# Unpacking a Two-Level Failure: An International Relations Perspective on State Breakdown in Afghanistan

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**Unpacking a Two-Level Failure: An International Relations Perspective on State Breakdown in Afghanistan**

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**Abstract**

This study explores the fundamental causes of the Afghan Republic's demise and considers how it affected numerous facets of internal and foreign affairs. The study utilizes a range of sources, including scholarly articles, policy papers and news articles to test four key hypotheses. These theories look at the possible effects of different variables on political legitimacy and economic growth, including the use of power, diversity, historical conflicts, socioeconomic disparity, and geographical differences. In-depth case studies and comparative analysis are used in the research to examine the relationships between these factors and how they contribute to state disintegration. The findings suggest that various internal and external factors that played a part in the collapse of the Afghan republic government. This includes issues, like corruption, eroding state institutions tensions exacerbating disputes, and socioeconomic inequalities undermining government legitimacy. The implications of this study are significant as they enhance our understanding of the mechanisms that determine state stability or collapse.

*Keywords:* *Afghanistan, state breakdown, regional powers, international relations, corruption, ethnic diversity, historical disputes, socioeconomic inequality.*

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The stability of a nation is profoundly affected by its foreign policy and its interactions with the rest of the world. Afghanistan is a fascinating case study for studying the causes and effects of state failure in international relations due to its central location at the epicenter of several regional and global problems. History and the expected collapse of President Ashraf Ghani's government in 2021 show that Afghanistan's governance stability is endangered by a broad variety of local and external forces. This study seeks to untangle the complex web of elements leading to Afghanistan's state disintegration in order to get a better understanding of how a nation-state's fate is determined by foreign policy decisions and interactions with regional and global parties.

**1.1 Problem Statement**

The collapse of President Ashraf Ghani's Government in August 2021 has many known causes. Beyond military aspects lay innumerable features of the Republic of Afghanistan, these include its highly centralized but locally ineffectual state institutions, the endemic corruption, and myriad weaknesses in state-society ties, which lack legitimacy in the eyes of Afghanistan's people. The research indicates, through an examination of historical sources and scholarly perspectives, that Afghanistan's state breakdown results from various difficulties, including centralized but ineffective state institutions, widespread corruption, and historic ethnic segregation. Regional powers have also played an important role, frequently worsening internal divides by supporting different factions. This study shows how Afghanistan's foreign policy mistakes compounded these issues, emphasizing the critical need for policies that balance national objectives with the demands of regional and global dynamics.

**1.2 The Research's Purpose and Objectives**

This study aims to examine the role of foreign policy in the dissolution of the Afghan state. This study intends to contribute to a better understanding of how foreign policy decisions can affect the stability and sustainability of a nation-state by focusing on the Republic of Afghanistan's foreign policies and their impact on state-society ties. The following are the research objectives:

*1. To investigate the failure of the Republic of Afghanistan's foreign policies in controlling relations with regional powers.*

*2. To evaluate the impact of regional powers' interests on Afghan governance stability.*

*3. To investigate domestic elements driving foreign policy failure.*

**1.3 Background**

*1.3.1 Foreign Policy in State Breakdown*

Foreign policy plays a critical role in the aftermath of a state breakdown, with its ability to either enhance stability and security or escalate tensions and conflicts. The repercussions of mishandling external relations can be catastrophic for a nation's internal dynamics, as has been starkly demonstrated in Afghanistan (Akbarzadeh & Ibrahimi, 2020). Afghanistan has been a hotspot of international interests and regional conflicts throughout its tangled history. One gets vital insights into the intricacies of global politics and diplomacy by researching the link between foreign policy and state disintegration. This study examines how external influences, such as the interests and alliances of regional powers, can influence domestic governance stability. This knowledge enables researchers to study similar events in different circumstances more effectively and contributes to understanding broader theories of state collapse.

Afghanistan's history is a mash-up of colonial intrusions, Cold War tensions, and modern-day problems that can teach much about the more significant challenges that countries face during the transition and rebuilding phases (Cordesman, 2021). Researchers can identify patterns that apply to many more instances by closely evaluating how Afghanistan's foreign

policy efforts succeeded or failed, contributing to our growing understanding of conflict resolution and government reconstruction (Herd, 2021). Another intriguing feature of researching Afghanistan's foreign policy failures is how it defies the conventional wisdom that foreign policy is primarily about governments rather than people. Afghanistan's problems underscore the tight relationship between functional administration and the population's welfare. Understanding that foreign policy is about more than just diplomats talking but also meeting citizens' needs and hopes might result in more balanced and viable foreign policy approaches (Clausen & Albrecht, 2021).

Investigating Afghanistan's foreign policy failures reveals how internal and external issues interact in intricate ways. Afghanistan must deal with ethnic differences, tribal affiliations, and economic inequities, all of which are intertwined with the greater global landscape (Akbari & True, 2022). Understanding how these internal weaknesses might exacerbate the impact of external forces on the country's stability is critical. It assists policymakers in developing ways to promote both national unity and international ties (Herd, 2021). Afghanistan presents a cautionary tale for governments of what occurs when foreign policy aims do not correspond and, instead, exacerbate internal vulnerabilities in a world where global reliance and governance issues are on the rise (Giustozzi, 2021).

*1.3.2 Afghanistan's Foreign Policy and State Failure*

Afghanistan has historically been at the center of geopolitical rivalries for various reasons, with many regional powers competing for influence within its boundaries (Dodge, 2021). Understanding how these forces connected with Afghanistan's domestic politics and governance, researchers and lawmakers get vital insights into the complex issues impeding efficient administration and regional stability anywhere else in the world.

Furthermore, Afghanistan's experience shows the essential role that foreign policies play in supporting or destroying a nation-state's stability. By evaluating how foreign policy mistakes contributed to Afghanistan's state breakdown, it is possible to identify particular areas

where reforms are needed and devise measures to avoid similar outcomes in other circumstances (Giustozzi, 2021). Furthermore, given the Taliban's recent return to power, examining Afghanistan's experience is especially pertinent. Analyzing how foreign policy decisions affect long-term state sustainability under new governance frameworks is critical as the country navigates uncharted territory.

*1.3.3 Collapse of President Ashraf Ghani's Government in August 2021*

The fall of President Ashraf Ghani's government in August 2021 was a watershed moment in Afghanistan's turbulent history. It serves as a chilling reminder of the many issues that have plagued Afghanistan's governance and stability for years in what was similar to a seismic change in the country's trajectory. It revealed the deep-seated flaws and vulnerabilities within the Afghan state machinery, triggering a chain of events that ultimately contributed to its collapse (Ibrahimi & Maley, 2019). President Ghani's government was under increasing pressure from various sources, including a renewed Taliban insurgency, pervasive corruption, and public skepticism about the government's capacity to provide basic services and preserve security. This sequence of events resembles a domino effect, with each tumbling piece revealing a complicated web of interconnected difficulties. These conditions paved the way for the deterioration of state institutions and, eventually, the downfall of his administration.

The return of the Taliban insurgency was at the heart of the disaster. The unrelenting armed group's resurgence generated a hostile atmosphere, undermining the government's security forces and instilling fear and uncertainty throughout the country (Peters, 2021). The widespread instability not only jeopardized ordinary residents' lives but also destroyed their faith in the capacity of the government to deliver security and stability. This growing skepticism undermined the government's authority and paved the way for additional internal and external challenges.

The failure to establish or maintain the essential domestic political consensus for stability was a crucial cause of the collapse. The lack of cohesiveness among the government's

various groups damaged its governance structure and rendered it vulnerable to external pressures. In addition, Afghanistan's highly centralized but locally ineffective state institutions fueled the flames. Despite efforts to centralize, these organizations struggled to establish authority and deliver necessary services outside major urban areas (Martin & Sinkkonen, 2022). This schism between the central administration and local communities even weakened public trust and legitimacy.

Corruption was also a factor in worsening state disintegration. It had infiltrated every level of Afghan society like a rotting sore. This pervasive problem was not limited to a few isolated incidents; it was systematic, corroding the basic fabric of society (Dodge, 2021). The rampant bribery and lack of transparency harmed public services, depleted key resources, and made it impossible for residents to repose their trust in political institutions. Corruption portrayed a negative picture of governance, giving the impression that the government placed its interests over the well-being of its inhabitants. Public conceptions of fairness and justice were weakened by rampant graft at all levels of government. Furthermore, the long-standing question of legitimacy that has plagued President Ghani's government cannot be overlooked. Widespread charges of electoral fraud have called his mandate as a representative leader into question (Münch, 2021). Any administration is subject to both internal disagreement and external meddling if it lacks genuine legitimacy conferred by its people.

