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Democratic Peace Theory and the Development

of Democracy in Afghanistan

by

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Democratic Peace Theory and the Development of Democracy in Afghanistan

Thesis Abstract—Idaho State University (2020)

This thesis examines and analyzes the development of democracy in Afghanistan since 9/11, and examines that development through the lens of the Democratic Peace Theory, which stipulates at its core that democracies do not fight each other. I pose two research questions within this thesis: “Since 9/11, has Afghanistan had a democracy?”, followed by “If Afghanistan does have a democracy, how has its status changed?” To answer these questions, I utilize aspects from the Democratic Peace Theory, specialized data from Polity IV, election data and results from Afghanistan’s elections since 2004, and I analyze Afghanistan’s history since 1947, in order to demonstrate how Afghanistan has continued to be an unsolvable problem for the United States.

Key Words:

Afghanistan

Democracy

Elections

Anocracy

Monadic Theory

Dyadic Theory

Chapter I: Introduction

When Donald Trump took office on January 20th, 2017, Americans who had voted for him were expectant that he would fulfill his campaign's message of "Make America Great Again". Among his campaign promises was the desire to realign the foreign policy of the United States to a more nationally-oriented one, in which the United States would serve its own interests. A key focus of the Trump campaign's foreign policy was centered on the continued American involvement in the Middle East and Afghanistan. "We went from mistakes in Iraq to Egypt to Libya, to President Obama's line in the sand in Syria. Each of these actions have helped to throw the region into chaos and gave ISIS the space it needs to grow and prosper...It all began with a dangerous idea that we could make western democracies out of countries that had no experience or interests in becoming a western democracy" (Trump, 2016).

This remark in a campaign speech in September of 2016 had significant implications. For a decade and a half at that point, the United States had endured an unceasingly high tempo of military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya. The September 11th, 2001 attacks drew the United States into committing significant military resources into invasions (Afghanistan and Iraq) and extended bombing campaigns and involvement in civil wars (Libya and Syria). With the latter two, the United States had been involved with since 2001 and 2003, respectively, and Trump capitalized on Americans' overall dissatisfaction with the wars' length and lack of significant return and progress. Trump's campaign calling into question United States' involvement in those two countries was a far cry from previous administrations' stances. For instance, in a March 2006 speech to troops in Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, then-President George W. Bush had this to say regarding United States' involvement in Afghanistan:

“Democracies yield peace, and that's what we want. What's going to happen in Afghanistan is a neighborhood that has been desperate for light instead of darkness is going to see what's possible when freedom arrives. What's going to happen in Afghanistan, it's going to send a signal not only in the neighborhood, but around the world, that freedom is the potential. The United States of America believes that freedom is universal. Freedom is not our gift to the world, freedom is the gift from an Almighty to every single person in this world” (Bush, 2006).

His speech hardly came as a surprise. George W. Bush was a key proponent of what is known as Democratic Peace Theory, which at its base definition is the theory that democracies simply do not wage war on each other. Throughout Bush’s time in office, he publicly stated that he was a believer that Iraq and Afghanistan could make themselves into stable democracies, and that their embrace of democratic forms of government would sound the death knell of radical Islamic terrorism in the region: “I’ve got great faith in democracies to promote peace. And that's why I’m such a strong believer that the way forward in the Middle East, the broader Middle East, is to promote democracy. I readily concede there are skeptics, people who say democracy is not possible in certain societies. But, remember, that was said right after World War II with Japan. And today one of the people that I work closest with is my friend, Prime Minister Koizumi. And it's remarkable to me that we sit down at the same table, talking about keeping the peace in places like North Korea, and it really wasn't all that long ago in the march of history that we were enemies” (Bush, 2004).

Bush’s sentiments in that East Room press conference in 2004 were echoed by then British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who also considered himself a fierce advocate for the power of democracy as the most surefire guarantor of regional peace. At the time, Afghanistan had held its first elections in October of 2004, a month prior to the East Room press conference, and

hopes were initially high that a democratic government would act as a stabilizing force for the rest of the country; a month later the first administration of an Afghan republic would officially take power in December of 2004 with Hamid Karzai's electoral victory. The hopes would soon give way to the reality that declaring a nation a democracy was not a guaranteed path to peace, and that the democratic peace theory advocated by Presidents such as George W. Bush and Bill Clinton was and remains considerably more complex than a base idea rooted in and inspired by international liberalism theory. The reality notwithstanding, the desire of the United States to pursue policy in Afghanistan based upon Democratic Peace Theory was strong enough that President Barack Obama, who succeeded Bush in office in 2009, was an advocate for it: "[The agreement we signed today] sends a clear message to the Afghan people: As you stand up, you will not stand alone. It establishes the basis for our cooperation over the next decade, including shared commitments to combat terrorism and strengthen democratic institutions. It supports Afghan efforts to advance development and dignity for their people. And it includes Afghan commitments to transparency and accountability, and to protect the human rights of all Afghans—men and women, boys and girls" (Obama, 2012).

The reality is that despite the United States being directly involved in Afghanistan for nearly 20 years, and despite our efforts to create a functional democracy in that same span of time, the government there is still unstable and has little legitimacy among Afghans. Thus, the historic reliance on the idea that creating a democracy will create a stable government is not accurate for Afghanistan. It is clear that the United States cannot go into a country and create a top-down, Western style democracy, expecting it to work out in the long run. This begs two questions: since 9/11, has Afghanistan had a democratic government? And if Afghanistan does have a democracy, how has its status changed? These questions can be addressed by looking at

the Democratic Peace Theory, an international relations theory that has been relied upon to forge an idealized vision of Afghanistan's government and society, and how we may need to look toward other theories or solutions.

Chapter II: Democracy

What Makes a Democracy?

Democracy is often taken for granted as a stand-alone concept that has simply existed on its own, and that the rights and benefits of a democratic society are a mere part of the package that are guaranteed. It is defined by Encyclopaedia Britannica as “literally, rule by the people” (Britannica, 2020). More elaborately, it is defined by that same entity as “a system of government in which laws, policies, leadership, and major undertakings of a state or other polity are directly or indirectly decided by the ‘people,’ a group historically constituted by only a minority of the population...but generally understood since the mid-20th century to include all (or nearly all) adult citizens” (Britannica, 2020). Rarely is it given further thought beyond those basic ideals. In truth, what constitutes a democracy has been debated fiercely since Antiquity, and among modern-day political scientists and observers, the democratic identity is not as cut-and-dry as it is assumed to be. It is generally accepted that democracies allow voting, guarantee human rights, and strive to secure the general welfare of its citizens. It is also accepted by countless free trade advocates that democracies, especially stable ones, are more conducive to overall economic prosperity, due to the wide range of freedoms offered and exercised by its citizens. These freedoms, on that note, are accepted to be “universal”, especially in Western democratic nations and organizations, and are enshrined in their various constitutions and legal codes. This is a key point to bear in mind, in particular to the foreign policy aims of the United

States in lesser-developed nations such as Afghanistan. Even international organizations are overwhelming advocates for democratic forms of government, and enshrine a “universally” accepted definition of what a democracy is. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed towards the end of 1948, promotes in its articles countless pro-democratic stances, such as the guarantee of rights and freedoms with no regard for any discrimination (Article 2), equality before the law (Article 7), and freedom of thought and expression (Articles 18 and 19). The UDHR even mentions democratic society outright in Article 29: “In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society” (UDHR, 1948).

There are more statistically-driven analyses of what makes a democracy, ranging from Dean Babst’s 1964 and 1972 studies to the Polity Data Series, which was conceived by Dr. Ted Robert Gurr in the late 1960’s. The Polity Project is a large-scale analysis that analyzes the rise and fall of government types from a period starting in 1800 to the present day, and charts them using measurements to gain an understanding of how a government is developing. It is continually updated as time and political developments progress, and it is currently in its 4th iteration (referred to as “Polity IV”), with a 5th series currently in development. It contains data taken from 1994 to the present day, with that data relating to statistics that measure political stability, successful elections, representation and whether or not the government of a nation is stable or unstable. Its measurements work by breaking governments down into a “regime authority spectrum” that embraces 6 different categories: Full Democracy, Democracy, Open Anocracy, Closed Anocracy, Autocracy, and a final category that groups failed states and states

with little data to offer, with Afghanistan being grouped in that last category as of Polity IV's last update in 2014. It further plots those categories with a scale that works as such: "The 'Polity Score' captures this regime authority spectrum on a 21-point scale ranging from -10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy). The Polity scores can also be converted into regime categories in a suggested three-part categorization of 'autocracies' (-10 to -6), 'anocracies' (-5 to +5 and three special values: -66, -77 and -88), and 'democracies' (+6 to +10)" (Marshall, 1995). The special values of -66, -77 and -88 are labeled as "Interruption Periods", "Interregnum Periods", and "Transition Periods" respectively. The difference between "Interruption Periods" and "Interregnum Periods" is that the former is the product of a foreign invasion, and the latter being internalized as a complete breakdown of domestic authority.

A question that emerged during the later stages of the Cold War and emphasized in the years after 1991 was the question regarding what constituted a democracy outside of a statistical analysis like the Polity Data Series. These stipulations were laid out with practicality and policy in mind—that is to say, what constituted a democratic nation. Initially, Small and Singer, the two political scientists that brought Dean Babst's studies on democratic war analysis to light, reasoned simply that a country that allowed opposition parties to run with at least 10% of its people being able or desiring to vote could call itself a democracy. This was not satisfactory since it was highly simplistic and too broad, and further definitions were pushed forward. By 1990 a generally accepted view was that democracies could be called such if they allowed free markets, representation, and a fair judicial system, as well as embracing liberalizing reforms and guaranteeing human rights. Samuel Huntington's definition of a democracy ran along those lines, as well. For Huntington, his criteria went as such: "a twentieth-century political system is democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through

fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes, and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote” (Huntington, 1991; Russett, 1994). Ray, who was cited earlier in regards to democratic nations’ relations with each other, opined that democracies were nations that could guarantee over 50% of a voting public (Ray, 1998).

Another, more recent definition concerning on what makes a democracy comes from Zoltan Acs of the London School of Economics: “Democracy consists of four key elements: (1) a political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections; (2) the active participation of the people, as citizens, in political and civic life; (3) the protection of the human rights of all citizens; and (4) the rule of law, where by all laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens” (Acs, 2015). Adding to the question concerning the nature of democracies and how one goes about classifying them, came the realization that once defined, democratic nations could be analyzed in how they interacted with each other on the international scene. This ideal is manifested in what is known as the Democratic Peace Theory, the concept that democracies do not fight other democracies. For this thesis, the ideas from the Democratic Peace Theory will be used to assist in determining what the United States did wrong in Afghanistan and why Afghanistan’s democracy has not yielded the results that the United States had hoped for.

What Is Democratic Peace Theory?

“The practicability (objective reality) of this idea of federation, which should gradually spread to all states and thus lead to perpetual peace, can be proved. For if fortune directs that a powerful and enlightened people can make itself a republic, which by its nature must be inclined to perpetual peace, this gives a fulcrum to the federation with other states so that they may adhere to it and thus secure freedom under the idea of

the law of nations. By more and more such associations, the federation may be gradually extended” (Kant, 1795).

Democratic Peace Theory, or DPT for short, is a theory within international relations that suggests that nations with democratic governments do not go to war with each other. The reasons for this phenomenon are myriad, and are explained in-depth in the following subsections. DPT has been around for two and a half centuries, but it did not take its present and titled form until the latter half of the 20th century. Since the 1990’s, DPT has evolved to where there are still debates over the nature of the theory and many of its specific traits. To understand the full picture of DPT and why it’s important, it is necessary to review its history and who its proponents were. To clarify, DPT did not attain its name until the 1960’s, so any references to DPT prior to that time period are merely inferences or the result of ideas that help establish its foundation as time progresses.

The Evolution of Democratic Peace Theory

Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant was the first to give DPT form. In his work *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, Kant detailed that for there to be a lasting peace between nations, it would be preferable if every nation on the planet adopted a republican constitution. Kant made it very clear that the nations were to be republics, not democracies—“Republicanism is the political principle of the separation of the executive power [the administration] from the legislative; despotism is that of the autonomous execution by the state of laws which it has itself decreed. Thus in a despotism the public will is administered by the ruler as his own will. Of the three forms of the state, that of democracy is, properly speaking, necessarily a despotism, because it establishes an executive power in which “all” decide for or even against one who does not agree; that is, “all,” who are not quite all, decide, and this is a

contradiction of the general will with itself and with freedom” (Kant, 1795). Therefore, for Kant, a world comprised of constitutional republics headed by a sovereign government elected by the people and in full command of accountable executive power, would be the best and most successful opportunity at securing the peace.

Going back further in time, Thomas Paine also entertained the idea that republics create permanent peace. In his iconic pamphlet *Common Sense*, Paine’s primary argument was that the people of the British colonies in North America ought to band together to overthrow what he perceived as an oppressive monarchic form of government and replace it with an egalitarian republic. While that remained the focused point of his pamphlet, interestingly Paine made the argument that a republic comprised of citizens that enjoy equal rights and status, is a republic that remains keen to keep the peace. “Where there are no distinctions there can be no superiority; perfect equality affords no temptation. The Republics of Europe are all (and we may say always) in peace. Holland and Switzerland are without wars, foreign or domestic. Monarchical governments, it is true, are never long at rest: the crown itself is a temptation to enterprising ruffians at home; and that degree of pride and insolence ever attendant on regal authority, swells into a rupture with foreign powers in instances where a republican government, by being formed on more natural principles, would [negotiate] the mistake” (Paine, 1776). Paine did not mention it specifically in the way that Kant or Alexis de Tocqueville did, but it was an important (albeit unconnected forerunner) to DPT. The issue with Paine’s remarks on peaceful republics was one of reality, however—Holland during Paine’s time was very militarily active in maintaining its overseas empire, and Switzerland was peaceful due to its geographical situation, being a landlocked country dominated by mountainous terrain.

Paine's argument for republics being inherently more peaceful than monarchies or other forms of government was primarily rooted in historical idealism and an anti-Semitic mindset. "In the early ages of the world, according to the scripture chronology there were no kings; the consequence of which was, there were no wars; it is the pride of kings which throws mankind into confusion. Holland, without a king hath enjoyed more peace for this last century than any of the monarchical governments in Europe. Antiquity favours the same remark; for the quiet and rural lives of the first Patriarchs have a happy something in them, which vanishes when we come to the history of Jewish royalty...monarchy is ranked in scripture as one of the sins of the Jews, for which a curse in reserve is denounced against them" (Paine, 1776).

Kant, unlike Paine, argued that republics were peaceful from a more realistic point of view and with a decidedly more philosophical bent. Kant wrote that "the republican constitution, besides the purity of its origin (having sprung from the pure source of the concept of law), also gives a favorable prospect for the desired consequence, i.e., perpetual peace. The reason is this: if the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide that war should be declared (and in this constitution it cannot but be the case), nothing is more natural than that they would be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war" (Kant, 1795, Section II). Kant's belief that citizens want to enjoy peace and prosperity, while enjoying the benefits of a stable society, would be elaborated further by one Alexis de Tocqueville, albeit indirectly and without being referenced.

In his most well-known work, *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville elaborates more on what Kant was grasping at, making the point that for a democracy to be peaceful in general, it must have internal equality among its citizens. Divisions by class, wealth, trade, and status, in de Tocqueville's observation, served only to create disunity that made it easier for a ruling class to

exploit in order to push for any series of wars. But when a democracy rids itself of those divisions and starts spreading those ideals abroad so that citizens in other nations identify with commonalities, those same nations begin to look upon wars with disfavor.

“When the principle of equality is in growth, not only amongst a single nation, but amongst several neighboring nations at the same time, as is now the case in Europe, the inhabitants of these different countries, notwithstanding the [dissimilarity] of language, of customs, and of laws, nevertheless resemble each other in their equal dread of war and their common love of peace. It is in vain that ambition or anger puts arms in the hands of princes; they are appeased in spite of [themselves] by a species of general apathy and goodwill, which makes the sword drop from their grasp, and wars become more rare. (Tocqueville, 1835).

Tocqueville made another observation that could be considered a key forerunner to modern DPT, and one with an ominous historical precedent. He remarked that “thus, on the one hand, it is extremely difficult in democratic ages to draw nations into hostilities; but on the other hand, it is almost impossible that any two of them should go to war without embroiling the rest. The interests of all are so interlaced, their opinions and their wants so much alike, that none can remain quiet when the others stir. Wars therefore become more rare, but when they break out they spread over a larger field. Neighboring democratic nations not only become alike in some respects, but they eventually grow to resemble each other in almost all. This similitude of nations has consequences of great [importance] in relation to war” (Tocqueville, 1835, p. 737). In that remark, he laid down without directly mentioning it that when democracies do go to war, it is often a major endeavor that can encompass any large number of nations for any period of time.

Overall, Tocqueville's contribution to DPT, without referencing it specifically, was that stable democracies overall tend to enjoy better living conditions—their citizens are kept happy, well-fed, employed and stable, and because of this set of conditions, thus far less likely to risk all of that by going off to a war that would likely result in catastrophe for both conqueror and conquered. His other point, that citizens must enjoy a certain level of rights, freedoms and satisfaction, was a point that would come to be debated in earnest by the 1990's and early 2000's as academics would begin picking at the finer aspects of DPT.

Modern DPT's actual start can be traced to criminologist Dean Babst, who worked for the Wisconsin State Department of Public Welfare in 1964. Babst had published a statistical analysis of democracies going to war. In "*Elective Governments—A Force for Peace*", Babst quoted British historian and jurist James Bryce, 1st Viscount Bryce, on the reasoning behind his statistical analysis: "A century ago there was in the Old World only one tiny spot in which the working of democracy could be studied. A few of the ancient rural cantons of Switzerland had recovered their freedom after the fall of Napoleon, and were governing themselves as they had done from the earlier Middle Ages, but they were too small and their conditions too peculiar to furnish instruction to larger communities or throw much light on popular governments in general. Nowhere else in Europe did the people rule...when the American Republic began its national life with the framing and adoption of the Federal Constitution in 1787-89, the only materials which history furnished to its founders were those which the republics of antiquity had provided, so it was to these materials that both those founders and the men of the First French Revolution constantly recurred for examples to be followed or avoided" (Bryce 1921, Babst 1964). This was critical for Babst's study, and key to understanding Babst's motives in undertaking it—until after World War One, studies pertaining to democratic governments and

how they relate to each other were nonexistent simply due to the lack of them in the world in 1900. By the time Bryce had written his book in 1921, the number of nations claiming democratic forms of government had grown exponentially, thus providing Babst a few decades down the line with a larger sample size to work with.

Babst elaborated further on Bryce by quoting a study undertaken by Quincy Wright, a political scientist at the University of Chicago in 1941. Wright had conducted a study regarding international relations and war in his 1942 study titled "*A Study of War*": "[Quincy Wright] and his associates list 116 major wars from 1789 to 1941 (date of publication) [of Wright's study], with 438 participating countries. An analysis of this list shows that no wars have been fought between independent nations with elective governments. Such nations have fought many wars against autocratic governments, and even some against their own colonies who wanted to become independent, but these nations have not waged war against each other" (Babst, 1964). His statistical analysis broke the Second World War down as such: "During the Second World War, there were 103 war relationships between the independent nations. The only war relationships counted were those that occurred before the nations lost their independence. A declaration of war, or an invasion of a country without a declaration of war, were counted as war relationships...with this many war relationships the probability of war between any two nations was .078" (Babst, 1964). He continued: "Between the 14 elective nations involved there were...91 different ways they could have fought one another. Since there were no wars declared between them, the proportion of wars fought to that possible was...0. Again testing the difference between these proportions, it was found to be statistically significant on the 1 percent level" (Babst, 1964). What these equations meant was that despite the Second World War involving so many countries, actual conflict between all of those countries was minimal and

focused—one side of nations was fighting another side of nations, instead of being involved in a brutal free-for-all that typically characterized long-term wars between alliances in the past. Simply put, the democratic nations had stuck together and would not declare war on each other, even if there were enough key differences between them to motivate suspicion, such as the differences between the Soviet Union, the British Empire, and the United States.

Babst also observed that despite there being no statistical analysis of wars fought between 1945 and 1963, a general overview of any main wars since 1941 would be consistent with this analysis. Finland, he remarked, was the sole nation with a democratic government that aligned itself with the Axis powers during the Second World War; its reasons however were purely pragmatic and not ideological in nature. Overall, Babst's findings would not gain traction until later, even after publishing a simpler study in 1972. Professor James Lee Ray of Vanderbilt University's Department of Political Science noted this as well, and added that "probably few would be aware of Babst's work had it not been cited by Small & Singer (1976), who attempted to discredit Babst's assertion that democratic states are peaceful in their relationships with each other" (Ray, 1998). He continued to add how Babst's study gained attention by noting that "their attempt suffered from several shortcomings. The most serious was their inability to compare the rates of war proneness for democratic and autocratic states. Their data analyses were limited to the question of whether wars involving democratic states have historically been significantly different in length or in degree of violence than wars involving only autocratic states...Nevertheless, the paper by Small & Singer helped evoke the interest in the democratic peace proposition manifested some two decades later. It saved from obscurity Babst's claim about the peaceful nature of relationships among democratic states. More importantly, it

distinguished the national-level relationship between regime type and international war proneness from the dyadic-level relationship between regime type and conflict” (Ray, 1998).

Democratic Peace Theory: Recent Developments

On Christmas Day, 1991, the Soviet Union, a nation with a Communist regime and one of the world’s two superpowers, collapsed and in its place emerged a plethora of new countries, all of which stressed their new status as republics and democracies. It was the hope of the United States, as well as the international community, that with nations taking on democratic forms of government, as well as taking on liberalizing reforms to ensure more or less uniform human rights, that it would spell a long period of global peace. Starting out, some of these republics took to democratic forms of government very well, such as the Baltic countries. Others had a more difficult time, like Russia, Ukraine and the Central Asian republics. Yugoslavia, another multi-ethnic nation, collapsed into several smaller countries as well, with only Slovenia and Croatia managing to establish stable governments from the start. It is important to bring these two examples up, since it’s in this timeframe where DPT begins to pick up a head of steam as an official government policy, particularly that of the United States. It is also critical because of the nature of both of those nations—Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were multi-ethnic Communist nations with a centralized power structure. When they collapsed, the world saw many new republics emerge, but many of those new nations were in a state of internal chaos and low-level conflict with each other. It was these low-level conflicts that would spark a serious interest and debate on the nature of new democracies and what it meant for DPT advocates. There were also key observations made as far as democracies’ relations to the rest of the world, in particular, non-democratic governments. In sum, the DPT would spend the 1990’s and through the turn of the millennium in a state of evolution to account for the nature of the nations

that had emerged, as well as accounting for stateless entities. This realization gave rise to three different theories that attempted to explain how democratic nations interact, those theories being: monadic peace, dyadic peace, and anocratic theory.

Monadic vs. Dyadic Peace, Anocratic Theory

During the 1980's and 1990's, three schools of thought emerged in regards to DPT: monadic theory, dyadic theory, and anocratic theory. The terms are easily definable: in monadic thinking, it is stipulated that democracies are inherently peaceful and do not fight each other based on that idealism. Dyadic theory suggests that democracies are peaceful due to realistic external and internal factors, such as economic prosperity, the level of rights and freedoms enjoyed by their politically-empowered citizens, and a shared base identity with people in other democracies. Anocratic theory, the most recent of the three, attempts to explain why young democracies tend to be warlike and struggle with peaceful relations as they transition from a dictatorship or a state of anarchy into a democracy. These are covered further in depth in the following subsections of this chapter.

Monadic Peace

Recalling Immanuel Kant, the inherent peacefulness of democracies is made possible through the encouragement of political participation of the citizens in a country, who are counted on to make rational voting decisions while holding their elected officials accountable. This basic utilitarian argument is elaborated a little further on and given a modern twist in a 2004 study done by German scholars Harald Müller and Jonas Wolff: "The rational citizen in liberal capitalist societies is generally peace prone because war endangers not only his life (as combatant or civilian victim), but is economically expensive as well. If the political system

allows for the translation of this preference into foreign policy (like democracy does), the respective state will refrain from violent behaviour or, at least, will prove ‘least prone to international violence and war’. The causal chain, thus, leads from the rational calculus of the average citizen to a (relative) peaceful democracy provided that, firstly, war entails more costs than gains and, secondly, public majorities translate into political decisions” (Müller, Wolff 2004). Although Müller and Wolff dismiss this utilitarian explanation at first, that explanation surfaces again in their cultural analysis of democratic societies: “In democratic societies prevails a ‘democratic norm of bounded competition’...with an emphasis on mediation, negotiation, and compromise. The normative assumption maintains that states externalise those ‘liberal norms of non-violent and compromise-oriented resolution of conflict’...Democratic norms apply to all citizens—even criminals shall be treated in accordance with the rule of law. Therefore, the normative explanation shall account for democracies’ foreign conduct *in general*” (Müller, Wolff 2004). Tocqueville quotes this much on the matter: “As the spread of equality, taking place in several countries at once, simultaneously impels their various [inhabitants] to follow manufactures and commerce, not only do their tastes grow alike, but their interests are so mixed and entangled with one another that no nation can inflict evils on other nations without those evils falling back upon itself; and all nations ultimately regard war as a calamity, almost as severe to the conqueror as to the conquered” (Tocqueville, 1835, p. 737). Kant had also brought this up without specifically referencing monadic peace. He believed that citizens, being directly involved in their governance, would opt to enjoy peace, since it is they that would bear the brunt of any damage taken in a war, and states this clearly. “Among the latter would be: having to fight, having to pay the costs of war from their own resources, having painfully to repair the devastation war leaves behind, and, to fill up the measure of evils, load themselves with a heavy

national debt that would embitter peace itself and that can never be liquidated on account of constant wars in the future” (Kant, 1795, Section II). In summary, monadic democratic peace is made possible by nations acting much like their citizens in resolving potential conflicts, by emphasizing consensus among nations as their people would in a community.

