity of the studied country, it is important to define its characteristics before describing its history. Furthermore, the aforementioned concepts are heavily linked to culture, which is a by-product of certain characteristics and situation of a country. Afghanistan is a heavily rural country, with less than 25% of the population actually living in urban centres.<sup>46</sup> Partially as a consequence of this, data availability within the country

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<sup>40</sup> Hafeez Malik, "Taliban's Rule and National Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Pakistan's Options," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 24, no. 1 (2000): 75.

<sup>41</sup> David Mansfield, "Alternative Development in Afghanistan: The Failure of Quid Pro Quo," paper presented at the *International Conference on Alternative Development in Drug Control and Cooperation, Feldafing, September 17-22, 2001*.

<sup>42</sup> Milton Bearden, "Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires," *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 6 (2001): 17-30.

<sup>43</sup> Bearden, "Afghanistan," 17-30.

<sup>44</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, "Afghanistan Under the Taliban," *Current History-New York Then Philadelphia* 98, (1999): 79-91.

<sup>45</sup> "Sanctions Against Al Qaeda and the Taliban," Global Policy Forum, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.globalpolicy.org/global-taxes/41753-sanctions-against-al-qaeda-and-the-taliban.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Macrotrends. 'Afghanistan Urban Population 1960-2020'. Accessed 16 April 2020. <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/AFG/afghanistan/urban-population>.

is extremely low, the last census was carried out in 1979 and was never finished.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, there is an extremely low internet penetration within the country, with only a tenth of the population connected, making online data collection impossible.<sup>48</sup> The two official languages are Dari and Pashto, a multitude of other languages with complex histories are spoken across the country.<sup>49</sup> Another layer of complexity is added by the presence of a plurality of ethnic groups which are spread across the country, including Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazara and others.<sup>50</sup> There is also a degree of religious diversity, the Hazara and some Tajik subgroups for example are a Shi'a minority group within Afghanistan that were previously repressed by the Taliban government, the majority of the Afghan population is Sunni. The lack of stability also didn't provide the right condition for a high-impact nationwide literacy program. This left Afghanistan with a very low literacy rate and limiting the capacity of the government to inform the population at large.<sup>51</sup> These characteristics of Afghanistan complicated the provision of a government-controlled educational curriculum, as regional native languages, cultural sensitivities and ethnicity needed to be considered. Additionally, the remoteness of some areas within the countryside further compounded the issue in light of an uncertain security situation, though there was some success in this regard around 2008.<sup>52</sup> These characteristics of Afghanistan define the country as a complex environment where culture, language and religion are not singular but rather form the mosaic that is Afghanistan. With a large rural-urban divide and a lack of literacy for the population, countries aiming to engage in a state-building effort should ideally keep all these characteristics in mind to be successful and build a representative government where there was none before.

## Hypotheses

As mentioned earlier, the research question is the following: "What is the effect of US institution-building on Afghanistan?". There are four hypotheses for this question. The null hypothesis is that US institution building had no effect on Afghanistan and the current situation developed independent of it. The first and second hypothesis are that the US had either a

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<sup>47</sup> "Afghanistan Urban Population: 1960-2020," Macrotrends, accessed April 16, 2020  
<https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/AFG/afghanistan/urban-population>.

<sup>48</sup> Eileen Guo, "Afghanistan's Real Internet Lives on Its Streets," *New York Magazine*, October 31, 2018,  
<https://nymag.com/developing/2018/10/afghanistan-sneakernet-internet-physical-file-sharing.html>.

<sup>49</sup> George Morgenstierne, "The Languages of Afghanistan," *Area Studies* (1967).

<sup>50</sup> "Afghan Ethnic Groups: A Brief Investigation – Afghanistan," ReliefWeb, accessed April 16, 2020,  
<https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghan-ethnic-groups-brief-investigation>.

<sup>51</sup> Susan M. Andersen and Christina S. Kooij, "Adult Literacy Education and Human Rights: A View from Afghanistan," *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 5, no. 3 (2007): 315-20.

<sup>52</sup> Hanif Yazdi, "Education and Literacy in Afghanistan: Lessons of History and Prospects for Change," *Monitor J. Inter. Stud* 14 (2008): 30-50.

negative or positive impact on institution-building in Afghanistan. Negative being characterised by making the situation worse or being responsible for its current state if found to be negative. Positive being that institution-building had a positive effect and was able to create fair and democratic institutions. The final hypothesis is that the effect of US institution building was more liminal, in that whilst it did have positive effects, it also had negative ones.

Three sub-questions follow this main research question. First, “What is the current state of democratic institutions within Afghanistan? How effective and representative are they since the invasion of 2001?” This sub-question serves as a baseline for the further analysis and is aimed at establishing what the result, as of 2020, is of extensive US involvement in institution-building in Afghanistan. Second: “Was there a failure of imagination in the institution building effort and policymaking?” Through process-tracing it can be discerned whether or not the US committed a failure of imagination through its policymaking in Afghanistan, the null hypothesis is that it didn’t whilst the alternative one is that it did. The final sub-question is aimed at finding other factors that contributed to the current state of democratic institutions in Afghanistan. This is in order not to solely focus on failures of imagination but instead provide a more general conceptualization of the effect of US policy. The null hypothesis for this sub-question is that there are no other factors that explain the state of democratic institutions in Afghanistan whilst the alternative hypothesis is that they did.

The first question aims to measure what the effect of the US was on institution- and state-building in Afghanistan, specifically in terms of democratic institutions. The first sub-question examines what the current state of these institutions is and how representative they are, specifically for civil society. The second sub-question is an investigation of whether or not the US did commit a failure of imagination when building these institutions in Afghanistan. The third sub-question assesses alternative explanations or factors that could explain the state of democratic institutions in Afghanistan.

## Methodology

The methodology for this thesis is a within-case analysis with process-tracing, aimed at investigating causal processes.<sup>53</sup> This is a within-case analysis as the case of Afghanistan is explored in-depth as a ‘standalone’ entity rather than an element of a collection of entities.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 4 (2011): 824.

<sup>54</sup> Lioness Ayres, Karen Kavanaugh, and Kathleen A. Knafl. "Within-case and Across-case Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis," *Qualitative Health Research* 13, no. 6 (2003): 871-83.

All data used is qualitative, both for the description of the case and for the interviews, as these are not easily quantifiable due to the nature of the research which includes cultural and personal experiences. The pieces of evidence are historical events that stem from the long history of foreign interference within the history of Afghanistan and US institution building within it. They are all temporal in that the sequence of events is chronological, with one leading to the next.<sup>55</sup> The evidence that falls outside of the time frame of analysis (those before the US' invasion of Afghanistan) is present as support for further arguments made and crucial to understand the complexity of the current situation. Therefore, the history of Afghanistan is also thoroughly investigated to provide additional descriptive context within which the current situation also needs to be interpreted.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, seeing the events that are within the time-frame in isolation of the historical context would be detrimental to the analysis due to the topic.<sup>57</sup> The aim is to have causal inferences drawn from the sequence of pieces of evidence, with special attention given to the aforementioned concepts without losing sight of other factors that could impact these causal processes.<sup>58</sup> Due to the presence of these other factors and the complex environment that is Afghanistan and the geopolitical realities surrounding it, there is no expectation that direct causal inference can be determined without reasonable doubt. Meaning that neither a failure of imagination, extensive mirror-imaging or othering are expected to be able to provide a full explanation for the current state of democratic institutions in Afghanistan. Instead, a multiplicity of factors compounded by the aforementioned concepts are expected to be a better explanation for this current state.

Three concepts need to be operationalized and applied to the empirical sequential evidence in order to find whether or not they are part of the causal mechanisms. In order to establish this, they need to be recurring empirical regularities that can be established beyond reasonable doubt.<sup>59</sup> This would confirm a regular pattern of behaviour that the concepts characterize and would thus partially explain the state of current institutions in Afghanistan through investigation of the consequences. It is important to note here that all three concepts are related to pre-event thinking and assessment and effective are cognitive or institutionalized processes. Mirror imaging, failing to imagine and 'othering' happen before the event occurs and in the resulting policymaking processes. Therefore, they can only be established in a reverse causality, meaning

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<sup>55</sup> Ayres et al. "Within-case," 871-83.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 823-830.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 823.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 824.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

that the effect (or in this case the result, i.e. the policy paper) explains the thinking processes behind it and the possible application of the concepts.<sup>60</sup>

All three concepts will thus be operationalized by assessing the policy papers, application and general actions on the ground (including political speeches and statements) by the US in face of the culture, religion and history of Afghanistan, to be seen from the local perspective rather than an orientalist one. Interview questions are also used and collected that contain questions pertaining to the perception of the actions of the US and are open ended. These serve an illustrative purpose and are asked to local individuals whose identity is protected due to the current situation in Afghanistan. To be sure, they are not used as a main ‘pillar’ of this thesis but rather to involve a ‘subject’ of the actions that are the topic here. The justification for their addition is that a paper assessing cultural experience of the local population of Afghanistan simply needs representation from the local population, else it being a continuation of ‘othering’, mirror imaging or orientalism. The questions are all asked in languages native to Afghanistan to speakers who are native to the country as well. They are translated and will be present within the annexes, both in the original language and in English (provided this is possible). The individuals themselves are also briefly described in vague terms to avoid any identification possibility.

## Historical overview

For the aforementioned reasons, it is important to define the historical context of Afghanistan before carrying out a detailed analysis. This historical context is divided into four time periods, the first being from 1953 to 1979, the second from 1979 to 1989, the third from 1989 to 2001 and the fourth from 2001 to 2020. The first period begins at the placement of Daoud Khan as prime minister of Afghanistan, who had a considerable influence on the development of democracy in Afghanistan and ultimately overthrew the monarchy in 1973.<sup>61</sup> The second period is marked by the beginning and ending of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which ended in the withdrawal of the Soviet troops and started a civil war within the country. The third period was one of instability for the country, with no clear leader emerging until the Taliban increasingly captured territory and held the capital, after which they effectively held the country. The fourth period begins at the end of this Taliban governance project, when they were removed by the US following 9/11, this period also does not have an ‘ending’, as the US is still

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 825.

<sup>61</sup> “Afghan King Overthrown; A Republic Is Proclaimed,” *The New York Times*, July 18, 1973, <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/07/18/archives/afghan-king-overthrown-a-republic-is-proclaimed-afghanistan-king-is.html>.



involved within Afghanistan and ‘at war’ in the country despite recent efforts to make a peace treaty.<sup>62</sup>

It is important to note that during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Afghanistan was a much-coveted region for both the British and Russian empires. For the British, Afghanistan was the gate to the Indian subcontinent and its major colonies there, whilst for the Russians it was an extension of its regional sphere of influence.<sup>63</sup> As a consequence, the country functioned as a buffer state between the influence sphere of both, with Persia at the time also vying for territory and besieging Herat.<sup>64</sup> During the subsequent period, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ‘country’ engaged in several conflicts with the British, disputing the claims over its territory and toiling with Russian influence. As opposed to some of the other colonies of the British Empire, Afghanistan was allowed to remain relatively independent regarding domestic affairs, which allowed for a consolidation of the state from 1880 onwards. Only in 1907 did it become entirely independent regarding domestic affairs with the signing of the St. Petersburg convention between Russia and the British, with no Afghan input.<sup>65</sup> With the end of the first World War, in 1919, Afghanistan gained its independence and was allowed to determine its foreign and domestic policy entirely independently, though it also had to accept the still-controversial Durand line establishing its Eastern borders.<sup>66</sup> As this short summary illustrates, Afghanistan was seen by colonial powers as a ‘gate’ or sphere of influence rather than a territory to be directly controlled that needed domestic colonial institutions. However, its history post 19<sup>th</sup>-century history contained several attempts at creating a democracy within the country, either by the King or by other political bodies.<sup>67</sup>

### First period: 1954-1979

In 1973, the previous king of Afghanistan Mohammad Zahir Shah was removed from power in a relatively bloodless coup whilst he was away undergoing surgery and replaced by Sardar Daoud Khan, his cousin. During the 1950’s, Daoud was responsible for the ministry of war and balanced the country between the US and the Soviet Union, with the latter ultimately gaining primacy due to non-cooperation by the US in arms deals. The Soviets also provided loans for infrastructure and other economic projects, increasing the popularity of the measures Daoud

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<sup>62</sup> Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Julian E. Barnes, “To Save Afghan Peace Deal, U.S. May Scale Back C.I.A. Presence,” *The New York Times*, April 17, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/17/world/asia/afghanistan-cia-peace-treaty.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History of its People and Politics* (New York: Perennial, 2002), 85.