These fundamental concerns were exacerbated by regional factors that undermined the stability of Afghan governance. The competing interests of regional as well as international parties complicated matters further. Because of Afghanistan's geopolitical importance, it has become a battleground for conflicting interests. Afghanistan was viewed as a way to advance the interests of several countries with varied strategic agendas (Sahill, 2023). Various regional powers with disparate interests strove to establish influence over Afghanistan, frequently deepening already-existing schisms within Afghan society (Murtazashvili, 2022). Reaching an agreement and establishing a unified governance system was nearly impossible.

*1.3.4 Causes of Afghanistan's State Failure*

Afghanistan's state disintegration was the culmination of a slew of deeply based and interconnected challenges that had plagued the country for years. These well-known factors provide insight into an intricate web of issues that eventually led to the breakdown of governance and the rise of instability. The ubiquitous influence of insurgency, particularly by the Taliban, is one important explanation (Peters, 2021). This armed group's comeback and unrelenting attacks damaged security forces, destroyed public trust in the government's ability to protect its population, and produced a fearful and uncertain environment. The protracted conflict took its toll on institutions, destroyed social fabric, and eroded the government's legitimacy.

Another important aspect contributing to the state's downfall was widespread corruption which pervaded all levels of Afghan society, from minor bribery to high-level embezzlement. This not only sapped development resources but also stained public institutions, eroding their reputation and efficiency. Weak governance mechanisms also had a crucial influence. Although steps were taken to construct democratic institutions following the fall of the Taliban administration in 2001, these efforts were insufficient to foster efficient governance across the country (Prantl & Goh, 2022). Inadequate capacity-building programs have hampered major organizations, causing inefficiency, a lack of transparency, and an inability to spread power beyond urban areas.

Socioeconomic issues also played a role. Many Afghans felt isolated by their government, owing to high poverty rates and restricted access to fundamental amenities such as education and healthcare. This socioeconomic discrepancy generated anger and exacerbated grievances, eroding public trust in governmental institutions even more. Furthermore, ethnic differences within Afghanistan's diverse population severely hindered national unity (Sahar & Kaunert, 2022). Political actors seeking power or influence exploited historical conflicts between ethnic groups, exacerbating tensions and undermining broader societal cohesion.

The geography of the country also contributed to its vulnerability. Afghanistan experienced challenges in linking different regions, establishing efficient governance, and guaranteeing equal resource allocation due to its landlocked status and rough terrain. These geographical constraints added to the already difficult task of preserving stability and unity. Furthermore, other actors' influence was vital in defining Afghanistan's fate. Various regional and international powers had stakes in Afghanistan, resulting in competition for control and influence (Sahill, 2023). This resulted in competing agendas, further destabilizing the country and making reaching an agreement among key parties impossible.

## 1.4 Research Scope and Limitations

The scope of this research is on the foreign policies of the Republic of Afghanistan and how they have affected the relationship between the government and its citizens. The study's overarching goal is to provide light on the limitations and failures of these policies, notably in relationship management with regional powers, assessing the influence of regional interests on governance stability, and looking into domestic issues leading to foreign policy failures.

However, it is critical to note that the research has several restrictions that might limit the data's breadth and generalizability. Firstly, this study aims to offer a thorough analysis; nevertheless, given the varied and intricate nature of foreign policy and state collapse, certain topics may be covered in more depth than others. Second, the study uses primary and secondary research grounded on historical analysis. The availability and quality of these sources will determine how accurate and reliable the results are. The thoroughness of the study may suffer due to biases, gaps, or mistakes in the historical records. Third, as this research is mainly concerned with the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the analysis of external elements is conducted largely from the perspective of those choices. The effect of larger geopolitical processes, regional wars, and international power struggles on states' collapse is outside this study's scope. Finally, the rapid pace of change in international relations

and the potentially delicate nature of the study issue may affect the timely relevance of certain results. The findings may not take into account all relevant factors now or in the future.

**1.5 Significance of the Study**

Evaluating Afghanistan's experience allows us to challenge commonly held beliefs about effective foreign policies and international relations. Afghanistan's intricate web of relationships, conflicts, and opposing interests needs nuanced responses that go beyond popular thinking (Herd, 2021). We can identify alternate tactics for better aligning national interests with regional and global dynamics by reviewing past achievements and failures in Afghan foreign policy. Comprehending Afghanistan's experience advances scholarly understanding of state breakdown and its confluence with global politics. It enriches existing theories by offering empirical evidence based on real-world situations. This study adds to our understanding of how domestic forces interact with external pressures to shape a nation-state's fate.

This study's implications go beyond historical analysis. Examining Afghanistan's experiences gives policymakers insights into crafting foreign policies responsive to local needs while encouraging international cooperation. Understanding the role of foreign policy in the collapse and overthrow of the Afghan Republic is crucial, not only for achieving a clear description of a major event in the country and the world's social history but also for gaining insights into contemporary foreign policy. Furthermore, the study fills gaps in the existing literature by emphasizing the importance of social and cultural settings, public opinion, and post-conflict foreign policy initiatives. Understanding Afghanistan's foreign policy failures becomes critical in directing contemporary global governance techniques, supporting peace, unity, and prosperity as the country navigates an uncertain future. Finally, this study emphasizes the complex interplay between foreign policy decisions and state dissolution, emphasizing the significance of thorough studies that take into account past events, cultural differences, and global power dynamics. The lessons from Afghanistan's struggles can help policymakers,

scholars, and practitioners establish resilient and effective nation-states in a more connected world.

## 1.6 Research Organization

This paper is organized into six cohesive chapters that collectively investigate the complexities of state breakdown in Afghanistan from an international relations perspective. Chapter 1 introduces the research problem and its significance, contextualizing Afghanistan's role as a pivotal case study. Chapter 2 undertakes a comprehensive literature review, delving into the intricate relationship between foreign policy and state disintegration in Afghanistan. Chapter 3 specifies the research questions, hypotheses, and outlines the chosen analytic approach and research methods. Chapters 4 forms the core findings while chapter 5 provides the analysis exploring the dynamics of state breakdown and the role of domestic and external factors. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the study by presenting the main findings, discussing their significance, acknowledging limitations, and suggesting areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Foreign policy holds significant sway over the stability and endurance of nation-states. Exploring existing literature is crucial to comprehend the intricate relationship between foreign policy and state disintegration in Afghanistan. This literature review aims to critically evaluate previous research and scholarly works about foreign policy and state breakdown in Afghanistan, shedding light on the various factors that have influenced these dynamics. The recent collapse of President Ashraf Ghani's government in August 2021 serves as a vivid reminder of the numerous challenges Afghanistan faces in maintaining governance stability. While multiple factors contributed to the disintegration of the state, it is imperative to acknowledge that internal and international policies, alongside military forces, played pivotal roles in this process. By examining the findings from previous studies, this literature review seeks to uncover valuable insights into how foreign policy can shape the fate of a nation-state like Afghanistan.

**2.1 Existing Scholarly Discourse on Foreign Policy and State Disintegration**

*2.1.1 Regional Powers' Interests and Afghan State Disintegration*

Examining Afghanistan's foreign policy environment deeply, it is clear that neighboring regional countries' actions and interests have considerably contributed to the complex web of issues that led to the state's dissolution. Afghanistan, known as the "Heart of Asia," has long been a flashpoint for geopolitical conflicts, with numerous regional countries competing for power and dominance within its boundaries. This complex interaction of external factors has far-reaching consequences for the country's governance, stability, and foreign policy decisions.

According to Akbari & True (2022), Afghanistan has been a target for various regional powers aiming to exert their influence in the region. These external actors have significantly impacted domestic politics and stability in governance within Afghanistan. Regional powers'

importance in Afghanistan's challenges cannot be emphasized. Pakistan, for example, has always been a prominent player in Afghanistan's affairs. Sullivan (2021) convincingly argues that Pakistan's historical support for specific armed groups in Afghanistan has perpetuated instability and undermined the central government's legitimacy. This is not a passive act; it is a purposeful effort by Pakistan to achieve its interests. Pakistan hopes to exercise control over its western neighbor while simultaneously resisting the grip of India, with which it has a long-standing rivalry. This support has provided a haven for extremist elements, posing a persistent threat to Afghan security forces and eroding public trust in the government's ability to ensure citizen safety.

