

US WITHDRAWAL AND POST 9/11 APPROACHES IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Following the withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan, the discussion centres on why the United States' longest and most costly military intervention in Afghanistan failed to defeat the Taliban and construct a lasting state. Various elements, both internal and external, are considered in this discussion, including US and Taliban strategies as well as regional and extra-regional actors' contributions to the conclusion of the Afghan conflict. Because of these flaws and inconsistencies, this study focuses on US plans for Afghanistan, including military force, political settlement, and state-building. It also reviews US efforts in Afghanistan under four administrations – from Bush to Biden – to see why these methods were ineffectual in dealing with the war in Afghanistan. The theoretical framework of Game Theory has been used to analyse these tactics. US strategies for entering Afghanistan were disconnected from the ground reality, according to this report, and thus accounted for the failure of the conflict's intended conclusion.

Keywords: Afghanistan, US intervention, use of force, state-building, Taliban

INTRODUCTION

The situation in Afghanistan is one of the most difficult and perplexing in today's world. Conflicts within and beyond the country have plagued the country ever since the modern era began. When it comes to geography and population, Afghanistan is not a large country. However, its geostrategic importance has drawn the attention of major powers on numerous occasions. As a gateway between Asia and Europe, it is situated at the crossroads of South, Central, East, and North Asia. States, notably China, are reviving traditional trade routes now, but Afghanistan's strategic location has led to repeated invasions. The Great Game, a clash between the British Empire and Tsarist Russia in the nineteenth century, had a negative impact on it. Due to the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, the 1980s saw strife. Afghanistan has been in a state of perpetual upheaval since the 1979 Soviet invasion, which was followed by the United States' 20-year military effort following the September 11 attacks.

Afghanistan was the least developed nation in the world as a result of these long-standing disagreements. In the middle of a violent civil conflict, the 1996 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan quickly became difficult. An outcry erupted over the Taliban regime's extremist policies and ties to Al Qaeda, not least in the West. It was at this point that the US decided to invade Afghanistan to eliminate Al Qaeda's safe havens and remove the Taliban administration from power. To be sure, America's long military campaign to restore order to Afghanistan failed to deter the Taliban, who took back control even before the United States was ready to leave the region. US state-building efforts suffered their worst setback in this most costly war on terror. In February 2020, after exhausting all of its military options, the United States agreed to an end-of-war settlement with the Taliban. Following the announcement of President Joe Biden's withdrawal, the US and its allies' twenty-year-old security and governance infrastructure disintegrated within days, as a result of the Taliban's blitzkrieg.

Game Theory variables can be used to explain why the United States went to war in Afghanistan. However, theorists in the fields of political science and international relations soon began applying the economic theory of John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern, known as Game Theory.(Hargreaves-Heap & Varoufakis, 2004) In other words, a logical decision in a conflict situation is at the heart of Game Theory. Players, their individual plans, the consequent results and the resulting rewards for each player all interact in this game.(Rapoport, 1974) Players in this environment are logical and make decisions based on their knowledge of other players' options and gains.

As a result, the United States invaded Afghanistan in order to depose the Taliban and remove al Qaeda leaders as major suspects in the 9/11 tragedy. So, in order to cope with the complicated situation in Afghanistan, the United States used three options, namely military action, political settlement, and state-building. At first, it was successful in driving the Taliban from power. US forces were unable to defeat the Taliban during their reorganisation and insurgency from 2005 onwards. Although the state-building enterprise was not without defects, it was imposed by the corrupt elite without regard for the local socio-political and cultural norms. Because prior measures had failed, the United States was unable to cover up its own mistakes by realising that a political settlement was necessary. There was a recurring flaw in US strategy: it failed to make decisions while considering the Taliban's alternatives and rewards. The Taliban used guerrilla warfare techniques, whereas the United States relied mostly on conventional military tactics. The Taliban had an edge because they were familiar with the terrain and had a head start on local allies.