Dyadic Peace

Dyadic theory is a good deal more complicated than monadic theory. It stipulates that democracies *do not fight each other*, as opposed to the monadic notion that democracies are just *more peaceful in general*. Dyadic theory suggests reasons as to why democratic states do not wage war on each other, with those ranging from economic prosperity, to citizens being likeminded despite being in different nations, and a general reluctance overall in regards to having to clean up the damage of a war afterward. Modern dyadic peace was championed especially at the turn of the Cold War with intellectuals such as Francis Fukuyama advocating that the further the world pushed toward liberal democracy, there would be more peace, since they would also be functioning in a fully connected global market. For Russett, he had three criteria of why democracies do not fight each other. “First, democratically-organized political systems operate under restraints that make them relatively peaceful in their relations with other democracies. Democracies are not necessarily peaceful, however, in relations with other kinds of political systems” (Russett 1994). He continued: “Second, in the modern international system, democracies are less likely to use lethal violence toward other democracies than toward autocratically-governed states or than autocratically-governed states are toward each other” (Russett, 1994). “Third, peace between democracies is importantly a result of some features of democracy, rather than caused exclusively by economic or geopolitical characteristics merely correlated with democracy” (Russett, 1994). Russett also notes that there are causal forces that

restrain democracies from warring with each other, remarking that they produce certain outcomes. “Structural/institutional features of democratic systems constrains make it hard for democracies to go to war rapidly unless they are attacked, and hard to prepare for war in secret. Two democratic states disputing with each other therefore need not fear sudden or surprise attack from each other, and thus know they have time to resolve conflict through peaceful means of negotiation and mediation” (Russett, 1994). His final point on causal forces was that two or more democratic states in conflict or dispute, understand certain “norms”—universal values, if one sees it that way—in regards to conducting diplomacy and the resolution of conflicts. This one particular point, a misunderstanding, so to speak, would come back to haunt the United States in forming Afghanistan’s democratic government from 2002 to 2004 during the transition phase, as I will demonstrate further on. The concept of a market-driven peace is an excellent application of dyadic theory—liberal democracies are among the most prosperous in the world, and this prosperity was made possible by deep economic interconnectedness. Weede comments on this in a 2004 article on globalization leading to overall global peace: “As to why trade contributes to the prevention of war, two ideas come to mind. First, war is likely to disrupt trade. The higher the level of trade in a pair (dyad) of nations is, the greater the costs of trade disruption are likely to be. Second, commerce might contribute to the establishment or maintenance of moral capital, which has a civilizing and pacifying effect on citizens and statesmen” (Weede, 2004).

Anocratic Theory

Anocratic theory was brought around by Mansfield and Snyder’s 2005 book *Electing to Fight*, using data from analyzing off of Gurr’s Polity data series. What anocratic theory attempts to explain is the nature of transitioning democracies and how they act on the stage of

international relations. Anocracies are far more likely to suffer from political and domestic strife, including low to medium level civil wars with prolonged resistance movements operating comfortably against a central government. If a democratizing country tries to embrace democratic reforms too quickly, it falls prey to a variety of sectarian strife that turns to full-blown political violence. This third wheel of DPT would seem best suited to describe the situation in Afghanistan, although it must be noted that each anocracy is unique and confined to the considerations it is dealing with. What may work in analyzing in North Africa would not fit very well in Iraq or Afghanistan, and vice versa. Abulof noted in his 2015 study of MENA (Middle East/North African) countries that “those regimes where the constraints on the executive are ‘more than ‘slight’ but less than ‘substantial’,’ often with ‘dual executives, in which a hereditary ruler shares authority with an appointed or elected governing minister” (Abulof, 2015). Mansfield and Snyder’s contribution to anocratic theory was that they measured the transitions from a non-democracy to a democracy over a five-year period, drawing the conclusion that emerging democracies embraced nationalistic ideals with chaotically weak political institutions. Because of these traits, developing democracies engage in political violence with more frequency than democracies or purely anocratic states. An observation on anocratic theory is that its practical application has three different outcomes. The first being that a state transitions from a non-democracy to a democracy after a period of instability and uncertainty, but eventually solidifies into a strong system, and owns a government that enjoys status as a recognized democracy. The second outcome is that it remains permanently in the anocratic state, thereby becoming an anocracy—a state that has the trappings of a democracy with a system in place, but never clearing that transitory phase and becomes a state ruled by a strongman, who combines both democratic and autocratic elements to preserve an air of

legitimacy. The third and final outcome is that the state devolves into total chaos and civil war, and from there either new states are formed or it becomes a failed state, devoid of a legitimate government and existing in a state of seemingly permanent chaos.

Democracies in Stable Nations versus Unstable Nations

The 1990's demonstrated with ease that simply having a democratic government complete with elections and a government was not enough to guarantee the status of being a democratic nation. Yugoslavia was, for a decade, essentially a laboratory for political scientists and commentators to test whether or not placing a democratic label on a country would be enough to encourage peace, or at least get a liberal peace trending in the desired direction. Mansfield and Snyder's 2002 study on democracies and their transitional nature. What they got was more than they expected. As it turned out, nations emerging on the world scene or transitioning to a democracy from a party-run dictatorship tend to have more issues than what was then previously imagined. Mansfield and Snyder's 2002 study looked at Yugoslavia in earnest, and drew several conclusions, but are best summed up in two primary reasons. The first reason was that in the early phases of transitioning to a democracy, one can observe a wide variety of groups emerging that will push forth their interests, usually in direct competition with other groups. Because a transitioning democracy often lacks a strong institution to enforce the rules, it is easy for those groups to take advantage in a power vacuum. In Yugoslavia, those groups were nationalists who asserted their power over areas they controlled and attempted to work their way to various goals, be they the establishment of governments and nations based on ethnic considerations, or smaller ethnic groups within certain areas that desired to maintain a certain amount of rights, including the preservation of their identities. These were both what the world saw when Croatia and Slovenia seceded from Yugoslavia and ethnic forces in both of

those nations promptly asserted their nations' independence, and the Dayton Accords added an annex to the treaty that functions as the constitution for Bosnia-Herzegovina—it guarantees the autonomy of both Bosnians and Bosnian Serbs in a fragile, extremely decentralized peace (Mansfield, Snyder, 2002).

The second reason that Balkan nations were initially unstable during their bid for independence and democracy, according to Mansfield and Snyder, was that the collapse of an authoritarian regime often saw the rise of threats to powerful interests such as military and bureaucratic personnel (Mansfield, Snyder, 2002). These powerful interests often moved quickly to secure their interests and positions in a new society. “To salvage their position, threatened interests frequently try to recruit mass support, typically by resorting to nationalist appeals that allow them to claim to rule in the name of the people, but without instituting full democratic accountability to the average voter. Exploiting what remains of their governmental, economic, and media power, these elites may succeed in establishing terms of inclusion in politics that force opposition groups to accept nationalism as the common currency of public discourse” (Mansfield, Snyder, 2002). Nationalist movements and other groups seeking to take advantage of transitional chaos in emerging democracies was not just constrained to Yugoslavia. In the Soviet Union, countless nationalities and groups asserted themselves as the Communist government collapsed. Interestingly, the USSR did not see the level of violence that Yugoslavia had, save for an aborted coup in Russia itself, followed by a decade of economic hardship and political instability. The Baltic republics established themselves with few problems and transitioned to democracy quite handily. Ukraine and Belarus both seceded with no issues and did not engage in ethnic sectarianism against Russian minorities in either of those nations, though they did have economic hardships and difficulties with corruption; Belarus went in a

decidedly authoritarian direction. Despite the ethnically diverse populations of Central Asia, those republics seceded from the USSR with no ethnic violence and chronic instability, although this can be attributed to several of those nations—Tajikistan and Kazakhstan in particular—being guided by strongmen who transitioned to democracy by utilizing authoritarianism dressed up in a democratic veil.

The USSR's collapse did not see emerging democracies engage in wars or skirmishes with each other, with the exception of Russia trying to enforce its will upon the attempted breakaway republic of Chechnya. The reasons for this are elaborated later on in this section; simply stated for now, it is because although they were transitioning democracies, they were guided by strong central governments that emphasized the rule of law first prior to pushing democratization beyond a certain point. It is worth noting that Yugoslavia's chaos and the Soviet Union's chaos had markedly different outcomes in their transitions. The aforementioned powerful interests in Central Asia were more pragmatic than their South Slavic counterparts, and authoritarian leaders such as Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan moved quickly to consolidate their rule, while remaining mindful of the new geopolitical realities of being independent nations. Yugoslavia, on the other hand, saw Serbians attempt to keep the nation together, due to overwhelming concerns that Serbians scattered about in the multi-ethnic country would be persecuted.

The concept of democracy due to Yugoslavia's collapse had changed from its initially optimistic outlook in 1991. What the world had hoped for was the emergence of democracies in the region that would immediately serve as a stabilizing force due to a sudden opening of societies in the Balkans. While there was some turbulence expected, it was hoped and even expected that continued liberalization would cement democracy in the new republics and make

for a peaceful region. The realities of ethnic nationalism, sectarianism and a desire to protect ethnic-based interests ended up creating a region that is sustained off of mutual distrust and dislike of each other. Even nations such as Croatia and Slovenia, which have stable and functioning democracies, still maintain a strong sense of distrust and limited cooperation with Serbia and Bosnia.

Why These Debates Are Critical To Democratic Peace Theory in Afghanistan

The notion that emerging democracies tending to be more warlike and eager to engage in foreign conflicts is seemingly unusual, especially within the confines of DPT. As Mansfield and Snyder have elaborated, however, this should not come as too much of a surprise, although outside of Yugoslavia, most anocracies do not go to war with each other, since they are in a state of transition and occasionally chaos. Also, anocracies work differently depending on what the situation is. What is common, though, are that anocracies are typically dominated by special interests that are absolutely concerned and focused on maintaining their power. The Central Asian nations are the perfect example of this phenomenon. All of them had leaders who took power in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse, or, in the cases of Islam Karimov and Askar Akayev, leaders who attained their positions during the Soviet Union as regional bureaucrats who managed to parlay their positions into leadership roles for their new nations. And as Abulof pointed out, those same leaders are often very reluctant to engage in reforms to their political systems, as it would mean giving up their power. Some of them have been willing to die in office before passing anything onto the next generation of leaders, keeping their countries in a permanent state of transition, which makes it difficult for that next generation to move beyond the shadows of their past. For Afghanistan, it is probably one of the most unique anocracies in the world, although in many eyes it has lost even that status and is simply a failed

state (Gurr's Polity data series had it classified as a failed state as early as 2010). As the background will demonstrate, DPT, even with its recent makeovers to account for stateless entities, has not accounted for the uniqueness of Afghanistan's situation, and it has cost both the United States and Afghanistan precious time, resources and effort. Specifically, the United States, which since the Woodrow Wilson administration has operated its foreign policy upon fostering democracy abroad and embraced DPT, is particularly culpable for the failings of Afghanistan's democracy for a multitude of reasons. Those reasons will be explored further in depth in the chapters concerning research and analysis; however, simply stated, the United States failed to account for Afghanistan's unique tribal politics, the politics of exiled and expatriate Afghan communities, and other entities and was keen on fostering a democratic government in that country with little appreciation for any of those factors. The research questions posed in the opening section are relying upon the ideas and applications of DPT, and are further addressed in the next section.

Chapter III: Methods

The two research questions put forward in this thesis are:

1. Since 9/11, has Afghanistan had a democratic government?
2. If Afghanistan does have a democracy, how has its status changed?

In order to attempt to answer these questions, this work draws upon the DPT and its concepts of monadic peace, dyadic peace and anocratic theory. In addition, other sources are also utilized to fully address the issues raised by DPT's application in Afghanistan. To answer these questions, in the previous chapters, I explained the definition of democracy, along with multiple other ways in how democracy is defined. Further, I explained DPT and how it is

utilized in this work. This work analyzes data from the Polity IV Series. The Polity IV Series is a set of data and tables used to measure a nation's level of stability and government type. The current iteration, Polity IV, was brought about in the 1990's. This series, in my work, is used to establish Afghanistan's governing regime trends and rating of systemic peace. The Polity IV data sets I will be specifically utilizing are the State Fragility Index, the Country Reports, and the Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research (INSCR), which contain over ten tables of data regarding political violence, regime changes, states of anarchy, and other pertinent data. More specifically, these data sets are expected to bolster my thesis with concrete data. The State Fragility Index, last updated in 2016, rates national stability on a scale from 0 to 25, with lower scores being the desired results. These parameters are determined by a cumulative average among several categories: Fragility, Effectiveness, Legitimacy, Armed Conflict Indicators (is the nation at war or not), Political Effectiveness, Political Legitimacy, Economic Effectiveness and Legitimacy, and Social Effectiveness and Legitimacy. The Country Reports/Regime Trends are summarized reports of cumulative analysis on any given nation, with Afghanistan's last being updated in 2013. Overall, the data from Polity IV allowed for the assessment of whether Afghanistan was a democracy, or if it was more closely related to an anocracy or a failed state entirely.

A second category of data which also helped to answer the research questions, and more practically important, was Afghanistan's electoral data. The data for Afghanistan's elections—presidential and parliamentary—came from numerous sources such as the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan, Afghanistan's primary electoral commission responsible for overseeing elections, the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB), the Psephos electoral archives (an online archive of national elections from every country in the world, run by Dr.

Adam Carr, a former aide to Australian MPs), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), a nonprofit organization that tracks election data in nations around the world. The reason so many different sources were utilized for Afghanistan's electoral data was simply the availability of those sources varying for elections. A number of different authoritative entities had to be utilized. Those sources, in a way, were bound to the situations they were in. JEMB, which was set up by Afghanistan's transitional government in 2003 with aid from the United States and the United Nations, monitored and certified the 2004 and 2005 elections of Afghanistan's President and Wolesi Jirga respectively, since Afghanistan's transitional government had just taken hold and did not have the capacity to monitor its own elections. The 2009 and 2010 elections were, on the other hand, monitored by the Independent Election Commission (IEC), which had overtaken the JEMB's role as the supervisory commission overseeing Afghanistan's elections. The details of this transition are placed further in the thesis. Because IEC documents were in Pashto, news outlets such as the BBC and American news outlets such as CNN were utilized to gain the results, as well as the summarized results of Carr's Psephos site. The NDI was utilized for Afghanistan's 2019 and 2020 elections, since it operates a data collecting initiative, "Afghanistan Election Data". It was used primarily for Afghanistan's 2019 and 2020 elections, since it's a fully interactive platform that gives election results, province by province. Psephos has summarized data for the Presidential elections in Afghanistan, as well as excellent records detailing candidates, voter turnout, and vote totals for the Wolesi Jirga elections. Tertiary sources were also analyzed, given some of the limitations of election analysis (results in Pashto, inactive and dead sites for the earlier elections, etc.). These tertiary sources were news outlets such as the BBC and CNN reporting election results, friction resulting from those results (as evidenced in the 2009, 2014 and 2019 presidential elections), as well as commentary by writers

and academics such as Wahabuddin Ra'ees. Of particular importance are articles and commentary offered by the Christian Science Monitor, which was the only news source I found and utilized that not only maintained a full archive of news pieces of over 20 years old going back to before the invasion of Afghanistan, but commented and reported extensively on Afghanistan's development—and issues—into becoming a democracy, including offering extensive commentary on the monarchist movement within Afghanistan, which was largely sidelined and ignored by the United States for ideological and geopolitical reasons. The data from the above-mentioned sources will allow the determination of problems (or lack thereof) during Afghanistan's attempted development of democracy since 9/11. It will also allow for an assessment of the type of system emphasized within Afghanistan at varying periods in time, those systems drawing elements from monadic peace, dyadic peace, and/or an anocratic system. This information will be used to further discuss the connections to the DPT.

In addition to looking at the system within Afghanistan, it is also vital to analyze the commitment of the United States in establishing a democratic form of government. This is a necessary analysis for a number of reasons, all of which tie into both research questions posed, but especially helpful for the second research question. Drawing from those sources listed beforehand served to give insight on Afghanistan's political situation. The second research question, "why did Afghanistan's democratic experiment fail?", is answered with that data. While that answer is expanded in full in Chapter V, the surface-level reason why the United States' commitment is important to analyze is that from 2002 onward, the United States has served as Afghanistan's primary guarantor of military, economic and social aid programs and policies. The United States has served as the focal point for Afghanistan's development as not just a democracy, but at its base level, a functioning government. For example, Afghanistan's

constitution, despite exceptions to account for tribal relations and the role of Islam in the nation, has a number of similarities to the United States' constitution, and its government's structure also reflects a heavy level of inspiration and wording set down from the United States. Thus, Afghanistan's actual constitution, written in 2004 at the tail-end of the transition government, will serve as a source for the United States' commitment for democratic government in Afghanistan. Concerning the United States' involvement in Afghanistan from a military perspective, it is important to note that this research is not aimed at explaining the United States' military involvement on the issue. However, it will be crucial to analyze the United States' determination in pushing Afghanistan to create a democratic government. In order to assess the United States' commitment or pressure for Afghanistan to create a democratic government, it is crucial to understand United States' troop deployments and military aid, and if this support was dependent upon Afghanistan moving forward as a democracy. To find this information, NATO and United States military press releases will be used, specifically those that announce the increase/decrease of troop levels and military aid, along with Presidential addresses from two administrations affirming that support.

Polity IV Data Analysis

Polity IV does not show an optimistic outlook for Afghanistan. Compiled by Dr. Monty G. Marshall, the Director for the Center of Systemic Peace, the "Major Episodes of Political Violence" (MEPV) is a table that compiles data of every conflict waged around the world since 1946, the first full year of the post-World Wars era. It breaks up those conflicts among several categories:

Episode Type: C (Intrastate Civil Warfare), E (ethnic warfare involving a state actor and distinct ethnic groups), I (international war, war between sovereign nations), W (war between two exclusive groups seeking to impose results on their enemies), and N (independence wars).

Magnitude of societal-systemic impact (Mag): “The number listed represents a scaled indicator of the destructive impact, or magnitude, of the violent episode on the directly-affected society or societies on a scale of 1 (smallest) to 10 (greatest). Magnitude scores reflect multiple factors including state capabilities, interactive intensity (means and goals), area and scope of death and destruction, population displacement, and episode duration” (Marshall, 2019).

Episode location (States Directly Involved): “Countries listed are only those upon whose territory the political violence episode actually takes place, that is, those state-societies directly affected by the warfare” (Marshall, 2019).

Estimates of “directly-related” deaths (Deaths): Deaths from conflicts. The data utilized allowed me to answer my research questions in full, and also allowed me to draw the larger picture of Afghanistan’s situation in general.

Polity IV also makes use of table sets called the State Fragility Index and Matrix (SFI Matrix). These are tables that analyze, through numerous categories, the political stability of a country. “The Fragility Matrix scores each country on both Effectiveness and Legitimacy in four performance dimensions: Security, Political, Economic, and Social, at the end of the year. Each of the Matrix indicators is rated on a four-point fragility scale: 0 ‘no fragility,’ 1 ‘low fragility,’ 2 ‘medium fragility,’ and 3 ‘high fragility’ with the exception of the Economic Effectiveness indicator, which is rated on a five-point fragility scale (including 4 ‘extreme fragility’)” (Marshall, 2019). On the 25-point scale used in the SFI tables, 0 is the lowest score (meaning

the nation is completely stable and prosperous), and 25 is the highest score, meaning a total state of chaos. It is interesting to note, however, that it still implies that a state *exists*.

In addition, there is additional coding that explains countries enduring unique circumstances:

Code -66 is assigned to a nation experiencing an “interruption”. This is defined as when a nation is occupied by a foreign power that replaces the government.

Code -77 is given to countries undergoing an “interregnum”, a period of time in which the central government’s authority has completely collapsed and a state of anarchy prevails in the country.

Code -88, the final circumstance, is given to nations transitioning from one form of government to another. These are generally peaceful transitions.

All the sources utilized had their roles to play. The Polity IV Series along with the statistical data it offered allowed me to place Afghanistan’s situation into a purely data-driven, politically scientific context, while the electoral data allowed for a more practical application of that data to give the reader a simpler, easier to digest picture that the reader was able to identify with more readily. The troop deployment levels, as well as pieces done by writers and academics as well as agencies such as the Christian Science Monitor, made Afghanistan’s situation easier to identify with, since those entities give the reader a clear vision of why Afghanistan’s democratic development has been founded and pursued on shaky grounds—it is difficult indeed to create a new government while a civil war is on in earnest at the same time. As Chapter IV has elaborated, those grounds have foundations of their own that go back several decades, and served to set the stage for my research questions.

Chapter IV: Background—Afghanistan, the Heart of Central Asia

Geography and Government

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia. It is bordered to the west by Iran, to the east by Pakistan, and shares borders in the north with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Its southern borders are cradled by both the physical borders of the Zagros Mountains and the geopolitical borders of Pakistan's westernmost boundaries and Iran's southeastern boundaries. It also shares a very small border in the extreme eastern edge of the country with China, the product of the Durand Line, which was drawn up by the British in the 19th century as a way to serve as a buffer between its empire in India and the growing Russian Empire. Afghanistan's climate reflects its very diverse landscape, with the south being hot and very dry, and the north's cooler climate reflective of the mountainous terrain and high altitudes found there. Afghanistan's tough and mountainous terrain has helped tribes maintain a fierce sense of independence thanks to the isolating effect it has on travel and military campaigns; it is so difficult to navigate that even into the 19th century one could find tribes that had not converted to Islam despite the region being firmly Muslim since the 8th and 9th centuries. The terrain has proven difficult to master for modern-day forces such as the USSR or the United States, and has provided groups such as the Taliban much-needed security while pursuing their operations. As of 2004 with the transition government giving way to an officially recognized government, Afghanistan is a republic with a President serving as its primary leader. The President of Afghanistan serves terms consisting of 5 years, and is the primary executive leader of the country. However, in 2014, a unique Chief Executive Officer position was created specifically to address the controversial 2014 Afghan elections, which saw Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah split a hotly contested election that required the United States to broker a

power sharing agreement in order to form a “National Unity” government. Abdullah became the Chief Executive Officer of Afghanistan, and his duties were to detail policy recommendations to the President, serving in a functionary role as a prime minister would. This addition was made constitutionally legal in early 2015, and allowed the President of Afghanistan to transfer various authorities to government officials, thereby legitimizing this CEO position for the time it existed. “In the case of the Afghan unity government, Ghani has delegated some powers to Abdullah,’ Professor Abdul Ghafoor Liwal, an expert on constitutional law and director of the Kabul-based Regional Studies Center, told DW...The president and the vice president are not part of the Ministers' Council. The unelected Council is not entitled to make any policy decision. That's the job of the president's cabinet. The Ministers' Council can only make recommendations” (Shams, DeutscheWelle, 2014). Abdullah’s term as CEO ended on February 19th, 2020, and the position was abolished, with Ghani remaining the President of Afghanistan and as its sole democratic leader once again. Afghanistan’s government has three branches (executive, judicial and legislative), with a similar setup to that of the United States, and they function in much the same fashion. Its legislative branch is bicameral, and is divided between a “House of Elders” and a “House of the People”. The “House of the People” has 249 seats with representatives being directly elected by the people of the country, and they serve 5-year terms. The “House of Elders” is the upper house of Afghanistan’s legislature, and it has 102 members, divided by 34 members: 34 members are nominated by the President, 34 are elected by provincial councils and serve 4-year terms, and 34 are elected by district councils and serve 3-year terms. The judicial system is currently being reformed, as it has been severely fractured from over 40 years of civil war and foreign invasions. It is not unusual for Afghanistan’s court system to base rulings on laws from the last king of Afghanistan’s reign, Zahir Shah, who was also the last leader to

undertake a full reform of the nation's legal system. In rural areas, even after being officially ousted from power, Taliban-era laws are occasionally enforced and other rulings are simply based in Islamic law, which is not unusual for a predominantly Muslim country.