Similarly, Simangan et al. (2023) explored Iran's involvement in supporting various Afghan factions as part of its broader geopolitical agenda. Iran effectively influences the balance of power on the ground by providing political, financial, and military assistance to different groups, exacerbating internal divisions within Afghanistan and hindering progress toward political stability. This assistance advances Iran's regional agenda by offering it a stake in Afghanistan's internal affairs (Simangan et al., 2023). Iran's actions in Afghanistan demonstrate how the nation is a battleground for regional power struggles and an instrument of play in its neighbors' larger strategic games.

While regional countries' interests have undoubtedly fostered domestic disputes and degraded governance in Afghanistan, it is critical to understand that the country's disintegration cannot be traced primarily to external players. Rather, these outside forces interact with Afghanistan's pre-existing local problems, resulting in a complex web of causes contributing to the country's instability. Afghanistan's inadequate government institutions, ethnic divisions, and socioeconomic gaps, for example, all aggravate the impact of external meddling. A more in-depth examination of these regional powers' motivations and strategies provides an opportunity for a more thorough understanding. Knowing why some countries pursue

particular objectives within Afghanistan gives insight into the larger regional factors that impact the country's foreign policy. Investigating the motivations behind these activities could offer a glimpse at possibilities for dialogue and collaboration that are consistent with Afghanistan's stability over the long run.

Akbarzadeh & Ibrahimi's (2020) study argue that to comprehend the complexities of state-society relations, it is essential not to overlook domestic factors. Consequently, this literature review aims to expand existing scholarship by shedding light on external and internal elements that contribute to foreign policy failures and state collapse in Afghanistan. Furthermore, while the research frequently emphasizes the negative repercussions of regional countries' pursuits, there is also potential to investigate cases where regional involvement has resulted in good if restricted, outcomes. For example, identifying examples of regional cooperation that have helped stability could provide significant lessons for building diplomatic efforts that promote Afghanistan's interests (Akbari & True, 2022). Identifying instances when neighboring nations have collaborated to address common concerns, such as battling terrorism or aiding economic development, could be part of this.

In conclusion, the significance of neighboring powers' objectives in the dissolution of Afghanistan's state is complicated and varied. Although external actors have had an impact, it is critical to appreciate this influence in the context of Afghanistan's difficulties. Recognizing the complex interaction between internal dynamics and outside influences is critical for developing successful policies to restore stability, strengthen governance, and better position Afghanistan for success in its regional context.

### 2.1.2 Factors at Home Influencing Foreign Policy Failure

Understanding the internal factors that drive foreign policy failures in Afghanistan provides a more in-depth understanding of the complex dynamics that underpin the state's downfall. These elements, which range from governance systems to social divisions,

significantly impact the country's foreign policy decisions and add to the difficulty it has in preserving stability.

According to Clausen & Albrecht (2021), the centralized nature of Afghan state institutions poses a recurrent challenge, impeding the effective execution of local foreign policy. Scholars have highlighted how this governance structure hampers the ability to successfully manage relationships with regional actors. Threlkeld & Easterly (2021) emphasize the importance of decentralized decision-making power and efficient local administration systems for effective foreign policy implementation. However, due to Kabul's centralized authority, there is a lack of agency and autonomy at the province and district levels. This centralized system causes a divide between the capital and the various regions, limiting local administrations and provinces' ability to engage meaningfully with foreign actors, particularly neighboring countries. As a result, the Afghan government fails to represent and answer the varied local people's problems and demands. Citizens increasingly perceive the government as remote and removed from their daily lives, undermining its legitimacy and trust.

Another significant contributing factor to Afghanistan's foreign policy failure is pervasive corruption within government institutions. Corruption has infiltrated all sectors of Afghan society, ranging from simple bribery to high-level theft. Extensive scholarly research has explored how corruption undermines state capacity, resulting in ineffective governance and hindering successful foreign policy formulation and implementation. Dodge (2021) provides substantial evidence of how corruption in the security sector jeopardizes Afghanistan's ability to establish its foreign policy. Resource diversion, bribery networks, and nepotism hinder efforts to construct a legitimate governmental apparatus capable of effectively managing regional power dynamics. Furthermore, the presence of bribery networks and the patronage system shapes foreign policy decisions in ways that favor the interests of certain individuals or groups over the interests of the nation as a whole. Consequently, illicit interests influence

decision-making processes, further impeding meaningful engagement with external actors and significantly impacting state-building and governance efforts.

Ethnic diversity and historical disputes within the Afghan population also impact foreign policy failures. Throughout history, the country's multi-ethnic mix has been an instrument of both strength and chaos. However, political players seeking power have exploited ethnic tensions, exacerbating societal cracks (Sahar & Kaunert, 2022). The ethnic fragmentation of Afghan society complicates foreign policy decisions by introducing additional factors relating to identity politics and advocacy. Foreign policy decisions must balance the needs of many ethnic groups; failing to do so can intensify internal tensions and impede effective diplomacy with adjacent states.

Another internal element impacting foreign policy outcomes is socioeconomic inequality, especially high poverty levels and inadequate access to vital services. Many Afghans feel marginalized due to the sharp contrast between urban and rural communities and limited access to education and healthcare. This socioeconomic disparity increases government grievances and undermines trust in state institutions (Akbari & True, 2022). When it comes to foreign policy decisions, the federal government's capacity to resolve imbalances and meet the needs of excluded communities directly impacts its legitimacy and efficacy in the international arena.

Studying the domestic factors contributing to Afghanistan's foreign policy failure exposes this nation's complicated web of obstacles. The country's foreign policy landscape is shaped by the country's centralized government structure, corruption, ethnic divisions, and socioeconomic inequality. These domestic factors obstruct successful cooperation with external players and add to Afghanistan's difficulty in preserving state stability. Addressing these issues is critical for establishing a robust Afghan state capable of navigating regional difficulties and developing meaningful connections with neighboring countries. These findings help illuminate how internal dynamics interact with external pressures to shape foreign policy

outcomes (Cordesman, 2021). Addressing these domestic issues is essential for building a stronger Afghan state capable of effectively navigating regional complexities and forging sustainable relationships with neighboring countries.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

The breakdown of the Afghan state is a compelling case study that calls for in-depth research, necessitating theoretical frameworks capable of untangling the complicated web of circumstances that led to this event. Three theoretical frameworks explain this phenomenon: Realism, constructivism, and political economy. Each of these theoretical frameworks brings a unique viewpoint to bear on the complicated dynamics of state collapse, and together, they provide thorough responses to the study's key concerns.

Afghanistan's state breakdown may be seen through Realism, a major paradigm in international relations theory that gives insight into the strategic calculations and power dynamics among regional parties. This perspective stresses the international system's anarchic character and argues that nations pursue their own interests to secure their own existence and safety (Xuetong, 2019). As far as Afghanistan is concerned, regional forces frequently vie for influence inside its boundaries, and this is something that is highlighted by Realist analysis (Akbarzadeh, 2020). This method elucidates how these players' control in the area, strategic advantages, and perceptions of danger have influenced their actions, aiding in destabilizing the Afghan state. While Realism does a good job of portraying the realpolitik concerns of regional players, it may fail to account for the tangled web of identity-based disputes and ideational issues that contribute to a state's demise.

On the other hand, Constructivism provides a counterpoint by highlighting the importance of social identities, historical narratives, and cultural norms in influencing foreign policy choices and heightening internal conflicts. This perspective argues that pecuniary interests are not the only motivators for state activity and that ideas and norms play a

considerable role as well (Jung, 2019). Using Constructivism to examine Afghanistan's diplomatic history, we can see how internal strife, past grudges, and a focus on national identity have shaped relations with neighboring countries (Ibrahimi, 2023). Constructivism deepens the approach by exploring the complexities of identity-based conflicts, with an emphasis on the part played by perceptions and shared ideals. The ability to grasp the interplay between material interests and ideological elements may be limited if it fails to reflect the strategic calculation and power struggles that underpin regional dynamics.

The Political Economy perspective emphasizes economic structures and power interactions, drawing attention to the interconnected nature of corruption, social injustice, and economic inequities as they threaten the stability of states. Through this perspective, we can see how monetary trends and vice versa influence political results (Holsti, 2019). When applied to Afghanistan, Political Economy reveals how corruption networks stymie state-building initiatives, obstruct effective governance, and exert influence over national and international policy. This method sheds light on the ways in which economic disparities might weaken state cohesiveness by analyzing the connection between economic inequality and government legitimacy (Higgins & Novelli, 2020). However, geopolitical maneuvers and identity-driven conflicts may play an even larger part in the demise of the Afghan state, and the Political Economy may not account for these adequately.