Since US-led forces have left Afghanistan, it raises serious concerns about how the conflict will be resolved. There was a lack of consistency in the US strategy for dealing with the conflict in Afghanistan, and it changed frequently. The only way to save face for the United States was to choose a political resolution. The United States began as a single country. The war against the Taliban was followed by state-building efforts. Finally, it reached an agreement with the Taliban to withdraw from Afghanistan on its own accord. Afghanistan now represents an obviously failed foreign intervention by the United States, with the Taliban regaining control and the country remains on the verge of collapse. In order to highlight the flaws that lead to the United States' failure in Afghanistan after 2001, this study reviews U.S. strategy in Afghanistan since 2001.(Rapoport, 1974)

Afghanistan's Post-9/11 Strategy by the United States

US involvement in Afghanistan is marked by a lack of clarity and consistency on policies, strategic objectives, and simultaneous implementation. To punish al Qaeda and its allies, the Taliban, the Bush administration relied only on a war approach in 2001. A Weberian-style democratic government in Afghanistan was tried after initial military victories by the US administration. In the meantime, the Taliban regrouped and strengthened their positions on the outskirts of Afghanistan, launching guerrilla strikes against coalition forces led by the United States. It was not possible for the Bush administration to stop the Taliban's progress with its counterterrorism approach. Later, the Obama administration devised a strategy based on troop increase, followed by a "exit strategy," which might be adopted in part in light of the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan today. The Trump administration made considerable progress toward a peace agreement with the Taliban in the late 2020s, but it fell short of securing a political settlement within Afghanistan. Due to Biden's mismanagement of the Afghan withdrawal, which led to a fast takeover by the Taliban and US humiliation, his administration received widespread criticism. The failure of each of the four successive US administrations to achieve their goals in Afghanistan can be seen in this summary of the US' Afghan strategy.

The policies of the Bush administration.

To end the war, the Bush administration used military force to invade Afghanistan and then launched multilateral attempts to construct states.

Military Action

George W. Bush laid out the principles of US policy in the War on Terror in a speech delivered on September 20, 2001. He said that instead of a single war, a long-term campaign unprecedented in American history would be necessary to achieve the country's goals. Among other things, he said that terrorists would be denied access to any money or space to flee, and that no state would aid or shelter them.(Bush, 2011) The Bush administration chose a paradigm of proactive military action (pre-emptive self-defence), saying that the only way to eliminate terrorism is to destroy it in its own lair. On May 1, 2003, then-US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld resigned.

The Taliban was defeated, and military activities were halted as a result.(Hashimy, Magoge, & Mokarim, 2022) Previously, When he called the mission a success, President Bush did the same. Karzai said that "we are at a moment where we have gone from substantial war activity to a period of stability and stabilisation and reconstruction initiatives," expressing his satisfaction with the strategic shift in US policy. (Criekemans, 2021) It was a premature celebration of victory. First successes against al Qaeda and the Taliban increased US expectations. (Dobbins, Poole, Long, & Runkle, 2008) Ground realities, on the other hand, were quite different. Resurgent Taliban fighters launched an asymmetrical campaign against coalition forces and the Karzai government by mostly conducting suicide strikes in 2005.

Several causes contributed to the rebirth of the Taliban and the disappointment of the United States in their subjugation. At the start of this process, the Taliban emerged as a resolute force in spite of the catastrophic military offensives launched by the United States. They built up a network of warriors and commanders who were able to carry out their own missions. (Dorrnsoro, 2009) To begin with, they used Iraqi rebel tactics in their assaults. In the past, the Taliban would engage in open combat with US forces, which resulted in heavy losses due to their lack of technological superiority. US and coalition forces took a high toll from suicide bombings and improvised

explosive devices (IEDs). Between January 2005 and August 2006, there were over sixty-four attacks on US forces.(Katzman, 2004) Another way in which they gained popular support was by exploiting Afghans' perceptions of government corruption, a lack of social services, and ethnic prejudice towards Pashtuns. The historical narrative of foreign occupation of Afghanistan by infidels like the British, Soviets, and Americans was also a factor in their strategy.(Katzman, 2004) For the Taliban, this permitted them to garner logistical support for the insurgency, marginalise the inadequate local administrations, and develop their own administrative arrangements.