<sup>64</sup> John Carl Nelson, “The Siege of Herat: 1837-1838,” (MA diss., St. Cloud State University, 1976).

<sup>65</sup> Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 83.

<sup>66</sup> “Durand Line Will Never Be Accepted as Formal Border: Karzai,” *The Express Tribune*, October 13, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1530071/durand-line-will-never-accepted-formal-border-karzai/>.

<sup>67</sup> Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 101-13.

took. He was ultimately relieved from his duties in 1963 following a conflict with the royal family. Daoud had proposed a constitutional monarchy with a single ruling party that he controlled, which the King refused due to fears this would move the country more towards autocracy rather than democracy. He was replaced by Dr Mohammad Yousuf who advocated for a democratisation of the country and introduced measures to that effect. This took the form of a seven-man constitutional committee that drafted a constitution that was approved by the *Loya Jirga* and limited the powers and positions available to the royal family. Furthermore, it also created the base for a bicameral parliament with a lower and upper house and shaped the legal system as a hybrid secular-religious system.

In the early 1970's, cleavages in Afghan society became increasingly visible, with the religious class protesting against increasing sacrilegious behaviour, culminating in acid attacks on women wearing Western clothing.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the economic situation deteriorated due to a lack of know-how to maintain Soviet-built infrastructure and a corrupt and ineffective government, resulting in famines in 1971 following a bad harvest.<sup>69</sup> Thus, in 1973 Daoud returned to public life and took over power in Kabul in a bloodless military coup. He replaced the constitution and members of the *Loya Jirga*, consolidating his power within the country in an authoritarian manner, disrupting the previous democratic evolution. Islamist religious groups were later also suppressed and their leaders jailed, with some important future figures such as Hekmatyar, Massoud and Rabbani fleeing to Pakistan.<sup>70</sup> However, he was unable to solve the economic woes of the country and increasingly moved away from the Soviet Union. He was consequently deposed in 1978 whilst he was in the midst of an anti-communist campaign, his regime replaced with a military one with a left-wing slant.<sup>71</sup> After a period of instability the Khalq regime under Amin Hafizullah took control and applied secularist communism in the country, to the dismay of the religious classes. Furthermore, the Pashtun makeup of the government was problematic for other ethnicities in the North, a sign of other problems to come<sup>72</sup>. Following this reign of terror and the murder of the American ambassador in 1979, the Khalq regime was increasingly unpopular and an uprising started in Herat. With the unrelenting chief of the Khalq regime, Hafizullah Amin, refusing to listen to calls for moderation from the Soviet Union, organizing the assassination of the Soviet-friendly president Tariki, and

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 131-132.

<sup>71</sup> "1978: Afghan Coup Rebels Claim Victory," *BBC News*, April 29, 1978, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/april/29/newsid\\_2970000/2970317.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/april/29/newsid_2970000/2970317.stm).

<sup>72</sup> Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: Harper, 2009), 23-25.

increasing public and military discontent toward the regime the Soviet Politburo decided to invade the country in December 1979.<sup>73</sup>

### Second period: 1979-1989

On December 27, the Soviet Union activated its forces that had slowly been supplemented with reinforcements since the situation in Afghanistan was deteriorating. They invaded the country from the North in order to stabilise and protect the government, though also assassinating Hafizullah Amin first in an assault on his palace and replacing him with Babrak Kamal.<sup>74</sup> He was also part of the PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) like Amin, though of the Parcham faction and supported gradual rather than sudden socialization of the country.<sup>75</sup> The first phase of the Soviet Invasion involved fighting the opposition groups that could threaten the stability of the country and challenge the government.<sup>76</sup> Whilst the Soviets were militarily successful in quelling the opposition, at least openly, their presence within Afghanistan was seen as an act of aggression by the local population, which galvanized nationalistic sentiment. As a consequence, the Soviet forces failed to fully stabilise the country and had to fight mutinying Afghan Army units and urban uprisings around the country.<sup>77</sup> Though the Soviets were able to defeat these elements of the rebellion, they were not able to stop the growing unrest in the country. As was the case for the British in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century when they also tried to consolidate their hegemony over the resistant country and population.<sup>78</sup>

A direct consequence of this growing unrest was that the Soviets were incapable of controlling the entire country and were confined to the most strategic areas. Whilst there was no single 'group' that was fighting against the Soviets in Afghanistan, they were collectively referred to as the Mujahideen. These were supported by Pakistan, Iran and later by the US. The former two countries motivated and trained the Mujahideen to conduct cross-border raids and harass the Soviets in guerrilla-style attacks. This created a Vietnam-like scenario for the Soviets who were unable to hold any non-strategic and easily defensible territory due to attrition and long supply lines. As Jimmy Carter himself said: "We will make sure that Afghanistan will be their Vietnam".<sup>79</sup> As a consequence, the Soviet Union applied an indiscriminate brute force approach

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<sup>73</sup> Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 142-46.

<sup>74</sup> Feifer, *Great Gamble*, 65-75.

<sup>75</sup> Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two-party Communism: Parcham and Khalq* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983).

<sup>76</sup> Arnold, *Two-party Communism*, 85-90.

<sup>77</sup> Lester W. Grau, "The Soviet-Afghan War: A Superpower Mired in the Mountains," in *Conflict and Insurgency in the Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Barry Rubin (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 199-220.

<sup>78</sup> David Loyn, *In Afghanistan: Two Hundred Years of British, Russian and American Occupation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009), 12-30.

<sup>79</sup> Julian Zelizer, *Governing America: The Revival of Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 335.

that made use of the local intelligence agency and often involved torture and extrajudicial killings, also further galvanizing support for the Mujahideen.<sup>80</sup> During this period, there was no real government or democracy put in place but for a client-government of the Soviet Union, effectively stopping any development in this respect for the country. It is also during this period that several commanders or warlords, who were often involved in infighting due to political or religious differences, raised to prominence and solidified their role within the rebelling factions. However, the religious nature of the war as a duty of Jihad galvanized the religious opposition and caused other Muslim nations to support some rebellious groups. Some also sending volunteers for the Jihad, who would become the Afghan-Arabs that only moderately supported the fighting but ended up forming the core of Al-Qaeda.<sup>81</sup> In 1987, president Karmal was replaced by Najibullah Ahmadzai who attempted to mend the ties between different population groups through National Reconciliations and taking measures to move towards democracy. However, these changes were not as effective as they could have been due to the association of the president with the activities of the Afghan secret police. This effectively undermined his authority and legitimacy. Following setbacks, mass casualties, and a change of policy by the Soviet Union, they decided in 1987 to withdraw and leave the responsibility of fighting to the local Afghan forces, whilst still militarily and financially supporting them.<sup>82</sup>

### Third period: 1989-2001

Despite the withdrawal of the Soviet military forces, the Najibullah government managed to stay in power for several years, though it was consistently under siege by the Mujahideen and incapable of recovering lost territory. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, military and financial support was withdrawn and the position of Najibullah was increasingly precarious.<sup>83</sup> In 1992, the Mujahideen took over Kabul and signed the Peshawar Accord, thus creating the Islamic State of Afghanistan, Najibullah sought to become an exile in India but was refused and spent his years in the UN headquarters until 1996 when he was executed by the Taliban.<sup>84</sup> The Islamic State of Afghanistan was effectively governed by the leaders of the major anti-government parties in a power-sharing agreement. Though these warlords such as Rabbani, Hekmatyar, Dostum and Massoud, who held the means of violence over specific territory constantly clashed with one another, destabilising the country and leaving it splintered.

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<sup>80</sup> Claude Malhuret, 'Report from Afghanistan', *Foreign Affairs* 62, no. 2 (1984 1983): 426–35.

<sup>81</sup> Mohammed M. Hafez, 'Jihad after Iraq: Lessons from the Arab Afghans', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 2 (26 January 2009): 73–94, doi:[10.1080/10576100802639600](https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802639600).

<sup>82</sup> Feifer, *Great Gamble*, 214-225.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 255-258.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 261-268.

Furthermore, the factions controlling the country de jure were not Pashtun, which alienated a part of the population.<sup>85</sup> It is within this context that the Taliban rose to prominence with support from part of the Pashtun population, arguably the US, Pakistan and the rural population.<sup>86</sup> The Taliban were a Sunni religious faction led by Mullah Mohammed Omar that advocated a strict version of Sharia. They exploited the differences and cleavages between different warlords and in the span of two years controlled the majority of the country, killing religious minorities and heavily curtailing women's rights in newly conquered territory.<sup>87</sup>

Following the conquest of the majority of the country by the Taliban, the country descended further into civil war, with warlords fighting against the Taliban under the banner of the Northern Alliance from 1996 until 2001. However, the territory they controlled was mostly in the north-east of the country, and with the capital steadily under control of the Taliban they were the de facto rulers.<sup>88</sup> This rule came under the form of totalitarian Islamic governance led by Mullah Muhammed Omar who was advised by a Pashtun Tribal council or Jirga. Funding for mosques and Madrasas, in which a significant part of the Taliban was also educated in Pakistan and Afghanistan, increased and became a precondition for involvement in the government. Furthermore, the other ethnicities present in Afghanistan were also suppressed by the majority Pashtun Taliban movement, increasing discontent in certain areas.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, part of the aforementioned Arab Afghans who formed the precursor of Al-Qaeda and were sheltered by the Taliban from 1996 onwards garnered international attention through terrorist attacks.<sup>90</sup> This culminated in the attack on 9/11 and provoked the invasion of Afghanistan by the US in 2001, after repeated request to Mullah Omar to hand over Bin Laden. During this period, there was no real democracy within Afghanistan, with the Islamic State of Afghanistan effectively being a power-sharing agreement and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan being a totalitarian state.

#### Fourth period: 2001-2020

The US followed a dual approach in its invasion of Afghanistan. First, it supported the Northern Alliance, which was led by warlords, as local partners for an initial assault on the Taliban government done through the embedding of special operations forces. The US and its partners

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 272-275.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> 'Hazaras', *Minority Rights Group*, accessed 4 June 2020, <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/hazaras/>.

<sup>90</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006), <http://archive.org/details/loomingtoweralqa00wrig>.

were quickly successful in their effort to oust the Taliban from power and recaptured the majority of the country.<sup>91</sup> However, Taliban and Al-Qaeda members also withdrew into rural territories where state presence was hard to establish and neighbouring Pakistan, from which they carried out cross-border attacks on the US occupation forces. Hamid Karzai was chosen during this period to head the Afghan interim administration and the loya jirga was reinstated, he was subsequently elected in the 2004 elections. Already by 2003 however, the Taliban resurged and carried out guerrilla-type attacks on US and Afghan Forces, destabilising the country once again.<sup>92</sup> The subsequent years were marked by a slow but steady increase of Taliban activity across the country in the form of terror attacks against the civilian population and increasing casualties for the US-trained Afghan forces. This situation was compounded by the lack of cooperation from Pakistan, which continued to support the Taliban even though they were fighting against the US.<sup>93</sup> As a consequence, the US and their allies were unable to create a safe environment for the Afghani population. At the same time, the economic situation of Afghanistan was also deteriorating, as infrastructure was not maintained, leaving the population with little prospects both in terms of stability and economic welfare.

Despite the efforts of the US and its allies to train the local Afghan forces and suppress the Taliban, they were able to maintain a steady pace of attacks on an increasingly large scale. By 2011, NATO countries decided to decrease their commitments to Afghanistan and gradually withdrew their troops, leaving the Afghan forces to fight the Taliban, in an agreement with the administration of Karzai.<sup>94</sup> At the same time, they re-instated the Northern Alliance and some of its warlords to bolster opposition against the Taliban. As a result, Taliban attacks increased due to both the withdrawal and combat operations in Pakistan's Tribal regions, which bolstered the Taliban's ranks. In 2014, Ashraf Ghani took over from Karzai after the 2014 elections as president of Afghanistan after a disputed election that required the intervention of the US.<sup>95</sup> However, the country has steadily been wrested from control of the government and its allies by the Taliban, who by 2019 controlled the majority of the country, though mostly in rural

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<sup>91</sup> James Dobbins, 'Our Man in Kabul', 15 February 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2009-11-04/our-man-kabul>.

<sup>92</sup> Eric Schmitt and David Rohde, 'THE REACH OF WAR: AFGHANISTAN; Taliban Fighters Increase Attacks, With Troubling Toll Among G.I.'s and Afghans', *The New York Times*, 1 August 2004, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/01/world/reach-war-afghanistan-taliban-fighters-increase-attacks-with-troubling-toll.html>.

<sup>93</sup> Vanda Felbab-Brown, 'Why Pakistan Supports Terrorist Groups, and Why the US Finds It so Hard to Induce Change', *Brookings*, 5 January 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/01/05/why-pakistan-supports-terrorist-groups-and-why-the-us-finds-it-so-hard-to-induce-change/>.