Considering the strengths and weaknesses of these three perspectives, it is clear that we need a synthesis that reflects the complex interaction of power dynamics, identity conflicts, and socioeconomic variables to comprehend the disintegration of the Afghan state fully. Here, the collapse of the state is the dependent variable, and its cause is the convergence of these many factors. This synthesis acknowledges that the complex phenomena of the dissolution of the Afghan state is shaped by the intertwining interplay of Realism's regional power dynamics,

Constructivism's identity-driven narratives, and Political Economy's socioeconomic undercurrents.

Adopting Realism, Constructivism, and Political Economy as the theoretical underpinnings recognizes the necessity for a multidimensional analysis that fills in the blanks and gives a nuanced understanding of the breakdown of the Afghan state. By using this unified model, we can examine the many ways in which geographical context, cultural tensions, and economic dynamics all play a role in shaping this phenomena, and get a deeper, more nuanced understanding of it as a whole.

## 2.3 Research Gaps

The analysis of existing literature revealed crucial insights into the complex relationship between foreign policy and the dissolution of the Afghan state. This review, however, has revealed numerous significant research gaps that require further investigation. Giustozzi (2021) agrees that while the current literature on Afghan foreign policy and state disintegration offers valuable insights, significant research gaps need to be addressed. By identifying these gaps, we may throw light on areas where our understanding is still lacking and places where new research might add to a more comprehensive understanding of Afghanistan's difficult path.

First, the existing research mostly focuses on geopolitical and external effects on Afghan foreign policy and state failure. While it is clear that neighboring powers such as Pakistan and Iran have had a substantial impact on Afghanistan's trajectory (Akbari & True, 2022), there is a clear need for a deeper examination of the sociocultural factors influencing foreign policy decisions. These characteristics include the influence of religion, tribal allegiances, and local identities in determining foreign policy decisions. By delving into the sociocultural components, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of how Afghan leaders balance their national goals and the intricacies of their community. Understanding the social,

cultural, and historical contexts in which foreign policies are formulated is crucial for assessing their effectiveness and impact (Simangan et al., 2023).

Additionally, the role of public opinion and perceptions of legitimacy in shaping successful or unsuccessful foreign policies in Afghanistan has been overlooked. Public opinion influences government decision-making processes and significantly impacts the execution and consequences of foreign policies (Clausen & Albrecht, 2021). While a few studies have recognized the significance of public perception (Clausen & Albrecht, 2021), there is a lack of understanding of how Afghan citizens' perceptions of foreign policy have changed over time and how their views have influenced decision-making processes. Therefore, further research is needed to examine public opinion on domestic and international relations and assess its influence on decision-making processes and could reveal how aligning foreign policy with citizen goals adds to long-term state viability.

Another research gap lies in studying post-Taliban foreign policy. Most existing studies focus on Afghanistan's foreign policies during conflict or transitional periods. It is essential to understand the challenges Afghanistan has faced in formulating effective foreign policies after the removal of the Taliban regime to gain insights into long-term state sustainability (Herd, 2021). The move from insurgency to governance necessitates a fresh look at how Afghanistan's foreign policy alternatives are changing in this new period, particularly under Taliban governance. Investigating how foreign policy is being rebalanced to accommodate Afghanistan's shifting internal and external dynamics will provide important insights into the country's long-term state-building prospects. Analyzing how Afghanistan has navigated regional power dynamics, established diplomatic relations, and forged partnerships since then can provide policymakers with valuable lessons for future endeavors. Addressing these research gaps will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Afghan foreign policy

formulation and implementation processes, leading to more informed decision-making for sustainable state stability.

Moreover, existing literature frequently highlights the detrimental consequences of foreign policy shortcomings on state breakdown. On the other hand, a more detailed approach may uncover situations where foreign policy, despite difficulties, has contributed to favorable outcomes. Even if they are incomplete, these success examples can provide valuable insights and ideas to achieve stability in a difficult region. Researchers can better understand the factors contributing to good foreign policy by examining both failures and achievements.

Subsequently, the literature evaluation identifies critical research gaps that provide ample opportunity for further investigation. Examining public engagement, assessing post-Taliban foreign policy adjustments, and identifying foreign policy triumphs are all areas where current understanding is insufficient. By filling these gaps, scholars may add to a more comprehensive understanding of Afghanistan's foreign policy issues and path to state stability. Afghanistan's foreign policy landscape is defined by a confluence of historical backdrop, societal dynamics, and geopolitical influences, and only a thorough investigation can reveal its real complexity.

## 2.4 Research Variables

There are crucial variables that underpin this research and are central to addressing the research questions and hypotheses. These variables encompass the core elements that will be examined in relation to the breakdown of the Afghan state, shedding light on their interplay and contribution to the phenomenon under investigation.

*Dependent Variable: State Breakdown*

The dependent variable of this study is the breakdown of the Afghan state. This encompasses the multifaceted aspects of the state's disintegration, including political instability, loss of central governance, and diminished capacity to provide essential services to citizens.

*Independent Variable 1: Influence of Regional Powers*

This first independent variable investigates how regional powers affect the state breakdown. It includes foreign nations' actions, interests, and tactics that affect Afghanistan's stability and government.

*Independent Variable 2: Systemic Corruption*

Systemic corruption inside government institutions is the focus of the second independent variable. Corruption, theft, and a lack of transparency are all part of the problem that undermines trust in the state and its ability to govern.

*Independent Variable 3: Ethnic Diversity and Historical Disputes*

Ethnic tensions and historical disagreements are explored in the third independent variable, which is shown to have an impact on both domestic and international policy. The effects on social cohesion and governance are analyzed to see how they feed into the dissolution of the state.

*Intervening Variable: Identity-driven Conflicts*

Identity-driven conflicts act as a mediator between racial and religious variety, historical issues, and the collapse of states. Included in this category are the conflicts that arise from ethnic and cultural differences that serve to deepen domestic strife and hamper international policy.

This study aims to disentangle the complex web of elements that lead to the collapse of the Afghan state by methodically deconstructing key research variables. These factors are not separate things but rather are interconnected and interdependent, providing the framework for a thorough comprehension of the event being studied.

# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Research Design

The current study intends to use a qualitative research methodology to address the research objectives. The proposed qualitative study would include a comprehensive selection of secondary sources, including news items, academic papers, government publications, and archive records. The data will function as a mechanism to determine the primary individuals engaged in the decline of the Afghan government, together with the fundamental motives that influenced their behaviors throughout that specific timeframe. This research aims to enhance the comprehension of state collapse dynamics by conducting case studies of notable events, including the emergence of the Taliban and the eventual demise of President Ashraf Ghani's administration. The use of qualitative analysis may facilitate a complete comprehension of the intricate interplay of regional powers, internal divides, corruption, and socioeconomic inequities in Afghanistan.

Due to the qualitative nature of this research, we can delve deeply into the underlying complexities and contextual subtleties that have led to the dissolution of the Afghan state. The historical, political, and social forces that have contributed to Afghanistan's state stability may be better understood via the integration of case study analysis and content analysis. Taking into account the complex interaction of internal and external forces throughout periods is reflected in this method. The qualitative approach places a higher value on context, which allows researchers to consider the specific historical and cultural aspects that contribute to the disintegration of the state in Afghanistan. The research can find subtle insights that a quantitative method could miss by closely investigating individual examples and evaluating various textual sources (Aljian, 2019). The chosen approach eliminates the requirement for primary data gathering while opening up a world of rich data sources for the study. The circumstances that lead to the breakup of states may be better understood if the research draws

on data collected from various sources, including published works, policy papers, and news reports.

## 3.2 Research Questions and Corresponding Hypotheses

Drawing from the theoretical frameworks outlined earlier, this section delineates the research questions that will serve as the compass for this investigation. Each research question is intricately linked to a corresponding hypothesis, forming a robust foundation for the ensuing analysis.

*Research Question 1*:

How does the influence of regional powers significantly contribute to the breakdown of the Afghan state?

Hypothesis 1: The influence of regional powers significantly contributes to state breakdown in Afghanistan.

The presence of neighboring nations, such as Pakistan and Iran, is hypothesized to play a crucial role in increasing internal tensions and compromising Afghanistan's stability. The research will look at how these outside forces undermine domestic governance and state stability by manipulating internal politics, backing armed groups, and stoking ethnic differences.

*Research Question 2*:

To what extent does systemic corruption within government institutions act as a critical factor driving the breakdown of the Afghan state?

Hypothesis 2: Systemic corruption within government institutions is a critical factor driving state breakdown in Afghanistan.