The People

Afghanistan has a population of around 36.6 million people, and is one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world, thanks to millennia of invasions, occupations and human migrations. (CIA, 2020). Its ethnic makeup consists of Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Aimaq, Balochi, and Turkmen. The Pashtuns are the largest ethnic group in the country, and dominate most of the nation's regional and national politics. They also have a significant presence in Pakistan, which has caused problems for Afghan governments for decades; Pashtuns have long desired to reunite their people since the British divided their populations up in the 19th century. Pashtuns are the only group in Afghanistan that can stake a claim as having legitimate pan-nationalist desires because of this division, although the Hazaras have a regional nationalism that is limited to their distinct territory in the central Afghan highlands, referred to as the Hazarajat. While Tajiks do not have a significant amount of nationalistic tendencies, they are the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, and have often jockeyed for power and influence in Afghan politics as the primary competitor of the Pashtuns. The other ethnic groups in Afghanistan that have close links with the nation's neighbors have no desire or have been involved in movements to reunite with their co-ethnics—for instance, there are no movements among Uzbeks, Tajiks or Turkmen to break off from Afghanistan to join the respective nations that border the country. The likely reason for a lack of nationalist movements outside of Pashtuns and Hazaras (Hazaras being the target of ferocious persecution from Pashtuns), is that all the ethnic groups in Afghanistan do not act in a unified manner, at both the macro and tribal

levels. This is due to the fact that they have tribes within their ethnic groups, with each pursuing their own interests from time to time. Those tribal differences and allegiances would have significant effects on the chaos in Afghanistan during the 1990's, and would be the root cause for a lot of the problems that the United States encountered in attempting to establish a democratic government in the country, as well as trying to maintain a stable and forward-moving military campaign. The problems the United States had with establishing a government in Afghanistan after 2004 were, in fact, nothing new—even as far back as the Durrani dynasty, Afghan governments have had major issues with establishing centralized rule. Peter Blood noted how loose tribal society in Afghanistan could be. “The aristocratic elites who lead subdivisions, rise to their positions primarily through personal charisma, patronage, and leadership abilities rather than by primogeniture, which is not recognized in Muslim law, or any type of prescribed hereditary rights. Tribal organization is therefore acephalous or without a paramount chief. And the measure of their power differs. Heads of nomadic tribal groups, for instance, act principally as spokesmen, but have no right to make decisions binding on others” (Blood, 2001). This loose tribal structure and the lack of established hierarchies that governments can achieve a familiarity with are problematic in governing Afghanistan. Intertribal warfare is also intense, particularly among the Pashtun, who have an entire warrior ethos referred to as “Pashtunwali”, which dictates tribal relations and serves as a code of honor. “The absence of recognized principles governing the assumption of leadership allows for intense competition. Rivalries within and between tribal segments and between tribes and subtribes consequently have always existed. It is these internecine feuds that have earned the Pushtun their reputation as an unruly and warlike people. Nonetheless, when outside forces threaten, the Pushtun are equally reputed for their ability to forge formidable alliances, among themselves and with other ethnic groups. Both

internal as well as intergroup conflicts are most often rooted in matters of personal and group honour, personal enmities, family dissensions concerning brides and property, struggles for material possession, access to resources, territorial integrity and extensions of power, rather than in intrinsic attitudes of ethnic discrimination” (Blood, 2001). While his last comment regarding ethnic discrimination can be taken into serious question given Pashtun treatment of the Hazaras (especially during the 1990’s, which will be elaborated on in the historical section), Blood’s analysis of tribal conflicts in Afghanistan serve to demonstrate why Afghanistan is so difficult to govern.

Beginnings: 1947-1960

Although one could try to pin most of Afghanistan’s problems by looking at its history—one merely needs to open a history book and pick a place to start and work his or her way forward and will never be entirely wrong—it is best to limit the looking glass of Afghanistan’s history to 1947 and after that, in order to get a grasp for why it has lost its way in the modern era. Before that, however, it is necessary to quickly point out a few time periods to give the nation a proper context. Afghanistan was formally united as a kingdom by the Durrani dynasty in 1747, and worked in a state of territorial fluctuation in Central Asia until the Russian and British Empires began playing “the Great Game”, forcing Afghanistan to conform to its present-day borders by the turn of the 19th century, and officially by 1919 with the conclusion of the Third Anglo-Afghan War, which saw the British Empire and Afghanistan sign the Treaty of Rawalpindi. This treaty guaranteed British recognition of Afghanistan’s borders, independence of their foreign policy and as a sovereign nation, and not merely a buffer zone to ward off imperial competition. Of great importance is the border referred to as the Durand Line, which today marks Afghanistan’s boundary with Pakistan. This boundary has been a sticking point

with the Pashtun population in Afghanistan, since it divided ethnic Pashtuns between two political entities, those entities at the time being the Kingdom of Afghanistan and the British Raj. It has caused an incredible amount of conflict and strife, and even today it has greatly complicated American military efforts at combating the Pashtun-dominated Taliban movement, frustrating every senior officer attempting to wage a campaign against the Taliban for the past two decades; it also frustrated the Soviet Union's plans for a swift occupation and end to its own Afghanistan War during the 1980's.

This background itself begins in 1947, with two key events that would come to shape Afghanistan's direction for the 20th century—the end of British rule in India, and the Indian Independence Act of 1947, which outlined the actual Partition of India. The Indian Independence Act, also referred to occasionally as the “June 3rd Plan” in reference to an agreement between the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League and the Sikhs, was on the surface level, direct and clear-cut. There was one particular ethnic group who were not happy with any of the arrangements made for Indian independence—the Pashtuns. Two brothers, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Khan Abdul Jabbar, had petitioned the British Empire in early 1947 to add a special consideration to the upcoming independence referendum, to allow for Pashtuns in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) to either secede from the Raj to form a Pashtun state or join with their fellow Pashtuns in Afghanistan, instead of the stipulations that the NWFP was to join either India or Pakistan. The British vetoed the idea off the bat, and the Indian National Congress would have none of it either, since the idea of partitioning British India into two states, Hindu and Muslim, was being entertained and gaining serious momentum.

The Khan brothers were furious with the decision, and after the Partition of India, wanted nothing to do with the new Muslim state at all. “The Khan brothers were openly hostile to

Pakistan. They had boycotted the referendum citing that it did not have the option of NWFP remaining independent or worse joining Afghanistan. Bacha Khan had on June 27, 1947 called for an independent and free Pathan state based on Islamic principles and social justice. Dr. Khan Sahib (Khan Abdul Jabbar) meanwhile continued to distribute arms licences to his party men. Similarly, consider the police intelligence report of August 5, 1947 that said: ‘It is rumoured in some circles that Congress and Red Shirt supporters might start civil disobedience after the 15th of August if the Congress Ministry is made to vacate the office. It is reported that the Faqir of Ipi (Mirzali Khan, who was an anti-Pakistan Pashtun that demanded a Pashtun state and waged a multi-year guerilla campaign against the British and Pakistanis to achieve that end) will declare jihad against the British and the Hindus after the Id and that the Zalmai Pakhtoon (Pashtun) Party would fight the Muslim League for the attainment of Pathanistan (Pashtunistan)’” (Hamdani, 2011). While Khan Sahib (as Khan Abdul Jabbar was popularly known) was dismissed from his ministerial position in the new Pakistani government, his younger brother Bacha Khan, a committed pacifist, would spend the rest of his life in and out of house arrest and constant observation from Pakistan’s military governments, having incurred the wrath of officials trying to quell Pashtun separatism in the then newly-created Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which bordered Afghanistan. “...the greatest loser was Ghaffar Khan. In newborn India he was all but abandoned by his former Congress Party allies, while in newborn Pakistan he was charged with sedition and promoting separatism. It made no difference that he took an oath of allegiance to the new state, or that he repeatedly insisted he sought autonomy for Pashtuns within Pakistan. He was repeatedly jailed or kept under house arrest until his death in Peshawar in 1988 at the age of 98” (Meyer, 2003). Khan Sahib would be assassinated by a

disillusioned Pashtun nationalist in 1957 shortly after Khan Sahib had made his peace with the new regime in Pakistan.

The idea of a Pashtunistan would live on through the subsequent decades, but more importantly, the Kingdom of Afghanistan itself would exploit that idea for its own ends. With the results of previous treaties living on in Pakistan in a way that only diplomatic legalism could make possible, Afghanistan never accepted Pakistan's inheritance of the 1919 Treaty of Rawalpindi and sought to renegotiate the Durand Line—an issue that Afghanistan would approach Pakistan until well into the 1970's, and would be resurrected after the American invasion. The 1950's for Afghanistan primarily centered around the issue of Pashtunistan and reworking the Durand Line, with neither of those being fulfilled and often devolving into border skirmishes and near-war with Pakistan. “Although both Afghanistan and Pakistan made conciliatory gestures, the matter remained unresolved. In one of the government's attempts to suppress tribal uprisings in 1949, a Pakistani air force plane bombed a village just across the frontier. In response, the Afghan government called a loya jirgah, which promptly declared that it recognized ‘neither the imaginary Durand nor any similar line’ and that all agreements--from the 1893 Durand agreement onward--pertaining to the issue were void. Irregular forces led by a local Pashtun leader crossed the border in 1950 and 1951 to back Afghan claims. Pakistan's government refused to accept the Afghan assertion that it had no control over these men, and both nations' ambassadors were withdrawn, but were exchanged again a few months later. The issue of an international boundary through Pashtun areas was of great importance to policymakers in Kabul. Pakistan halted vital transshipments of petroleum to Afghanistan for about three months in 1950, presumably in retaliation for Afghan tribal attacks across the border” (Blood, 2001).

Many of these problems in the 1950's stemmed from one person in particular, that of Mohammed Daoud Khan the Prime Minister of Afghanistan appointed in 1953 by Zahir Shah, who was a cousin of Khan's. A committed socialist, Khan was also a fierce nationalist who desired the unification of all Pashtuns under the umbrella of Afghanistan, and used the Pashtunistan issue to further that end. Khan's pressing of the Pashtunistan and Durand Line issues with Pakistan caused a countless number of border closings in the 1950's, which harmed Afghanistan's exports of consumer goods to India. Khan had sent troops to fight border skirmishes with Pakistan throughout the decade, and his desire to play off Cold War rivals in order to gain a favorable conclusion to the border issue led him to push for greater relations with the Soviet Union, since Pakistan by the end of the decade had become a firm ally of the United States. Khan had even sent troops into neighboring provinces in a failed 1960 bid for resolving the issue, but Pakistan had routed the force and made a point to publicly humiliate the captured Afghan troops. Khan spent most of the 1950's funneling money and arms to tribes in the former NWFP, which had been abolished by the military government of Pakistan and restructured into the FATA.

For all this effort to redraw the borders with Pakistan, Afghanistan got nothing out of it and the deteriorating economy due to Pakistan cutting off Afghan trade with India proved to be too much for King Zahir Shah, who summoned his cousin Daoud Khan into a meeting. Khan was summarily dismissed in 1963 for creating horrible relations with Pakistan, which had broken off diplomatic relations in 1961, and causing the economy to fail. Zahir Shah used the period of instability in the 1950's to push for major reforms of the nation's constitution, which many Afghans had felt that Khan had taken only to court political support for his endless endeavors in Pakistan. The hope was that Zahir Shah's championing of the "New Democracy", as he put it,

would result in a more stable and respectable government for Afghans, and one to be taken seriously by its neighbors, who still viewed Afghanistan as something of a tribal state with some modern trappings.

1960-1973

Zahir Shah dismissed Daoud Khan in March of 1963, which prompted Pakistan to reopen the borders and restore normal diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. The instability of Khan's near-autocratic reign also motivated Zahir Shah to reform the nation's constitution, which was done in 1964. Of the reforms, there were a few that were incredibly important. Family members were no longer allowed to serve in political office save for the monarch himself, and Khan's dismissal resulted in Zahir Shah appointing foreign-educated Afghans to positions in a newly created cabinet. Also of note, Zahir Shah—with approval from the Loya Jirga—pushed forward reforms that explicitly detailed the rights and equality of women in Afghanistan. The Wolesi Jirga, which was the “lower house” in Afghanistan's parliament at the time, would be elected by universal suffrage. This parliament acquired new powers, such as the ability to hold no-confidence votes in the king's officials and could have them removed. Those elected to parliament were able to enjoy legal protection for debates that had taken place, and it is important to point out that parliament could now have a significant say in determining the budget, and were to meet regularly instead of at the monarch's whim. Peter Blood notes: “The constitution—and the deliberations that produced it—demonstrated several noteworthy changes in political thinking. It barred the royal family, other than the king, from participating in politics and government—a provision that was perceived as keeping Daoud out of politics. Individual rights were strongly championed by provincial delegates over tribal ones. Conservative religious members were persuaded to accept provisions they once considered intolerably secular.

Although a lengthy debate ensued over whether the word Afghan should be used to denote all citizens of Afghanistan (many people regarded it as a reference only to Pashtuns), the loya jirgah agreed that this term should apply to all citizens” (Blood, 2001). The resulting political landscape in Afghanistan due to these reforms placed it in a transitory state between an absolute monarchy and a fully-fledged constitutional monarchy. The king retained a significant amount of power, and Zahir Shah used it with mixed results. “The Afghan political system remained suspended between democracy and monarchy, although it was, in reality, much closer to the latter. Political parties continued to be prohibited because the king refused to sign legislation allowing them. Democracy nevertheless maintained a toehold in the lower house of parliament where free criticism of government policies and personnel was aired” (Blood, 2001). While retaining a great deal of personal popularity due to a reluctance to get involved in border instability with Pakistan, Zahir Shah’s image of being an effective monarch suffered, and it was because of this that Communist factions in the country, as well underground parties leaning towards alignment with the Soviet Union, started to grow. The Communist factions themselves, to point out, were officially united under the banner of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan, but in reality, were divided between two primary factions. The Khalq were hardline Marxist-Leninist type Communists led by Nur Mohammad Taraki, and they favored a total alignment with the Soviet Union. The other faction, Parcham, led by Babrak Karmal, wanted the same things that Taraki’s faction supported, but the differences lay in the people themselves. Taraki’s support base were rural Pashtuns, while Karmal’s were typically more affluent and urban. It’s this split that will become of great importance a little further on.

The 1960’s also saw increased Soviet and American presence in Afghanistan, although these were civilian-oriented for the most part. The USSR contributed to the construction of

airfields in Afghanistan that were shared with by the Afghan Air Force, and the United States and the USSR both contributed heavily to educational efforts in the nation as well as supporting the growth of infrastructure and the construction of highways in Afghanistan. “Dominated by the Soviet Union, the government began large scale constructions projects in the mid-1950s, building hydroelectric power plants, long-distance highways, and major civil installations. Shortly thereafter the United States, Western European nations, Japan, and United Nations (UN) agencies became heavily involved in the development of mining, agriculture, education, civil administration, and health” (Blood, 2001). Overall, the promises of greater democracy and representation would be championed by Zahir Shah’s reforms, but would also tragically fall short. In 1973, taking advantage of widespread disaffection with Zahir Shah’s reign and with the king having to leave the country for eye surgery, Daoud Khan initiated a coup that toppled the monarchy and established a socialist republic. Zahir Shah took up residence in exile in Rome, Italy and would remain there until the transition government had been established in 2002, when he returned to Afghanistan. Pro-democracy activists had longed for a less intrusive head of state, something they failed to gain with Khan returning to power. Pashtun officers in the military were all for the change of government, since Khan had promised them that Pashtunistan would be revisited as many times as it needed to be in order to get the territory under Afghan rule.

1973-1980

Daoud Khan moved quickly to secure his new regime, establishing the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) as the primary political party of Afghanistan, and began purging leftists in Afghanistan who had opposed his taking power. Khan’s purges primarily involved sending troublesome factionalists to rural provinces to get them out of the capital; these were mostly Parchamis. Daoud Khan also nixed a countercoup from Mohammad

Hashim Maiwandmal. Maiwandmal was a former ambassador to the United States, an evolutionary socialist and pro-royalist, and Prime Minister of Afghanistan from 1965 to 1967. Maiwandmal died in prison due to mysterious circumstances, and until 1978 Daoud Khan had no significant threats to his power. Domestically, Khan sought to modernize Afghanistan at a far quicker pace than Zahir Shah had done, and the outcomes of his efforts would come back to haunt him. Khan had wanted to push further industrialization under a state-controlled economy, but had alienated the Soviet Union over the Pashtunistan issue with Pakistan, and his expulsion of Soviet officers from several Afghan units raised eyebrows in Moscow. This was crucial, since the Soviet Union was Afghanistan's largest donor of aid to the nation. Khan's alienation of Afghanistan's political factions—the Khalq and Parcham—led to both groups setting aside their differences in a fragile peace to quietly work against him. Khan's last bastion of support, which consisted of Pashtunistan fanatics, evaporated when at the urging of the Soviet Union, Iran and the United States, Khan dropped the Pashtunistan issue by 1977. Blood elaborates: "Efforts by Iran and the United States to cool a tense situation succeeded after a time, and by 1977 relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan had notably improved. During Daoud's March 1978 visit to Islamabad, an agreement was reached whereby President Mohammad Zia ul-Haq of Pakistan released Pashtun and Baloch militants from prison in exchange for Daoud withdrawing support for these groups and expelling Pashtun and Baloch militants taking refuge in Afghanistan" (Blood, 2001). Pashtun nationalists were outraged and disillusioned that Daoud Khan, once a rabid supporter for reworking the Pashtunistan issue in Afghanistan's favor, had turned his back on them and the idea. It was likely done out of developing a realistic view that Pakistan would never budge on the matter. There were others who felt that it was simply a political ruse by Afghanistan to solidify its position in Central Asia. Ghaffar Khan remarked as much in a 1981

interview with India Today: “The idea (Greater Pashtunistan) never helped us. In fact, it was never a reality. Successive Afghan governments just exploited it for their own political ends. It was only towards the end of his regime that Daoud Khan had stopped talking about it” (Khan, Siddiqui, 1981). Support for Khan from these hardliners disappeared, and by 1978, Daoud Khan found himself in a precarious position. In the five years he had spent in power, Khan had managed to alienate every political and social entity in Afghanistan. Pashtunistan diehards would never forgive him for betraying Pashtunistan to Pakistan. Religious fundamentalists in the countryside were furious with his programs to enforce social equality at the rural level, with a total disregard to tribal identities and long-established societal norms in those societies. Non-Pashtuns were chafing under his rule, understanding that the term “Afghan” came to mean “Pashtun”, since they were more or less excluded from positions of any influence. Non-Pashtuns such as Uzbeks and Hazaras were not allowed to become officers in the military, and Tajiks, long the ethnic rivals of Pashtuns, were kept at bay with minor political appointments. Urbanites bore the brunt of his failed economic policies, followed by economic stagnation in Afghanistan. Khan’s foreign relations had done well by the final year of his rule, having patched things up with Pakistan and maintaining decent relations with oil producing Arab nations such as Iraq, as well as maintaining good terms with Iran. But Khan’s handling of the PDPA’s factional bickering and his refusal to compromise with Khalq and Parcham or emphasize a consensus between the two, led to both factions aiming to replace him. Most troubling for Khan was that the Soviet Union itself had grown tired of his political ineffectiveness, and found themselves criticizing him on a near-routine basis. For Daoud Khan, the writing was on the wall.

On April 19th, 1978, a large public funeral was held for Parcham idealist Mir Akbar Khyber, who had been murdered two days’ prior. Although who committed the murder is not

known to this day, it is known that Khyber's murder triggered a mass outpouring of anger towards Khan's regime, who was rumored to have initiated the murder. Over 15,000 PDPA supporters, both Khalq and Parcham, had gathered in Kabul to mourn Khyber, and it ended up turning into a demonstration. Anti-Western slogans were chanted, and it appeared to outside observers that this was becoming a typical pro-Communist demonstration. For Daoud Khan, who had spent his time in office keeping Khalq and Parcham weak, divided and at each other's throats, this was a terrifying development. The PDPA were publicly united for the first time since the party's inception in the mid-1960's, and Khan hit the panic button by ordering the arrest of leading PDPA officials, with the emphasis on arresting and detaining Nur Mohammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin. For PDPA officials, this was the last straw. Around a week later, on April 27th, 1978, a coup against Daoud Khan was initiated. It is important to point out that such a coup had been contemplated by anti-Khan elements of the PDPA, notably Amin among them. But the coup had been considered to not be a possibility until at least 1980, due to a lack of cohesion. With Khan deciding to move fast against the demonstrators and PDPA officials on April 19th, and taking nearly a full week to arrest Taraki and Amin, those elements decided it was now or never. The coup was initiated on the 27th, and the next day, after battling Khan loyalists around the Presidential palace, Khan and his family were captured and Khan, along with most of his family, were brutally executed in the palace and their remains dumped in a mass grave in the countryside. The Saur Revolution was over, and the PDPA now took leadership of Afghanistan.

The PDPA established a Communist government in Afghanistan shortly after the Saur Revolution had succeeded, but it was a starkly divided government. Even with the brokered peace between the Khalq and Parcham factions thanks to efforts from the Soviet Union, factionalism began to dominate the government in Afghanistan. The division between the

Parcham and Khalq factions in the PDPA government was intensified by divisions in the Khalqi faction. That division was between Hafizullah Amin and Nur Mohammad Taraki, the primary leaders of that faction. Taraki, although a committed Communist, was more pragmatic in regards to the nature of Afghans and Afghan's rural-based society. Amin, on the other hand, was a hardline Communist in the Marxist-Leninist mold who advocated a total societal revolution to modernize Afghanistan, no matter the cost. Parchamis began being purged by either being imprisoned or with the more prominent among their faction being administratively reassigned as ambassadors to other countries in order to get them away from Kabul. In the case of Babrak Karmal, who headed the Parchami faction, he was exiled to Czechoslovakia thanks to intervention from the Soviet Union. There, he began networking with other ousted Parchamis to begin plotting coups that would fail in September of 1979. Khalqis had established themselves as the primary faction in power within a few months of assuming power, but the conflicts between Taraki and Amin had intensified over the next year and a half, with Taraki's supporters (who had Soviet support) making numerous attempts on Amin's life. The final attempt on Amin's life had backfired and on the 8th of October, Taraki was murdered by Amin, who had assumed control of Afghanistan's government less than a month prior after being elected by the PDPA Politburo (Afghanistan's policy-making system that had replaced Daoud Khan's parliament). With Taraki ousted against Soviet advice, Amin had consulted Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev as to what to do with Taraki, with Brezhnev giving a veiled "do as you wish" with him. Amin took that as Soviet support for an assassination, and had Taraki assassinated on the 8th of October. Two days later, Radio Kabul had announced that Taraki had passed away from a long-time illness. "Taraki's death was first noted in the Kabul Times on 10 October and reported that the former leader only recently hailed as the 'great teacher...great genius...great leader' had

died quietly ‘of serious illness, which he had been suffering for some time.’ Less than three months later, after the Amin government had been overthrown, the newly installed followers of Babrak Karmal [of the Parchami faction] gave another account of Taraki's death. According to this account, Amin ordered the commander of the palace guard to have Taraki executed” (Blood, 2001).

Amin’s rise to power in Afghanistan’s government was short-lived. By December 1979, the Soviets, who had supported Taraki and had covertly supported the attempts on Amin’s life, had decided that the time was as good as any to oust him. There was a crucial reason for Soviet opposition to Amin—Amin was the most hardline Communist in the entire PDPA, out of both Parchami and Khalqi factions. While the Soviets could appreciate Amin’s diligence in pursuing the Communist ideal, they were realistic about his position. A hardline Communist in a rural nation dominated by conservative values and steeped in Islam was bound to create an explosive situation right on the Soviet Union’s doorstep if left unchecked. Alongside monitoring disaffection with Amin’s regime, the Soviets had also been paying very close attention to an ominous situation that had been developing since 1974 after Daoud Khan’s first year in power. Many Afghans opposed to the hardline secularism embraced by Khan and later, the PDPA, had begun organizing resistance to both regimes. Many Afghans had left to Pakistan and Iran, where resistance groups began plotting coups and garnering support among the Muslim world. The Soviets were incredibly nervous over this development, as it contained a significantly large Muslim population in Central Asia. As an aside to bear in mind later on in this background, it is this development that saw the rise of the future warlords and commanders that would dominate Afghanistan’s war against the Soviets in the 1980’s and the protracted civil war in the 1990’s. Groups such as Hezb-i-Islami, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (who had split from another group,

Jamiat-e Islami, led by Burhanuddin Rabbani), and others such as Jebh-e-Nejat-e-Milli, led by Sibghatullah Mojadeddi, would feature prominently in both wars and at the time of the USSR's intervention, had gained the attention of the Western world over the years of the Communist regime. Blood notes that to outsiders, resistance groups generally fell into two different camps (and will be a key point to recall during the 1990's). These camps were the traditionalists and the fundamentalists. The traditionalist groups, such as Jebh-e-Nejat-e-Milli, were focused on the use of sharia (Islamic law) as the predominant legal code in Afghanistan. These traditionalists were not opposed to inviting Zahir Shah back to reign as king again, and some of them had been in contact with his entourage in Rome, where the king was residing in exile, but overall were more concerned with establishing sharia law in Afghanistan, and were keen on elevating the ulama—Islamic scholars—to prominent positions in Afghan society. The fundamentalist groups such as Jamiat, on the other hand, were also Islamic-based, but their base came out of mass political involvement rather than Islamic scholasticism, and consisted of the largest resistance groups. Jamiat, in fact, was so large that splits had occurred, with Hekmetyar forming his radical group Hezb-i-Islami and another influential man, Yuunes Khaled, forming a second Hezb-i-Islam apart from Hekmetyar's. A fourth split produced Ittehad-i-Islami, led by Rasool Sayyaf.