The Taliban's rebirth was aided by several factors. Because of the concurrent US military campaign in Iraq since March 2003, their resurgence has been easier to handle. In addition, the US-led coalition's troop commitments to Afghanistan began to fall apart. Because of the rising violence, European governments were unwilling to commit further troops. They didn't take into account the social and cultural ramifications of their war against the Taliban. As a matter of policy, the Bush administration was unwilling to acknowledge the Taliban as an essential partner for the establishment of lasting peace in Afghanistan. But its military plan failed to take into account local conditions and the reality of the field. US military failure in Afghanistan was not just due to a bad strategy. Additionally, there were drawbacks to other causes including state-building and political settlement.

State-building

The U.S. focused on state-building in Afghanistan after an early military win against the Taliban and al Qaeda components. Afghan rehabilitation was outlined in the Bonn Agreement in December 2001. It supplied supporting new constitutional reforms and the establishment of state institutions such as a democratically elected executive branch, an independent judiciary, well-equipped law enforcement agencies, and an efficient civil service. These goals were reaffirmed in future international meetings and declarations on Afghanistan.(Agreement, 2001) To achieve the state-building goals, the United States and other donor countries and agencies donated substantial financing. The accomplishments of the Bush and subsequent US administrations, on the other hand, are undeniable. As a result of the 2004 presidential elections, a new constitution was put into place. Elections to the National and Provincial Assemblies took place the following year. The US, meanwhile, spent More than \$88.32 billion has been invested in Afghanistan's national security forces over a period of two decades.(Edwards, 2010)

Despite colossal spending in state-building, the plan miserably failed in terms of consequences for the US conflict resolution strategy. State-building efforts by the United States were aimed at preventing the Taliban from gaining power and diminishing their influence in Afghanistan. Parallel administrative systems were built up by the Taliban in rural areas while successive Afghan administrations failed to represent all regions and sectors of population. It's impossible for Afghanistan's security forces to take down the Taliban alone. Afghanistan's government and national security forces disintegrated so swiftly after the United States left that they no longer existed. According to these figures, the US state-building mission in Afghanistan is doomed to failure.

External efforts to construct states are successful when there are favourable conditions such as social and political institutions, economic development, and social homogeneity, according to academic research and empirical evidence.(Löfström, 2022) An example of this is the United States' efforts to establish states in Japan and

Germany, both of which already met the criteria outlined above. The absence of democratic institutions, a lack of economic progress, and a lack of social cohesion have all conspired to make state-building attempts in Iraq and Afghanistan fail. There were no pre-existing capabilities in Afghanistan in 2001 to build on the state's strength and scope. US state-building attempts in Afghanistan were doomed due to a policy of state-system reform. State-building participation succeeds when it builds on the target state's existing capabilities, but it fails when it focuses on transforming it. In order to be effective and productive, state-building necessitates a stable and supportive environment. Taliban restructuring led to increased violence as the US strategic focus shifted from military to political aspects, and as a result, the US opened a new combat front in Iraq.(Zia-Zarifi, 2004) Because of this, state-building and reconstruction efforts were hampered by the unstable conditions that resulted.

As a third failure, the ruling elite in Kabul was unable to ensure its own representation in the provinces and districts. Because of corruption, patronage clientelism, and a lack of connections, local governments were unable to efficiently distribute international funds to the grassroots level. As a result, the periphery appears to have been neglected or mismanaged in the US state-building strategy that centered on the capital. In other words, Afghanistan's state-building became a project for the elites, and its impact on the general population was mostly ineffective. Because of this, the Karzai and Ghani administrations were viewed as foreign political intrusions with no basis in reality. The Taliban gained a strategic edge as a result of this drawback.