<sup>94</sup> Andrea Carati, 'No Easy Way Out: Origins of NATO's Difficulties in Afghanistan', *Contemporary Security Policy* 36, no. 2 (4 May 2015): 200–218.

<sup>95</sup> Shereena Qazi, "Will the Ghani-Abdullah Rivalry Undermine Afghan Peace Process?" *Al Jazeera*, March 9, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/02/ghani-abdullah-rivalry-undermine-afghan-peace-process-200221052054522.html>.

areas. This was paired with an ever-increasing pace of attacks against Afghan forces and coalition personnel, which continuously destabilised the country and prevented normal functioning.

### Remarks on historical overview

This historical overview is aimed at showing the complicated modern history of Afghanistan without which the current situation of Afghanistan cannot be understood. It is important to note that this is by no means an exhaustive summary of the history of Afghanistan but rather a summation of marking events that had an impact on the development of the country, with a link to the aforementioned concepts. As the historical overview illustrates, the history of Afghanistan was marked by conflicts, be them violent or not, between ideological, ethnic, religious and political factions that consistently destabilised the country. Additionally, it is a country that has often been the object of foreign attention through military means. Although nor the British, Soviets or Americans and their allies were able to effectively hold the country and stabilise it as a puppet or client state. Indeed, in each of the foreign military incursions local groups rose up to fight them.

The historical overview also shows that violence is one of the primary tools for the deployment of power within Afghanistan. Amin Hafizullah violently suppressed the country and had to consistently fight against opposition as a result, leading to the Soviet invasion. These, in turn, had to support the new government through violent means and were forced to withdraw. Later, the Northern alliance under the leadership of several warlords were vying for more power between each other, deploying their militias to control territory. As a result of this instability, the Taliban violently asserted its power and took control of the majority of Afghanistan, installing a totalitarian Islamic State. Due to spoiler actors known as Al-Qaeda, this was disrupted by the US and its allies who violently invaded the country and deposed the Taliban, wrestling with them for control over territory for the past 19 years. The subsequent analysis needs to be placed within this historical context and tumultuous history of Afghanistan.

### Analysis

Within this analysis section, the efforts at building democratic institutions within Afghanistan are evaluated and tested against the previously outlined concepts. First, there is an additional section in which the current state of democratic institutions in Afghanistan is evaluated in order to establish the result of the US-led democratisation process.

Three different policy arenas can be distinguished in this project for the future of Afghanistan. The first is the United Nations framework, in which several nations came together to discuss the future of Afghanistan and what the aims should be of the international partners. The result was a series of UN-backed agreements in which guidelines for political and military traditions are outlined. The second are the policies created by the US in their more individual effort to shape institutions within Afghanistan. These are less coherent and harder to find as they are the result of a combination of US agencies involved in the country. In between these two parts, there is a short section on the role of warlords in spoiling policymaking. This section describes what their influence was on the implementation of international efforts and United States policy in general. Finally, the third are local policies, which are created within the country by the local leadership or governor under guidance of the US. Indeed, the Embassy in Washington and the policymakers in Afghanistan have their own influence on the country and its institutions. These are described in the same order in the analysis section.

### Democratic Institutions in Afghanistan now

This section of the analysis is an assessment of the current state of democratic institutions in Afghanistan. It is present to answer the first sub-question, namely “What is the current state of democratic institutions in Afghanistan?” and establish an end-state to which policymaking since the invasion contributed. This is done through a superficial assessment of the current democratic process in Afghanistan and the state of its institutions. Thus, this section is the final result of the policymaking of the US and its allies regarding democratisation in Afghanistan for the past 19 years. Subsequent sections of the analysis are aimed at establishing through process tracing how this end-state was established and what the failures were through the democratisation process.

At the time of writing the last election in Afghanistan were held in September 2019. Voter turnout for these elections was two million out of close to ten million registered voters or some 20% of the population actually voting.<sup>96</sup> The voting centres and population was also under threat of the Taliban if they voted, as attacks on these facilities is more common despite ongoing peace talks.<sup>97</sup> Despite this low turnout, the elections were nonetheless considered legitimate and resulted in the election of Ashraf Ghani as president of the country with 50.64%, and the runner-

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<sup>96</sup> Michael Safi, “Afghanistan Election: Turnout May Have Been as Low as 20% Amid Taliban Threats,” *The Guardian*, September 29, 2019, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/29/afghanistan-election-turnout-as-low-as-20-per-cent-taliban-threats>.

<sup>97</sup> Mujib Mashal, Fahim Abed, and Fatima Faizi, “Afghanistan Election Draws Low Turnout Amid Taliban Threats,” *The New York Times*, September 28, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/28/world/asia/afghanistan-president-election-taliban.html>.



up with 39.52%.<sup>98</sup> However, the runner-up, Abdullah Abdullah, who was also a warlord during the Soviet invasion and part of the Northern Alliance, disputed the elections and set-up a parallel government, eroding trust in the existing institutions.<sup>99</sup> Their feud continued afterwards with each party using democratic institutions to increase their legitimacy, with Ghani removing the office of the Chief Executive which was held by Abdullah and the latter refusing to recognize Ghani as president. As a consequence, the US further cut aid to the Afghan government and continued to negotiate a peace agreement with the Taliban that should lead to a full withdrawal from the country by the US.<sup>100</sup>

This continued deadlock in the democratic system of Afghanistan has further highlighted the lack of power that the governmental institutions have. The Afghanistan Supreme Court has stayed remarkably silent on the issue and the president legitimated by the elections is also unable to solve the crisis. Furthermore, the independence of this state organ has been increasingly questioned due to accusations of favouritism toward Ghani.<sup>101</sup> Pressure by the US has also proven ineffective in resolving the issue. The status of Abdullah Abdullah as a warlord with ties to several militia leaders also prevents forceful intervention by any branch of the government or Ghani himself, as it would threaten the stability of the country. The ability of Abdullah Abdullah to rally these leaders with capacity for violence outside of state jurisdiction effectively undermines the authority of the government and allows for protracted and fragile deadlocks despite popular opinion and election results.<sup>102</sup> Given the history of Afghanistan, in which civil wars burst with different militia leaders controlling small fiefdoms, and can quickly spin out of control, this prospect is very real. Furthermore, the lack of territory directly controlled by the government of Afghanistan also raises questions about its legitimacy and ability to safeguard the population of the country amid a Taliban resurgence.<sup>103</sup> Thus, not only are democratic institutions in Afghanistan unstable and prone to be destabilised due to interference by warlords, they are also unable to assert sovereignty over a significant part of the country. Consequently, the current state of democratic institutions in Afghanistan and their

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<sup>98</sup> Pamela Constable, "Afghanistan's Ghani Wins Slim Majority in Presidential Vote, Preliminary Results Show," *The Washington Post*, December 22, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/afghanistans-ghani-wins-slim-majority-in-presidential-vote/2019/12/22/73355178-2441-11ea-b034-de7dc2b5199b\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/afghanistans-ghani-wins-slim-majority-in-presidential-vote/2019/12/22/73355178-2441-11ea-b034-de7dc2b5199b_story.html).

<sup>99</sup> Qazi, "Will."

<sup>100</sup> Matthew Lee, "US Slashes Aid to Afghanistan after Pompeo Visit to Kabul," *AP NEWS*, March 23, 2020, <https://apnews.com/649879924a532522e51291955170c034>.

<sup>101</sup> Sayed Ziafatullah Saeedi, "How Afghanistan's Judiciary Lost Its Independence," June 5, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/how-afghanistans-judiciary-lost-its-independence/>.

<sup>102</sup> Pamela Constable and Susannah George, "Afghan Election Challenger Warns of Dire Consequences If Polls Marred by Fraud," *The Washington Post*, September 26, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/afghan-election-challenger-warns-of-dire-consequences-if-polls-marred-by-fraud/2019/09/26/f6f69606-e045-11e9-8dc8-498eabc129a0\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/afghan-election-challenger-warns-of-dire-consequences-if-polls-marred-by-fraud/2019/09/26/f6f69606-e045-11e9-8dc8-498eabc129a0_story.html).

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Clayton, *Afghanistan: Background and US Policy in Brief* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2020), 10.

legitimacy can be considered poor. The factors that could have contributed to this state of being are investigated in the following sections.

### International Conferences on Afghanistan

The following section is aimed at evaluating the texts and promises that resulted from international conferences on Afghanistan following the invasion of the country. Its aim is to show the intentions of the US and its allies on a grand strategic level. The resulting texts of these international conferences represent the larger framework through which the future of Afghanistan was established. Thus, it represents a common denominator for the policymaking process in Afghanistan by the US and its allies, meaning what they all agree on. To add value for the thesis, several final statements or arrangements resulting from these international conferences are analysed and studied with regard to Afghan society and its culture writ large. Consequently, it can be established whether or not there has been a first failure of imagination during this first and foundational step of the democratisation process. A summary of the evidence linked with the arguments in this thesis is provided at the end of this chapter to clarify the need for this section.

One of the first initiatives to rebuild institutions in Afghanistan was started right after the ousting of the Taliban and was in the form of international conferences on Afghanistan. These were backed by the United Nations and formed a starting framework for the democratisation of institutions in Afghanistan and a new governmental system.<sup>104</sup> The first of such conferences, organized in Bonn by the international community, yielded an “Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan pending the re-establishment of permanent government institutions” and was conducted in 2001, right after the ousting of the Taliban from power in Afghanistan.<sup>105</sup> This agreement was effectively the starting point of policymaking regarding the state-building efforts within Afghanistan and contained several provisions that framed its future. First, the agreement stipulates that whilst the “people of Afghanistan” can freely determine their own future, it has to be in accordance to Islam, democracy, pluralism and social justice.

“[...] Secondly, the democracy that Westerners have brought to Afghanistan is something that has been imposed on the Afghan people. [...]” (See annex 1)

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<sup>104</sup> “Conferences on Afghanistan – The Office of the Deputy Minister for Policy,” Office of the Deputy Minister for Policy, accessed May 14, 2020, <http://policymof.gov.af/home/category/conferences/>.

<sup>105</sup> *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions (“Bonn Agreement”), S/2001/1154* (5 December 2001).

Additionally, it extensively compliments the Afghan Mujahideen who ousted the Taliban and mentions their “role in the struggle against [...] oppression”.<sup>106</sup> Going as far as to name Burhanuddin Rabbani as the one holding interim power and responsible for its transfer, despite his long-standing role as a warlord or militia member since the 70’s.<sup>107</sup> These interim arrangements should also be aimed at establishing a gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government. The point of gender is also further stressed through the selection of the interim administration and Loya Jirga, as is the point of multi-ethnic and religious representation.<sup>108</sup> Finally, the agreement also states that all Mujahideen and armed groups would come under command of the new government and be reorganized. Their conduct would also be with respect for international law and neighbouring countries.<sup>109</sup>

This base framework is problematic in some respects. Whilst it does acknowledge the right of the Afghan population to determine their own future it also forces democracy as the system to be adopted, without prior consultation. This is problematic given the difficult combination that Islam and democracy constitute.<sup>110</sup> As voiced by one of the interview respondents:

“[...] Issues such as freedom of expression, and other individual freedoms are at odds with traditional and Islamic values. In this sense, Western imported democracy has developed social and religious sensitivities. [...]” (See annex 1)

Though this is still a subject of contention, it might point to an instance of mirror-imaging.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, the praise given to the Mujahideen, their associated warlords and other armed groups can be a source of dispute given their previous abuses and role in destabilising Afghanistan before the Taliban. Indeed, warlords such as Rabbani and Dostum had a significant part in the civil war in Afghanistan and their groups were accused of rape, extortion and other abuses against civilians.<sup>112</sup> By absolving them of their crimes and absorbing them within the Afghan Armed forces they are left unpunished despite their negative role, chiefly due to their cooperation with the invading force in 2001. Additionally, there is no assurance of the loyalties of their members nor leaders. Similarly, the role of women within politics, the Loya Jirga or as

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>107</sup> Norah Niland, "Impunity and Insurgency: A Deadly Combination in Afghanistan," *International Review of the Red Cross* 92, no. 880 (2010): 931-50.

<sup>108</sup> Niland, "Impunity," 4.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>110</sup> Ghassan Salame, ed. *Democracy Without Democrats: The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), 15.

<sup>111</sup> Mark Tessler, "Islam and Democracy in the Middle East: The Impact of Religious Orientations on Attitudes Toward Democracy in Four Arab Countries," *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 3 (2002): 337-54.