According to this hypothesis, pervasive corruption inside Afghan government institutions diminishes state capacity, obstructs efficient governance, and makes it more difficult to craft and execute effective foreign policy. Corruption's impact will be analyzed in detail, with a focus on how it distorts decision-making, redirects resources, and ultimately undermines the central authority's capacity to regulate regional power dynamics.

*Research Question 3:*

In what ways do ethnic diversity and historical disputes intensify internal tensions and impede effective foreign policy decisions, thus contributing to the breakdown of the Afghan state?

Hypothesis 3: Ethnic diversity and historical disputes contribute to state breakdown by intensifying internal tensions and hampering effective foreign policy decisions.

An ethnically divided Afghan society, the hypothesis contends, makes it harder for officials to strike a balance between competing interests and requirements. The research will look at how a country's stability and its capacity to interact with external players are affected by ethnic conflicts that have arisen in the past.

*Research Question 4:*

How does socioeconomic inequality contribute to the erosion of government legitimacy and trust, thereby undermining state stability?

Hypothesis 4: Socioeconomic inequality, including disparities in access to essential services, undermines state stability by eroding government legitimacy and trust.

According to this hypothesis, people are less likely to have faith in the government when living in poverty and lacking access to basic services. In this research, we will examine how regional economic and social differences influence the central government's legitimacy and, by extension, its ability to handle regional difficulties and carry out effective international policy.

**3.3 Data Requirements**

This study's data needs and sources are important in locating reliable and relevant data with which to answer the research objectives. The research will be a qualitative evaluation of previous work, therefore it will draw on a wide variety of secondary materials such scholarly articles, policy studies, official reports, and trustworthy news sources. Selection criteria for sources include their usefulness, reliability, and congruence with the study's aims. We will only look at sources that help us learn more about what led to the collapse of the Afghan government. The ideal sources will be scholarly publications, policy studies, and assessments from reputable think tanks and organizations.

**3.4 Data Collection**

This research relies heavily on secondary resources gleaned from academic journals, government reports, news stories, and historical records for its foundation. The qualitative character of the study necessitates an emphasis on archival research to illuminate the complex factors that led to the collapse of the Afghan government. To better understand Afghanistan's political climate and state stability, we will perform a thorough literature research and policy analysis of relevant academic publications. Scholar journals, studies, and policy papers are included that provide light on the historical, political, and societal issues that impact the country's stability. The information in these works is essential for developing an in-depth comprehension of the theoretical frameworks and explanatory methods highlighted in the survey of the relevant literature.

Journal articles and media coverage will also be used because of the information they provide on current events, government policies, and the responses of local, national, and worldwide players. The political environment of Afghanistan is constantly changing, and this shift will be captured through analyzing news coverage from reliable sources. These materials help set the scene and learn about the regional powers and internal issues that contributed to

the disintegration of the state. The archives and official statements of governments and international organizations provide light on the background and decision-making processes behind Afghanistan's current stability level. These documents contain eyewitness recollections of pivotal moments, foreign policy decisions, and domestic debates that shaped America's history.

To guarantee the reliability and validity of the data, strict inclusion and exclusion criteria will be used throughout the data-gathering process. Only sources that have been peer-reviewed, have appeared in credible journals or news outlets, or have received official approval from respected organizations will be included. In addition, these will consist of contemporary materials that are particularly relevant to the study's questions and theories. The rigor and validity of the research will be maintained via credible secondary sources since primary data-gathering techniques like interviews are not used in this study.

### 3.5 Analytic Approach

A thorough qualitative data analysis procedure will be applied to the gathered information, relying on content analysis and case study analysis techniques. This strategy aligns with the research objectives and hypotheses, allowing for a thorough study of the many factors that lead to the collapse of the Afghan state. Content analysis employs a systematic assessment of the collected material to find meaningful themes, patterns, and discourses that contribute to the study goals (Lindgren et al., 2020). Researchers may use this strategy to unearth common themes, patterns, and recurring topics across various sources. The research will analyze media, policy papers, and academic literature to determine the representations of regional authorities' interests, corruption, ethnic divides, and socioeconomic inequality. With this method, we may better understand the context of the debates surrounding the collapse of the Afghan government.

Case study analysis involves an in-depth examination of specific instances of state breakdown in Afghanistan, such as the rise of the Taliban and the fall of President Ashraf Ghani's government. The study may examine the interaction of elements contributing to state instability by picking important instances that exhibit varied combinations of internal and external variables (Alpi & Evans, 2019). History, political choices, and the function of local players may all be probed more deeply using the case study approach (Gallagher, 2019). In-depth case studies will investigate the hypothesized causes of the state's downfall and provide evidence supporting or refuting the proposed explanations.

Data analysis continues beyond the discovery of recurring themes and patterns. Extending beyond the generation of research topics and theoretical frameworks, this phase involves analyzing and synthesizing results. Researchers will evaluate the relative significance of regional power acts, corruption, ethnic divides, and socioeconomic inequalities to the collapse of states. Case study analysis and this information will shed light on the complex interplay of elements shaping the political scene in Afghanistan. Multiple researchers will participate in the data analysis process, engaging in peer debriefing and discussions to increase the credibility of interpretations, ensuring the results' reliability and validity (Arifudin et al., 2022). Qualitative analysis software may be used to help with the systematic sorting, classifying, and categorizing the data. The researcher will maintain constant vigilance to prevent bias and guarantee that all results are based on solid evidence.

### 3.6 Operationalization of Concepts and Theories

Operationalizing concepts and theories within a qualitative framework is essential because it converts intangible notions into measurable variables for scientific investigation. This study's operationalization does not need primary data collecting since it uses only secondary sources to investigate the nuances of state collapse in Afghanistan.

Operationalizing the dependent variable "state breakdown" within the qualitative paradigm entails finding concrete examples of deteriorating government, weakening institutions, and anarchy. This disorder's symptoms are armed warfare, civic unrest, and government collapse. This analysis highlights the varied character of state collapse events by extracting these indicators from various sources, including news stories, official papers, and historical archives. Contextual interpretations provide complex meanings to the independent variables, including regional interests, corruption, and ethnic variety. Analyzing neighboring nations' geopolitical strategies, economic investments, and diplomatic activities helps clarify regional interests. Getting a qualitative idea of corruption in a certain area is possible by looking at actual cases of wrongdoing in public service organizations. Literature, historical records, and qualitative studies provide crucial context for understanding ethnic diversity via accounts of conflict, cultural dynamics, and identity politics. We can operationalize socioeconomic disparity as an intervening variable by diving into qualitative accounts that bring out discrepancies in earnings, access to basic amenities, and quality of life. It is clear from ethnographic testimonies, qualitative studies, and official records that socioeconomic disparities affect how people see the legitimacy of their government and contribute to the decline of faith in it.

The theoretical frameworks are operationalized by distinguishing essential ideas common to Realist, Constructivist, and Political Economy approaches. Through the lens of power dynamics and security concerns, realists investigate how regional power relationships affect the stability of Afghanistan. Constructivists examine the narratives, discourses, and collective perceptions that influence international relations and racial strife through the lens of the social construction of identity. Analyses of corruption networks, economic inequality, and their impact on state stability give origin to the field of Political Economy, which studies the relationship between economics and politics.

This research uses a qualitative methodology and content analysis tools to investigate variances in results by analyzing a wide range of case studies from various periods and settings. To understand the complex interaction between internal and external forces, it is necessary to identify patterns and unique combinations of components that lead to state disintegration. This qualitative study adds to our understanding of the many elements contributing to a disarray state. This research intends to inform policymakers, scholars, and practitioners involved in conflict prevention and state stability by providing a theoretical framework grounded in real-world situations and narratives.

### 3.7 Contribution to Existing Literature

By providing a thorough qualitative analysis that incorporates theoretical frameworks to shed light on the complex dynamics of Afghanistan's governance collapse, this research provides a substantial addition to the existing literature on state breakdown, foreign policy, and stability. This project seeks to answer research questions and test theories on the causes of state collapse and the effects on local, national, and international security.

Contributions include tailoring Realist, Constructivist, and Political Economy theories to the conditions of Afghanistan. Although these models have seen considerable usage in international relations, applying them to the study of the collapse of the Afghan government yields novel insights. The discourse on regional geopolitics benefits from realism's explanation of the power dynamics at play in determining Afghanistan's fate. Foreign policy decisions and state stability are affected by historical grievances and ethnic conflicts, which may be better understood through the lens of constructivism's focus on social identities and norms. By shedding light on the correlation between economic factors and political results, Political Economy sheds light on the complicated connections between corruption, inequality, and the collapse of states.