These groups had spent the majority of the 1970's after Daoud Khan's coup organizing resistance to his regime and subsequently the Communist regime. Their activity multiplied in the face of Amin's ascension to power, and began causing problems within Afghanistan. These resistance groups gained the full attention of the Soviet Union, which to them had confirmed that Amin's hardline style was not appropriate for a nation such as Afghanistan. Alarmed by the increasing activity of these groups, the Soviets cited their need to come to the aid of a fellow Communist nation, and on Christmas Day, 1979, sent special forces to secure Darulaman Palace,

where Amin resided. After a quick but furious battle with Amin's loyalist forces, the Soviets killed Amin and began sending conventional forces into Afghanistan over the next few weeks, after installing Babrak Karmal of the Parchami faction into power. The Soviet Union's Afghanistan war had begun.

1980-1992: The Soviet War and the Communist Era

From the onset, the USSR faced ferocious criticism in the international community for its invasion of Afghanistan, despite its attempts to use legal pretenses to intervene. The United States boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics, other nations issued official condemnations, and because of the Soviet Union's seat and veto power at the United Nations' Security Council, meetings devolved into tense standoffs with the UN's members passing resolutions condemning the invasion and occupation, but unable to do much else. Pakistan and Iran (which had become an Islamic state in 1979 following the Islamic Revolution that toppled the monarchy there) decided to pursue a more direct course of action by aiding and abetting resistance fighters, termed "mujahedeen", and allowing them to enter in and out of their nations at will in order to harass the Soviet Union. The Soviets, aware of this, decided on a reactive course—by bringing the war to the Afghan population itself. "The dropping of booby traps from the air, the planting of mines, and the use of chemical substances, though not on a wide scale, were also meant to serve the same purpose. However, although the total number of the victims of genocide was high, it was not high in each separate incident. A common feature of the Soviet program of total war was retributive mass killing, which was their means of repaying tough resistance. For example, in revenge for the killing by the mujahideen of three Russian soldiers, the commander brother of the fallen captain led his commando unit into the city of Tashqurghan in April 1982 and razed the city, killing at least two hundred of its defenseless civilians" (Kakar, 1995). There

were two purposes behind these actions. One, the Soviets had an impossible task of separating mujahedeen from the regular population, since they blended together so well. Two, since Pakistan and Iran were established nations with the former enjoying close ties with the United States, the Soviets couldn't invade either or initiate any sort of military action in those countries, since it would spark a wider war. The point for the Soviet's depopulation program was to deny havens among the Afghan people for resistance fighters, and to create a major refugee crisis that was intended to overwhelm Pakistan's social support systems.

During the Soviet invasion a number of commanders would make a name for themselves as highly effective guerilla warfare specialists and tactically formidable opponents, including those who remained loyal to the Communist government in Afghanistan. Gulbuddin Hekmetyar established himself as one of the most brutal and treacherous of these commanders, and would ally himself with every faction during the Soviet war in order to improve his position once the Soviets had left. The mysterious Mullah Omar, who would go to found the Taliban movement in 1994, was a phenomenal soldier who made life miserable for Soviet troops, and was wounded over four times. Burhanuddin Rabbani, who had founded Jamiat-i-Islami, was exceptional in maintaining relations with Afghanistan's countless tribes. Rashid Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek, made a name for himself for his excellent command of his Jowzjani units that remained loyal to the Communist government, which by the end of the Soviet war were one of the few reliable units left in Afghanistan and one of the best Communist generals of the war. Abdul Rasul Sayyaf was a mujahedeen commander who had popularized the war for foreign Muslims to take part and was financed by Saudi Arabia, which was impressed by his religious fundamentalism. The most notable commander of the Soviet war and the one who made the largest impact was one Ahmad Shah Massoud, who earned a reputation as the finest commander of the war. His

tactics and command of asymmetric warfare were some of the best of the 20th century; in the eyes of many military historians, on par with Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong and the Yugoslav Partisans. From the relative safety of his Panjshir Valley stronghold in north-central Afghanistan, Massoud, managed to not only keep the Soviets at bay but at times, could undertake offensive operations in furious efforts to dislodge the Soviets from the northern part of the nation.

The Soviet war had gone well at first and most of the mujahedeen groups had been kept at bay, and even with increased US and Pakistani support and with the increasing flow of non-Afghan Muslims entering the country to fight against the Soviets, the Soviet Union was optimistic about the eventual outcome. The goal was to create a favorable situation for Afghanistan's Communist government, which had suffered low popularity among Afghans thanks to the mishandling of reforms by Taraki and Amin. However, when Mikhail Gorbachev took power in the Soviet Union, his opening up of Soviet society led to the revelation that the war was not popular at all among Russians and its non-Russian people. Gorbachev agreed with Soviet public sentiments, and began agitating for a withdrawal at the earliest opportunity. With American and Pakistani financial and logistical support bolstering the resolve of the mujahedeen, the Soviets were hard-pressed to find a reason to let the war continue. After installing Parchami Mohammad Najibullah as the new leader of Afghanistan in 1987, the Soviets began leaving the country and by 1988, they were gone, having never established firm control of the nation. Ironically, though the mujahedeen found themselves ecstatic with their victory over the Soviets, their hardest fight would come against Najibullah's government. The Afghan military would ensure, through competent command and a surprising level of formidability, that the Communist regime of Najibullah would survive even the Soviet Union by nearly two full years. Najibullah

had attempted to nationalize Afghan socialism to distance itself from its predecessor regimes of Daoud Khan, Nur Taraki and Hafizullah Amin. He invited a number of non-Communists into his government, had done away with explicit Communist references from Afghanistan's constitution in 1990, made Islam the state religion, and sent feelers out to mujahedeen to attempt a peaceful settlement. But these were never going to win over the Afghan population—prior to becoming President, Najibullah was the head of KHAD (Khadamat-e Aetla'at-e Dawlati, or “State Intelligence Agency”), which was Afghanistan's sister equivalent of the Soviet KGB. KHAD had a brutal reputation among Afghans and was responsible for tens of thousands of deaths, arrests and disappearances. It was a black eye Najibullah would never recover from until the present day, and his affiliation with the Communists would cost him his life during the subsequent civil war.

1992-2001: The Afghan Civil War and the Taliban

In 1991 the Soviet Union, the Afghan government's biggest supporter, ceased to exist and Russia, its successor state, would enter a long period of economic decline and political hardship. The Central Asian republics that now bordered Afghanistan kept a close eye on the ongoing war between Afghanistan's government and the mujahedeen, who were now united for a time to oust Najibullah's government. Before I detail the events of the 1990's and how they led to American involvement, I will be detailing the various groups of Afghan's civil war, since the number of groups and their goals are intimidating to understand for those not familiar with Afghanistan's political landscape in the 1990's. To start, the Afghan Civil War began after Najibullah voluntarily stepped aside to allow for a neutral Afghan government to transition over to a democratic state. The mujahedeen gathered to form a coalition government to go over the details of this new state, except for one—Gulbuddin Hekmetyar, who in the winter of 1992 had

aligned himself with Pakistan's notorious ISI—Inter-Services Intelligence, which is that nation's intelligence agency and one of the world's most proficient. The ISI, which has considered itself something of a state within a state and thus pursues its own goals at times, had contacted Hekmetyar and offered him a deal—seize Kabul and the government of Afghanistan, and bring the nation into Pakistan's orbit to secure its west flank from India, and in return, Pakistan would recognize Hekmetyar as its sole leader. Hekmetyar agreed and in April of 1992, when the other mujahedeen announced their intent to form a coalition, Hekmetyar, who had also courted support from former Khalq officials and soldiers to boost his ranks, announced his intent to take Kabul by force. Hekmetyar's forces converged on Kabul immediately and by the 17th of April, had seized the capital. The other mujahedeen such as Massoud, promptly declared war on Hekmetyar's Hezb-i-Islami faction and by doing so, triggered the Afghan Civil War, which is generally split into two phases (1992-1996, 1996-2001). The factions in this multi-sided civil war that eventually drew in covert foreign aid from every direction were as follows:

Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG)—Established by Gulbuddin Hekmetyar in the 1970's following disagreements with Ahmad Shah Massoud and Burhanuddin Rabbani, this group was comprised of Islamic fundamentalists seeking to establish an Islamic state in Afghanistan. It was primarily active from 1992 to 1996, when Pakistan, furious over Hekmetyar's callousness towards the civilian population and the immense damage his forces had caused to Kabul, pulled its support for his group. His group would be sidelined from 1996 onward, although would find new life in fighting the Hamid Karzai administration, and would not settle for peace with any Afghan government until 2016. HIG was also one of the wealthiest factions, having received a staggering sum of money from the Central Intelligence Agency and Saudi Arabia, which Hekmetyar utilized for himself. It is notable that this group, despite their wealth and backing

from major Muslim states such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, were unable to secure Afghanistan and would be frustrated by other warlords during the civil war.

Jamiat-e Islami—The faction of Burhanuddin Rabbani with Ahmad Shah Massoud commanding its military forces. This faction stressed the desire to transition to a fully democratic nation, and was popular among the civilian population in the country for its role in saving civilian lives during the Soviet War, and for the exploits of Massoud, who had by this point become a living legend among military forces in Afghanistan. This group was reviled by Pakistan, and Massoud himself became the target of Taliban and ISI assassination attempts throughout the 1990's. The ISI eventually succeeded in 2001, two days prior to 9/11. Rabbani himself was the nominal head of Afghanistan's government from 1992 to 1996 thanks to the April Peshawar Accords, which designated him as such. But with the rise of the Taliban and their capturing of Kabul in 1996, Rabbani was forced to flee and Jamiat was forced to make an uneasy alliance with other factions in the north of the nation, informally known as the Northern Alliance.

Hezb-i Wadat—A faction that controlled the central highlands of Afghanistan and dominated by Shiite Hazaras, this faction was aligned and funded by Iran, and was more or less marginal by the end of the first phase of the Afghan Civil War. Their status as Shiites and as Hazaras made them targets for Taliban atrocities, and because of their small number, could not hope to have a long-term stake in Afghanistan's political scene. Ahmed Rashid describes the group: "...eight Afghan Shia groups were given official status in Tehran, but Iran could never arm and fund them sufficiently...they [Iran] helped unite the eight Iran-based Hazara groups into the single [Hezb-i Wadat] party. Iran now pressed for Wadat's inclusion in international negotiations to form a new mujahedeen government, which was to be dominated by the

Peshawar-based mujahedeen parties. Even though the Hazaras were a small minority and could not possibly hope to rule Afghanistan, Iran demanded first a 50% and then a 25% share for the Hazaras in any future mujahedeen government” (Rashid, 2001).

Ittehad-e Islami—led by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, this group was the only Pashtun dominant faction to oppose the Taliban in the second phase of the Afghan Civil War, which was ironic since Sayyaf personally held much in common religiously with the Taliban. His group had been accused by Amnesty International for murdering ethnic Tajiks and Hazaras and for murdering Shiites. Sayyaf himself never fully denied those accusations. BBC correspondent Phil Rees related this account in 2001, in regards to a 1993 attack on these neighborhoods, in the early stages of the civil war in Afghanistan: “In 1993, it was the site of repeated human butchery during fighting between a faction that adheres to the Shi’ite Muslim faith and followers of a Saudi backed Mujahideen leader, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. Amnesty International reported that Sayyaf’s forces rampaged through Afshar, murdering, raping and burning homes” (Rees, 2001). They received their funding, fighters and support from Saudi Arabia.

Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami—This group, led by then-Vice President Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, did not participate as a group but saw most of its numbers defect to the Taliban. Mohammadi stepped down as Vice President when the other mujahedeen forces began firing on each other, and he spent the rest of his political career trying to broker a peace deal between the mujahedeen. Despite his differences with the Taliban, he and his group were on good terms with the Taliban. Of note, this was the group Mullah Omar had fought in during the Soviet War.

Junbish-i Milli—This was the faction led by Rashid Dostum, the only successful Communist commander of the Soviet War, and dominated by his Uzbek militias. Dostum, himself an ethnic Uzbek, received generous support from Uzbekistan in the 1990’s. Residing in

the north of the country, Dostum's control of the northern provinces assured him security and the ability to pursue his own policies independent of the government. His independence was such that until he was duped by a subordinate for a period of time, Dostum ran a state of his own. He had created his own airline, printed his own currency, and his forces were fairly disciplined. Women could attend school and did not have to be veiled, and alcohol was available for consumption. Despite his even-handed rule in the north, however, Dostum had also earned a reputation for being one of the most untrustworthy warlords in the war. He had sided with Massoud in 1992 as Hekmetyar had sieged the capital and helped the mujahedeen beat Hekmetyar back. Afterwards, he retreated north to build up his strongholds and in 1994, fought against the government by aligning with Hekmetyar, only to realign himself back with Rabbani's administration in 1995. He was ousted in 1997 when a subordinate, General Abdul Malik Pahlawan, made a secret deal with the Taliban that promised Pahlawan authority in the north in return for allying with the Taliban. Pahlawan took the deal, Dostum fled to Iran, only to find out that the Taliban had no intention of honoring their end of the bargain. The Taliban were then ousted, Dostum returned, and infighting caused Dostum to again leave for exile in 1998. He returned to aid the Northern Alliance after the American invasion but continued to have his animosities against the Karzai and Ghani administrations, despite serving in administrative capacities with the latter.

Taliban—The Taliban emerged in 1994 under the leadership of Mullah Omar, who had grown tired of the brutal excesses of warlord rule in Afghanistan. Comprised predominantly of Pashtuns from Pakistan as well as young students and refugees, the Taliban were formed in madrassas (religious schools) and were keen on helping Mullah Omar rid Afghanistan of the warlords, the drugs and the excesses of warlord rule. The Taliban desired to accomplish this by

establishing a purely Muslim state in the country, and began their operations in August of 1994. With massive support from Pakistan—who were happy to have a group that they could rely on, since Hekmetyar’s forces had been ineffective and unreliable—the Taliban scored their first victories over the smaller, less important warlords in the southern part of the country and took Kandahar, the largest city in the south, by November of 1994.

The Afghanistan Civil War is an immense and at times, a confusing, period to understand, and since much of its troubles were exacerbated by foreign countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United States, there are still aspects of it that are not understood, since one has to delve into the realms of off-the-books funding, secret meetings, backroom diplomacy and other events and aspects that are still considered classified information in some of those countries. As such, this work focuses on Afghanistan after 9/11, so while there will be a tremendous amount left out, it is imperative that there is at least a basic rundown of the two phases of Afghanistan’s civil war. The first phase was from 1992 to 1996, which began when Gulbuddin Hekmetyar decided to take Kabul for himself, at the ISI’s behest, and ends in 1996 with the Taliban seizing Kabul in September of 1996. The second phase is a more straightforward one, as it features the struggles of the Northern Alliance holding off the Taliban, the emergence of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, and the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the events of 9/11 and the American invasion and ousting of the Taliban from power.

In 1992, Gulbuddin Hekmetyar had seized Kabul at the urging of the ISI and Pakistan, which desired to create an Afghan state loyal and subservient to Pakistan’s geopolitical interests and in order to facilitate natural gas and mineral shipments from Central Asia to Pakistan, since Pakistan is the shortest route to the sea. The other warlords immediately responded and in an alliance determined to secure Burhanuddin Rabbani’s government as agreed upon in the

Peshawar Accords, began fighting Hekmetyar to eject him from Kabul. Two years of bitter fighting would leave Kabul a shadow of its former self, as Hekmetyar shelled Kabul to an extent that not even the Soviet invasion and two prior coups could compare in the damage wrought upon the city. Tens of thousands fled the city, mostly to Pakistan, and by the end of 1994, Kabul was a ghost town in ruins. The mujahedeen could not stay unified and Rashid Dostum and his Junbish forces aligned themselves with Hekmetyar and joined in the shelling and bombing of Kabul, until they were beaten back by Massoud's forces and forced to retreat. Dostum then retreated north and began securing his position in the formidable mountain ranges in that part of the country, where for the next few years he would establish something of his own state complete with its own currency, state airlines and would serve as a refuge for Afghans fleeing the chaos of the war. Massoud would continue fighting for the Rabbani government in the hopes of bringing an end to the war and enabling a democratic state to establish itself in Afghanistan. Hekmetyar's ineffectiveness in Afghanistan led to Pakistan deciding to back a new movement in the late summer of 1994—the Taliban. The Taliban were religious students and Pashtuns residing in Pakistan under the command of the secretive Mullah Omar, and Pakistan, sensing an opportunity to make up for their failed project in Hekmetyar, began secretly arming and training the Taliban. In August of 1994, the Taliban began crossing the border into Afghanistan and immediately began fighting the petty warlords in the south of the country, where no single warlord was able to exert a strong amount of influence. Southern Afghanistan, centered around Kandahar, was essentially a power vacuum, since the Rabbani government had its hands full with Dostum and Hekmetyar and Massoud's influence did not extend that far south. The Taliban were able to take the region with ease and established themselves in Kandahar by November of 1994, thereby establishing a new faction in the war that had in the early stages, popular support.

By this stage, Massoud, who was now Afghanistan's Secretary of Defense, had defeated some of the warlords and had forced them to come to the negotiating table. He had invited the Taliban to the meeting as well but was rebuffed, and the civil war in Afghanistan would continue.

In 1995 the war took on a new intensity as the Taliban began moving west towards Herat and north to Kabul. They began the year by shelling Kabul but were driven back by Massoud, and for the next few months the Taliban, Hezb-i Wadat and Massoud's forces would fight a bitter struggle over the control of Kabul. Abdul Ali Mazari of Wadat would align himself with the Taliban in order to save his forces from being crushed by Massoud, although most of his forces being Hazara defected to Massoud anyway, and in March of 1995, the Taliban would enter parts of Kabul. This small victory lasted for a few days when Massoud's regrouped forces would drive the Taliban out of Kabul altogether, and the Taliban could only resort to occasional shelling of the city for the time being. For the next several months, the civil war settled into a back and forth routine with each side in the end making territorial progress. The Taliban captured Farah province (which borders Iran), only to lose it to Ismail Khan and Rabbani's government forces. Ismail Khan was the primary force in the west part of the nation, unaligned with any faction and ruling Herat much in the same fashion that Rashid Dostum ran the north of the country based out of Mazar-i-Sharif. By the late spring, Wadat had captured Bamiyan, the largest city in Hazarajat and were able to establish themselves as a primarily Hazara and Shiite force in the north-center part of the country, and although they lost the city for a month in June, only to reclaim it in July. The Taliban managed to capture Herat from Ismail Khan in September of 1995, and with Dostum claiming more territory in the northwest, Rabbani's government was in a precarious position.

By 1996 it had become apparent that the Taliban were a formidable force to contend with. Having taken southern Afghanistan within three months of their emergence and having ousted Ismail Khan, a strong regional leader in Herat, Mullah Omar resumed shelling Kabul throughout the spring of 1996 and their proximity and popularity at the time motivated Hekmetyar to sign an accord with the Rabbani government to align against the Taliban. Dostum continued to support whichever side was convenient for his short-term goals. Hekmetyar was given a government post in return for his support, which enraged Afghans who were well aware of his war crimes, and this caused the Rabbani government to lose a significant amount of support. The Taliban continued their slow march north and by September of 1996, had captured Jalalabad in the far east by Pakistan, which enabled them to exert far more pressure on Kabul. Two weeks later, after government officials and forces had fled Kabul in fear for their lives, and after Massoud left for the Panjshir valleys that had granted him security during the Soviet War, the Taliban stormed Kabul towards the end of September and with their capture of the capital, ended the first phase of the war with them in control of a full two-thirds of Afghanistan. They proceeded to implement the strictest version of sharia law in the world, scale back all the democratic reforms of the Rabbani government, and impose total control on Afghans in their areas.

The second phase of the civil war in Afghanistan, from late 1996 to 2001, is significantly more straightforward. With the Taliban controlling two-thirds of the country, there were two forces that resisted them. Ahmad Shah Massoud's forces in the northeastern part of the country, and Rashid Dostum's forces in the north and part of the northwest. Dostum and Massoud, who were archenemies who could never see eye to eye, put most of their differences aside to face the Taliban, and created the Northern Alliance in September of 1996. Fighting settled into a routine

as the Taliban tried to take the Panjshir from Massoud but were never able to penetrate its defenses nor compensate for the tactical brilliance of Massoud. Dostum was able to hold firm in the north until May of 1997, when he was ousted by Abdul Malik Pahlawan, who had made a secret deal with the Taliban—control of the north in return for allegiance to the Taliban. Pahlawan, who had blamed Dostum for the death of his family, agreed and ousted him in May. Dostum fled to Iran while Ismail Khan, who had fled to Mazar-i-Sharif, joined him in temporary exile. Pahlawan revolted against the Taliban when it became apparent that the Taliban were not going to honor their end of the bargain, and managed to drive them out. After the Taliban were chased out of Mazar-i-Sharif, Dostum returned, defeated Pahlawan and took control of the north until 1998, when the Taliban reentered. This time, Dostum left into exile to Turkey and would not return until the United States began its invasion of Afghanistan.

1998 saw the Taliban seize the northern part of the country, leaving just Massoud to carry on the fight. By this point, millions of Afghans had fled the country, lost their lives, or resided in one of the most oppressive Islamic regimes in the world. With Pakistan's help, the Taliban were able to secure their rule over three-quarters of the country, with just Massoud's pocket of resistance remaining in the northeast and the Panjshir valleys. The war had settled into a stalemate, with the Taliban unable to beat Massoud and with Massoud lacking the resources to wage a major offensive. The only event that nearly derailed the Taliban's progress was when the Taliban had killed several Iranian diplomats in Mazar-i-Sharif in August of 1998. This drew the fury of Iran, which decided to send a message by stationing over 250,000 troops on its eastern border with Afghanistan. Pakistan and the Taliban lost their nerves and appealed to the United Nations to mediate, which it did, but relations between Iran and the Taliban would remain at a permanent low. Pakistan—specifically the ISI—decided to assassinate Massoud, since his tours

of Europe to plead with the international community to aid Afghanistan were becoming problematic and causing worry in the ISI. Two days before 9/11, Massoud granted interview time to what he thought were two Moroccan journalists bearing Belgian press credentials. They were actually Tunisian and part of the long-established “Arab-Afghan” connection that funneled Arabs and North African Muslims to Afghanistan to aid the Taliban to fight their wars. They set off explosives hidden in their camera and Massoud passed away on route for treatment in India. It has been speculated that one of two parties were responsible for his assassination—al-Qaeda, under the command of Osama bin Laden who had been residing as a guest of Mullah Omar’s since 1996, and the Pakistani ISI, who had grown exhausted of their constant humiliations at his hands, having never been able to defeat him on the fields of battle.

Massoud’s assassination gave the Taliban all the momentum they needed to finish their work by unifying Afghanistan under an Islamic government that had implemented the strictest forms of sharia in the world. However, their guest—Osama bin Laden—had masterminded the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City. For the Taliban, American involvement could not have come at a worse time. The United States in the late-1990’s had attacked training camps for al-Qaeda with cruise missiles in response to their attacks on American embassies and other places of importance. While these responses were concerning for the Taliban and Pakistan, Pakistan had hoped that their strategic position could mitigate more aggressive American action in the region. That hope evaporated when hijacked aircraft had hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and galvanized the United States into action. The Taliban immediately prepared to defend their victory in the Afghan Civil War, and in October of 2001, the United States proceeded to drop its Special Forces and Airborne units into the country, where they linked up with the remaining Northern Alliance forces still fighting on where

together, they would drive the Taliban out of power. The American invasion and occupation was the end of the second phase of the Afghan Civil War.

From this point on, the focus shifts to establishing a democratic government for Afghans while fighting off Taliban insurgents throughout the country, and the United States, despite its best intentions, found itself caught in the middle of a labyrinth of Afghan politics and expectations. Balancing the need to create a legitimate government in Afghanistan while including former warlords in the new government in order to prevent potential factional resistance, the United States would have its hands full in trying to push a government that would be accepted by all, while managing holding off a furious Taliban resurgence that would come several years later. As the research section will demonstrate, the United States ultimately failed in this endeavor, and the hopes of George W. Bush to create a stable democracy in Afghanistan that would eventually grow out to the nations surrounding it, would be unfulfilled.