<sup>112</sup> Frud Bezhan, "Return of Militias to Afghan Front Lines Sparks Allegations Of Abuses," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, September 5, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-militias-return-sparks-old-fears-abuse-ethnic-strife/27228482.html>.

decision-makers is still not as culturally accepted as it is in the West, being another potential source of conflict.<sup>113</sup> This also remains true within Afghani society, as 62% of men and 26.1% of women wish to be represented by a male, with only 4.2% of men and 30.7% of women wishing to be represented by a female. Additionally, only 59% support completely independent voting for women, without consultation with men.<sup>114</sup> Thus, there are considerable differences between the reality of the local population of Afghanistan and what is described or wished for within this first treaty.

Three years later, the 2004 Berlin Conference Declaration outlined other steps to be taken for the building of good governance and Public Administration and stressed the need for elections.<sup>115</sup> The issues of corruption and the impartiality of civil institutions are stressed extensively in the declaration. Despite the intentions in the declaration however, the perception of corruption as a problem in daily life has been increasing since then, with 91% perceiving it as such in 2019.<sup>116</sup> A report by the US Embassy in Afghanistan identified that corruption was problematic in the justice sector, election process and general government. Indeed, the report outlines that the anti-corruption laws were not effectively implemented and that corruption remained rife within society and government alike.<sup>117</sup> Thus, despite the defined steps for effective Public Administration outlined in the 2004 declaration, their implementation was not successful. Similarly, the steps described in the declaration regarding the provision of security during elections were difficult to guarantee given the activity of the Taliban and corruption within the system. This issue became increasingly problematic through the years since the invasion, with 41% having fear whilst voting in 2006 and 63% in 2019, showing the direct impact of Taliban resurgence on the election process.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, as identified in state-building literature, peace-building and the general provision of security is key in guaranteeing effective governance.

Another conference was held in 2006 and described the new priorities for the country and its international partners. The issue of security remained relevant in this declaration, with the

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<sup>113</sup> Fatima Faizi and David Zucchini, “‘You Should Be in the Kitchen’: At Afghan Assembly, Women Are Told They Don’t Belong,” *The New York Times*, May 3, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/03/world/asia/afghanistan-women-assembly-loya-jirga.html>.

<sup>114</sup> Tabasum Akseer et al., *A Survey of the Afghan People: Afghanistan in 2019* (San Francisco: The Asia Foundation, 2019), 165-75.

<sup>115</sup> Government of Germany, “Afghanistan: 2004 Berlin Conference Declaration,” *ReliefWeb*, April 1, 2004, <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-2004-berlin-conference-declaration>.

<sup>116</sup> Tabasum et al., *Survey*, 144.

<sup>117</sup> US Department of State, *Afghanistan 2018 Human Rights Report* (United States Department of State: Washington, D.C., 2018).

<sup>118</sup> Tabasum et al., *Survey*, 157.

disarmament of illegal armed groups and the strengthening of existing institutions being particularly important.<sup>119</sup> However, the disarmament of illegal armed groups is difficult given the interconnections between the civil leadership, which is partially populated by warlords, and these same armed groups. A consequence of this is that these groups and their leaders are often able to escape justice altogether due to the threat of increased violence. Thus, their abuses toward the population remain unpunished.<sup>120</sup> One new point in the declaration was the importance of respect for Afghan sovereignty by its neighbours, coming at a time when Pakistan was playing a negative role within the country.<sup>121</sup> A recurring issue within these declarations is also the recruitment of credible and competent bureaucrats to manage the public institutions, which is difficult considering the history of Afghanistan in which a strong bureaucratic culture is simply not present. As a consequence, despite the wishes outlined in the declaration the construction of effective civil administration and legal frameworks is more difficult due to the lack of existing competent personnel. This remained a problem in 2018 despite the expressed interest in training such a bureaucratic force, as identified by the State Department in 2018.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, economic measures related to public investments were, whilst well-intentioned, plagued with embezzlement and favouritism by public officials and construction businesses as of 2018.<sup>123</sup>

A commonality between the 2004 and 2006 declaration is their harsh language in regards to drug trafficking in Afghanistan. Both declaring state recognition and urgency in curbing poppy cultivation and general drug trafficking within the country. They also stress the need to provide alternative livelihoods for people who were previously active in the drug trade and had their product or business interdicted. This duty was to be carried out by both the Afghan government and the international community involved in the state-building process.<sup>124</sup> The counter-narcotics effort is characterized within the declarations as being necessary to ensure national, regional and international security. Furthermore, its curbing would, according to the 2006 declaration, remove a threat that hampered the development and governance of the country.<sup>125</sup> However, whilst this goal is commendable on an international level, it is more disruptive on a local one as both warlords and the population of Afghanistan reaped benefits from poppy

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<sup>119</sup> International Conference on Afghanistan, London (2006)

<sup>120</sup> US Department of State, *Afghanistan*.

<sup>121</sup> Declan Walsh, "Pakistan Sheltering Taliban, Says British Officer," *The Guardian*, May 19, 2006, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/may/19/pakistan.alqaida>.

<sup>122</sup> US Department of State, *Afghanistan*, 11.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>124</sup> Reliefweb, 2020.

<sup>125</sup> International Conference on Afghanistan, London (2006)

farming.<sup>126</sup> Indeed, the Opium trade is profitable and high in demand internationally, making it an understandable choice for farmers within Afghanistan. This was compounded by the years of conflict preceding the American invasion, during which the poppy cultivation boomed. Due to this, it remained a locally interesting option due to the lack of prosecution of drug trafficking groups and general insecurity, which prevents other economic activities from arising.<sup>127</sup>

It is important to note however that there have also been some successes in state-building efforts following these conferences. The adoption of a progressive constitution that provided respect for human rights, religious and gender differences was a major milestone in the building of a democratic state. Similarly, the ability to hold elections in a previously undemocratic country with 70% turnout was also a major achievement. Additionally, the ability to demobilize some militias and the formation of independent human rights commissions can also be lauded as concrete steps that improve the democratic status of Afghanistan.<sup>128</sup> On the flipside, the administration remained ineffective and thoroughly corrupt, the security situation was getting increasingly worse and the economy was consistently manipulated by drug traffickers. However, the narcotics problem can also not be solved short-term due to the absence of alternatives for the local population. Similarly, the legitimacy of the democratic system was being increasingly questioned by clergy that feels marginalized, having previously enjoyed more power. To add, Afghanistan became increasingly dependent on aid for the payment of salaries of its security-providing personnel and failed to construct alternative income models, creating a precarious future situation.<sup>129</sup> This aid however was not used to strengthen Afghan institutions or sovereignty, instead being used for singular projects managed by different international partners in a variety of regions.<sup>130</sup>

Subsequent post-conference declarations stressed the need for continuation of the policies within the aforementioned declarations, with an increased emphasis on the security of Afghanistan as the Taliban resurged. Corruption remained an oft-mentioned problem within these declarations, as the policies were unable to curb it.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, concrete goals were made to increase the number of forces in the Afghan army and Police force to improve the

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<sup>126</sup> Jeffrey Miron and Erin Partin, "Another Failure of the War on Drugs," *Cato Institute*, December 9, 2019, <https://www.cato.org/blog/another-failure-war-drugs>.

<sup>127</sup> Christopher M. Blanchard, *Afghanistan: Narcotics and US Policy* (Collingdale: DIANE Publishing, 2009), 1-8.

<sup>128</sup> B. Rubin and H. Hamidzada, "From Bonn to London: Governance Challenges and the Future of Statebuilding in Afghanistan," *International Peacekeeping: Afghanistan in Transition: Security, Governance and Statebuilding* 14, no. 1 (2007): 8-25.

<sup>129</sup> Rubin and Hamidzada, "Governance Challenges," 8

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

<sup>131</sup> Rens Steenhard, "International Conference on Afghanistan," *Peace Palace Library*, March 26, 2009, <http://www.peacepalacelibrary.nl/2009/03/international-conference-on-afghanistan-the-hague-31-march-2009/>.

provision of security, in accordance with state-building theory. In 2010, a new provision was added to the measures to be taken, namely the reconciliation and reintegration of Taliban senior members to curb the insurgency.<sup>132</sup> However, despite the continued promises of Hamid Karzai and subsequent administration to restrain corruption and increase opportunities for graduates and the civilian population, they were unable to do so. Additionally, the role of neighbouring countries such as Pakistan was a major spoiler as they fuelled the Taliban insurgency, allowing it to increasingly jeopardize Afghan security and preventing state-building progress. Indeed, in 2010 the United Nations noted a continued deterioration in the security situation in Afghanistan, which prevented the government from delivering basic services and made international aid difficult to deliver. Ban-Ki Moon summarized in 2010 what weakened the electoral situation and hampered state-building when responding to allegations of fraud during the previous election:

“[...] Rather, it is the weaknesses in the state-building process so far, including the ongoing culture of impunity, the still inadequate security forces, corruption and the insufficient pace of institution-building that undermined the electoral process”<sup>133</sup>

Several factors can be discerned as contributing to this failure to build democratic institutions by international partners who expressed their commitment during these conferences. For one, the lack of understanding of regional implications allowed Taliban insurgents sheltered in Pakistan to re-enter the country and destabilise it without punishment. This is, to a certain extent, a failure of imagination. Indeed, Pakistan’s continued overt cooperation with the US prevented policymakers from adequately ‘imagining’ the covert role that Pakistan would play in destabilising Afghanistan despite warning and intelligence. Furthermore, a complex political relation between the international partners, the US and Afghanistan made it more complex of an issue to address. Similarly, the experience of the international forces with Afghan warlords as their allies created conditions for an instance of mirror imaging.

The main experience with these warlords that these international partners had prevented them from understanding their complex and often negative relation with subsets of the local population. This was compounded by their integration within the Afghan administration and the absolving of their crimes, tainting the future judicial process. This was also the case for the anti-drug policies, as it was seen as one of the main reasons for corruption in Afghanistan. To

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<sup>132</sup> “International Conference on Afghanistan, July 2010,” *UNODC*, July 20, 2010,

<https://www.unodc.org/afghanistan/en/Events/international-conference-afghanistan.html>.

<sup>133</sup> “World Must Act Now to Reverse Worsening Situation in Afghanistan,” *UN News*, January 4, 2010,

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2010/01/325772-world-must-act-now-reverse-worsening-situation-afghanistan-ban>.

illustrate; in one instance, the United Kingdom, who was leading the anti-drug policy, enacted a program in which they promised 700\$ per acre of poppy that was burnt by farmers. Instead of curbing poppy cultivation, it created a poppy growing frenzy as farmers rushed to grow and burn their fields to receive as much money as possible, though still selling part of their produce on the market.<sup>134</sup> This is an example of mirror imaging, as it was assumed that the poppy farmers would understand the need to stop poppy cultivation, whilst for them it was simply the most efficient means for survival. Additionally, the importance of Islam within society was greater than initially assumed by international partners, and its influence spread in gender and judicial issues as well, hampering the effectiveness of introduced policies.<sup>135</sup>

“Democracy in Afghanistan has come from the West, which is in conflict with our way of life. Democracy is made by human beings and is opposed to Islamic law.” (See annex 1)

### United States policy in Afghanistan

Whilst the previous section outlined planning efforts by international partners through conferences, this one discusses the policies of the US and, to a certain extent, its allies. First, the internal policy mechanisms of the US are assessed, these are responsible for what ultimately happens on the ground. The second part evaluates the implementation of the policies of the US related to governance model implementation. Finally, the structural problems with state-building in general are assessed, as state-building includes several conditions that are usually seen in these operations and complicate the policymaking process, especially on a cultural level. Analysis within this section rests partially on the release of the Afghanistan Papers by the Washington Post. These papers were a large collection of interviews with military and civilian leaders of the US and its allies, conducted by SIGAR throughout the war. This collection of documents served as an ‘insider’ look on US policy in the country and how it was interpreted by its implementers and thus forms a good basis for this section.<sup>136</sup>

### Internal Policy management & delivery problems

First, it is important to mention that the policy of the US toward Afghanistan was managed by several branches of the government. For some issues such as the Afghan drug strategy the State Department, DEA, US Military, NATO allies and Afghan government were all responsible for

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<sup>134</sup> Craig Whitlock. “In Confidential Documents, U.S. Officials Said Almost Everything They Did to End Opium Farming in Afghanistan Backfired,” *The Washington Post*, December 9, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/afghanistan-war-opium-poppy-production/>.

<sup>135</sup> US Department of State, *Afghanistan*.