In addition, unlike quantitative studies, this one makes use of both available resources and qualitative techniques to provide a fresh viewpoint on state breakdown. The research highlights the complexities and context-specific complexity sometimes missed in quantitative studies by diving into historical tales, qualitative reports, and other sources. This method is consistent with the growing movement towards a more comprehensive understanding of phenomena that defy reduction to a single metric, such as statistics.

The contribution to existing literature also lies in addressing gaps and limitations present in prior research. Previous research has focused on isolated causes of state failure; this one aims to establish causal links between international pressures, internal political strife, graft, and economic inequality. The study's overarching goal is to provide policymakers and academics with a more nuanced understanding of the complex processes of state collapse by integrating these factors via a qualitative perspective.

Additionally, this study adds to the discourse on state-building, conflict resolution, and regional peace and security. For policymakers working to promote stability in Afghanistan and comparable situations, the study's identification of the interwoven nature of causes causing state disintegration provides useful insights. Because of the in-depth nature of qualitative analysis, a more nuanced knowledge of the root causes is gained, allowing for more precise treatments and strategies to be developed.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

**4.1 Case Study 1: Rise of the Taliban**

The Taliban's ascent to power in Afghanistan represents a watershed moment in the country's history, having far-reaching consequences for the safety and stability of the surrounding area. This case study analyses the complex web of causes that led to the rise of the Taliban, paying special attention to how internal dynamics and external forces merged to form that critical time. The case study answers the research questions and confirms previously developed assumptions about the larger context of state disintegration in Afghanistan.

The events that paved the way for the Taliban's ascension to power may be seen as a complicated narrative marked by pivotal turning points. The area's complex historical, political, and social forces all contributed to the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Significant upheavals plagued Afghanistan during the end of the 20th century, from the Soviet invasion 1979 to the Afghan civil war that broke out after the Soviets withdrew (Nojumi, 2009). These occurrences created the basis for many parties' subsequent rise to power, including the Taliban.

The Soviet invasion was a watershed moment because it galvanized Afghan mujahideen factions into a ferocious resistance movement that drew assistance from outside actors like the United States. The war profoundly damaged Afghan society and its institutions. The emergence of the Taliban may be partly attributed to the widespread lawlessness and factional infighting that characterized this period. More unrest engulfed Afghanistan in the early 1990s when the country's central government collapsed and warlords rose to power (Nojumi, 2009). As a result of the chaos and uncertainty that ensued, the Taliban were able to acquire support by portraying themselves as a stable authority that would enforce a puritanical version of Islamic law.

An important step in the Taliban's rise to power was 1996, when they overran Kabul. Women's rights, access to education, and cultural practices were severely curtailed during their

control due to a literal interpretation of Sharia law. The Taliban capitalized on regional discontent and presented themselves to the population as a solution to the instability that had dogged the nation for so long (Nojumi, 2009). There is a close connection between regional geopolitics and the circumstances that led to the creation of the Taliban. Because they protected Osama bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda network under the Taliban's control, the United States and its allies were forced invade Afghanistan in 2001.

The complex interaction between internal and external causes is at the heart of the Taliban's development. Crucial to this account are the roles played by many parties inside Afghanistan and the region in shaping the eventual rise to power of the Taliban. During this time, Afghanistan's political climate was heavily influenced by its neighbors, especially by regional authorities. Bashar (2021) highlights the complex interconnections characterizing regional dynamics, emphasizing the security consequences of the Taliban's growth in neighboring nations like Bangladesh.

Examining these regional players' goals, plans, and moves sheds light on how they contributed to the Taliban's ascent to power. The rise of the Taliban is shaped by these extraneous factors, contributing to the group's capabilities and goals. They highlight the multifaceted nature of state failure, which cuts across boundaries and includes complicated geopolitical dynamics. While external factors certainly played a role in the Taliban's meteoric ascent, internal dynamics were also crucial. Afghanistan's corruption and inefficient government systems paved the way for the Taliban to gain power and territory. Nojumi (2009) argues that the Taliban acquired a foothold in Afghanistan because of the government's internal shortcomings. The country is also vulnerable from within because of the complex relationship between domestic forces and regional dynamics.

Social and economic tensions largely fueled the emergence of the Taliban. Mental health problems among the displaced people were worsened by decades of collective trauma,

persistent humanitarian crises, and the reign of the Taliban (Mohd Saleem et al., 2021). These economic and social divisions aided the Taliban by resonating with a portion of the populace who shared the group's beliefs. The complex interaction between underlying structural concerns and the development of political groups is shown by the link between socioeconomic conditions and the advent of the Taliban.

When combined with other research, this case study's findings help illuminate the complex dynamics at play in Afghanistan's descent into anarchy and the establishment of the Taliban. This research deconstructs the many contributing causes to the development of the Taliban by focusing on the interplay between internal and external forces. These insights bridge empirical data with theoretical frameworks to fully describe how the case study results relate to the wider literature and theories covered in earlier chapters. Afghanistan's state collapse has many and varied causes, interconnected with internal governance problems, regional influences, and socioeconomic inequities.

### 4.2 Case Study 2: Downfall of President Ghani's Government

The case study of President Ghani's government's collapse reveals a web of interconnected factors that ultimately led to a dramatic transformation in Afghanistan's political environment. During this unstable time, a government that had been struggling with internal governance issues, foreign pressures, and deep-seated divisions finally collapsed. Afghanistan was at an impasse in August 2021 as the Taliban, a terrorist group intermittently competing for control of the nation, moved aggressively and encircled Kabul. The Taliban's fast gains showed they were an existential threat to the Ghani government. The situation deteriorated over time, which triggered a chain reaction that eventually led to the overthrow of the government. In light of the Taliban's impending attack on Kabul, a piece by Latifi (2021) on Al Jazeera sheds insight into the time President Ghani was compelled to evacuate the country. The President's near-capture was a depressing reminder of how low the nation had fallen. This turning moment

was the result of a buildup of problems, such as internal governance concerns, corruption, and foreign pressures.

There are several local and foreign forces at play at this historical juncture that, when taken together, explain the downfall of the regime. The precarious power dynamics inside Afghanistan play a pivotal role in this case. Bashir (2021) explains that the decline was due to a combination of internal governance difficulties that had been building up for some time and external factors. A society riven by ethnic differences and identity politics, a topic examined by Chohan (2021), stoked internal tensions and undermined the government's hold on power, making it more susceptible to subversion. The influence of outside factors becomes more apparent as we go through the case study. The devastating narrative provided by Graham-Harrison and Harding (2021) highlights the lightning speed with which the Taliban's advances brought an end to a mission that had been ongoing for two decades. The delicate balance of power dynamics that has shaped Afghanistan's political trajectory over the years is highlighted by this rapid destabilisation.

One of the most prominent factors in the breakdown of the administration is shown to be economic inequality. According to the research of Murtazashvili (2022), these inequalities weakened the legitimacy of the administration and sowed discontent among the public. The human element provided by Mohd Saleem et al. (2021) sheds light on the ways in which preexisting tensions were amplified by collective trauma and continuing humanitarian problems, hence increasing the government's susceptibility to instability. Corruption and problems with internal governance play significant roles as well. Bashir's (2021) narrative and the SIGAR report's (2022) findings both point to a buildup of systemic concerns that went unchecked and ultimately led to the public losing faith in government institutions. The joint news conference between President Obama and President Ghani (The White House Office of the news Secretary, 2015) provides context for understanding the governmental problems.

Mills (2021) elaborates on the government's frailty, drawing attention to the delicate balance of power and the difficulties of a change in leadership. The research from Commonslibrary.parliament.uk paints a picture of a country at war with itself due to political disagreements, economic inequality, and a loss of faith in government. These underlying flaws culminated as the Taliban ringed Kabul, producing a perfect storm that made the government more unsustainable. The chain of events that took place at this pivotal juncture exposes a nuanced interplay of elements that ultimately led to the downfall of the administration and the flight of President Ghani.

This case demonstrate that President Ghani's administration fell due to a complex interplay of causes rather than any one of them acting in isolation. The government's downfall may be understood in its entirety by considering the complex interaction of internal governance, foreign forces, ethnic divides, socioeconomic inequality, and identity politics. By illuminating the complex character of Afghanistan's political environment at this pivotal time, this case study aids in our understanding of the larger phenomenon of state collapse.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

**5.1 Introduction to the Analysis**

This research draws on a wide variety of secondary sources, including academic articles, policy papers, government comments, and news articles. Together, these documents provide a full picture of the many causes that have led to the collapse of the Afghan government. The interests and influence of regional powers, corruption within government institutions, ethnic conflicts, and socioeconomic disparity are examined as major elements that have been recognized as crucial in driving the processes of state breakdown. These aspects are crucial to the investigation, testing ideas about the interaction between internal and external factors influencing Afghanistan's state stability. Patterns, trends, and underlying dynamics that offer insight on the research subject are sought via a systematic evaluation of these factors across chosen instances and substantial text analysis. This research intends to add to the discussion of the effects of the collapse of the Afghan government on international relations by diving deeply into the available data.