Chapter V: Research and Analysis

2002 Transitional Government and the Loya Jirga

With the United States' invasion of Afghanistan in October of 2001, the Northern Alliance, allied with US and NATO forces, seized the opportunity to assist in driving the Taliban out of Afghanistan. This was achieved by January of 2002. A month prior to that, in December of 2001, Hamid Karzai was selected, at a Conference in Bonn, to be the head of a transitional government in Afghanistan. The Bonn Conference featured four delegations: the Northern Alliance, the "Cypress Group" headed by exiles in Iran, the "Rome Group" who were royalists with strong ties to Zahir Shah (in exile in Rome at the time), and the "Peshawar Group", Pashtuns residing in Pakistan (PBS, 2002). This conference, while mediated by the United

States, the United Nations and numerous experts and dignitaries, was dominated by factionalism between the groups, as well as individuals catering to their own interests. At times, it was a productive conference, with James Dobbins, U.S. Special Envoy to Afghanistan, remarking, “the delegations were very civil to each other. A number of them were related to each other, a number of them had been friends before they were enemies, and it wasn't difficult at all to get them to sit down and talk to each other. I mean you didn't have to spend days of negotiating as to the size of the table or how many people sat there or who could speak first. These things were arranged much more easily than they are in similar situations” (PBS, 2002). Lakhdar Brahimi, the United Nations’ Special Representative to Iraq and Afghanistan, had this much to say: “After a few days, I think, we started to see that perhaps we can go very far. And, the presence of the various players and influential players around, in Bonn was extremely useful” (PBS, 2002).

The Bonn Conference was undertaken with a tremendous amount of pressure from the United States, and due to the military situation at hand—the United States and the Northern Alliance managed to gain control of much of Afghanistan within a very short time, and dignitaries such as Colin Powell were keen on emphasizing the speed of forming an interim government. This pressure was summed up by Powell himself in June of 2002: “I said, ‘Let me just summarize this with the following observation: Speed, speed, speed!’ Three times, I think I said it, according to The New York Times the next day. The reason for that is that the situation on the ground was unfolding quickly. We needed a political solution quickly in order to have something ready to put into Kabul” (PBS, 2002). Burhanuddin Rabbani, the recognized President of Afghanistan at the time, felt that pressure from the United States and upon remarking that he was feeling hassled, received this response from Powell: “Do not let them break up. Keep them there. Lock them up if you have to. We do not want this to go anywhere

else. We're almost there, and this is the time to grind it out on this line. If they go off, I don't know when I'll get them all back together.” (PBS, 2002). This conference led to the creation of the Afghan Interim Administration (AIA), headed by Karzai, and consisting of 29 members drawing from all four groups. The AIA was created to replace the Islamic State of Afghanistan (the 1992-2002 government that replaced Najibullah’s Communist regime but had itself fallen to civil war) and was to remain active for 6 months, eventually clearing the way for the more formal Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (TISA). TISA’s primary function was then to oversee the convening and process of the Loya Jirga.

Loya Jirga means “Grand Assembly” in Pashto. A 2002 BBC primer explains it succinctly: “It is a forum unique to Afghanistan in which, traditionally, tribal elders - Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks - have come together to settle affairs of the nation or rally behind a cause. ... The institution, which is centuries old, is a similar idea to the Islamic ‘shura’, or consultative assembly. Historically it has been used to settle inter-tribal disputes, discuss social reforms and approve a new constitution” (BBC, 2002). With over 2,000 delegates and tribal chiefs showing up to Kabul in June of 2002, it certainly lived up to the “Grand Assembly” billing. Furthermore, with these numbers, despite the agreements and solidarity shown at the Bonn Conference in regards to settling an interim administration, the 2002 Loya Jirga demonstrated much political intrigue and maneuvering.

The 2002 Loya Jirga was set up with 1,450 seats. Of those, 1,051 were chosen by indirect elections. Each of Afghanistan’s districts—362 in total—were permitted one seat as a base minimum, with extra seats being granted for every 22,000 people in the district. 100 seats were delegated to Afghan refugees, 25 seats for nomadic groups, 160 reserved entirely for women, and the rest for the members of Afghanistan’s interim administration. The Loya Jirga began in

June and immediately was beset by delays, since over 2,000 delegates had arrived, 500 more than were allowed. The additional delegates were accommodated, and over 50 new seats were granted to the various warlords who were present. These warlords, mostly affiliated with the Northern Alliance as well as various unrepentant, minor and independent ones, quickly set about trying to assume a commanding position within the Loya Jirga, much to the anger of the other delegates. Another problem arising with the warlords' presence was that they were invited to become part of the new government, much to the consternation of the delegates and Afghans in general. "One delegate drew cheers and applause at the loya jirga when he questioned the participation of warlords and military commanders at the meeting. 'We were told that this loya jirga would not include all the people who had blood on their hands. But we see these people everywhere. They are the ones who had the guns. I don't know whether this is a loya jirga or a commanders' council,' said Safar Mohammed. 'Who are all these other people? Why are they here? The commissioner has not explained who they are,' he said. 'All the governors are here, the warlords are here. Who chose them?'" (The Guardian, 2002). Even European mediators such as Klaus Peter-Klaiber, the European Union's Special Envoy, were caught by surprise and disappointment to see former warlords at the Loya Jirga. "I was amazed to see in the first and second rows those so-called warlords sitting together...It tells me only one thing: the interim administration has decided to try to integrate former warlords into policy-making in Kabul. If they succeed, that will be an achievement" (The Guardian, 2002). The warlords used this as an opportunity to intimidate other delegates into supporting their goals and positions, and thus managed to gain their own forces unlimited access to the Loya Jirga (posing as bodyguards and security details) in order to carry out their orders.

Another contentious issue at the Loya Jirga was the role of the former king, Zahir Shah. The United States did not see a role for Zahir Shah in the interim government, or in the post-interim full government of Afghanistan, and had decided that as early as the Bonn Conference. “The role of the king should be defined as opening the Loya Jirga, the constituent assembly that would meet six months after the interim assembly came soon to power, and that his role didn't need to be defined beyond that for the purposes of this meeting. The central agreement which had to be forged was the membership and the internal administration” (PBS 2002). Zahir Shah had widespread support among the delegates at the Loya Jirga, especially among the Pashtuns. He was mentioned numerous times at the Bonn Conference, and most Pashtun Afghans were keen on his restoration. However, because of immense pressure from the United States and Pakistan, along with United States envoys such as Zalmay Khalilzad, Zahir Shah formally backed out of any candidacy to restore the monarchy, allowing Hamid Karzai to assume the primary role. This angered much of the Loya Jirga causing several pro-royalists to storm out of the council entirely, joining other delegates who walked out in protest over the involvement of former warlords. However, by the 24th of June, the interim administration was sworn in, after Hamid Karzai won the Loya Jirga's election two weeks' prior with over 80% of the vote.

A second, smaller Loya Jirga, consisting of only 503 delegates was held in late 2003 in order to decide the nation's constitution. Despite complaints and misgivings over the perceived influence of warlords, businessmen, and foreign entities such as the United States (specifically Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Envoy to Afghanistan and ethnic Pashtun who had been a naturalized citizen for over 30 years by then), the new Constitution of Afghanistan was chosen by a consensus among the 2003 Loya Jirga and made official by early 2004. Hamid Karzai and George W. Bush saw it as a watershed moment for Afghanistan's development into a democratic

nation. “I want an Afghanistan where a poor boy from the Baluch tribe can become president” (BBC, 2004), Karzai remarked at the concluding ceremonies. His comments were welcomed by President George W. Bush, himself a strident advocate for democracy. “A democratic Afghanistan will serve the interests and just aspirations of all of the Afghan people and help ensure that terror finds no further refuge in that proud land” (BBC, 2004).

The Constitution of Afghanistan

The Constitution of Afghanistan was written in 2003 and ratified in 2004. There are a number of observations one can make on the Afghan Constitution that demonstrate the pervasiveness of United States’ influence as well as the United States’ commitment to fostering a democratic country. Within the Preamble itself of Afghanistan’s Constitution one sees this influence. The Preamble begins with “We the People of Afghanistan” in a similar fashion to “We the People” used within the United States. And towards the middle of the Preamble is a line dedicated to enshrining human rights and democracy: “Observing the United Nations Charter as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...” (Afghan Constitution, Preamble, 2004). The Preamble also dedicates itself to: “Establish an order based on the peoples’ will and democracy” as well as its desire to “form a civil society void of oppression, atrocity, discrimination as well as violence, based on rule of law, social justice, protecting integrity and human rights, and attaining peoples’ freedoms and fundamental rights” (Afghan Constitution, Preamble, 2004). After the Preamble, Afghanistan’s Constitution does make a clear statement that the nation is to be considered an Islamic Republic with Islam as the national religion (Articles 1 and 2), however it does guarantee the rights and freedoms of non-Muslim religions. Article 6 is the first article that specifically stresses the importance of democracy in the nation, and the first of many articles that were inspired by the United States Constitution and

United States democratic ideals: “The state shall be obligated to create a prosperous and progressive society based on social justice, preservation of human dignity, protection of human rights, realization of democracy, attainment of national unity as well as equality between all peoples and tribes and balance development of all areas of the country” (Afghan Constitution, Article 6, 2004). Article 7 reaffirms the commitment of Afghanistan to the safeguarding of “universal rights and freedoms” that was stated in the Preamble: “The state shall observe the United Nations Charter, inter-state agreements, as well as international treaties to which Afghanistan has joined, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...” (Afghan Constitution, Article 7, 2004). Article 10 also shows heavy United States’ influence, with the guarantee of the Afghan government protecting the idea of a free market economy; “the state shall encourage, protect as well as ensure the safety of capital investment and private enterprises in accordance with the provisions of the law and market economy” (Afghan Constitution, Article 10, 2004).

Chapter 2 of the Afghan Constitution, “Fundamental Rights and Duties of Citizens”, is where the meat of democratic sentiment is anchored and codified. The first three articles of Chapter 2 deal with discrimination (Article 22), the sanctity of life (Article 23) and the guarantee of individual liberty (Article 24). It is interesting to note that the text of Articles 23 and 24 are worded in a way that United States citizens would find familiar. Article 23 states: “Life is the gift of God as well as the natural right of human beings. No one shall be deprived of this except by legal provision”, while Article 24 states that “Liberty is the natural right of human beings. This right has no limits unless affecting others freedoms as well as the public interest, which shall be regulated by law. Liberty and human dignity are inviolable. The state shall respect and protect liberty as well as human dignity” (Afghan Constitution, Articles 23, 24; 2004). Article

34 defends the freedom of expression: “Freedom of expression shall be inviolable. Every Afghan shall have the right to express thoughts through speech, writing, illustrations as well as other means in accordance with provisions of this constitution...” (Afghan Constitution, Article 34, 2004). Article 36 guarantees the freedom of Afghans to assemble: “The people of Afghanistan shall have the right to gather and hold unarmed demonstrations, in accordance with the law, for attaining legitimate and peaceful purposes” (Afghan Constitution, Article 36, 2004), while Articles 38 and 40 are almost perfect copies of the United States’ Constitution’s 4th Amendment, which guarantees the inviolability of private property from seizure and warrantless searches. “Personal residences shall be immune from trespassing. No one, including the state, shall have the right to enter a personal residence or search it without the owners’ permission or by order of an authoritative court, except in situations and methods delineated by law...” (Afghan Constitution, Article 38, 2004). Article 40: “Property shall be safe from violation. No one shall be forbidden from owning property and acquiring it, unless limited by the provisions of law. No one’s property shall be confiscated without the order of the law and decision of an authoritative court” (Afghan Constitution, Article 40, 2004). Finally, Article 42, which declares the Afghan’ government’s right to levy taxes on the people of Afghanistan, is nearly identical to the United States Constitution’s 16th Amendment, ratified in 1913, that gave the United States Government the ability to collect income taxes.

Chapter Three of the Constitution covers the roles and expectations for the President of Afghanistan, and further influence from the United States can be observed. The President of Afghanistan has two Vice Presidents that must be declared as running mates prior to a Presidential election, and the order of Presidential succession, like that of the United States, flows through them first (akin to the 25th Amendment of the United States’ Constitution, which

secures Presidential succession). Should both Vice Presidents and the President die or be rendered unable to carry out their duties, the line of succession follows much like that of the United States: “In case of simultaneous death of the President and the First Vice-President, the Second Vice-President, the President of the House of Elders, the President of the House of Representatives and the Foreign Minister shall succeed respectively and, in that order, and, according to Article Sixty-Seven of this Constitution, shall assume the duties of the President” (Afghan Constitution, Article 68, 2004). Like the United States Executive Branch, the Afghan President is the Commander-in-Chief of Afghanistan’s military, and can only declare war on other nations with the approval of the National Assembly—just as the United States President must have Congressional approval to do the same. Afghan Presidents, like United States Presidents, can declare and remove states of emergency, accept resignations of Cabinet ministers, Vice Presidents and ranking officers, and must confirm the appointments of the heads of intelligence agencies (the National Security Director), Attorney Generals, and other major departments with the House of People (the Afghan counterpart to the House of Representatives). The Afghan President must also confirm Justices of the Supreme Court of Afghanistan with the House of People, in much the same fashion that the President of the United States confirms Supreme Court nominees with the confirmation, advice and consent of the United States Senate.

In essence, with the exception of the roles of Islam and provisions covering nomads and tribes, the Afghan Constitution is essentially a modern-worded variant of the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. This was not accidental. The United States took an enthusiastic role in shaping Afghanistan’s government, which in many ways mirrors the United States’ branches—the Legislative, the Executive, and the Judicial, with an emphasis on the importance of the Executive branch, and a bicameral Legislative branch. Given that President

George W. Bush was in office during the formation of Afghanistan's democratic processes—Bush was and remains a strong advocate of democracy and more specifically for monadic-style DPT—it can be safely inferred that the thought processes for the United States government were that an American-style democracy could be imposed from the top-down in Afghanistan, a nation with a vastly different history, political landscape, socio-cultural traditions and ethnic makeup. As the election data and military situation will demonstrate, imposing a democratic government from the top-down would yield far different results from what the Bush Administration was hoping it would yield.

2004 Afghanistan Presidential Elections

The 2004 Presidential Election in Afghanistan was the nation's first general election for an executive position, and Afghanistan's first general election overall since the 1988 parliamentary elections to replace the PDPA's Revolutionary Council. The 2004 elections began in October of that year, having been postponed from the original date of July 5th due to ongoing violence, to September, where they were again postponed to October. The election fielded a total of 18 candidates, with the two lead candidates being Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun running on an independent ticket, and Yunus Qanuni, an ethnic Tajik who headed the party Naveen, or "New Afghanistan Party". The other candidates included: Mohammed Mohaqiq, a Hazara (People's Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan/PIUPA), General Abdul Rashid Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek who ran as an independent but had limited popularity outside of Uzbek enclaves in the northern half of the country, Hamyon Shah Aasifi (a Pashtun monarchist who was joined by fellow monarchist and Uzbek, Abdul Satar Sirat), and a Tajik representing Afghanistan's oldest political party, the Jamiat-e Islami, Abdul Hafiz Mansoor. Of the 18 candidates, 8 were Pashtun, 7 were Tajik, 2 were Uzbek and 1 was Hazara, which was fairly representative of the nation's ethnic

composition. The only female candidate in the 2004 elections was Massouda Jalal, herself an ethnic Tajik.

Because this was Afghanistan's first election, a number of procedures had to be implemented in order to curtail the expected levels of fraud and instances of multiple voting. Besides a cursory and basic system of national ID's being implemented, along with rushed designs for voting cards, the most vivid image from Afghanistan's first election was that of Afghans holding up fingers stained with a purple dye to prove they voted, similar to scenes from the Iraq election which ousted Saddam Hussein. However, this ink would also have a significant drawback—many Afghan voters noted that it was washable, and thus individuals were able to vote multiple times. "...indelible ink was used following reports of excess voter registration cards circulating on the black market. Some estimates suggested there was between 10 and 20 percent duplicate registration. Punching holes in the registration card was to be the primary method of preventing multiple voting, but due to the commonplace practice of multiple registrations, the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) decided to apply ink on the left thumb of voters to prevent multiple voting" (Gerhard, Atic, Letic, Erben, 2019). This mishap with the 2004 election was due in part to the rushed circumstances of the election thanks to the United States and Hamid Karzai both pushing for the election to take place at all costs. "For Election Day, kits provided for the polling stations contained ink in the form of an ordinary water-soluble marker, with 'permanent marker' written on it, for general use, in addition to the marker for inking fingers. In some cases, polling staff confused the two markers and voters inked with the 'permanent marker' were potentially able to wipe the ink off" (Gerhard, Atic, Letic, Erben, 2019). According to officials, the extent of the confusion was considered limited and thus not sufficient to cause any serious alteration of the results. The confusion among stakeholders

and its potential destabilizing force, however, were more substantial than any real fraudulent impact (Gerhard, Atic, Letic, Erben, 2019).

A number of candidates were unhappy with the election proceedings due to this ink problem, and “by midday Saturday, 15 candidates declared the election invalid because of allegedly rampant multiple voting. By Sunday, several candidates appeared to back down after a series of meetings of US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and candidates, and a promise of an independent inquiry” (Baldauf, 2004). The election was also criticized for being a rushed affair due to United States’ pressure, with a number of aid workers noting that many election staff in Afghanistan had not been trained properly. “‘Everything was done at the last possible moment’, says Vikram Parekh, a senior analyst at the International Crisis Group in Kabul. ‘The election planning began late in every way, from defining the legal regimes of the election process to the registering of voters and political parties’” (Baldauf, 2004). The Bush Administration was very keen on downplaying these difficulties, in order to maintain the image that things were moving forward with Afghanistan’s development as a democratic nation.

Finally, one unforeseen factor that was expected but did not occur were the Taliban’s threats of violence during the election. “Perhaps the greatest surprise is what didn’t occur on election day: massive Taliban attacks. Afghan military checkpoints leading into most Afghan cities limited traffic, making it difficult for the estimated 3,000 Taliban insurgents to launch any major attacks on polling day... Lt. Gen. David Barno told the AP that the Taliban ‘basically didn’t show. They had very limited attacks’” (Baldauf, 2004). Despite managing the ongoing invasion and occupation of Iraq at this time, the United States maintained a garrison of around 20,000 troops in the country to keep the peace and to maintain pressure on the Taliban, who at

this point were in a state of chaos and regrouping, even though Mullah Omar had proclaimed the Taliban's new goal of driving out what they regarded as foreign invaders.

Overall, the 2004 presidential election in Afghanistan was a success, given the situation that Afghanistan had been in since 1992. Hamid Karzai, who was at this time still the interim President prior to the election being certified by JEMB, remarked that it was "tremendously inspiring to see millions of Afghans come out of their homes and villages and mountainous areas and travel for hours in snow and rain and dust storms to line up and vote", while United States Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad stated that "the Afghan Nation has spoken - it has voted for democracy and freedom. This is a triumph for Afghanistan" (Baldauf, 2004). The final numbers from the 2004 Election vary from source to source, but JEMB, who oversaw the final tallies and who certified the election as being legitimate (and is considered the most trustworthy source) reported and certified the numbers as follows: 8,128,940 total official votes tallied in the election, Hamid Karzai won the lion's share with 4,443,029 (55.4% of the vote). The runner-up, Yunus Qanuni, tallied 1,306,03 votes (16.3%). The next tallies were certified as such: Mohammad Mohaqiq (935,325 votes, 11.7%), and General Abdul Rashid Dostum (804,861 votes, 10%) (JEMB, 2004). The next several candidates did not earn over 1.4% of the vote, and their impact on the election was minimal. The Bush Administration and specifically Ambassador Khalilzad looked very favorably on this election, and desired to see this carry over to 2005, when the first National Assembly since 1988 was to be elected and established.

2005 Wolesi Jirga Election

The 2005 Wolesi Jirga elections, Afghanistan's parliamentary elections for its legislative branch, were Afghanistan's first parliamentary elections since 1988, when Afghans began the process of voting out the Revolutionary Council and embracing a new Wolesi Jirga. These

elections were held with high hopes coming from the Bush Administration, the new Afghan government, and individuals such as Zalmay Khalilzad. The Bonn Agreement initially called for these elections to be held prior to the 2004 Afghan Presidential elections, but they were pushed forward a full year due to violence and the unstable situation in Afghanistan. JEMB described the election's setup in a 2005 handbook detailing the venture. Beginning on the 18th of September of 2005, all Afghans over the age of 18 were made eligible to vote with a registration card. Throughout the country, 26,500 polling stations were established, and overseen by over 160,000 staff in affiliation with the Afghan government, the United Nations, and JEMB. As with the 2004 election, the ink dye would be utilized again (JEMB, 2005). Afghans who desired to run as candidates were required by JEMB to file nomination papers at a local JEMB office in their province, have their photograph taken for the ballot sheets, and had to submit a list of registered voters who supported their candidacy (JEMB, 2005). The ballots themselves were not printed in Afghanistan, but in Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom (JEMB, 2005). JEMB reported in their handbook that 1.7 million more Afghans were registered to vote prior to the Wolesi Jirga elections, with over 40% of those being women. 5,800 candidates emerged to vie for the 249 seats in the Wolesi Jirga. Since 68 of those seats were reserved for women, with another 10 going to the Kuchi (the nomadic communities), that left just 171 seats to be competed over by those 5,800 candidates. Kabul Province provided the most seats from one province at 33. According to the JEMB 2005 Wolesi Jirga tallies, the female candidates were broken down as follows: 582 of the candidates were women, with 328 competing for seats in the Wolesi Jirga and 247 competing for seats among the provincial councils, which were also up for election at this time (there are 34 provinces in Afghanistan, and these councils are guaranteed 34 seats in the Meshrano Jirga, which is Afghanistan's "upper house", the equivalent of the United States

Senate). Seven of those women were Kuchi. Of the provinces, Kabul fielded the most women candidates with 84, and Takhar Province, in the north, fielded the least amount of female candidates at 2 (JEMB 2005). For the male candidates, 2,778 candidates vied for seats among the provincial councils, with 2,379 competing for seats in the Wolesi Jirga. 61 candidates competed for seats among the Kuchi allotment. Because Afghanistan's population had severe issues with literacy, all candidates were given symbols by which Afghan voters—some 12 million in all—were instructed at the polling booths to utilize to decide their candidate. Because political parties were still in a state of flux in Afghanistan at this time, candidates ran as independents. This allowed even little-known personalities to win seats, however, with so many candidates competing for seats, only a handful polled over 10%. For instance, according to election data compiled by Psephos, an online archive of elections from around the world, Burhanuddin Rabbani brought in 11.4% of the vote in his native Badakhshan Province. Zulmai Mujadadi, the runner-up, garnered 6.1%. The third candidate, Mawlawi Abdul Aziz, earned an even 5%. These are not impressive numbers at first glance, but when considering the number of candidates for the Wolesi Jirga and the Provincial Council in Badakhshan alone (89 for the Jirga, 78 for the Provincial, for a total of 167 candidates), it is obvious that only the most recognized names were going to win seats and influence (JEMB, Carr, 2005).

Another issue in the 2005 elections was that of invalid votes. Using Badakhshan as an example once more, there were 414,009 total registered voters for this election. 243,740 registered voters showed up and voted. 4.8% of the total vote in the province were deemed invalid, with this distinction covering incidents of fraud and multiple voting. The total amount of invalid votes in Badakhshan came out to 11,645 (JEMB, Carr 2005). This voting pattern reflected itself throughout the other 33 provinces, that pattern being that 2-4 candidates garnered

most of the votes, and everything else was split to 0.5-2% shares of the votes due to the huge number of candidates vying for seats in the Wolesi Jirga. Most provinces reported lower turnouts than the 2004 Presidential election, and some provinces, such as Zabul Province in the southeast of the country, reported just a 20.1% turnout. Invalid votes varied from province to province, and given the different sizes of the electorates, a ranged estimate was difficult to place. Zabul reported a 6.5% tally of invalid votes, while Uruzgan Province reported 8.8% (Carr, 2005). The low turnouts and invalid votes, coupled with so many candidates running, served to make the 2005 Wolesi Jirga election a rather underwhelming venture. 220,000 observers, both national and international, oversaw the election process and despite accusations of fraud from various candidates, the delays in announcing the election results were not as pronounced as the 2004 election, and the parliamentary elections were concluded by November 12th.