<sup>136</sup> Whitlock, “Confidential Documents.”



its management, creating a confusing situation where agencies and allies enacted a range of different programs. Additionally, the dual civil and military approach to the conflict and state-building effort made adequate organisation and coordination more difficult.<sup>137</sup> This prevented institutional learning since it was divided amongst different organs of the US government, NGO's and the international community. As a consequence, each branch or organ learned internally, without transferring the knowledge to other parties who thus continued to repeat mistakes. However, in an inter-connected environment such as Afghanistan this was detrimental to the effort altogether.<sup>138</sup>

To illustrate: this was the case during the collapse of Kabul Bank, the first private bank in the country, the US Treasury Department suggested an investigation but it was side-lined by the ongoing war effort in the country.<sup>139</sup> As a consequence, a large number of funding for aid and police salaries was lost and smuggled out of the country by insiders and government officials in a classic case of principal-agency shirking, leaving massive corruption unpunished.<sup>140</sup> Thus, Agencies within the US each had their own goal in the recently-invaded country, often disregarding local culture and the fragile balance with neighbouring states. The Department of Defense was responsible for the stabilisation of the country and the ongoing conflict with Taliban insurgents. As previously mentioned, the DEA was responsible for the drug policy, which was also the domain of the State Department, despite this topic's heavy link with security, which was the responsibility of another agency.<sup>141</sup> The result was heavily fragmented policy management, the consequences of which were compounded by the complex local context and culture of Afghanistan. Therefore, the analysis within this section cannot be based on a singular 'policy approach' and instead is based on the same mosaics of policies (and methodologies) that US agencies enacted within the country from Washington DC.

This opaque policymaking was rendered more complicated by the high turnover of experts which resulted in a lack of institutional memory.<sup>142</sup> For one, the US military functions on the basis of combat tours in which units are rotated frequently. This was the case for USAID, the

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<sup>137</sup> Thomas Clayton, *The Washington Post's "Afghanistan Papers" and U.S. Policy: Main Points and Possible Questions for Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2020), 5.

<sup>138</sup> H. A. Simon, "Bounded Rationality and Organizational Learning," *Organization Science* 2, no. 1 (1991): 125-34.

<sup>139</sup> Matthew Rosenberg, "Audit Says Kabul Bank Began as 'Ponzi Scheme,'" *The New York Times*, November 26, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/27/world/asia/kabul-bank-audit-details-extent-of-fraud.html>.

<sup>140</sup> J.J. Sutherland, "Karzai Brother Being Investigated For Corruption," *NPR*, September 27, 2010, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2010/09/27/130152430/karzai-brother-being-investigated-for-corruption>.

<sup>141</sup> "Drug Prevention and Treatment," United States Department of State, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/drug-prevention-and-treatment/>; "U.S. Embassy Kabul and DEA Honor DEA-Trained Afghanistan Officers Killed in Terrorist Attacks," *U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan*, December 11, 2019, <https://af.usembassy.gov/u-s-embassy-kabul-and-dea-honor-dea-trained-afghanistan-officers-killed-in-terrorist-attacks/>.

<sup>142</sup> Clayton, 2020.

Department of State and the Department of Defense which functioned on a one-year rotation system. Whilst this might prevent corruption within these branches it also meant that all gained expertise and established relations would disappear as the unit or individual was rotated away.<sup>143</sup> This is compounded by the fact that the replacement is ‘fresh’ and thus inexperienced regarding cultural and societal sensitivities in Afghanistan. This replacement effectively causes a problem in the continuity of the practices and risks replacing the experts or experienced individuals for novices, as it is described in Change Management literature.<sup>144</sup> An indirect consequence of this system was also the migrating of experts to the private sector due to large salary differences, further weakening governmental policy as a result. Furthermore, this issue was inadvertently made more impactful by the lack of linguistic expertise and training by the US government, which challenged even communication between Afghan and American parties. In the words of Michael Flynn:

“...when we get to Afghanistan [in 2009], there is only one officer on the ISAF staff that could speak Dari [one of the official languages of Afghanistan] ...but he was only there briefly. The Air Force pulled him out in like July and sent him to Japan...we laughed about it because this is how insane this [system] is...Even today, we are still in Afghanistan and you go tell me how many actual U.S. members of the military or policy [community], or from State who speak Dari or Pashto. That is a shame and that is a policy decision.”<sup>145</sup>

#### Governance model policy implementation

Notwithstanding these internal problems, one of the initial misguided policy decisions was the one to create a strong central government within a country in which there is little history of one. As indicated in the historical overview, post-Soviet Afghanistan was plagued with factionalism, civil war and instability under the Taliban and previously, the warlords.<sup>146</sup> However, these existing power ‘structures’ did interact extensively with international interventions, with the Mujahideen warlords receiving help from the CIA and the United Front and the Taliban from

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<sup>143</sup> Klaus Abbink, “Staff Rotation: A Powerful Weapon Against Corruption?” *Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn*, October 1999, [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f0f5/f157bb0c02cf95ed44073bc0cb4e1d7a7086.pdf?\\_ga=2.41324705.2070569717.1591030522-1307776163.1590276927](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f0f5/f157bb0c02cf95ed44073bc0cb4e1d7a7086.pdf?_ga=2.41324705.2070569717.1591030522-1307776163.1590276927).

<sup>144</sup> Karl E. Weick and Robert E. Quinn, “Organizational Change and Development,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 50, no. 1 (1999): 364-65.

<sup>145</sup> Clayton, 2020, 6.

<sup>146</sup> Sarah Lister, “Understanding State-building and Local Government in Afghanistan,” Crisis States Working Papers Series No. 2, Crisis States Research Centre, May, 2007, 3, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/57452/wp14.2.pdf>.

the US, which increased their ability to project power.<sup>147</sup> As demonstrated in the previous section, the warlords were immediately legitimized by the international community from the first conference onwards. Due to this, not only did a central government have to be created from scratch, but it also had to compete with already existing power brokers who did have the means to destabilise the country.<sup>148</sup>

This allowed for the creation of de-facto sub-states within Afghanistan that are sustained through their military and financial strength, but also through their tribal and historical ties within a region, a cultural aspect that is severely lacking for the Pashtun-dominated central government. Furthermore, this curtailed the ability of the central government to show its power from the get-go, as it was locked down by legitimated warlords and mujahideen commanders who did have the cultural and physical legitimacy. Consequently, each warlord is able to create and implement policy for his own control region or governorate, regardless of the wishes of the central state and through whatever means deemed necessary.<sup>149</sup> Given the conditions in which Afghanistan was at the time of the invasion, and the existing power structures, a decentralised system could have been more effective. The governmental system was instead modelled to fit the one in the US, which has a significantly different cultural, religious and political history.

This governmental system is based on centuries of political development in Europe and the US and is considered the “culmination of all societies” rather than one of the possible governance models.<sup>150</sup> As a consequence, the possible governance models for Afghanistan were also interpreted through this narrow world view in which only this system works and alternatives don't. To elaborate, the conditions of Afghanistan at the time of the invasion by the US were shaped by decades of experience with different regimes and governments that each sought to influence the country. As explained in the historical overview, in the span of one hundred years Afghanistan went from colony to monarchy to dictatorship to communist regime to occupied client state to fragmented state to Islamic Totalitarian regime and finally to a semblance of a democracy. As a result of these continuous upheavals, often violent governments and foreign interferences, ethnic, linguistic and religious communities contracted and tended to their own

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<sup>147</sup> Joe Stephens and David B. Ottaway, “From U.S., The ABC’s of Jihad,” *The Washington Post*, March 23, 2002, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2002/03/23/from-us-the-abcs-of-jihad/d079075a-3ed3-4030-9a96-0d48f6355e54/>.

<sup>148</sup> Anne Evans et al. *A Guide to Government in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Publications, 2004), 11.

<sup>149</sup> Evans et al., *Guide*, 13-15.

<sup>150</sup> J. M. Guéhenno, *The End of the Nation-state* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 4.

affairs. This contraction was also a natural consequence of the lack of infrastructure, which prevented the state from adequately serving the population across the country.<sup>151</sup>

Additionally, the role of the central governments in suppressing specific minorities or population groups directly contributed to fragmentation into compact sub-communities. At the same time having created a culture of scepticism toward the central government and thus fostering a crisis of legitimacy, compounded by constant corruption and policy failures.<sup>152</sup> Tribal ties and communities are consequently the sources of legitimacy within certain areas of the country and have different norms and values than the capital, or the US and its allies. The ethnicities have another role beyond identification of in- and out-group, they are also a source of contention toward a leader.<sup>153</sup> During the initial phases of the invasion by the US for example, over-reliance on Tajik warlords such as Ahmad Shah Massoud and Kalakani de-legitimized the invasion in the eyes of Pashtun tribes, complicating future policymaking.<sup>154</sup> Tribal ties go further than ethnicity or religion, in that an ethnicity is not represented entirely by the elite of that group. Hamid Karzai is not the representative of the Pashtun community, though he was treated as if he had this role and was able to influence 'his' entire ethnicity.<sup>155</sup> This was an oversized role as Hamid Karzai was not able to mobilize this large ethnic community in Afghanistan like the Taliban did. One of the causes is the disregard that the central government and the US has for tribal ties. Instead, the Taliban capitalized on this facet of Afghan society by increasing their appeal to local leaders or their followers and by navigating the complex tribal tapestry of the Pashtuns to side-line opposition.<sup>156</sup> This functions of such a system and general situation is more difficult to imagine within a "Western" paradigm in which such a historical experience is rare to find.

As expressed by Kevin Clemens, an author of hybrid political orders, in 2014:

"Most customary sources of legitimacy are based on norms of trust and reciprocity. The core constitutive values that lie at the heart of traditional legitimacy enable families, kin groups, tribes and communities to exist, satisfy basic human needs and survive through time. These

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<sup>151</sup> Nazif M. Shahrani, "War, Factionalism, and the State in Afghanistan," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 715-22.

<sup>152</sup> Shahrani, "War," 719-22.

<sup>153</sup> A. Giustozzi, "Respectable Warlords? The Politics of State-building in Post-Taliban Afghanistan," Crisis States Research Centre Working Papers Series 1, Crisis States Research Centre, December 4, 2008, 13, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/13311/1/WP33.pdf>.

<sup>154</sup> R. D. Crews and A. Tarzi, eds., *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 60-85.

<sup>155</sup> Lucy Edwards, "State-building in Afghanistan: A Case Showing the Limits?" *International Review of the Red Cross* 92, no. 880 (2010): 967-91.

<sup>156</sup> Crews and Tarzi, *Taliban*, 60-63.

have in many instances been disrupted by rational-legal forms of governance and the contentious liberal peace assumption that modern state-building is peacebuilding.”<sup>157</sup>

The idea of a system based on kinship and patronage and not on the classic, capital-centred, Weberian rational legal system is difficult to interpret for non-informed policy and decision-makers.<sup>158</sup> As a consequence, the creation of a “state” was implemented by US policymakers not through the finding of a new form of governance that would fit the cultural-historical context of Afghanistan, but rather through a re-application of old ones, ergo an example of postcolonial thinking.<sup>159</sup> However, it is important to note that the current democratic situation of Afghanistan can’t solely be attributed to the simple, yet misinformed, decision to create a centralized state, as other factors also played an important role in its deterioration.

### Structural policy obstacles in state-building

Another layer of complexity is added by the means through which policymaking is carried out by the US and its allies in Afghanistan. Notwithstanding the aforementioned problematic relationship between the invading force and tribal communities, there is also an issue in terms of locale. Schlichte and Veit identify three different ‘arenas’ through which state-building normally occurs. In the case of Afghanistan, the first arena or metropolitan headquarters is inside of the US and other involved capitals.<sup>160</sup> This is also where a significant part of the policymaking happens (at least in the case of the US) as funding needs to be approved by Congress, intelligence analysed in agencies and military planning is carried out in the Washington-based State Department. However, this allows for a disparity between the ‘reality on the ground’ and the information received by the aforementioned parties, and it fosters failures of imagination and mirror imaging.<sup>161</sup> In an environment like Afghanistan where information is difficult to gather and areas are hard to reach, the disparity is larger and more delayed.

The second arena is the capital of the country where state-building happens. In this arena the Western policymakers and officials are the envoys that are supposed to connect the

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<sup>157</sup> K. P. Clements, “What is Legitimacy and Why Does it Matter for Peace,” *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives* 25 (2014): 13-17.

<sup>158</sup> Edwards, “State-building.”

<sup>159</sup> P. Chatterjee & P. Caṭṭopādhyāya, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 11.

<sup>160</sup> K. Schlichte and A. Veit, “Coupled Arenas: Why State-building is So Difficult,” Working Papers Micropolitics No. 3, Institute for Social Sciences, 2007,

[https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a68d/c11c7ba7d68c76814fac091bd2d820af9157.pdf?\\_ga=2.1552434.2070569717.1591030522-1307776163.1590276927](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a68d/c11c7ba7d68c76814fac091bd2d820af9157.pdf?_ga=2.1552434.2070569717.1591030522-1307776163.1590276927).