**5.2 Hypothesis Findings**

*Hypothesis 1: Regional Powers' Interests*

Afghanistan's geopolitical history is heavily influenced by the actions and agendas of neighbouring states. According to this hypothesis, regional powers and other outside players factor into the decision to topple Afghanistan's government. Multiple scholarly works, policy studies, and expert perspectives all agree that regional powers have been crucial to Afghanistan's stability or lack thereof (Akbarzadeh, 2020; Clausen & Albrecht, 2021; Akbarzadeh & Ibrahimi, 2020).

Iran and Pakistan, two of Afghanistan's neighbours, have long attempted to influence the country's political process. Reasons for their strategic interests include the possibility for the Afghan state to ally with competing powers, the safety of its borders, and the stability of the area. These superpowers, as emphasised by Akbarzadeh (2020), have often used non-state

entities as proxies to achieve their objectives, leading to exacerbated internal disputes and a splintered political environment. One example is how Islamabad's intentions and effect on the Afghan insurgency have been questioned due to the Taliban's links to Pakistan.

The implications of regional interventions are multifaceted. First, they have helped to create a more militarized political climate in Afghanistan, which has aided the growth of rebel organizations. Power conflicts between numerous Afghan groups, each supported by a different regional actor, have shown that foreign backing for multiple factions has hampered the development of a cohesive central authority (Cordesman, 2021). Thirdly, regional meddling has hampered the Afghan government's legitimacy by fostering views that it is a foreign puppet. This has reduced popular confidence in the government and hindered its capacity to rule.

These geographical factors have been connected to the comeback and ultimate government takeover by the Taliban. Aid in the form of safe havens, material support, and diplomatic cover has often come from outside sources. Government control of the country's territory has been weakened because of the actions of regional powers that have made it easier for the Taliban to reorganise, plan, and carry out assaults (Giustozzi, 2021). The intricate web of regional interests also makes peace discussions difficult, since different agendas and squabbles often stand in the way of success (Herd, 2021).

A good example of how the interests of regional powers connect with domestic dynamics is the downfall of the Afghan government. Even while countries like Iran and Russia were wary about the Taliban's return to power, the situation eventually shifted in their favour. To protect its own interests and forestall the rise of instability on its borders, Iran forged links with the Taliban as the Afghan government quickly collapsed (Martin & Sinkkonen, 2022). Such realignments in the area have far-reaching effects for the internal politics and international relations of Afghanistan.

The hypothesis that regional powers' interests have played a crucial role in the collapse of the Afghan government is therefore supported. Weaknesses in the Afghan government may be traced back to the geopolitical calculations of neighbouring nations, the historical actions of those governments, and the strategic alliances formed among them. Insight into the larger issues of state stability in areas characterised by foreign intervention and proxy wars may be gleaned from an examination of these processes, which highlight the intricate interaction between internal and external variables.

*Hypothesis 2: Internal Factors - Corruption and Governance Challenges*
Internal concerns, including corruption and governance issues, played a significant role in the breakdown of the Afghan state. Corruption's destructive effects on state institutions and public confidence have been well documented in the scholarly and professional literature (Dodge, 2021; Sahar & Kaunert, 2022). Furthermore, the government's incapacity to provide basic services, keep the peace, and meet the demands of its inhabitants may be traced back to poor governance (Murtazashvili, 2022).

Afghanistan's political climate has been plagued by corruption for quite some time, slowing progress and hindering state-building efforts. The diversion of public finances for private gain has stifled economic development and damaged public trust in government (Dodge, 2021). Public disenchantment has been compounded by the government's failure to deliver on its promises due to the misappropriation of funds meant for development projects (Sullivan, 2021). This lack of confidence has made it easier for terrorist organisations like the Taliban to take advantage of popular anger.

Problems with governance have contributed to the severity of the situation. Disillusionment has spread among the Afghan community due to the government's failure to deliver basic services, enforce the rule of law, and guarantee the safety of its citizens. Insurgent organisations have stepped into the void created by poor government, offering peace and justice

in places where state institutions have failed (Murtazashvili, 2022). Moreover, internal conflicts, factionalism, and a lack of cooperation across government institutions have weakened the state's capacity to solve the difficulties it confronts (Prantl & Goh, 2022).

Corruption and deteriorating governance are threatening the security of states. Insurgent groups have been able to increase their authority and influence because of a lack of governmental presence caused by ineffective administration (Murtazashvili, 2022). Furthermore, huge portions of the people have been alienated due to the impression of a corrupt and incompetent administration, which has led to a decline in support for the state and an openness to the alternative forms of governance provided by insurgent groups (Sahill, 2023).

The political instability in Afghanistan may be traced back to the interconnected problems of corruption and poor governance. Corruption in the government and security forces hampers international attempts to strengthen state institutions (Cordesman, 2021). This is an example of how internal variables interact with external dynamics. Corruption undermines the effectiveness of help provided by external actors by diverting funds away from their intended uses (Clark, 2020).

The evidence strongly supports the hypothesis that internal factors, particularly corruption and governance challenges, have played a significant role in the downfall of the Afghan government. Governance inadequacies have left the government poorly able to deliver critical services and preserve security, while corruption has destroyed public faith in government and weakened state institutions. These internal flaws have exacerbated the difficulties caused by external dynamics, hastening the decline of the state.

*Hypothesis 3: Ethnic Diversity and Historical Disputes*

Afghanistan's history is marked by the struggles of its many ethnic groups for recognition and power within the government. However, this variety has often led to political struggle and discord, undermining the state's efforts to forge a coherent national identity

(Ibrahimi, 2023). Conflicts within the country have been fostered by ethnic differences, which insurgents like the Taliban have used to their advantage to weaken the state (Akbarzadeh & Ibrahimi, 2020).

The argument proposes that lingering distrust and hostility between ethnic groups have hampered cooperative administration and jeopardised state stability due to previous disagreements. These disagreements have impeded the government's attempts to create a unified and representative political system, often exacerbated by historical grievances and conflicting claims (Ibrahimi, 2023). In this part, we'll look at how these disagreements have hampered the government's capacity to respond to urgent problems, keep the peace, and serve the interests of its constituents.

The two cases support the concept by showing how ethnic diversity and historical disagreements have been major contributors to the disintegration of states. As shown in Case Study 1, the development of the Taliban was aided by the government's failure to alleviate ethnic tensions and ensure that all groups were fairly represented in parliament (Akbarzadeh & Ibrahimi, 2020). The state's authority was weakened, and its ability to negotiate and interact globally was hindered due to ethnic differences and historical grievances that created fertile ground for insurrection. In Case Study 2, ethnic tensions exacerbated the failure of the Afghan government to respond cohesively to growing threats (Bashir, 2021). The government's credibility and stability suffered due to its inability to resolve ethnic tensions, adequately address economic inequality, and provide basic services.

Afghanistan's leadership has struggled to define a unified national perspective on international issues due to internal conflicts caused by the country's ethnic diversity and historical rivalries. Because of internal disagreements, the government is less effective in diplomatic discussions and engagements with foreign players (Giustozzi, 2021). Afghanistan's

ethnic conflicts have been exacerbated by neighbouring governments, making the country more susceptible to foreign influence (Akbarzadeh, 2020).

Case studies and existing literature provide considerable evidence supporting the hypothesis linking ethnic diversity and historical conflicts to state dissolution. Internal strife, weak administration, and ineffective foreign involvement result from Afghanistan's long history of ethnic differences and unsolved issues. The accounts show how resolving past grievances and fostering more inclusive governance are essential to attaining political stability and strengthening a government's ability to deal with complicated internal and foreign concerns.

*Hypothesis 4: Socioeconomic Inequality and Government Legitimacy*

Socioeconomic disparity and the stability of a nation's governance system are important areas of research, especially for those experiencing internal strife. The complicated interaction between economic inequality and the legitimacy of the government may impact both local and international settings. Afghanistan has long struggled with widespread socioeconomic disparity, with some areas benefiting from more resources and opportunities than others. This discrepancy is intrinsically linked to the legitimacy of the government. Many residents of underprivileged and disadvantaged communities view the government negatively because of its perceived indifference to their concerns (Higgins & Novelli, 2020). This makes people more receptive to the alternative types of government proposed by rebel groups.