The final results would reflect a Wolesi Jirga starkly divided between independent candidates, and candidates who aligned themselves with various factions; formal political parties were not as established as they would come to be for the next round of elections. Those factions were divided along ethnic lines, for the most part—Rashid Dostum commanded the Junbish faction with 33 seats; Jamiat-e Islami, led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, had 22 seats; Naveen, founded by Yunus Qanuni in the aftermath of political struggles with Hamid Karzai, had 13 seats. Other factions had a minimal number of seats, but of note, many of the older factions were continuations of the anti-Communist groups and warlord factions that had formed during the mid-to-late 1980's and early 1990's. Indeed, even the major factions were those who had formed their roots during that era; Dostum's Junbish, for instance, started out as a military unit under Dostum's command fighting for the Communist PDPA. This election was undertaken despite questions over how effective the United States and NATO would be in providing security

for the elections, since the Afghan National Army had not been stood up yet, and since the United States, despite public support for democratic initiatives in Afghanistan, had shifted its full focus to its war effort in Iraq. Troop levels in Afghanistan had dropped to an average of 19,100 (FAS, Belasco 2009) by 2005 and 2006, which allowed the Taliban to storm back and create a very hostile situation for the Afghan government, holding back rebuilding projects and political consolidation (as a note, by average troop levels, this is meant to represent the general level of troops in Afghanistan at any given time, in order to account for regular rotations of troops into and out of the country). The invasion of Iraq in March of 2003 had multiple consequences for the United States in Afghanistan. With its focus in Iraq, the United States found itself unable to handle the resurgence of the Taliban, which had regrouped in Pakistan and steadily built up its resources. Further, the United States expended tremendous financial and political capital on restructuring the Iraqi government after it ousted Saddam Hussein. Even Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. envoy to Afghanistan and an ethnic Pashtun, was co-opted into the Iraqi effort by June of 2005, and would spend his time setting up an Iraqi constitution. The United States would thus be caught off-guard when the Taliban re-emerged in 2006 as a truly formidable force, when its forces in Afghanistan stood at only 20,400 by the end of the fiscal year of 2006 (FAS, Belasco 2009). The Iraq War had another, rather unforeseen effect that lent to the Taliban's successful resurgence. In Iraq, insurgents began gravitating towards jihadist motivations, and thus more desperate and forceful tactics. Unable to compete with the conventional military superiority of the United States, Iraqi insurgents began utilizing improvised explosive devices (IEDs/VBIEDs) and suicide bombers. The Taliban took notice of their effectiveness at bogging down United States' forces, and began adopting those tactics for the first time in their history. The tactics

utilized by insurgents in Iraq would be used to great effect in Afghanistan by the end of 2006, and this newfound fanaticism would create complications for the 2009 and 2010 elections.

2009 Presidential Election

2009 proved to be a pivotal year for the Afghan government. Hamid Karzai was up for reelection, the Taliban insurgency was reaching insurmountable levels, and the United States saw a sea-change in its own political landscape with the outgoing George W. Bush leaving the White House to the newly-elected Barack Obama. Like Bush, Obama was a keen proponent of democracy and democratic initiatives around the world, and believed that a democratic government was the best form of government for any people desiring peace, freedom, security and an opportunity for a better future. Unlike Bush, who's actions could be construed as faithful to the monadic method of DPT, Obama's actions were far more subscribed to the dyadic way of thinking—that democracy can only take root if certain practical conditions were met. As such, by this time, the average number of United States troops that could be found in Afghanistan at any given time had greatly surged to around 50,700, with the actual height being marked around 67,000 by the end of 2009 (FAS, Belasco 2009, AP 2016). The Taliban and al-Qaeda resurgence there had caused a very complicated and unfavorable situation for the United States and its NATO allies, who now had not just one, but two fully capable insurgencies in two different theaters to contend with in Iraq and Afghanistan.

With this as a backdrop, the 2009 Afghan Presidential elections proceeded in earnest. The JEMB, which had overseen the first two elections, stood aside for the newly-minted Independent Election Commission (IEC), established after the 2005 Wolesi Jirga elections as the primary overseer for Afghanistan's elections. Another change from the 2004 and 2005 elections were the formal establishment of political parties, the lack of which had contributed to

Afghanistan's low voter turnout in 2005. While 44 candidates had formally filed papers to run in the 2009 election, only 32 of those would see action in the Afghan presidential campaign (Carr, 2009). Concerns resonating with countless Afghans was the hopeful banishing of warlords or former militia commanders from the election—this was such an important factor for Afghans that the concept was enshrined in Afghanistan's constitution (Article 85)—but the IEC received over 50 candidates' paperwork with ties to or who were formerly associated with warlords. "The Electoral Complaints Commission, which adjudicates on all challenges to the electoral process, excluded 54 candidates because of links with 'illegal armed groups.' But human-rights monitors have observed that at least 70 candidates with such links remain on the ballot list...Many of the bigger warlords, including current parliamentarians and provincial council members, have been able to get around this clause by registering their militias as private security companies" (Levine, 2009). The suspected involvement of drug traffickers, another concern with Afghans, was ever-present as well. These concerns, along with concerns over the direction of the nation would be taking, were present in the minds of Afghans throughout the election, and would show in the polls that the United States would run in the leadup to the election.

Unable to carry these polls out in 2004 and 2005, due to the necessity of establishing a government at all, opinion polls were utilized for the first time in 2009 with the election as a testing ground. The pollsters were funded entirely by the United States and run by United States' based companies and entities such as the International Republican Institute. Conducted in the same manner of polls in the United States, the Afghan polls revealed a very invested Afghan electorate. Of those polled in July 2009, 62% felt that the country was headed in the right direction, as opposed to the 37% that felt the nation was headed in the wrong direction. However, 43% of those polled responded that they felt Afghanistan was less stable than it was a

year prior, while only 35% felt that it was stable. The most telling statistic from those polls, however, was that the IRI poll had asked Afghans if they felt that Afghanistan needed to change its direction within the next 5 years of the election. 83% polled “yes” (IRI, 2009). Supporting those poll findings was the fact that interest in voting was as high as 73% in favor of those polled by region, which indicated that Afghans were eager to make themselves heard as much as possible (IRI, 2009). Making things complicated for Afghan voters was that the Taliban had stepped up several attacks in the nation during the leadup to the election, including a devastating rocket attack that killed 10 NATO and UN-affiliated personnel, along with causing over 50 injuries; United States soldiers were targeted in separate attacks, and Afghans also found themselves caught in the crossfire. “In separate attacks, two American soldiers were killed and three others were wounded by a roadside bomb in eastern Afghanistan. The deaths brought to 26 the number of US service members killed in the conflict in the past 30 days. Meanwhile, a suicide attack killed three Afghan soldiers and two civilians in Uruzgan in the south of the country. In Jowzjan province in the north, an election candidate was shot dead and three poll workers killed in Badakshan when the car they were travelling in hit a roadside bomb” (Sengupta, 2009). Election day in Afghanistan saw even more violence, and despite a media blackout, in an attempt to bolster confidence among Afghan voters, even the optimistic outlook by the winner, Hamid Karzai, could not smooth over the situation. “...Afghan government officials said militants had launched 73 attacks in 15 provinces during the voting, killing at least 26 Afghan civilians and members of the security forces. But with the Afghan media asked by the government not to report violence during the election the figures were impossible to verify” (Boone, Beaumont, 2009). Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggested attacks were likely much higher. And thus, although millions of Afghans did vote, the perceived lack of legitimacy in the

largely Pashtun south where hostility to the western-backed government in Kabul was highest, exacerbated the country's dire political and security problems.

Compounding this even further was the stark division between the candidates. Hamid Karzai was the incumbent office holder and more importantly, an ethnic Pashtun. His opponent was Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, an ethnic Tajik from Kabul. The two ethnicities are the most powerful in Afghanistan, and have often clashed with power struggles in the region going back several centuries. The 2009 Presidential campaign was merely a new chapter in this rivalry, and one of the most important reasons why the election was so hotly contested. Abdullah's campaign repeatedly accused Karzai's campaign of voting fraud, a distinct possibility given the low turnout. These accusations caught a head of steam when the ECC received hundreds of complaints from Afghan voters accusing the IEC of ignoring their complaints and caving to Karzai supporters. Abdullah's supporters accused the Karzai campaign of pressuring the IEC to open more polling centers in Afghanistan's southern provinces, where the Taliban regard as their home provinces, and more importantly, where the Pashtun reside in overwhelming numbers. "An international observer monitoring the elections said the IEC had come under 'a lot of pressure' from the Karzai government to open more polling stations. The disputed [centers] are in the provinces of Paktika, Paktia, Khost, Zabul, Helmand and Kandahar where the government has little control beyond major town [centers]" (Farmer, Nelson, 2009). "The Independent Election Commission (IEC) said the president's supporters were trying to force it to accept polling stations in Taliban strongholds where voting could not be properly monitored. His officials and the electoral authority are in dispute over plans to open 443 [centers] deep within insurgent territory where observers, police and the army fear to tread. Mr. Karzai wants to use fighters loyal to 'tribal elders—many of whom are suspected of being Taliban allies—to secure

the polling stations in militant strongholds” (Farmer, Nelson, 2009). Peter Galbraith, a former deputy to the UN Special Envoy to Afghanistan Kai Eide, also remarked on election fraud in Afghanistan, and was fired over it. ““I might have tolerated even this last act of dishonesty in a dispute dating back many months if the stakes were not so high...but the fraud was a fact that the United Nations had to acknowledge or risk losing its credibility with the many Afghans who did not support President Hamid Karzai” (Farmer, 2009). Galbraith also alleged that over 30% of Karzai’s votes were invalid.

The numbers reported by Psephos are approximate, given the chaos surrounding the 2009 election, but the official tallies were certified as such: out of 15.6 million registered voters, 5,918,741 voted (around 38% of the electorate), and 255,983 votes (4.3%) were invalidated, leaving 95.7% of the votes, tallied at 5,662,758, to be considered legitimate. Of those votes, Hamid Karzai, with much controversy and amid serious allegations of fraud, bribery and intimidation, was officially made the winner of the election with 54.6% of the vote (3,093,256 votes). Abdullah Abdullah, who refused to recognize the results, came in second with 1,571,581 votes (27.8%). Ramazan Bashardost, who interestingly was not featured in any of the pre-election polls conducted by the IRI or Glevum (thereby fueling allegations of the United States attempting to shape the election), finished with 520,627 votes (9.2%). Ashraf Ghani, who was featured heavily in those same polls and was heavily rumored to being favorited by the United States for his technocratic outlook, finished a distant fourth place with only 155,343 votes (2.7%). 28 other candidates who were validated by the IEC rounded out the election with 321,536 votes spread among them for 5.7% of the vote total (Carr, 2009). A run-off election was supposed to be conducted since the initial rounds of voting did not leave Karzai with the required 50% threshold, but with credible threats of violence, an angry and cynical Afghan electorate and

bitter political rivals holding a grudge, the IEC and the Afghan government bowed to pressure from the United States and the United Nations, and canceled the run-off after fears of inter-governmental violence.

2010 Wolesi Jirga Elections

Despite new levels of cynicism over the botched 2009 Presidential election and the misgivings of millions of Afghans over whether holding parliamentary elections was a wise idea, the Karzai Administration pushed forward with the 2010 Wolesi Jirga elections regardless. This election was not as controversial as the 2009 election, and was not marred with the level of violence that rocked the nation the year prior. Set to begin on the 18th of September, the 2010 Wolesi Jirga elections also featured formal political parties. This opened up the field for a new level of Afghan representation, since the established parties in Afghanistan prior to this election were political continuations of former warlord groups, militias, and in Junbish's case, former Communist units during the PDPA era. However, these parties immediately faced an uphill battle in establishing themselves. Afghanistan is a nation in which social ties are extraordinarily valuable, and where name recognition counts for legitimacy in not just political ventures, but socio-cultural ones as well. Because of this, funding and support for the 110-plus political parties that had emerged after 2003 found little forward progress, even with constitutional support for parties being founded on the basis of political, not ethnic, considerations. Also, many of these new political parties tended to be progressive and liberal in nature, in a political landscape where the established parties were overwhelmingly ethnic and tied to their founder—again, in Junbish's case, a party of ex-Communist personnel that were predominantly Uzbek. The NDI found in 2011 that political parties in Afghanistan had three features that made the 2010 parliamentary elections underwhelming. "Parties see themselves as potentially

contributing to the political landscape in Afghanistan but are unsure about how to best to develop a stronger political role for themselves as institutions. To date, most have functioned as the support networks of individual leaders” (NDI, 2011). NDI’s second point: “The process of determining and distinguishing ideological profiles among parties is slow. Some parties are gradually identifying and refining their key messages; however, many parties do not assign an ideological position to their activities” (NDI, 2011). And their third finding, that “there is a general need for parties to realistically assess the composition of their support bases before or as part of the process of developing issues-based or ideological bridges with other groups. Parties would also benefit from the development of party membership rights, roles and responsibilities”, showed that at this point in time, Afghan political parties were as disorganized as the nation’s government (NDI, 2011). The NDI’s study also elaborated on just how different the political parties of Afghanistan were (and continue to be), and that a glaringly wide gulf between established factions and new parties could be observed.

Jamiat-e Islami: an ex-Mujahedeen faction that in the aftermath of the election controlled 17 seats in the Wolesi Jirga, led by Burhanuddin Rabbani and based out of the north and west of Afghanistan, centered primarily in Badakhshan. Jamiat was one of the few ex-Mujahedeen factions that had legitimate pre-war roots as a political party, having been established in 1972 during the final year of Zahir Shah’s reign. It catered mostly to ethnic Tajiks. Leadership of the party would change after Rabbani was assassinated by suicide bombers in 2011.

PIUPA: The People’s Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan, led by Mohammad Mohaqiq, formed in 2004 after splitting from Hezb-e Wahdat, which itself was formed in 1979 as the anti-

Soviet resistance kicked off. The party gained 11 seats in the 2010 elections and was one of two political vehicles for Hazara participation in Afghan politics, the other being Hezb-e Wahdat.

Junbish: This “party” was the only such entity in Afghanistan that was an actual military unit. Junbish was a self-defense unit for Afghanistan’s Communist government that guarded oil fields and grew to 40,000 men when the government formally accepted it into the army as Division 53, commanded by General Abdul Rashid Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek. It was one of the only Afghan units of the Soviet war that was reliable, and the only group that was affiliated with the Soviets and the PDPA. It spent the 1990’s as one of the founding members of the Northern Alliance and they controlled the far north of Afghanistan, running themselves as a virtually independent country at one point before being driven out by the Taliban in 1998. By 2010, Junbish had become the political vehicle for Uzbek aspirations in the Afghan government, and had lost a tremendous amount of seats with parliamentary restructuring. Junbish had 33 seats in 2005; it had only 10 after the 2010 election concluded.

Jamhuri: Jamhuri was a new political party that was formed in 2006, and was one of the few parties (indeed, one of the few entities in Afghanistan in general) that was considered pro-government. Led by Engineer Habib, Jamhuri claimed 9 seats after the 2010 election.

Hezb-e Wahdat: Formed in the Hazarajat (the Hazara’s main enclaves within Afghanistan, the central highlands of the nation) in 1979 in response to the Soviet invasion, this ex-mujahedeen group had, by the 2010 election, become incredibly splintered and was scarcely recognizable from its formation. At the time of the election, it was the party of Karim Khalili, one of the nation’s two Vice Presidents. Hezb-e Wahdat earned 7 seats.

Mahaz-e Milli: Another ex-mujahedeen group, also formed in 1979, and predominantly Pashtun, they gained 6 seats. Mahaz was led by Ahmed Gailani, the leader of Afghanistan's Sufi Muslims (his full title was Pir Ahmed Gailani, "pir" being a Sufi spiritual master).

The other parties in Afghanistan were small and mostly independent, with a few unique parties that had small support. The Afghan Millat Party, which won 4 seats in the Wolesi Jirga, is a Pashtun nationalist group and, unique for their platform, social democratic. Astoundingly, there was a party with legitimate roots in the PDPA that still remained in the nation, Mutahed-e Milli, an ex-PDPA party that rebranded itself as "New Democrat". The 2010 election saw that parties with mujahedeen roots had the most support and the most experience navigating Afghanistan's chaotic political landscape. A sensible observation made about this phenomenon was that most parties were run by the same people who had founded them and had been active in Afghan politics and military struggles for most of their lives. Figures such as Rashid Dostum, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Gulbeddin Hekmetyar and others were still alive at this point and very much involved with the shaping of Afghanistan's politics and government. Even with the strong party presence in 2010 that was not around for the 2005 parliamentary elections, the makeup of the 2010 Wolesi Jirga was 2/3's in favor of independent political parties and candidates. This, however, was in the advantage of the established parties and factions, since they were more organized, and even the Hazara political parties, which endured split after split after this election, counted on a modicum of base support from Hazaras. This same reality applied to the Uzbeks and Tajiks, who had parties they rallied around. The Pashtuns, being the predominant ethnic group, were a little more splintered than others in this regard, since there was no one party or former mujahedeen faction that could appeal to them all. The 2010 Wolesi Jirga election's final numbers reported that out of an electorate of 10.3 million voters, 4,216,594 votes (41%) were

cast, showing a relatively low turnout. 186,367 votes were rendered invalid due to fraud, bribery, intimidation, and as in the 2009 election, black market IDs and ballots being sold to supporters and activists (ElectionGuide, 2010). As with the 2005 elections, these votes saw winning candidates in most provinces garner less than 15% of the vote, although the smaller provinces such as Panjshir saw candidates such as Dr. Zahir Sadat win convincingly with over 20% of the vote. Despite the low turnout, this election was still achieved thanks in large part to the increased numbers of United States' troops in the country, which had started picking up in 2009.

Fiscal year (FY) totals for troops in Afghanistan, then, would come to look like this. FY, Quarter 1 (Q1) 2009: 32,500. By FY, Q2: 38,350. FY, Q3: 55,100 and by the end of FY 2009: 62,300 (CRS, 2019). This was due to the Taliban's campaign escalating to a full-scale insurgency from 2007-2009, when the United States was fully focused on the Iraq War; it was a golden opportunity for the Taliban to establish themselves once again as a formidable force. This was accomplished, and the United States—along with its NATO allies—found the Taliban nearly impossible to dislodge from Afghanistan. Ominously, the Taliban had more than enough supporters in Afghanistan to make waging an insurgency a successful venture, and with background support from Pakistan, the Taliban found themselves poised to take on the might of the United States military and its NATO allies.

Cognizant of this, and understanding that the botched 2009 election left a poor taste of democracy in the mouths of millions of Afghans, President Obama reconsidered his initial campaign platform to get the United States out of the country, reversed course, and began escalating troop levels in Afghanistan along with moving the mission from support to full combat operations. This was embodied in the “surge”, and the concept was and remains

immediately familiar to veterans of that stage of the war. A classified report that got out to the press was reported on a segment of MSNBC's "Morning Joe" on September 23rd, 2009, that General Stanley McChrystal, the commanding general of United States and NATO forces in Afghanistan at the time, assessed that over 500,000 troops over a five-year period would be required to put the Taliban insurgency down (Andrews, 2009). At the start of FY 2010, the United States had upped its troop levels to 69,000. By September of 2010, that had been increased to an astonishing 96,600. By March of 2011, that number would increase to a steady 99,800 United States' troops in Afghanistan, working in tandem with around 40,000 troops from NATO countries such as Germany, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom and partnered support from Malaysia, Mongolia, Sweden and South Korea. The situation was still dire, however, with the Taliban operating nearly at will inside of Afghanistan's borders. Compounding this situation was that despite the troop surges, Obama still intended on following through with his campaign promises on eventually scaling down the presence of the United States, in order to make Afghanistan less dependent on United States aid. He made it clear by his second term that getting out of the country was a priority. In June of 2011, Obama announced that over 33,000 troops would be withdrawn from the country in an effort to push for a drawdown strategy, with the ultimate goal to leave Afghanistan to its own devices. "...we will be able to remove 10,000 of our troops from Afghanistan by the end of this year, and we will bring home a total of 33,000 troops by next summer, fully recovering the surge I announced at West Point. After this initial reduction, our troops will continue coming home at a steady pace as Afghan Security forces move into the lead. Our mission will change from combat to support. By 2014, this process of transition will be complete, and the Afghan people will be responsible for their own security" (Obama, 2011). While still supportive of democratic initiatives in Afghanistan, Obama's focus

(and those who studied DPT as well) were shifted to the then-ongoing Arab Spring. Middle Eastern and North African dictatorships were beginning to collapse thanks to large-scale popular revolts against dictatorial and military rule, and leaders such as Muammar Ghaddafi of Libya were swept aside after decades of maintaining power. Once again, Afghanistan was pushed to the background as the Obama Administration began diverting its focus to this new development and opportunity to support fledgling democratic movements in that region of the world. But in 2014, that focus shifted back to Afghanistan with the 2014 election, viewed as the most contentious to date.

2014 Presidential Election

Hamid Karzai's second term ended in 2014, with term limits being imposed on the Afghan executive branch in the same fashion that it does with the United States; Afghan presidents are limited to two terms of five years each. 27 candidates registered and were confirmed with the IEC, although 16 candidates were disqualified. The reasons for their disqualification gave some small semblance of hope for the 2014 election; the disqualifications were primarily over educational credentials and citizenship status. "There are different reasons [for the disqualifications]. Some of them had problems with documents, education levels, the number of registration signatures," Nuristani said. "They now have 20 days to criticize and complain" (Latifi, 2013). Unlike the 2004 and 2009 elections, those disqualified candidates did not have ties or backgrounds relating to warlord activity, which was a positive step (although Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, a qualified candidate who finished a distant third in the election, was a former mujahedeen commander, itself not a disqualifying factor). Further, there was cautious optimism among Afghans regarding the 2014 election, since Hamid Karzai was not permitted to run again due to term limits. Even Abdullah Abdullah's supporters, who were still nursing their

wounds from the controversial 2009 election that they felt they had won, were optimistic. The confirmed reports of vote fraud and allegations of United States support for different candidates were still present in the mind of the Abdullah campaign, which found itself paranoid over the idea that the United States was favoring Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, a Pashtun from Logar Province. United States support for Ghani was also alleged by the Karzai Administration during the chaotic 2009 election, as Ghani was seen as more technocratic and amenable to United States' policies and interests. Further, the personal differences between Abdullah and Ghani served to shape the 2014 election into a bitter one. To begin, their ethnic backgrounds formed a microcosm reflecting the larger Pashtun-Tajik rivalry—Ghani is Pashtun, Abdullah is Tajik. (Reflections upon Afghan history after Genghis Khan shows a tremendous rivalry between the Pashtuns and Tajiks for control of the region.) Furthermore, while both Ghani and Abdullah were highly educated, Ghani was educated in western schools while Abdullah was educated in Afghan universities.

Abdullah's education came through Afghan universities and refused to abandon Afghanistan during its darkest periods. He received his degree in ophthalmology from Kabul University and during the latter half of the 1980's, resided in Kabul working at a veterinary hospital, but played an active role in the Soviet war coordinating medical treatment for mujahedeen and other anti-Soviet elements until the war ended with full Soviet withdrawal in 1988. He also spent time in Pakistan helping Afghan refugees during the war. Most importantly, Abdullah's work in health and aid to refugees and fighters caught the attention of one Ahmad Shah Massoud, who took Abdullah in and made him Minister of Health in 1985, and Abdullah became one of Massoud's closest advisors. The BBC's 2009 candidate profile on Abdullah noted that he served "as foreign minister in the short-lived government headed by the

Northern Alliance, Dr Abdullah continued as ‘foreign minister in exile’ throughout the years of rule by the Taliban, which was ousted in 2001” (BBC, 2009). At the time of Massoud’s death in 2001, Abdullah was a spokesman for Massoud, traveling with him to Europe prior to his assassination. This closeness with one of Afghanistan’s most revered figures in the modern era lent Abdullah a credibility no other candidate could muster. Ghani, on the other hand, had been educated in western institutions since his high school days, attending high school in Oregon as an exchange student. His college education was completed at the American University of Beirut, and his doctoral work was done at Columbia. Following his doctoral work, Ghani worked in academia as a professor at various universities such as Johns Hopkins and Harvard, and was gainfully employed by the World Bank. In all, Ghani was absent from Afghanistan proper for over two decades and had missed the Soviet war and the Afghan Civil War during the 1990’s. The differences between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah were so pronounced that the rivalry between them overshadowed the other candidates—as reflected in the 2014 election results. Before analyzing those votes, however, it is vital to go over the election itself first.