<sup>161</sup> Schlichte and Veit, “Coupled Arenas,” 10-12.

metropolitan policymaking to local reality. However, due to the nature of the capital, especially in the case of Kabul, there is also a discrepancy between that urban context and external local realities. Additionally, this communication functions through a representative of this exact same urban community that does not necessarily have the same cultural experience than those outside of said community.<sup>162</sup> Consequently, conditions are yet again created for failures of imagination and mirror imaging to occur both on the part of the envoy and the intermediary who has to indulge the envoy, else risking withdrawal or lessened effort.<sup>163</sup> These discrepancies come to head in the third and most local arena, namely the ‘bush office’ where projects or missions are carried out by locals and the invading or state-building force. It is in this arena that the differences become tangible and can have more dramatic effects. In the case of Afghanistan, it manifested itself in the lavish spending of funds on projects with little impact or on areas that simply do not have the capacity absorb that much cash.<sup>164</sup> To quote John Garofano, an adviser to the Marines in Helmand province in 2011, who was a member of such a ‘bush office’:

“There was not a willingness to answer questions such as, what is the meaning of this number of schools that you have built? How has that progressed you towards your goal? What is the meaning of the number of students who are in some way, shape or form taking an English language class? What is the meaning of laudable of the number of girls in schools? How do you show this as evidence of success and not just evidence of effort or evidence of just doing a good thing?”

To summarize, the policy of the US (and to a certain extent its allies) suffered from several problems from the get-go that prevented successful policy measures. First, the experience of the US and its allies with their own governance model and culture inhibited the evaluation of different models. The envisioned model for Afghanistan was consequently not adapted to the local context that was shaped through a significantly different history. This is an example of mirror imaging and at the same time is a failure of imagination, as the state-building nations could not imagine the local context whilst at the same time projecting their own on the situation. Second, the complex policy management structures, diverse agencies and different involved nations fostered an environment of competition where cooperation would have been ideal. The result was that agencies would enact different policies for the same issues, such as the anti-drug

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<sup>162</sup> J. P. O. de Sardan, *Anthropology and Development: Understanding Contemporary Social Change* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 165-85.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-21.

<sup>164</sup> Whitlock, 2019.

policy, or would be selectively side-lined by the military agencies who had precedence, making policymaking extremely opaque for the population and the policymaker. In a complex, multi-faceted environment such as Afghanistan, the consequences of this were amplified by spoiler actors and the corrupt local government. Finally, the three-tiered state-building process was not well suited for this multi-faceted environment, as it created conditions in which mirror imaging and failures of imagination were more likely to occur. However, the role of the local government and its local intermediaries were crucial in nurturing this type of behaviour and system for their own benefit. Thus, there was a clear failure of imagination and there were cases of mirror imaging in the way the US created policy for Afghanistan, from the choice of governance model to the practice of state-building.

### Role of warlords in spoiling policymaking

A recurring element within this thesis are the warlords in Afghanistan. These have been mentioned in the historical overview and often in the analysis section. The reason for this is that warlords play an oversized role in policymaking and the maintenance of security within Afghanistan. This was arguably the ‘first sin’ of the US and its allies, as it enabled a wider cycle of impunity and corruption to evolve beyond state capacity. Thus, this section summarizes what role the warlords have played in policymaking by the US in Afghanistan, specifically regarding the development of a democratic culture, as initially envisioned. It discusses several consequences that their inclusion has had, starting from their impact on the judicial system. This is followed by a discussion on their retention of means for violence and what it means for the people of Afghanistan in general. Finally, their impact on corruption and drug policy is further evaluated, with an elaboration on the effect this has on public opinion and legitimacy.

As was outlined, the warlords of Afghanistan who were responsible for the instability from 1979 until the rise of the Taliban were brought to the foreground of the state-building process due to their cooperation with the US and its allies in 2001.<sup>165</sup><sup>166</sup> To illustrate, Hamid Karzai, the then soon-to-be president of Afghanistan started as a Pashtun militia leader aided US special forces in retaking Kandahar.<sup>167</sup> He also had to rely on co-option of other warlords in order to stabilise the country and ensure his survival, further ingraining them into the institutions of

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<sup>165</sup> Joshua Partlow, “He Was America’s Man in Afghanistan. Then Things Went Sour. Now Abdurrashid Dostum May Be Back,” *The Washington Post*, April 23, 2014, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/dostum-a-former-warlord-who-was-once-americas-man-in-afghanistan-may-be-back/2014/04/23/9d1a7670-c63d-11e3-8b9a-8e0977a24aeb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/dostum-a-former-warlord-who-was-once-americas-man-in-afghanistan-may-be-back/2014/04/23/9d1a7670-c63d-11e3-8b9a-8e0977a24aeb_story.html).

<sup>166</sup> “Task Force Dagger - Special Forces – Afghanistan,” American Special Ops, accessed May 22, 2020, <https://www.americanspecialops.com/operations/sof-afghanistan/task-force-dagger.php>.

<sup>167</sup> Alex Spillius, “Rebellion Helps Bring the Fall of Kandahar,” *The Telegraph*, November 17, 2001, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/1362682/Rebellion-helps-bring-the-fall-of-Kandahar.html>.

Afghanistan by 2004. Similarly, Abdul Rashid Dostum was chosen by current president Ashraf Ghani in 2013 to be his running mate to secure the Uzbek vote, despite his abysmal human rights records and ongoing judicial procedures against him. However, it is unlikely that these judicial procedures have any result, as Dostum is still able to be a source of destabilisation in Afghanistan.<sup>168</sup> The following section is thus aimed at exploring the ‘warlord problem’ that Afghanistan suffers from since the invasion in 2001.

One of the tenets of a democratic institution or, more generally, a democracy, is a functioning and fair judicial sector. In the case of Afghanistan this justice sector is managed by the government and local actors under customary law or the more traditional and often local jirga. However, due to the presence of warlords in areas of Afghanistan, the ability of this local system to function is severely hampered. As these warlords are often the one also holding some means for violence such as men and weapons, they can coerce the local justice system to their benefit and consequently delegitimize it in the eyes of the population.<sup>169</sup> Following the Bonn conference in 2001, in which warlords played a role, they were complimented and de facto exonerated of their crimes. This delegitimized both the administration and any judicial system to come as it guaranteed that warlords had their crimes go unpunished.<sup>170</sup> This impunity is threatening as it jeopardized the chances for peace, since it would allow them to retain their weapons and retinues, a concern also voiced by Afghans.<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, the lack of independence of the judicial system since the Bonn agreement in 2001 also prevented human rights abuses from being prosecuted after the fact to improve accountability and justice. Indeed, during the administration of Hamid Karzai, these crimes and abuses were barely prosecuted despite the urging of human rights groups.<sup>172</sup>

The lack of consequences and acknowledgement from the international partners in Afghanistan created conditions in which these same warlords were able to retain the means for violence and thus jeopardize the idea of a liberal peace in Afghanistan. Through the retaining of their mini-fiefdoms and weapons the capacity for violent coercion of possible challenges remains

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<sup>168</sup> Rod Nordland, “Accused of Rape and Torture, Exiled Afghan Vice President Returns,” *The New York Times*, July 22, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/22/world/asia/afghanistan-general-abdul-rashid-dostum-rape.html>.

<sup>169</sup> A. Wardak, “Building a Post-war Justice System in Afghanistan,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 41, no. 4 (2004): 325-29.

<sup>170</sup> Niland, “Impunity,” 933-34.

<sup>171</sup> Dawn Stallard, *Speaking Out: Afghan Opinions on Rights and Responsibilities* (Kabul: Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium, 2003).

<sup>172</sup> “Afghanistan: Justice for War Criminals Essential to Peace,” *Human Rights Watch*, December 12, 2006, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2006/12/12/afghanistan-justice-war-criminals-essential-peace>.



unchecked.<sup>173</sup> This role was further cemented by the US in 2009 when it decided to re-arm and back these local warlords to expel the Taliban from the areas in which it was re-surg-ing.<sup>174</sup> Thus, whilst these warlords are seen by the population of Afghanistan and non-warlord political elites as problematic for the development of the country they are also aided and abetted by the US who uses them as ‘boots on the ground’.<sup>175</sup> Consequently, less effort is also spent on the reinforcing of the national army, which lacks the ability to project its power in remote areas of the country. Additionally, it leaves the government of Afghanistan in a perpetual yet vicious cycle. On the one hand the warlords are necessary to maintain security across the country whilst also having the ability to disrupt it and on the other these same warlords need to be absorbed or removed to build a state as envisioned in the Bonn agreements and by the US.<sup>176</sup>

These two facets of the warlords in Afghanistan have consequently allowed them to engage in corruption and drug trafficking with impunity, again further disillusioning the local population for equitable treatment. A report written in 2010 by Tierney investigating the dependency of the US on warlords demonstrated how these racketeering practices are enabled by the policy decision of the US (only the United States as it was not a multilateral decision). According to the report, the protection services that these warlords provide for US supply chains gives these private armies a “raison d’être” despite their survival being dependent on a weak Afghan government.<sup>177</sup> Additionally, the business practices of these warlords are often opaque, at times involving the funding of the Taliban to prevent attacks on the territory or roads they control and use for their protection racket. It is important to note that this also happens without anyone being held accountable and also impact the local population, who associate them with the US or the central government. Other widespread corruption was enabled by the sudden influx of money that came from the US following the invasion, for the sake of security no matter the cost. This was a result of the complex structure of inter-agency policymaking compounded the problem by allowing double-dipping into aid money and shirking by warlords to go unnoticed.<sup>178</sup> The aforementioned conditions also allowed the warlords to engage in drug-

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<sup>173</sup> C. Schetter and R. Glassner, “Local Configurations of Violence: Warlords, Tribal Leaders and Insurgents in Afghanistan,” *Security and Peace* 29, no. 4 (2011): 232-36.

<sup>174</sup> Mac Ginty, “Warlords,” 577-98.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 590-592.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 592-594.

<sup>177</sup> R. J. F. Tierney, *Warlord, Inc.: Extortion and Corruption Along the US Supply Chain in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: US House of Representatives, 2010).

<sup>178</sup> Craig Whitlock, “U.S. Officials Admit to Fueling Corruption in Afghanistan by Flooding the Country with Money — and Then Turned a Blind Eye,” *The Washington Post*, December 9, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/afghanistan-war-corruption-government/>.

trafficking and poppy cultivation without punishment, thus giving them another influx of money and jeopardizing the chance to achieve a stable and secure Afghanistan.<sup>179</sup>

Warlords thus played an important role in shaping public opinion on public and democratic institutions in a negative manner and contributed to the current state of democratic institutions in Afghanistan. Whilst a lot of the reasons why these warlords were able to retain their power and ability for coercion are due to post conflict situations where a weak state tries to re-assert its power, their survival was abetted by the US. The goal of the US to provide security above all else, but through the usage of warlords was essentially self-defeating and allowed them to thrive and gain a greater role, all the while weakening the new central government. This was made possible also through other international partners who, during the Bonn 2001 agreements, paved the way for impunity and participation for these warlords. The part that these warlords play in Afghanistan is certainly another factor that explains why the effort to build democratic institutions in Afghanistan has thus far failed, for the reasons mentioned above.

#### United States policy on the local level

With the sections on the international conferences and US describing the grand strategic, strategic and operational levels of policy, the local ‘theatre’ describes the tactical level. The local theatre was managed by field commanders, governors of separate regions and translated into region- and topic-specific policy. For example, the policy planning regarding the drug policy was thus far described only in terms of country-wide policy rather than local implementation. Some anecdotes such as the British anti-drug policy, that backfired dramatically, were already provided and also need to be put in this local context. This implementation is, for all intents and purposes, the result of the aforementioned levels of policy and is also where they are tested. Thus, this section is aimed at describing how the state-building process itself has manifested itself on the local level, with more attention given to the cultural-social context of Afghanistan.