Socioeconomic gaps have permeated Afghanistan's history, with far-reaching effects on the country's capacity to govern and maintain peace. When institutions of higher learning, medical treatment, and economic opportunity are concentrated in a few areas, it reinforces the marginalised population's experience of being left out and unjustly treated. People see this inequality as the government favouring certain citizens over others breeds anger towards the central government (Simangan et al., 2023). Alternative sources of authority, such as insurgent

organisations, acquire support as they capitalise on the disillusionment these marginalised communities feel due to a decline in faith in the government.

A case study-based perspective reveals that areas struggling with greater socioeconomic disparity also experienced more threats to the legitimacy of their governments. As shown in Case Study 1, the growth of the Taliban, areas with high poverty rates and inadequate infrastructure, were ideal recruiting and training grounds for the insurgent organisation. As a result of the government's ineffectiveness un resolving these inequalities, support for alternative forms of administration has grown (Latifi, 2021; Akbari & True, 2022). Just as preexisting socioeconomic disparities undermined public faith in the state's capacity to care for its residents in Case Study 2, they also contributed to the collapse of the Afghan government. Citizens in disadvantaged areas were disillusioned when government institutions failed to meet their needs and redistributed funds (Sullivan, 2021; Threlkeld & Easterly, 2021).

Public services also feel the effects of economic inequality's effect on the government's credibility. Communities ravaged by poverty and misery frequently lack basic services, further undermining citizens' faith in their government. The government's incapacity to provide these essentials feeds the narrative that it is either unable or unwilling to better its people's lives. When voters feel their current government isn't working for them, they're more prone to look for leadership elsewhere.

Social and economic inequalities have consequences that go well beyond national borders. With its legitimacy in tatters, the administration can no longer conduct foreign affairs with the same degree of success as before. If a government is considered unpopular by its people, it will have less leverage in international talks (Prantl & Goh, 2022). This hinders its capacity to influence its international status and advocate for its interests abroad.

This research concludes that the legitimacy of a government and, by extension, the stability of a state are affected by socioeconomic disparity. The case studies show that distrust

in government is more likely to occur in areas with uneven distribution of resources and inadequate access to basic services. These dynamics influence internal stability and reduce a government's capacity to interact effectively internationally. The hypothesis linking socioeconomic inequality with government legitimacy aligns with the literature and highlights the pressing need for fair development and governance solutions to reduce the likelihood of state failure in nations with comparable problems.

## 5.5 Comparative Analysis and Synthesis

The case studies illustrate the complex interplay between foreign and internal causes that have weakened Afghanistan's government. The intricate interaction of interests of regional powers, internal governance flaws, ethnic conflicts, and socioeconomic inequities is evident in both the emergence of the Taliban (Case Study 1) and the collapse of President Ghani's administration (Case Study 2). The case studies show how regional powers' interests affect stability in Afghanistan. Two recent studies (Bashar, 2021; Giustozzi, 2021) agree that regional players have been crucial in reshaping Afghanistan's political environment. Regional players striving to further their interests helped the Taliban rise to power in Case Study 1 (Akbarzadeh & Ibrahimi, 2020). Like President Ghani's administration, the collapse was hastened by the withdrawal of assistance from outside (Bashir, 2021). These incidents highlight the vital role that outside parties play in determining the stability of the Afghan government. Both case studies highlight the need to address internal governance issues and prevent corruption. The government's ability to deliver services and maintain security has been affected by the public's loss of faith in its institutions due to corrosion (Dodge, 2021; Sahar & Kaunert, 2022). Both the government's incapacity to address social inequities and the Taliban's ascent as a result of popular dissatisfaction are examples of this. The government's capacity to respond to threats has been further eroded by internal dynamics marked by rivalries and disintegration (Prantl & Goh, 2022).

In both examples, the impact of racial and historical tensions becomes clear. First, Akbarzadeh and Ibrahimi's (2020) case study shows how ethnic differences helped the Taliban ascend to power. Bashar and 2020's case study shows how difficult it is to manage ethnic conflicts in government. This synthesis sheds insight on how resentments from the past fuel internal disputes and hamper state cohesiveness (Ibrahimi, 2023) amongst groups within a country. Both examples highlight how income inequality may work against the government's legitimacy. Cahill (2023) argues that increasing income and wealth disparities undermine public confidence and government support. Disillusionment and a decline in legitimacy result from a government's incapacity to meet the requirements of its inhabitants and the collapse of state services (Murtazashvili, 2022). Corruption distorts aid from external players, making the problems much more difficult to solve (Clark, 2020).

The data from the two case studies were synthesised to highlight the interconnection of these causes of the collapse of the Afghan state. Lack of internal administration, regional interests, ethnic differences, and socioeconomic inequalities all play a role in the failure of the Afghan government, making it difficult to pinpoint a single reason. To overcome these obstacles, we need concerted efforts considering the interplay between these elements. The relevance of the hypotheses in making sense of the political instability in Afghanistan is reaffirmed by the results of this comparative study and synthesis. Evidence from the case studies shows that fixing the complex problems that led to the government's demise requires a sweeping strategy. Policymakers may improve their efforts to promote stability, enhance governance, and address the core causes of Afghanistan's state disintegration if they consider the intricate interaction of these elements.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

## 6.1 Main Findings

The purpose of this research was to examine the many causes that culminated in the fall of the Afghani government. By examining the emergence of the Taliban and the collapse of President Ghani's administration as case studies, this study sheds light on the intricate interaction between internal and external processes that led to Afghanistan's state disintegration. The results confirmed the importance of the hypotheses put forward in this research. Afghanistan's political environment was significantly shaped by the interests of regional powers, worsening the country's internal difficulties. Corruption and poor administration hampered the government's capacity to provide services and fostered an atmosphere where rebel groups could capitalise on citizens' frustrations. Internal tensions were exacerbated by the country's ethnic variety and historical issues, which also hampered its capacity to make sound judgements about its foreign policy. Inequality in wealth and opportunity weakened public support for the government and opened the door to new political movements.

## 6.2 Significance of the Study

This research is useful for academics and has crucial practical ramifications. Afghanistan's state collapse has been thoroughly analysed, providing scholars and researchers with detailed insight into the complex interaction of regional, internal, ethnic, and socioeconomic elements. This all-encompassing view adds to the theoretical framework of state collapse and provides useful insights for further studies in conflict analysis, international relations, and the dynamics of government.

The findings of the research are also useful for policymakers and practitioners. The results highlight the necessity for a holistic strategy to combat instability in Afghanistan, showing that progress cannot be made by tackling only one aspect of the problem. Regional

interests, internal governance issues, ethnic conflicts, and socioeconomic inequalities are all interconnected and must be considered for policies to succeed. Policymakers in Afghanistan can better support long-term stability, peace, and development by identifying and resolving these complicated linkages. Research like this has the potential to inform international efforts to avert state disintegration and resolve conflicts in other places with comparable issues, which is a significant contribution. Unravelling the complex web of causes that precipitated the fall of the Afghan government, this study provides useful insights that may be used in developing interventions and tactics in other conflict-prone regions, bolstering international stability.

## 6.3 Limitations

Although this research provides important new information on the complex factors that led to the collapse of Afghanistan's government, its shortcomings should not be overlooked. To begin, the study may be inaccurate since it is based on secondary sources, which, although extensive, may have biases or insufficient information. Furthermore, because of the complexity and fluidity of political events, it is difficult to pin down definitive causal links among the identified components. The study's limited generalizability may also result from its exclusive emphasis on a particular era. Last but not least, the study may not consider certain recent events due to the dynamic nature of the situation in Afghanistan. Despite these caveats, the authors hope their research will add to the ongoing conversation on what factors lead to the collapse of states.

## 6.4 Areas for Further Research

This finding opens up various new avenues for enquiry. To further grasp the reality on the ground, the case studies should include primary data collecting, interviews, and fieldwork. More research on how civil society, the media, and education affect state stability might shed

light on the complexity of the problem. Further investigation into the effects of Afghanistan's demise on international relations, regional security, and global governance is also fruitful.

In conclusion, the results of this investigation highlight the interwoven character of the events that led to the downfall of the Afghan government. The ethnic variety, socioeconomic gaps, and major regional interests of major countries all contributed significantly to Afghanistan's political instability. Understanding the connections between these factors is critical for developing solutions that go to the heart of what's causing the collapse of the Afghan government and pave the path for a more secure and prosperous future for the country.

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