For the 2014 elections, the United States initially wanted to conduct opinion polling as it did in the 2009 election. However, this was one element all Afghan candidates agreed upon, opinion polls were felt to be deliberately misleading and influential in the election. The early polls run in Afghanistan saw Abdullah beating Ghani in three of the four polls run by three different pollsters. Those pollsters were Glevum (based in the United States and one of the two polling companies that drew ire from the Karzai administration for biased polling), Democracy International, and TOLO News, Afghanistan’s only 24/7 news network. The numbers for those polls came out as such: the first poll, conducted in October of 2013, was undertaken by TOLO and saw Abdullah leading Ghani 21% to 13% (Shamal, 2013). Another TOLO News poll in

December of 2013 showed that Abdullah still polled favorably among those surveyed, beating Ghani 27% to 19%. Democracy International's poll, conducted in the same month of December of 2013, reported the same end result found in TOLO News, seeing Abdullah leading Ghani 31% to 25% among those surveyed. Interestingly, the only poll to show Ghani leading Abdullah was U.S.-backed Glevum and Associates, which had Ghani leading Abdullah 29% to 25% (Glevum, 2013). These were the only polls conducted, as the United States announced through its embassy that it would be holding off on any other polls, along with cutting funding to the election in general. "A spokesman for the U.S.-funded group Democracy International said on Thursday it and other similar organizations had planned to carry out opinion polls as Afghanistan prepares for the April 5th election. 'Statements by some electoral authorities and candidates' camps suggested that there was ... a perception that the polling results were somehow biased,' a U.S. embassy spokesman said. 'In order to avoid any perception—however baseless—of U.S. interference, we have decided to forgo additional U.S.-funded polling regarding the upcoming election,' he said" (Donati, Reuters 2014).

The election began on the 5th of April and concluded by the 15th of May. Ashraf Ghani finished a distant second to Abdullah Abdullah, 44.9% to 31.5% (with the exception of Zalmi Rassoul, who had garnered the support of several other candidates and won 11.5% of the vote, no other candidate particularly mattered) (Carr, 2014). Around 12 million Afghans in the country were eligible to vote, and 6,617,666 turned out, constituting about a 55% turnout (Psephos, 2014). Abdullah was nominally declared the winner, but Afghan election laws stipulate that if a winner does not garner over 50% of the vote, a run-off is necessary. This was also an issue in the 2009 election, but violence and a shaky political situation with Hamid Karzai, along with overwhelming United States pressure to maintain the status quo, saw that run-off

canceled (which fueled accusations of interference and favoritism from the United States). This time, Abdullah was the clear winner of the election by a wide margin, and with the United States drawing down combat operations in Afghanistan by this point—only 33,200 troops would be in Afghanistan by Q2 of FY 2014 (CRS 2019)—the pressure was on to demonstrate that Afghanistan could facilitate a peaceful transfer of power in an election. That pressure was increased dramatically when it was announced that a run-off election would be held in June. Ashraf Ghani won the run-off handily amidst furious accusations of fraud and complicity from Abdullah’s campaign. The final numbers showed: 4,485,888 votes for Ghani (56.4%), 3,461,639 votes for Abdullah (43.6%). Psephos had an interesting remark regarding the post run-off settlement: “These were unofficial figures, which reflected systematic vote-rigging by officials appointed by outgoing President Karzai. After a prolonged deadlock, Abdullah agreed in September to Ghani becoming President, with himself being appointed ‘Chief Executive Officer’—a post unknown to the Constitution. This agreement was made possible only through intervention from Secretary of State John Kerry, who was directed by President Obama to force a settlement between the two political rivals to guarantee a government for Afghanistan. This agreement was crucial, as it would allow further withdrawal of United States troops. As part of the agreement, official figures for the second round were not released” (Carr, 2014). The run-off was bitterly contested by Abdullah, who alleged massive fraud on the part of Karzai and Ghani, both ethnic Pashtuns with heavy support from the United States. Abdullah was also shaken by an assassination attempt during that run-off. “Two bombs hit the convoy of Abdullah Abdullah as he was driven through the city from one campaign event to another on Friday. They ripped apart the bullet-proof four-wheel drive, blew the glass out of nearby buildings and left the ground strewn with blood and twisted metal, but Abdullah emerged apparently unscathed” (Graham-

Harrison, 2014). Interestingly and perhaps contributing to Abdullah's supporters' growing belief of a wider conspiracy, no group claimed responsibility for the assassination attempts. Even the Taliban, who had promised widespread violence during the election and the run-off, had nothing to say on the matter. Complicating matters even further was that Ghani had spent the months after the run-off courting United States lobbying agencies in an overt attempt to cement his legitimacy. "In July, Ghani retained two US outfits that focus on polishing the reputations and influence of foreign politicians. According to regulatory filings, he retained Sanitas International for \$45,000 a month to 'provide senior level counsel, media relations and key stakeholder outreach... to communicate interests and policies to US and Western media outlets and to build support among key US and Western audiences.'" (Murphy, 2014). Further, "Ghani's election team also retained DC-based Roberti White LLC in July for \$100,000 a month to 'provide political consultancy and public relations services... including campaign strategy development and implementation, issue formulation and messaging, media consulting, and other services in support of T&C's candidates and activities.' T&C refers to 'Transformation and Continuity,' the name of Ghani's political party" (Murphy, 2014).

By September of 2014, despite the bitterly contested election and the massive differences between Ghani and Abdullah, Hamid Karzai, who refused to step down from office until a settlement had been reached, oversaw both candidates placing their feelings aside and worked with United States Secretary of State John Kerry to broker a unity government. Ghani would be recognized as the President of Afghanistan, while Abdullah gained his new position as Chief Executive Officer, a semi-authoritative position that would, in theory, rule alongside the President. But the system that the United States had basically created for Afghanistan had shown itself to be untenable. "The United States-backed and guided Afghan constitution that was put in

place a decade ago created a powerful, almost king-like authority for Hamid Karzai, the man hand-picked by the George W. Bush administration to run the country. Mr. Karzai wielded those powers to the hilt, making sure the power and patronage unlocked by senior government posts flowed to and through those loyal to him, sidelining rivals and potential rivals”, Dan Murphy of the Christian Science Monitor had observed and written in July of 2014. “Afghan's nascent political institutions like parliament could be brushed aside and the only real check on Karzai's authority has been his government's total reliance on aid from the US and other NATO partners. All this, not surprisingly, increased ethnic and regional tensions and undermined political and community trust” (Murphy, 2014).

Afghanistan, by this point, was financially insolvent, relying entirely on the goodwill of the United States Congress and ever-skeptical American taxpayers, who were growing weary of throwing more money at a project that was already deemed a failure and not worth the interests or focus of the United States. Osama bin Laden had been killed in an Abbottabad, Pakistan suburb a few years' prior in 2011, and United States' troops had been scaled back to allow the Afghan security forces greater autonomy in dealing with the Taliban. However, the security forces that the United States had spent tens of billions of dollars in propping up with training, supplies, weapons and assistance, were regarded as wasteful spending by taxpayers and United States politicians, who were increasingly calling for the end of the rebuilding effort. More troubling for United States troops after the ending of combat operations at the end of 2014, was that the Training, Advise, and Assist Command forces (TAAC) left behind to help the Afghan National Army handle security matters, were the targets of ruthless insider attacks by the Afghan soldiers they were ostensibly training. “Green on blue” attacks, as they are referred to in the United States' military lexicon, became one of the greatest threats to U.S. troops in Afghanistan

because of their unpredictability and a countless variety of factors that could set and attack off. For instance, on August 5th, 2014, a 2-star General, Major General Harold Greene, was killed when an Afghan Army soldier shot him at an event featuring Afghan, U.S. and NATO personnel. “Greene, 55, was the first general officer killed in an overseas attack since the Vietnam War. He was killed Aug. 5 when an Afghan army soldier emerged from hiding in a bathroom at Marshal Fahim National Defense University outside Kabul and opened fire on a delegation of U.S. and European military officers. The shooter was killed” (Lin, 2014). According to the Long War Journal, since 2008, green-on-blue attacks have killed upwards of 150 troops. “Green-on-blue attacks have posed a problem for years...The number of attacks peaked in 2012, when they accounted for 15% of all coalition deaths” (Davis, 2020). Things looked dire for Afghanistan as it headed into the 2018 Wolesi Jirga elections.

2018 Wolesi Jirga Elections

The 2018 Wolesi Jirga elections were to originally have been held in 2015, after the 2014 Presidential elections, but due to the chaotic and bitter campaigns waged in that election that nearly turned into an actual war between supporters of Ghani and Abdullah, the Wolesi Jirga elections were postponed to 2016. Prior to that, Ghani signed an extension of the Wolesi Jirga elected in 2010, angering countless Afghans and further eroding any trust and confidence in the Ghani Administration. The move was seen as a power play by Ghani’s administration to subordinate the legislative branch to the executive one—a move that undid even the 1964 constitutional reforms that King Zahir Shah himself pushed in order to give the Wolesi Jirga a greater say. The elections were postponed again in 2016, as the Afghan government continued to attempt to reform its election laws to prevent a repeat of the 2014 election. This process was still in a state of development by 2018, but the Ghani Administration could not afford to

postpone the elections any further. By this point, Ghani's administration had a new kind of pressure from the United States: the election of populist Donald Trump, and the lowest level of United States' troops in Afghanistan in the entire span of the war, sitting at around 8,000 at any given time and eventually topping out around 13,000. President Trump ran on a platform of ending the war in Afghanistan by withdrawing all troops and personnel from the nation regardless of Afghanistan's situation. This was a level of pressure on Ghani that was unknown to him just 8 to 9 years prior, when he enjoyed tens of billions of dollars in aid programs and the full support of the United States military and its NATO allies. Further, the Taliban were operating with absolute confidence in the countryside and rural areas of Afghanistan, since the Afghan National Army could not be counted on to mount a serious defense of the nation, thanks to desertions, corruption and pro-Taliban activities in the worst cases. Thus, on the 20th of October, 2018, the Wolesi Jirga elections proceeded, but with little fanfare. Results of the election, gleaned from the NDI's interactive database, show around a third of the designated polling stations did not open at all, leaving only 18,283 polling stations and 4,698 polling centers to function for 8.9 million voters. The field for the Wolesi Jirga elections featured 2,544 candidates (411 of whom were women), with only 22 incumbent members return to office. Unlike the 2010 parliamentary elections, political parties were not a major feature of this new parliamentary election, and the 238 seats that were elected were non-partisan. The initial results declaring 27 new members were overturned after vote counts were finalized. In all, 3,296,643 votes were cast, with 363,886 votes discarded for reasons such as fraud, vote buying, and black-market ballots (NDI, 2019). This parliamentary election itself was subdued and quiet in comparison to the 2005 and 2010 elections, but was marred by violence that caused the deaths of 170 Afghans around the country, including 18 in Kabul on the first day of voting

(DeutscheWelle, 2018). In comparison to the 2019 Presidential elections, this election was successful, demonstrating that Afghanistan could hold elections in a fairly direct and quiet manner.

2019 Presidential Election

By 2019, Afghans had lost patience with both Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani. The concept that the loser of an election required his own executive position in the government of Afghanistan in order to stave off a potential civil war caused Afghan confidence in the executive branch to erode. Voter turnout for the 2019 Presidential elections was proof of that. Out of the 9 million Afghans eligible to vote, an abysmal 18.9% show up (1,824,401 votes tallied and split among 14 candidates) (Carr, 2019). (Because this election was finalized less than a month prior to this writing, the NDI does not have the data archived, thus the voting tallies were pulled from Psephos and the IEC.) Afghans' lack of trust and confidence in their government and the democratic method at the executive level was manifested in that there were no threats of violence between supporters of any of the candidates—the controversies were left between Abdullah and Ghani themselves. Ghani spent the year prior making controversial remarks that destroyed any goodwill he had among non-Pashtun populations. In a speech to Afghan students, Ghani managed to insult not just one, but several ethnic groups. "...President Ashraf Ghani spoke in a gathering titled as the national history, culture, and identity talks, in the presidential palace. What turned controversial was Ghani's reference to Amir Timur Gurkani as the 'Timur-e Lang', meaning 'the crippled Timur', who was the first emperor of the Timurid Empire. Ghani in his talks said, 'Genghis Khan destroyed the irrigation system in the north and northwestern Afghanistan. 'Timur-e Lang' destroyed the irrigation system in Sistan, Helmand, and Farah'" (ArianaNews, 2020). The outcry was such that General Rashid Dostum called upon Ghani to

publicly apologize, and non-Pashtuns levied a social media campaign against the remarks. In 2016, Ghani committed a faux-pas when he publicly donated \$20,000 of his own money to a monument dedicated to Daoud Khan, Afghanistan's first president after the overthrow of the monarchy. Khan was a Pashtun nationalist who remains deeply unpopular with non-Pashtuns for his cavalier stance towards Afghanistan's ethnic minorities. That Ghani referred to him as a personal hero continued to cause a stir for the 2019 Presidential elections. "Ghani's imitation of Daoud has given a rise to ethnic tension in the country. Non-Pashtun writers often refer to the post-Daoud communist era as one that led to power sharing between different ethnic groups in Afghanistan...For non-Pashtuns, Ghani's bid for centralization is a move directed at unbalancing the power equation in favor of Pashtun dominance... Not surprisingly, as his popularity has been eroding among non-Pashtuns, the imitation of Daoud has served Ghani as a tool for promoting his profile amongst Pashtuns...Ghani has subtly used Daoud's image to gain legitimacy among Pashtuns" (Saeedi, 2018).

The low voter turnout and the ending of Abdullah's tenure as CEO of Afghanistan resulted in neither side accepting defeat. The IEC reported and finalized that Ashraf Ghani had avoided another potentially devastating runoff election by a hair, winning with 50.64% of the vote (923,592 votes). Abdullah Abdullah finished second with 39.52% of the vote (720,841). The election was derided by Afghans, so much so that even Gulbuddin Hekmetyar, the infamous warlord who single-handedly caused Afghanistan's civil war in 1992 that allowed the Taliban to rise to power in the 1990's, was able to claim third place in the voting booth with 3.8% of the vote (70,241 votes) (IEC, 2019). The aftermath of the election demonstrated a permanent rift in the Afghan executive branch: both Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani held inauguration ceremonies, on the same day, March 9th, 2020, in Kabul. "Incumbent Afghan President Ashraf

Ghani took the oath of office for a second term while Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, citing fraud, proclaimed himself Afghanistan's president at a rival inauguration event. Although Ghani and Abdullah both claimed to have won September's presidential elections, Ghani last month [February] was officially proclaimed the victor” (Welna, 2020). Amidst this political chaos, failed peace talks with the Taliban resulted in explosions on inauguration day, and that same day, as reported by the Associated Press, the United States stated that the 13,000 troops still in-country would be drawn down to just 8,600. “American troops have begun leaving Afghanistan for the initial troop withdrawal required in the U.S.-Taliban peace agreement, the U.S. military confirmed Monday, amid political chaos in Kabul that threatens the deal. Army Col. Sonny Leggett, spokesman for U.S. forces in Afghanistan, said in a statement that the U.S. is moving ahead with plans to cut the number of forces in the country from about 13,000 to 8,600 over the next four and a half months” (Baldor, 2020). As of this writing, the status of those remaining 8,600 is questionable, with the coronavirus pandemic necessitating the withdrawal of United States troops from other locations back to the United States; there are no reports yet as to if the pandemic, already spreading through Afghanistan, will affect troop withdrawals from the country. Regardless, it would be an unforeseen ending for United States involvement in Afghanistan if troops had to be withdrawn due to a pandemic instead of the ever-elusive peace deal with the Taliban. The two-decades’ long journey of the United States would be over, and while progress was made on many different fronts in Afghanistan, one wonders if any progress had been made at all.

Polity IV's Data Summary

On the subject of progress, the Polity IV data is not very optimistic about the development of Afghanistan's democracy. Afghanistan has two mentions on the Polity IV series' MEPV. The first is its series of conflicts from 1978 (the Saur Revolution, the Soviet War, the Afghan Civil War and the United States' invasion in 2002) to the Taliban resistance from 2001, which is described as ongoing. The table data for the current conflict, which is what this thesis is focused on, reports these results: Afghanistan: 2001-2018+ [ongoing conflict], C/W, 7, and designates it as an ongoing civil war with the Taliban (Marshall, 2019). The C/W is identified as an intrastate civil war between the Taliban and the Afghan government, and the W, which denotes conflict between two exclusive groups wanting to impose their will upon the other, is the same. Casualties are tallied at 147,000 and climbing. The "7" rating was explained further in-depth in the warfare coding, and for Afghanistan it is a serious situation. Category 7 countries are described as being in a state of pervasive warfare, in which casualties can exceed up to one million, no region is safe from conflict, and social roles are defined by the war. Most critical to understand: The "technology of destruction is extensive but resources and productive capacity are limited and, so, continuation of the war effort is often dependent on supplemental resources from external suppliers. Effects are persistent and development is arrested over the medium- to long-term" (Marshall, 2019).

Another set of tables that tied into the MEPV were the State Fragility Indexes, and the Polity IV data table. The State Fragility Indexes were from 2016 and 2018. The 2016 SFI indicated that Afghanistan was near the maximum fragility score of 25, with an overall rating scoring 21. Interestingly, it was given one of the two regime type codes for autocracy: "AUT", which is given to centralized dictatorial governments, and "aut", given to weak, ineffectual

governments incapable of asserting control. These “aut” ratings, as a reminder, are given Polity scales of -5 to 0. Interestingly, despite successfully holding elections, Afghanistan was not considered a weak democracy (“dem”), but a closed anocracy. The 2016 SFI color coding for Afghanistan were almost all red and orange, giving Afghanistan low scores for legitimacy (10) and regime effectiveness (11), adding to Afghanistan’s overall score of 21 out of 25 for fragility, making Afghanistan in 2016 one of the world’s most unstable nations. Afghanistan’s situation in 2018 was little better, with Afghanistan’s score topping out at 20, an improvement by 1 point. Both legitimacy and regime scores were rated at 10 points each. The regime type remained designated as “aut”.

The data table for Afghanistan traced its history to 1800 and was last updated in 2018. The polity scores assigned to Afghanistan in the primary time period covered by this thesis (the research section, not the background) were fairly consistent in the post-Taliban period. From 2001 to 2013, the rating given to Afghanistan was -66, indicating Afghanistan’s status as an occupied nation. This is reflected in light of United States and NATO’s troop levels and the ongoing reality of combat operations being conducted in Afghanistan. In 2014, polity scores were formally assigned to Afghanistan, thanks to President Obama ending the ISAF mission (International Security Assistance Force, the formal term given to encompass United States and NATO forces). The polity scores from 2014 to 2018 in Afghanistan are consistent across the board. With a rating of +10 indicating that a nation is a strong democracy and -10 a total autocracy, Afghanistan rated +1 for a democracy, indicating a very weak and ineffective democratic government. It rated +2 for autocratic government, no surprise given how powerful its executive branch was designed. These numbers place Afghanistan firmly in the range of being an anocracy. There is a positive trend in durability ratings, which is accurate since despite

its electoral controversies, that there have been peaceful transfers of power in Afghanistan regardless of tension and conflict between presidential candidates. In 2014, Afghanistan's "durability" rating was 0, a rating consistently held since the United States led the invasion of the country in 2001. From 2014, it increased by 1 point per year, reaching a rating of 4 by the last updated polity reports in 2018.

In summary, the Polity IV data shows that Afghanistan's government does not have a very optimistic outlook or future. The government, while possessing a highly centralized and strong executive branch, has failed to exert strong enough control and security over the country to render an effective rule to its country. Initially, the Wolesi Jirga was seen to be an improvement in its democratic institutions, however since 2015 when Ashraf Ghani extended the 2010 Wolesi Jirga's term due to factionalism and the need to reform, it has acted as an extension of the will of the executive branch. The Afghans themselves also reflect the Polity IV data in "real-time", since they have indicated through low election turnouts a lack of confidence in their government's ability to provide security and a stable, representative government.

As this chapter of research shows, Afghanistan is complex and its history and government and politics reflect this complexity. How to pull this complexity together to understand where Afghanistan has been, where it is, and where it may go in the future is the topic of the following Discussion chapter.

Chapter VI: Discussion

The period from 2001 to 2020 saw a series of highs and lows for Afghanistan's political system, all which affected the possibility for a democracy. Furthermore, the possibility for democracy was often in flux due to the increasingly untenable situation overall created by the

increased ethnic tensions brought about by electoral results and the slow response of the United States to the furious resurgence of the Taliban after 2005. At the start of the turn of the century, from 2001 to 2004, there was sense of hope for the future of democracy in Afghanistan. The ouster of the Taliban, thanks to the United States'-led invasion of the country, along with efforts made by Afghanistan's key personalities such as Burhanuddin Rabbani and Hamid Karzai to create a government from scratch appeared to set the stage for democracy. And, the establishment in 2004 of Afghanistan's first truly internationally-recognized government since 1992, was the realization of these efforts for a democratic government.

From 2004 to 2009, the political situation in Afghanistan was one of construction and consolidation, but with the rising specter of the Taliban ongoing in the background. And after 2009, the Afghan government found itself in a permanent downward spiral due to political controversies, corruption, and election mishaps that all contributed to Afghans losing their confidence in their government. That downward trend continues as of this writing, with two political rivals recently hosting their own inaugurations in light of an ascendant Taliban as well as the potential, total withdrawal of the United States from the country.

The continuing instability of Afghanistan is worth investigating, and, as was done in this thesis, must include both internal situations which worked against the development of a strong democracy, and external involvement, specifically involvement from the United States. With both an understanding of internal conditions and an analysis of the United States' shortfalls, policy failures, and political shortsightedness in Afghanistan, the hope is that this thesis' insights will benefit those working to grow democracy, political stability, and help yield more pragmatic and patient policies in regards to nation-building projects in the future. To achieve those goals,

this thesis investigated the answers to two research questions: “Since 9/11, has Afghanistan had a democratic government?”, and “If not, why did Afghanistan’s democratic experiment fail?”

Since 9/11, has Afghanistan had a democratic government?

The first research question posed in this thesis inquired if Afghanistan has had a democratic government since 9/11. The short answer to this question is that it can be safely answered that despite the anocratic nature of Afghanistan’s government—the government has still tried to run the country with a heavy, centralized presence that continues to alienate Afghans—the country can be described as a democracy. More specifically, it has, at least on the surface, been a democracy since 2004.

Referencing the basic definition of democracy presented at the beginning of this thesis, the country of Afghanistan did achieve “rule by the people” (Britannica, 2020) with the 2004 general elections deemed legitimate by the international community. Even looking at the more elaborate definition of democracy, which referred to laws, policies, leadership, and major undertakings of a state or other polity as directly or indirectly decided by all (or nearly all) adult citizens, Afghanistan appeared to have achieved the label of democracy. Afghanistan exercised all the trappings of a democratic country: elections for its parliament, for its presidency, and while not covered in this work, elections at the district and provincial levels, all carried out in much of the same fashion as in Western nations. Even despite the controversy of United States-backed polling companies quietly influencing Afghan elections towards favorable outcomes (as deemed by administrators in the United States), Afghans’ use of both opinion and election polls reveals elements of a modern democracy. Finally, it must also be noted that Afghanistan has had a successful transfer of power, from Hamid Karzai to Ashraf Ghani in 2014, and has completed 7

elections. Thus, at a cursory glance, it appears Afghanistan has had a democratic government since 9/11.

However, despite the surface-level situation of Afghan's government meeting the basic criteria of a democracy, there remain a number of reasons to question this interpretation of democracy. These questions surrounding democracy, come from the more complex understanding of democracy—that it is not just one thing. As described in the methods section of this thesis, Democratic Peace Theory suggests that democracies do not go to war with each other specifically due to characteristics of democratic states. The breakdown of what these characteristics include is more complex, ranging from the monadic thinking that democracies are idealistic and thus lean toward cooperation rather than conflict, to the dyadic thinking that democracies' characteristics including a greater level of rights and freedoms enjoyed by politically-empowered citizens that create a shared base identity with people in other democracies and thus serve as a deterrent to conflict. Finally, anocratic theory suggests that although countries, including young democracies, transitioning from dictatorships tend to be warlike, as they transition and build a history as a democracy, they become more peaceful, since their energies are directed toward building upon its new democratic foundations. Thus, each of these ways of viewing democratic tendencies toward peace point to more complex characteristics of democracy: idealistic cooperation by the government and citizens, a collective identity, and a culture or history of legitimacy on which to rely. These characteristics are more difficult to identify with Afghanistan and thus shed doubt on the easy answer to the first research question, "Since 9/11, has Afghanistan had a democratic government?"

Thus, the reality of Afghanistan's success with democracy over the past two decades is not clear, despite the countless soundbites from the Bush and Obama administrations about

Afghanistan's rising star of democracy. Using characteristics from monadic thinking, there were (and continue to be) issues plaguing Afghanistan's elections, thus questioning the idealist characteristics of cooperation within a democracy. The struggles with literacy in Afghanistan plagued its early elections and forced election workers to get creative by creating symbol-filled ballots, which also had the misfortune of being easily replicated, and thus could be manufactured on the black market and sold to stuff ballot boxes. Overall, as Ra'ees noted in 2005 "...by and large the candidates could not reach the masses. Most people were not informed about what the candidates stood for. Three of Afghanistan's elections—2009, 2014 and 2019, all presidential elections—were marred by controversy that gradually eroded the confidence of the Afghan public" (Ra'ees, 2005). These elections, did, however, establish that Afghanistan's democratic institutions could be a viable enterprise with the proper backing and support.