On a local level, security was extremely important for Coalition Forces and was thus their main priority during the initial phases of the conflict. As mentioned before, security trumped most other policy deliberations and proposals. This was especially relevant in the province of Kandahar, where the Taliban initially grew to be a national power in the 1990’s. In this province, the Coalition had to ensure total security and control over the province, as it was seen

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<sup>179</sup> Samina Ahmed, “Warlords, Drugs, Democracy,” *Crisis Group*, May 1, 2004, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/warlords-drugs-democracy>.

as the most likely area where the Taliban would surge again. This was due to the ability of the Taliban to ensure security and, more importantly, accountability, which is appreciated by part of the Pashtun population.<sup>180</sup> As a consequence, these coalition forces conducted routine house searches to flush out potential Taliban supporters and weapons.<sup>181</sup> However, from a local perspective these house searches are serious violations of customs and is disrespectful especially toward women, as was described in the introductory anecdote.<sup>182</sup> Beyond that, the coalition forces were not informed enough and did not possess the language skills to engage the population, and also showed a level of disrespect toward them.<sup>183</sup> Whilst this was not a conscious policy decision, it is the direct result of the structural nature of state-building, as intermediaries gave the impression that linguistic skills were redundant. As a consequence, the coalition forces did not position themselves toward the local population as being respectful toward their customs and norms, on the contrary.

On the other hand, the US individually deployed several groups of special forces to remote villages in an effort to gain their trust and cooperation in the wake of the invasion in 2004. This was done through the funding of reconstruction projects to friendly villages and the denial of funding for those we did not give up weapons or helped the Taliban.<sup>184</sup> Security was maintained by securing the bases and through fire exercises to intimidate any potential attacker. Whilst this effort was initially successful, the inability to prevent attacks by insurgents and a too small troop number meant that it had to abandon some of these programs as other areas became unstable.<sup>185</sup> This is one of the weaknesses of such a program, as it is contingent on a large troop number to be successful and to maintain security through a longer time period. Consequently, the progress that was made and the cultivation of ties did not reach its full potential and was wiped out when security deteriorated again in those regions. Just as in Vietnam, once the US troops withdrew and left their local allies or other forces in charge, they were unable to defend the area and were overrun by the enemy.<sup>186</sup> In response to this, the US engaged in security sweeps instead of having a permanent presence, which had the aforementioned consequences,

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<sup>180</sup> C. Schetter, "Beyond Warlordism: The Local Security Architecture in Afghanistan," *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* 2, no. 2 (2007): 136-52.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>182</sup> C. Schetter and R. Glassner, "Neither Functioning, Nor Failing of the State! Seeing Violence in Afghanistan from Local Perspectives," in *From Fragile State to Functioning State: Pathways to Democratic Transformation in a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Sabine Collmer, (Munster: Lit Verlag, 2009), 141-160..

<sup>183</sup> R. McCutcheon and J. Derksen, "Canada's Role in Afghanistan: Submissions to the Manley Panel," *Peace Research*, 39, no. 1-2 (2007): 94-98.

<sup>184</sup> A. M. Lopez, "Engaging or Withdrawing, Winning or Losing? The Contradictions of Counterinsurgency Policy in Afghanistan and Iraq," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2007): 245-60.

<sup>185</sup> Lopez, "Engaging," 248-50.

<sup>186</sup> R. M. Cassidy, "Back to the Street Without Joy: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam and Other Small Wars," *Parameters: Journal of the US Army War College* 34, no. 12 (2004): 73-80.

and bombing campaigns. These, at times, caused civilian casualties which further antagonized the population and gave the Taliban grievances upon which it could feed.

Local policy regarding democratisation and elections was also flawed due to misunderstanding of the local context and the state in which it was after the invasion. The electoral system and parliamentary democracy were introduced with the idea that they could start *tabula rasa*. However, as explored previously there were already attempts at limited democracy, local decision-making processes and power relations.<sup>187</sup>

The village of Qara Bagh, situated north of Kabul and on a central axis toward the capital, was a microcosm of these wider issues with the democratisation policies. Before and, to a different extent, after the introduction of the democratic process there was already an existing system of deliberation and decision-making among the men of the village, who were able to decide on matters based on consensus in the context of a mosque.<sup>188</sup> These developed thanks to the evolution of the Afghan state that meant local communities had to contract and make community-based decision instead of relying on the state. These consensus building systems are led by local figures who can be removed if they are seen as not acting in the benefit of the community, through different means. To be sure, this is not an 'ideal' system or at least not one envisioned through Western standards, but it was functional and developed resilience in the face of austerity.

"To my understanding, democracy is meant to purely replace the Afghan culture with westernization" (See annex 1)

With the introduction of elections in 2005, during the first parliamentary elections, a local figure named Abdul Aziz was able to coerce voters and community representatives through feasts and speeches and subsequently won the election.<sup>189</sup> This despite his background as a warlord with a violent past for which there was, at the time, uncertainty regarding punishment. Thereafter, the village of Qara Bagh was able to grow and infrastructure was rebuilt through private relations between powerbrokers such as Abdul Aziz and the local police, as his connections to militia members were seen as useful. However, it also allowed individuals like Abdul Aziz to be in a good position to engage in illicit trade.

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<sup>187</sup> N. Coburn, "Elections and the Failure of Democratisation: How Voting Has Made Afghanistan Less Democratic From the Ground Up," *Conflict, Security & Development* 16, no. 6 (2016): 541-55.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 544.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 545.

However, following the troop surge by the Obama administration, a change of policy led to massive amounts of dollars to flood the country sent by NGO's, international partners and the US. A quote from a contractor working for the US that comes from the Afghanistan papers is useful here to illustrate the scale of the sudden influx of money:

“I had to spend \$3 million per day per district. I once asked a congressmen [sic] on a CODEL if he could responsibly spend that kind of money in his district and he said hell no. “Well sir, that’s what you just obligated us to spend, and I’m doing it for communities that live in mud huts with no windows.””<sup>190</sup>

Access to this money was not dependent on local ties or land owned but instead on personal links with international military and Afghan officials, circumventing traditional power structures. It thus provided leaders with an external source of legitimacy that the local community had no control over, as they were dependent on the cultivated ties.<sup>191</sup> This allowed the leaders to simply ignore their communities whilst at the same time becoming dependent on foreign aid for their sustenance. This was further compounded by the access that these leaders had to illicit money-generating ventures such as drug trade and smuggling, further eroding their legitimacy as representatives of the village. For inhabitants, the connections of these leaders became a crucial asset that one could not afford to lose, and gave them access to officials in Kabul for assistance or funds. In the consequent elections this also became the focus of the campaigns. Instead of promoting long-term ideas and planning, the connections of an individual became salient, with the previous leader (Abdul Aziz) having considerable advantage. After it was clear that warlords such as Abdul Aziz would never be punished for previous crimes, and with the solidification of their power through coercion, they re-asserted their dominance through violent means using their connections with militia members. This gave them an oversize power and allowed them to coerce even elements of the federal government if they tried to undercut their power or challenge it, effectively making them hard to remove. At the same time, other competing potential rivals also picked up arms, creating an environment of instability and mini-fiefdoms yet again, despite elections and a democratic system that was put in place.

On a local level, the US and its allies did not succeed in creating democratic institutions or guaranteeing security for civilians. Whilst initial efforts regarding the provision of security and reconstruction, it was only tenable with high troop numbers else risking overstretching of

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<sup>190</sup> Whitlock, 2019.

<sup>191</sup> Coburn, “Elections,” 547.

manpower. Additionally, the salience of security and lack of cultural knowledge paved the way for situations in which civilians were left disrespected or offended, indirectly helping the Taliban. Both of these cases are not failures of imagination, though the offending of locals due to misunderstanding of culture can be considered mirror imaging. More importantly, the imposition of an electoral system on top of existing, and relatively stable, power structures is a classic example of a failure of imagination. The previous system was not ‘imagined’ to be present and the consequences of its erosion not envisioned either, allowing abuse and illegitimate practices by local leaders. This was further compounded by an enormous influx of funds, which shifted the source of legitimacy from the population, as it is in a traditional democracy, toward external financiers. The nail in the coffin of this policy decision is the presence and impunity for warlords, which simply allowed them to pick up their practices once it was clear there were no consequences, and legitimacy could be acquired through cronyism.

## Discussion

The aim of this section is to provide answers to the research questions and eliminate the hypotheses that can safely be rejected. It also serves as a summary of the findings and links them more concisely to the research question and aim of the research. Finally, the limitations of the research method and analysis itself are also evaluated, as they also need to be taken into consideration when looking at the results of this thesis. It is divided in two parts. The first part is an overview of the research questions and the answers that were provided through the analysis that was conducted. Each research question is systematically reviewed and the favoured hypothesis explained. The second part is a review of the limitations that this thesis faced, based on two aspects. One, the limitations inherent to within-case study process tracing and two, those related to the identity and linguistic competencies of the author.

This research contains several key findings that both answer the research questions and outline a pattern of behaviour consistent with the outlined concepts. The most appropriate answer to the central research question is hypothesis 3, meaning that the US’ institution-building had a liminal effect on Afghanistan. Indeed, US institution building was positive in the sense that it was able to create institutions that had the structure of a national government and was able to stabilise the security situation for a certain period of time. However, the institution-building process included warlords on both the local and national level which were detrimental to most sectors of the Afghan state. Furthermore, the US institutions were built ‘on top of’ existing structures instead of ‘alongside’, creating a situation where legitimacy could be acquired

through violence or coercion. To be sure, the US is not the sole responsible in this case, as the international community through the Bonn agreement also allowed participation for these warlords despite their past. This directly affected the representativeness and effectiveness of these democratic institutions such as Parliament, the Supreme Court (or judicial system at large) and administration. The country also got increasingly corrupt and insecure as time went on, with the army and the US being unable to assert control over funds or territory. This state is epitomized in the most recent elections where a member of the political elite had a conflict against his competitor, a warlord, on the topic of voter fraud, leading to two presidents publicly fighting over who gets to lead.

As the research has shown, it can be established that failures of imagination were a recurring empirical regularity rather than being an exception, confirming hypothesis 1 of sub question 2. There were found consistently, meaning that they are not unique but instead were repeated in several different theatres of operations and throughout the studied time period. Failures of imagination and mirror imaging were rife in the provision of security, the creation of the democratic system and the envisioned role for warlords. This was especially the case regarding the choice of a democratic system in the fashion of a Western State (because that is where the imagination stopped regarding policy) rather than a local adaptation that would fulfil the conditions and history of Afghanistan. The contraction of the population into community groups based on identities was not leveraged to create a decentralized system but instead ignored completely, compounding existing inter-communal cleavages. However, previous research has shown as well that the 'traditional' state- and peace-building process is prone to failures of imagination and mirror imaging due to the usage of intermediaries and the long distance between policymaker and population. Furthermore, the inter-agency system of the US, NGO's and the international community worsened these issues by making policy extremely complex yet still dependent on security.

Whilst the ongoing failure of imagination and mirror imaging certainly contributed in the deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan since the invasion, it is not the only factor. Other contributing factors such as the cooperation of Pakistan with the Taliban, the geographic situation of Afghanistan and the actions of warlords were certainly key to this current flawed state. These served as a multiplier to the mistakes made by the US in their policymaking, as they jeopardized security and disrupted the natural development that the US and its allies envisioned. This security was, as mentioned in state- and peace-building literature a cornerstone of legitimacy for the newly installed government. However, it was also impossible to maintain

due to the lack of forces present on the ground and their replacement with either warlords or local forces who had their own downsides. Based on this, other factors did indeed contribute to the state of democratic institutions in Afghanistan, by acting as multipliers of the ‘first sin’, which was a fundamental misunderstanding of warlords and the local culture.

Given this, there are also important limitations to this research that deserve mention. For one, this research relied heavily on news reports and the Afghanistan Papers, which were only recently released. Therefore, only a limited amount of scholarly work has been conducted on this document release. Whilst their veracity is confirmed, their implications are not totally understood yet. Furthermore, the culture of secrecy in the US decision-making process and policymaking groups also prevents an insider view to confirm or falsify some aspects of this research, which prevents complete understanding of all sides.<sup>192</sup> On the other hand, these sources gave their account of their experience in a candid manner and without expectation of release, limiting the impact of possible biases of contextual nature that are inherent in process-tracing.<sup>193</sup> There are other inherent limitations that are linked to the research design that is applied in this thesis. For one, it is difficult to generalize this case to other cases of state-building in foreign countries, hence it is of limited external validity.<sup>194</sup> However, there remains a possibility to generalize beyond this case study through the concepts, which can be applied across different domains and situations.

The war in Afghanistan has been ongoing since 2001, which is 19 years ago and has seen a considerable amount of change through time, this consequently means that the results found in this research can still be subject to change. Additionally, as such a long time-span had to be covered, the research relied on the explanation of specific aspects or examples of policymaking which were judged to be representative of the more general scene. As a consequence, there are more threats to causal inference. To limit their impact, other factors that are not in line with the hypotheses were also assessed to provide alternative explanations for the findings, which were partially confirmed.<sup>195</sup> These alternative explanations did not contradict the favoured hypotheses but rather functioned in tandem with them, in that they worked as a multiplier for the favoured hypothesis, namely the presence of a failures of imagination. It is the view of the author that these examples are indeed a good representation of the state-building efforts of the US, and to a lesser extent, its allies. However, the lack of experience in the local languages and

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<sup>192</sup> Dimiter Toshkov. 2016. *Research Design in Political Science*. Macmillan International Higher Education, 306.