Using concepts from dyadic thinking, more questions about Afghanistan's label as a democracy arise—specifically a question about a collective identity. The election campaigns were not successful in building a collective identity for Afghans (even one where the people support different candidates) because of the large number of candidates who all drew on their own culture and ethnicity. Thus, Afghan elections were not only fraught with inexperienced politicians, but in the early years of its democratic system, overwhelmed with hundreds, if not thousands, of political candidates. Aside from basic efforts intended to weed out those guilty of war crimes and associations with warlords, this saturation of political candidates in the 2004, 2005, 2009 and 2010 elections was actually a rare observation that Afghanistan was "too democratic," or at least allowed for too many options, from the start.

Using characteristics stemming from the anocratic ideas of democracy, also leaves questions in Afghanistan. From this perspective, Afghanistan's elections were impaired by: (1)

lack of a good campaign strategy, (2) lack of experience and (3) most importantly, lack of security. The candidates did not know how to reach the public. Campaign methods employed were arbitrary. Those who could rally people did not call for big conventions due to security concerns” (Ra’ees, 2005). There was not a tradition of trust or a history of legitimacy upon which the government could draw.

Finally, other characteristics also reveal cracks in the idea that Afghanistan has been a democracy since 9/11. Afghanistan’s highly empowered presidential system, notwithstanding current Afghan president Ashraf Ghani, continues to demonstrate dysfunction. He has used the power of his office to secure a firmer position for the Pashtun in the country, and has challenged his critics in a very confrontational fashion, such as an incident in March of 2017 when Ghani had threatened to dissolve the Wolesi Jirga for their desire to have various defense and security ministers brief them on an attack on a Kabul hospital (Joyenda, 2017). Additionally, despite touting “successful” elections over the past twenty years, Afghanistan has had some questionable practices, such as calling off a constitutionally-mandated runoff election in 2009 when no candidate achieved the necessary 50% to win the election, as well as postponing the 2015 Wolesi Jirga elections due to the immense inter-parliamentary squabble arising from factional and ethnic differences as well as previous voting irregularities in past elections; Ghani was forced to extend their term with no election. This decree caused the Afghan government to recognizing a need to overhaul its electoral system in order to allow voting and ballot reforms. This extension unfortunately had the side-effect of turning the parliament into an extended body of the executive branch, centralizing power further in the hands of the Afghan president.

Overall, Afghanistan’s efforts toward democracy exist, but some of those are efforts that leave questions about the degree of democracy. Yet, at the very least, it can be safely concluded that

Polity IV's rating of +1 could be upgraded to +2, indicative of a less anocratic nation, since while its presidential elections have been marred by over-centralization, corruption and low legitimacy among Afghans, its parliamentary elections continue to show some hope. Afghans have long been a decentralized people with a desire for basic representation in governance without the overly burdensome oversight of a central government; the Loya Jirgas and relatively quiet Wolesi Jirga elections have proved that Afghanistan may not be as anocratic as previously thought in some respects.

If Afghanistan does have a democracy, how has its status changed?

The second research question addressed in this thesis asked, "If Afghanistan does have a democracy, how has its status changed?" It has been established that despite cynical commentary, Afghanistan meets the basic definition of a democratic nation, however there are seemingly insurmountable issues leaving questions about the label democracy. Thus, the since the answer to the first research question, asking if Afghanistan has been a democracy since 9/11, is not clear, a response to the "if not" second research question is necessary.

The reasons why a democratic government has not worked out in Afghanistan are so numerous that one could write entire book series on the subject. Keeping the window of discussion to the issues addressed in the background and research chapters, Afghanistan had several key reasons why its democratic government is faltering. These key reasons reveal a lack of monadic, dyadic and anocratic ideas of democracy. First and foremost, in its early stages, the country lacked political figures independent of its traumatic past that could genuinely connect with Afghans. As demonstrated in the both the background and research chapters, the vast majority of Afghanistan's key politicians from 2004 to 2014 were individuals such as General Rashid Dostum, a former Communist commander who became a warlord, and Burhanuddin

Rabbani, the former head of an Afghan government-in-exile in the 1990's. Likewise, Gulbuddin Hekmetyar, active in Afghan politics even running as a third-place candidate in the most recent presidential election, was the man who triggered the Afghan Civil War in 1992 when he seized Kabul, after courting Pakistani support. Gulbuddin Hekmetyar (and other warlords) vividly remind Afghans of their destructive tendencies and the atrocities that enabled the Taliban to rise in the mid-1990's. Furthermore, politicians such as Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, initially well-regarded due to his efforts in the Soviet war and the anti-Taliban resistance, had by 2020 had worn Afghans' patience thin with constant bickering concerning election results. Other important Afghan figures, such as Ashraf Ghani, were nowhere to be seen during the Saur Revolution, the Soviet war and the Afghan Civil War, they had resided abroad, yet returned to Afghanistan to take a role in the new government, however they were seen as being more westernized than Afghan. This was seen as problematic, since the Afghans who had been out of the country for so long could only see how to see Afghanistan's problems through western eyes, and could only attempt to solve Afghanistan's problems using western methods. Since democracy in the United States and Europe is primarily a one-size fits all affair in which political systems share more similarities than differences, the reliance on purely western-educated experts and expats would cause issues of effectiveness and realistic outlooks for Afghanistan's developing democracy. Further, Afghans such as Khalilzad and Ghani are Pashtun, which created the perception that the United States was solely relying on and supporting Pashtuns once the Taliban had been driven out. This caused, for the Afghan people, issues of trust and a perception of favoritism on the side of the United States.

A second reason why Afghanistan's democracy has not borne fruit is that those same political figures failed to establish rapport with Afghans, and instead catered to ethnic

considerations. Dostum, for instance, is an Uzbek, and does not draw much attention outside of areas in Afghanistan where Uzbeks are a significant portion of the population. Ismail Khan, one of the more respectable warlords during the 1990's (he had taken care to avoid massacres and committing the other atrocities that warlords undertook), is a Tajik, and is mainly supported by and impels Tajiks. When he was dismissed from his governor's post by the Karzai Administration, ethnic Tajiks in Herat rioted in the streets. These types of actions do not unite people as Afghans, but rather pull them into distinct groups creating divides and working against the spirit of respecting the voice of the majority of a democracy.

Third, and related, Afghan politicians had the potential for directing and shaping a multiethnic government that could have benefited Afghans of every background. This did not happen. As has been related throughout this thesis, of all the power struggles in Afghan history, there have been a few constants, namely, the rivalry between Pashtuns and Tajiks. Afghanistan's first two presidents were Pashtuns, both won consecutive terms in controversial fashion, and both—Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani—used Afghanistan's centralized presidential system to cater to their own ethnic groups and tribes. Karzai and Ghani both admire Daoud Khan, the first republican president in Afghanistan's history and a Pashtun nationalist—which symbolically worked against unifying the Afghan people. Khan remains popular among Pashtuns to this day but is reviled among non-Pashtuns for his discriminatory policies against them. Karzai and Ghani, especially the latter, are passionate admirers of Khan and have conjured his memory for their policies and projects, much to the discomfort and frustration of non-Pashtuns. This struggle has played out in a personal drama between Dr. Abdullah Abdullah (a Tajik) and Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani, and it has polarized an already fractured political landscape. Despite political mandates that the Afghan government be evenly staffed by ethnicities of all backgrounds in

Afghanistan, the general feeling among Afghans is one of hopeless frustration, as the presidency of Afghanistan appears to be permanently in the hands of Pashtuns.

Fourth, Afghanistan's executive branch was created to be the focal point for Afghanistan's democratic system and government. It has not only a president, but two vice-presidents as well, creating a much larger executive branch than what most democracies have. While the Wolesi Jirga elections are considered tremendously important to Afghanistan's democratic system as a way for its many ethnic groups to voice their representation, the primary emphasis in Afghanistan is on the presidential elections. The most controversial elections in Afghanistan were all presidential, and the importance of the executive branch has introduced a new wrinkle in the already cutthroat nature of Afghan politics and ethnic relations. The executive branch's power was unofficially expanded in 2015 when the 2010 Wolesi Jirga's term was extended without vote or input from the Afghan people, it was initiated as a decree from Ashraf Ghani's administration. Further, the executive branch in Afghanistan has been entirely in the hands of Pashtuns and won by Pashtun candidates, creating a sense of hopelessness and distrust from Afghanistan's non-Pashtun ethnic groups. Compounding all of these issues internal to Afghanistan, is the United States' own role in shaping the Afghan government. It can be argued that the failures of the Afghan government's efforts to transition fully from an anocratic state to a democratic one were also influenced by the United States. The United States' adherence to the ideas behind DPT in its various forms is a primary culprit, accompanied by numerous important secondary culprits.

To begin, President George W. Bush pushed for Afghanistan to become a democracy as fast as possible. He fully and firmly believed that just by allowing perceived freedoms and political suffrage that Afghanistan could, in time, enjoy the same storied trajectories of Germany

and Japan after the Second World War. It was a highly idealistic vision that the United States, under Bush's guidance, set for Afghanistan, a path not to be deviated from. The first stage of Afghanistan's democratic development, as pushed and emphasized by the United States, was textbook monadic theory, and in Afghanistan's case, a sort of "democracy ex nihilo"—a democracy created out of nothing. Afghanistan was expected to simply fulfill this democratic goal despite the reality of Afghanistan's situation—which the United States continued to fail taking into consideration.

A second issue was the United States' action to craft the Afghan Constitution, which one Zalmay Khalilzad had a hand in creating. Khalilzad was one of the expats the United States found itself relying on extensively for advice on Afghan affairs. Khalilzad's influence in crafting the new constitution for Afghanistan caused a lack of trust from some for Afghanistan's democracy; this lack of trust occurred for two reasons—Khalilzad has not resided in Afghanistan permanently since the 1960's (in fact, he has been a naturalized American since the late 1970's), and that he is Pashtun. Furthermore, the Afghan Constitution is a modern-worded version of the United States Constitution, complete with the trappings of a modern democratic nation. It is a constitution that, stripped of its references to Islam and the country itself, could be applied to any nation in the world. It is a "one size fits all" constitution, which is highly questionable for a country like Afghanistan. Most importantly, this is a problem since it places an emphasis of power and influence primarily on the executive branch, the Afghan constitution recreates, in a democratic form, the kind of heavy centralization that Afghans of all kinds have been wary of for centuries. And, it makes the legislative branch subordinate to the executive branch, instead of complimentary or even the more important branch. Afghan participation in Wolesi Jirga,

provincial and district elections has been one of the few positive developments for Afghanistan's democracy, since the legislative branch gives Afghans the opportunity for representation.

Third, the United States applied post-Second World War logic to Afghanistan, suggesting that with a few billion dollars, some garrisoning and democratic representation that a democracy would naturally bloom and that Afghanistan would have a firmly-rooted democracy within a decade. Afghanistan, however, was not Germany after the Second World War. Germany had democratic traditions going back some several centuries prior to the war, and despite the carnage that two world wars, had civilian support to rebuild a democracy. Afghanistan did not have that. Nearly 40 years of continuous warfare, civil war, and atrocities sent millions of Afghans fleeing the country, many who never returned. Entire generations and communities had either fled, been killed in the chaos, or had been atomized to the point where "Afghanistan" as a nation held little meaning, only allegiances to tribes, villages and whatever communities were sustained over this period of strife. This destruction of community and not having a fully functional government for so many years made it possible for warlords such as Rashid Dostum to become powerful. Dostum's portion of the country, tucked away in the north of Mazar-e Sharif, was so autonomous and separate from any government in Kabul that they ran their own education and airline services. Even with the Taliban providing something of a government from 1996 to 2001, the previous decades of war had taken their toll. This was Afghanistan when the United States came into the picture and was something the United States failed to take into consideration.

The United States' failure to read the situation, led to another critical error. In failing to take the political landscape seriously, the United States fully committed to the monadic ideal during the Bush Administration. This meant a foisting upon Afghans a number of rulers and political figures with zero consideration for the ethnic fabric of the country. Hamid Karzai,

despite being popular among Afghans for maintaining close links with the country (Karzai lived among Afghan refugees in Pakistan, earned an education in Afghan institutions and completed advanced degrees in India), is an ethnic Pashtun, which automatically alienated non-Pashtuns and minimized their support. Karzai was elected in the Bonn Conference to head the AIA (Afghan Interim Administration) and then TISA (Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan), and won the support of the Loya Jirga. But it was the political maneuvering of the United States after 2004 that damaged his image permanently. Karzai was seen as nothing more than a tool of the United States, and the massive corruption scandals that took place during his administration, as well as the electoral fraud scandals and the decision to not hold the constitutionally-mandated run-off that year, caused permanent loss of support from Afghans, support that he had initially enjoyed. This created a problem for democratic institutions in Afghanistan, since it was a test as to whether or not the Karzai Administration would follow through on the mandated runoff, or cave in to the pressure being brought on by the United States. It was a test that Karzai would fail, when he relented to that pressure for political convenience.

Fourth, the United States also relied too heavily on experts and Afghan emigres who had not resided in Afghanistan in decades, and who were predominantly Pashtun. Specifically, the United States relied on Special Envoy and Afghan expert Zalmay Khalilzad, and current Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. Khalilzad remains a bitterly divisive figure in Afghan politics and among Afghans to this day for his role in sidelining the monarchy so decisively, the monarchy being an institution that was initially popular among the Loya Jirga of 2002 as well as the older generation of Afghans who recalled the monarchy as a time of quiet stability and progress. Indeed, the antipathy of the United States in general towards any form of monarchy greatly limited its flexibility in a country that demands tremendous levels of it. Khalilzad's role in

creating a highly centralized political system in Afghanistan cannot be understated; it was perhaps not the wisest choice of the United States to appoint a Pashtun who had been out of Afghanistan for so long as a Special Envoy, let alone granting him tremendous influence in crafting out Afghanistan's democratic path. Further, Khalilzad came to be regarded as something of the real leader in Afghanistan during his tenure as Special Envoy, since he was the mouthpiece for the United States in that nation. Karzai, while getting along with Khalilzad, had not gotten along with the United States at times, feeling that they were trying to push certain candidates as well as a steadfast refusal to confront Pakistan over their behind-the-scenes support of the Taliban. This support and perceived favoritism was confirmed in my research in regards to the polling controversies, in which polls conducted by United States companies would subtly leave out certain candidates while supporting others. One candidate in particular was supported extensively during the 2009 and 2014 elections—Ghani. Ghani, like Khalilzad, was perceived to be more western than Afghan. He did not permanently return to Afghanistan until after very late in 2001. Ghani, with all of his western education and employment at the World Bank, made him a very attractive candidate for the United States to support. Ghani was also seen as a far more amenable politician to work with, and his technocratic outlook to dealing with political issues appealed to policymakers in the United States. With hindsight, Ghani's ascendancy to office would turn out to not be as ideal as the United States would have hoped. Ghani's very public admiration for controversial figures such as Daoud Khan, and his overt support for Pashtun issues, eroded any confidence of Afghans in their government. The United States continued to lend Ghani their support until recently, with the election of Donald Trump, who has so far remained keen on withdrawing from Afghanistan.

Final Thoughts: The United States' Impact on Democracy in Afghanistan

In examining the two research questions addressed in this thesis, it is possible to see that the movement toward democracy in Afghanistan was impacted both by internal and external factors. Much of the external element—the actions of the United States—link back to ideas discussed in the methods chapter: support of Democratic Peace Theory. Realizing those connections, a better understanding of how this theory impacted the United States and the decisions it took in Afghanistan is worthy of comment and future study.

Under President George W. Bush, the United States had a decidedly monadic outlook on Afghanistan: establish the democracy, push for Afghans to obtain suffrage, and watch the nation stabilize and prosper under the promise of freedom and representation. The hope was to have Afghanistan's democracy become a leading light of sorts in a very troubled region, since Central Asia itself was full of dictatorships, post-Soviet republics, and a volatile theocracy in Iran. This hope and outlook was monadic in nature, and it served as the bedrock for the Bush Administration in Afghanistan, and its foreign policy in general. After the government had been established, this hope was dashed as the Taliban reasserted itself, corruption became rife, and it became obvious that just manufacturing a democracy and expecting it to run on its own with a little work and security was not a viable outlook. After Bush left office in 2009, President Barack Obama had a new idea for Afghanistan. His idea was far more dyadic in nature. Dyadic theory specifies that certain practical conditions must be met first before a democracy can be established. This was Obama's view for Afghanistan. He concluded that Afghanistan's government, beleaguered by a reinvigorated Taliban, required some bolstering. Obama authorized a heavy surge that saw over 100,000 troops stationed in Afghanistan at its height, and

this escalation of force was hoped to create a more stable situation for the government to develop its democratic institutions. But the political mess that the 2009 and 2010 elections created made the Afghan government's position untenable, and the political maneuverings of both Afghans in the government and the United States failed to secure Afghanistan's fragile democracy, which had already been snake-bitten with its overly-centralized constitution and government. Had the situation been stabilized with troop escalations and a genuine drive to purge corruption from the country's political system, the dyadic theory would have proven itself correct. When Obama had left office in 2017, he had ended combat operations in Afghanistan and left a token presence to train Afghanistan's new military—an institution that was seen to be even more hopeless than its government, thanks to desertion and an escalating number of “green-on-blue” attacks.

Succeeding Obama was President Donald Trump, who campaigned on an “America First” platform that emphasized, among other priorities, leaving Afghanistan entirely. Only the intervention of various generals and administrators within the Department of Defense stayed that decision, however of this writing, troop levels in Afghanistan are at all-time lows as the United States enters its 19th year in Afghanistan, an involvement that has left far more questions and “what-ifs” than answers, solutions and progress.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

“What to do?” is a question oft-asked in the annals of history and political science. In regards to Afghanistan, it was, and remains, a question with a seemingly infinite number of solutions that float just beyond the reach of policymakers and politicians, Afghans and Americans, military officers and insurgents alike. It is a question I will ask here. At this point, the situation is untenable for Afghanistan. Whatever goodwill Dr. Abdullah Abdullah had, one of two men who held an inauguration ceremony in March of this year in protest of the 2019

presidential elections' results, has evaporated. He was essentially the last politician in Afghanistan, from the generation of Soviet-era/civil war-era fighters, who held genuine goodwill from Afghans. He was the only non-Pashtun candidate capable of taking on the perceived dominance of the presidential office by Pashtuns. However, as this thesis has shown, his stubbornness to work with the Afghan government to give non-Pashtuns a voice in the executive office—he and Ashraf Ghani needed Secretary of State John Kerry to step in to negotiate a settlement—wore thin on Afghans. Furthermore, it was the same effect among his own supporters, thus as of this writing, he has evidently squandered his goodwill and is held in as much contempt, by bitter Afghans, as is Ashraf Ghani. There is a small sliver of hope, since a newer generation of Afghan politicians and officials are beginning to work through the system, that Afghans with no ties to warlords and entrenched personalities will emerge. But time is already running short for them as well. Ghani is now on his second and last term, as Afghan presidents are mandated two terms. Already he has inherited an office that is not respected by Afghans, nor the Taliban, which has often remarked that taking Kabul and the administration would mean the collapse of the Afghan government, making the nation easy to take. With strong Pakistani support and with the United States having lost complete interest in Afghanistan, the Taliban will look to make good upon their boasts within the next several years.

So, “what to do”? In hindsight, there is a tremendous amount that could have been done. The United States erred greatly in its steadfast adherence to DPT, in attempting to create an Afghan democracy that was too much like that of the United States, and mirroring the process used to create the modern systems of Germany and Japan. The “what ifs” are too great, numerous and uncertain to pine for, but I have a few practical ideas that could have aided Afghanistan, with the concepts and ideas I have learned from this writing. To start, the United

States should not have been so quick to convene a Loya Jirga without stabilizing the nation first, and especially at a time when warlords dominated the scene, having come out of the civil war just a year prior to the Loya Jirga's session in 2002. Colin Powell emphasized "speed, speed, speed" at Bonn in 2001, when his emphasis should have been "patience, unity, force". The Iraq War notwithstanding, the United States should have committed itself fully from the very beginning in terms of troop numbers, tactics, and creating a presence that would enable a slower but steadier development of an Afghan government. Instead of relying so much on figures such as Zalmay Khalilzad and Ashraf Ghani, two highly educated but absent figures from Afghanistan during its worst times, the United States should have done more to search out for Afghans who were experts without the ulterior, self-serving motives of Khalilzad and Ghani. With the Taliban routed and on the run from 2001 to 2004, the United States should *not* have been so quick to hold elections as a public relations stunt to demonstrate progress. Instead, it should have promoted a unity government in order to create a more stable situation for Afghans, and used that to push for viable candidates among the Afghan population to staff its political and civil systems, instead of having to bargain with the warlords that Afghans had so resented. While that unity government was being promoted along with the seeds of a youth movement to move past the warlord era, the United States should have been more amenable to the idea—popular among those at the 2002 Loya Jirga—of restoring the monarchy, which many tribal leaders could recall with clarity as a time of slow but steady progress. Restoring the monarchy in a constitutional format would have had the primary benefit of having the highest position in Afghanistan out of reach to any politician, thereby tempering some of the loftier ambitions of men like Karzai, Ghani and Abdullah, while at the same time providing a focal point of loyalty to the government for the tribes and non-Pashtuns. It would not have been the perfect setup, since ethnic groups such as

the Hazaras tend to look at any authority in Afghanistan with a certain level of suspicion, and ambitious politicians are always difficult to control, but it would have been a step in the right direction to stabilizing the nation politically by connecting the past with its future.

Instead of sending the 20 some-odd thousand troops to secure Afghanistan, the United States should have started out with a substantially larger force to promote confidence among Afghans from the start, while making the Taliban's resurgence several degrees more difficult. More importantly, the United States should have given Afghans more input in the creation of their constitution. The 2003 Loya Jirga took a month to accept it from December 2003 to January of 2004, but had little input on it, since most of the legwork was done by the Afghan Constitution Commission. Most importantly, elections should not have been held in 2004 and 2005, for a number of reasons. The military situation in Afghanistan was far from secure, and while at this time the Taliban were still regrouping from their ouster by United States forces, they were still capable of forging a comeback—as they would by the end of 2005. Because the military situation had not been secured, the political situation, as it happened in reality, would become a rush to establish a government in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the motivation for this rush would be misplaced—referring to monadic theory, the prevailing thought among United States officials at the time was that if a democratic government could be formed quickly, Afghans would have reacted positively to their newfound freedoms and political rights, forming a people-powered shield against Taliban extremism. Leading into this observation, the elections should have been delayed for 3-5 more years. Afghans should have been further educated on voting processes while the balloting processes should have been given more time to become secure and less susceptible to fraud, bribery, and to curb black market ballots being sold to Afghans and activists participating in elections. Afghanistan had suffered critically low literacy

rates since the fall of the Communist regime and the rise of the warlords, and because of this alone, were not prepared to undertake their part in democratic participation. Furthermore, my research has also shown that the candidate field for the 2005 parliamentary elections was immense—over 2,500 candidates in all, competing for less than 300 seats. The time given from the elections that would not have been held, would have given the JEMB more time to vet candidates, in order to ensure less influence and ties from former warlords, while promoting a youth movement to energize Afghanistan's democracy with a younger, more optimistic crowd. It would also have given the JEMB more time to transition to Afghanistan's own IEC and ECC, giving those organizations more teeth to tackle the voting corruption that plagued the 2009, 2010, 2014, 2018 and 2019 elections.

Essentially, all that I suggest is itself of the dyadic school of DPT. By creating favorable conditions for a democracy to establish itself and thrive, a more genuine development of a democracy will undergo a slower, but more natural and longer-lasting process. That was the single biggest mistake of both Afghan politicians and the United States—the lack of patience and resolve. Through its impatience and the flaws in the Afghan democratic system that emerged from that impatience, Afghanistan ended up with an overly-centralized political system that guaranteed that many Afghans would feel left out and uninvolved with its political process. The consequences of this development by this point are well known and well documented, both within this thesis and among Afghan-specific and political scholars alike. The lack of patience in establishing a firm and effective democracy in Afghanistan also affected the United States, which sought to try to remedy that through force and political maneuvering. Unfortunately, this led to the Taliban gaining the upper ground in its insurgency, one that the United States has not been able to dislodge militarily and politically, much to its frustration. The result is that many in

the United States feel that Afghanistan is a hopeless situation, and that it is no longer worth remaining around for. Meanwhile, the Afghan government has found itself in an untenable position, with its two major political figures—Ghani and Abdullah—both resented by Afghans, to the point where figures such as Gulbuddin Hekmetyar are garnering third-place finishes, seemingly out of spite. The ultimate irony of Afghanistan's overall situation is that the impatience to demonstrate democratic progress nearly two decades ago might be undone by the Taliban, a formidable entity that has demonstrated nothing *but* patience.

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