<sup>193</sup> Toshkov, “*Research*,” 302.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 302-304.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.



culture of Afghanistan of the author was also detrimental to the analysis, as it did not allow for more intricate study of local culture.

## Conclusion: Implications and Recommendations

To briefly summarize the research. The original purpose was to assess the application of concepts, that are also biases, such as mirror imaging and a failure of imagination to the field of Public Administration and policymaking. This was successful as the state-building and democratisation process in Afghanistan was conducted without consideration for these biases. These concepts provided a more adequate set of tools than bounded rationality does. This is due to the fact that the problem lies not directly in the rational choice of the policymaker but rather on the imposition of that choice on his interlocutor, the Afghan population. Mirror imaging and the failure of imagination thus bring bounded rationality one step further through the addition of an active interlocutor that leverages these biases. Several instances of these biases occurring were found throughout the conducted research and in numerous policymaking fields. This was confirmed through causal inference with a focus on the regularity of the bias manifesting itself in the policy and was present in most, though not all of the policymaking instances selected. Other factors that are outlined in the analysis section, such as the presence of spoiler actors, were also found to be responsible for the failure in policymaking in Afghanistan in general.

The results of this research matter because they study a psychological bias that was present throughout a 19-year war involving considerable efforts in state-building, which relies on Public Administration scholarship for adequate governance.<sup>196</sup> They serve as an illustration or window into the effect that differences in culture can have on effective policymaking and granted ‘truths’ that are often easier to study in hindsight. Whilst these biases are easy to distinguish when the difference between two cultures is so large, this becomes harder when in-group differences are involved. Indeed, these biases can also be present within a modern and developed which has different cultures present in its territory, be it due to the presence refugees or linguistic differences.<sup>197</sup> This is a topic that is, according to some research, lacking in the teaching of Public Administration.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> For more information about this, see Lister (2005 & 2009), Van de Walle & Scott (2009), Farazmand (2019) & Ante (2010) for a sample of literature acknowledging & making this link.

<sup>197</sup> Mitchell F. Rice, ‘A Post-modern Cultural Competency Framework for Public Administration and Public Service Delivery’, *International Journal of Public Sector Management* 20, no. 7 (1 January 2007): 622–37, doi:[10.1108/09513550710823524](https://doi.org/10.1108/09513550710823524).

<sup>198</sup> Barbara Hewins-Maroney and Ethel Williams, ‘Teaching Diversity in Public Administration: A Missing Component?’, *Journal of Public Affairs Education* 13, no. 1 (1 March 2007): 29–40, doi:[10.1080/15236803.2007.12001465](https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2007.12001465).

Bounded rationality, a concept previously introduced in the literature review, does provide an introduction on this topic. Indeed, this thesis illustrated the risks that bounded rationality, combined with the imposition of this limitation on an ‘other’ (be it nation or peoples) has. Bounded rationality is also a first step into the introduction of these concepts to Public Administration, as it is also an acknowledgement of ones inherent bias based on cognitive limitation, in this case defined as cultural understanding. Therefore, these results are important for Public Administration as they introduce concepts from Intelligence Studies that, when linked with bounded rationality, are crucial for a deeper understanding of the potential for failure. The aim of a policy is to resolve a problem for a community or organisation, but these need to be fully understood within their own paradigm to preclude a negative result like the one explored here. However, bounded rationality is not sufficient to adequately describe the mental framework through which institutions and individuals understood Afghanistan. Hence, the concept should be expanded to include the imposition of those cognitive limitation on the ‘other’. The danger of this type of psychological bias is that the results, whilst disastrous in this case, took more than a decade to reach their apex. Indeed, unless the ‘mission’ (in this case the building of democratic institutions in Afghanistan) is shown to have failed, the acknowledgement of a failure of imagination on an (multi-)institutional level will not be present, as voiced in the excerpts from the Afghanistan Papers.

The same situation needs to be avoided when making policy for a group within one territory. In order to achieve this, more research needs to be conducted on the topic of groupthink and bounded rationality and pushed toward a cultural understanding. To be precise, bounded rationality needs to be understood not as a passive ‘state of being’ but rather as an active and ever evolving (institutional) mindset. Thus, the subjects of policies and research should be considered active actors with a history and culture capable of spoiling the intended outcome, and with their own bounded rationality. This can be done through retrospective analysis of failed policies with a focus on the previously outlined biases, combined with the aforementioned existing concepts in Public Administration. Critical questions aimed at self-reflection such as “How did they see it?” or “Did their cultural development prevent successful application of this policy?” are crucial. Future policymakers should also keep an open eye for

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Vanessa Lopez-Littleton and Brandi Blessett, ‘A Framework for Integrating Cultural Competency into the Curriculum of Public Administration Programs’, *Journal of Public Affairs Education* 21, no. 4 (1 December 2015): 557–74, doi:[10.1080/15236803.2015.12002220](https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2015.12002220).

Susan White, ‘Multicultural MPA Curriculum: Are We Preparing Culturally Competent Public Administrators?’, *Journal of Public Affairs Education* 10, no. 2 (1 April 2004): 111–23, doi:[10.1080/15236803.2004.12001352](https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2004.12001352).

cultural differences that have potential to create fundamental misunderstandings with the subject population, both locally and internationally.

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## Annexes

This interview has been conducted with 10 individuals in Afghanistan between 22 April – 06 May 2020. All individuals are educated beyond high-school level and come from an urban background.

Question: what is democracy and what does it mean to you as an Afghan?		
Answers in Dari and Pashtu languages		English translation
1	سن: ۳۳ "دموکراسی برای من در افغانستان به معنی آزادی کامل. عدم رعایت قانون شرعی - اسلامی و یا هم (تحت شعار آزادی بیان) قانون اساسی. بناءً دموکراسی کشورهای غربی بدون اینکه مشکلات را حل نموده است بلکه افزایش داده است." "	Age: 33 "For me, democracy in Afghanistan means a complete freedom. Non-observance to the Sharia-Islamic law or in some cases (under the slogans of freedom of speech) for the national constitution.

		Thus, the western democracy has not solved rather increased problems"
2	سن ۴۵_ درجه تحصیل ۱۲ پاس  "دموکراسی و جامعه افغانستان از چندین لحاظ ناسازگار هستند. در قدم اول چون مردم افغانستان اکثریت مردم سنتی و مذهبی بوده هرآنچیکه تضاد به قوانین سماوی داشته باشد برای شان مدار اعتبار نیست. ثانیاً، دموکراسی که غربی ها در افغانستان آورده است یک چیز تحمیل شده برای مردم افغانستان به مشاهده میرسد. بر علاوه سطح آگاهی مردم بسیار پائین است آنها نمیتوانند از دموکراسی برداشت خوب داشته باشند. "	Age: 45  "Democracy and the Afghanistan society are incompatible in several ways. In the first place, the majority Afghans are traditional and religious. Anything in contradiction with divine law is not valid for them. Secondly, the democracy that Westerners have brought to Afghanistan is something that has been imposed on the Afghan people. In addition, the level of public awareness is very low. They cannot have a good understanding of democracy"
3	سن ۳۵_  "دموکراسی در افغانستان بی معنی میباشد. دلیل ان اکثریت مردم افغانستان بی سواد میباشد و آنها در باره مفاهیم و ارزش های دموکراسی چیزی نمی دانند. بناءً دموکراسی کشورهای غربی در افغانستان هیچ دست آورد مثبت ندارد. "	Age: 35  "Democracy in Afghanistan is meaningless. Because the majority of Afghans are illiterate and they do not know anything about the concepts and values of democracy. Therefore, the democracy of Western countries in Afghanistan has no positive achievements."
4	سن: ۳۸  " دموکراسی در افغانستان موثریت کم و خسارات بسیار داشته است. دموکراسی با اشغال افغانستان	Age:38  "Democracy in Afghanistan has had little effect and a lot of damage. Democracy has

	<p>یکجا وارد شد. ازین لحاظ حامیان دموکراسی واین روند چهره بیگانه را برای افغان ها ترسیم کرد .          بناءً دموکراسی برای دشمنان افغانستان فرصت ابزاری را فراهم نمود. آنها جوانان بی سواد را بر علیه افکار دموکرات تعلیم نمودند و بر علیه نظام می جنگانند. "</p>	<p>come together with the occupation of Afghanistan. In this regard, the supporters of democracy and this process have drawn a foreign image for Afghans.          Democracy thus provided an opportunity for the enemies of Afghanistan. They have educated illiterate young people against democratic ideas and are fighting against the regime. "</p>
5	<p>سن: ۴۳</p> <p>"دموکراسی اهمیت زیاد دارد. در عدم موجودیت دموکراسی هیچ کس نمی تواند به تمامی حقوق خویش برسد. اما در افغانستان عوامل وجود دارد که این روند را به چالش کشانده است. موارد مانند آزادی بیان، و دیگر آزادی های فردی در تناقض با ارزش های سنتی و اسلامی هستند. بدین ملحوظ دموکراسی وارد شده غربی حساسیت های اجتماعی و دینی را رشد داده است. مثال، زنان حجاب اسلامی را مراعت نمیکنند و یا هم بدون محرم شرعی شان سفر میکنند."</p>	<p>Age: 43</p> <p>"Democracy is very important. In the absence of democracy, no one can achieve all his/her rights. However, there are factors in Afghanistan which have challenged this trend. Issues such as freedom of expression, and other individual freedoms are at odds with traditional and Islamic values. In this sense, Western imported democracy has developed social and religious sensitivities. For instance, women refuse wearing Hijabs (Burka) or traveling without a Muharram (spouses). "</p>
6	<p>سن: ۲۸</p> <p>" دموکراسی به معنی آزادی تمام اقشار یک جامعه است. بدین معنی که هر شخص حق و دسترسی برای تعیین ضعیف کشور خود را از طریق یک پروسه آزاد و شفاف داشته باشد. آزادی بیان تحکیم جامعه مدنی ، تظاهرات مسالمت امیز در برابر</p>	<p>Age: 28</p> <p>"Democracy means the freedom of all sectors of a society. This means, everyone has the right and access to choose his/her leader through a free and transparent process. The consolidation of civil society, peaceful demonstrations for legitimate</p>

	<p>خواست های مشروع از جمله مزایای یک رژیم دموکرات به حساب میروند. "</p>	<p>demands are including of the advantages in a democratic regime."</p>
7	<p>سن: ۲۴</p> <p>"دموکراسی که امروز غرب در افغانستان آورده است اگر به معنی واقعی عملی گردد اهمیت زیاد دارد. متأسفانه دموکراسی در افغانستان بشکل درست تمثیل نمیشود. "</p>	<p>Age:24</p> <p>"The democracy that the West has brought to Afghanistan is very important if it is to be practiced in the true sense of the word. Unfortunately, Democracy in Afghanistan is misrepresented."</p>
8	<p>سن: ۳۰</p> <p>"دموکراسی برای اکثریت افغان ها یک کلمه ناشناخته میباشد. مفهوم ان قابل تحلیل به ساده گی نبوده. این بدلیل پایین بودن سطح آگاهی عامه و حاکم بودن ارزش های سنتی میباشد. بناءً حامیان دیموکراسی اکثراً متهم به دین ستیزی میشوند. "</p>	<p>Age: 30</p> <p>"Democracy is an unknown word to the majority of Afghans. Its concept cannot be easily analysed. This is due to the low level of public awareness and the dominance of traditional values. Thus, proponents of democracy are often accused of anti-religionism"</p>
9	<p>سن: ۲۸</p> <p>"دموکراسی به معنی آزادی بیان، آزادی مطبوعات میباشد. دموکراسی در افغانستان توسط غرب آمده است که در تضاد به روش زندگی ما میباشد. دموکراسی ساخته شده بشر بوده ومخالفت با شریعت اسلام دارد. "</p>	<p>Age: 28</p> <p>"Democracy means freedom of speech, freedom of the press. Democracy in Afghanistan has come from the West, which is in conflict with our way of life. Democracy is made by human beings and is opposed to Islamic law."</p>
10	<p>سن: ۳۲</p> <p>"به نظر من، منظور از دموکراسی صرفاً جایگزین کردن فرهنگ افغانستان با غربی سازی است. "</p>	<p>Age:32</p> <p>"To my understanding, democracy is meant to purely replace the Afghan culture with westernization"</p>