Obama's Administration's Strategy

US policy toward Afghanistan was overhauled after Obama took office and he announced a new plan called the Af-Pak strategy. The goal was to end the American involvement in Afghanistan. Afghanistan and Pakistan were stabilised, al-Qaeda was eliminated in both neighbouring states, reconciliation with moderate Taliban was achieved while elevating the fight against hardcore Taliban was elevated and responsibility was transferred to Afghan forces, and US forces were phase-wise drawn down by July 2011 as a key feature of this strategy.

The Af-Pak Strategy

According to the Af-Pak policy, the United States adopted a fresh approach to understanding Afghanistan's turmoil. For compelling reasons, Pakistan remained a key component of this strategy. U.S. officials feared that terrorists and insurgencies were being fueled by al Qaeda's presence in tribal (border) areas. President Obama referred to the tribal territory as "the most dangerous place in the world" because of its role in terrorism.(Ahmed & Akins, 2013) As a result of a terrorist upsurge in Pakistan's north-western region, the country has seen worrying instability. The US counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan was also being hampered by developments in Pakistan. As a result, Pakistan was perceived as both a cause and an effect. Because of this, the strategy was to stabilise Pakistan and build up its economic and military capabilities to conduct counterinsurgency operations in the tribal regions. Consequently Pakistan received \$1.5 billion a year between 2010 and 2014 as part of the Kerry-Lugar Bill from the United States, in addition to military aid.(Monten & Science, 2014) The policy also called for trilateral talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States to help bridge the trust gap and advance political, economic, and security convergence between the two countries. For the Af-Pak policy, the United States began bilateral strategic dialogue with Pakistan to establish a

comprehensive partnership framework. Al-Qaeda and terrorists in the Pakistani tribal region have been targeted more frequently by US drone strikes.

Because of these frictions, despite its framework, the Af-Pak strategy didn't achieve its desired outcomes, despite its remarkable architecture. They objected at first to the hyphenation of their nation with Afghanistan, which they claimed had separate conditions and issues. As a result, they necessitated the implementation of new policies. The second is the relationship between the United States and Pakistan.

In light of the US 'do more' motto vis-à-vis Pakistan, differences have evolved over Pakistani military counterinsurgency operations' scope and aims. As a result of concerns over overstretching and capabilities, the Pakistani military avoided launching a military campaign in North Waziristan despite its success in battling insurgents in Swat and South Waziristan. The United States pressed Pakistan to extend military operations to North Waziristan, which it viewed as a major shelter for extremists operating in Afghanistan.

Third, tensions between the United States and Pakistan rose in 2011 as a result of incidents involving CIA contractor Raymond Davis, the death of Osama bin Laden, and a US military raid on a Pakistani checkpoint. As a result of these events, Pakistan withdrew its supply facilities for NATO in Afghanistan, putting diplomatic pressure on the United States and Pakistan. A last point is that the US drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal region were both contentious and ineffective. Civilians were frightened and angered by drone strikes, which resulted in anti-Americanism and backlash at all levels of government.(Shah, 2018)

Initiatives for Peace-making

The Obama administration came to terms with the fact that it couldn't win the war in Afghanistan through military means alone. Due to the ever-increasing Taliban insurgency and accompanying deaths, the US approach in Afghanistan was clearly flawed. To avoid a zero-sum battle with no end in sight, the Obama administration acknowledged the Taliban's importance and changed its strategy. It was therefore possible to achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Afghanistan under President Obama's policy. Negotiations between the United States and the Taliban began in earnest in early 2011.(Obama, 2015) The US maintained a strategic ambiguity in order to prevent criticism of its Great Power posture, despite its stated intention to meet with the Taliban. Only President Trump has taken a blatantly public stance on the US-Taliban negotiations.

The Taliban launched an unofficial political office in Qatar in January 2012 to facilitate conversations with international parties. As a result of this, the US-led coalition soldiers in Afghanistan will be able to leave the country. After the US-Taliban negotiations in Germany and Qatar were mediated by the Qatari Royal Family, the Qatar office was established. In November 2010, Mullah Omar's agent, Tayyab Agha, met with US officials in Munich for the first time.(Sheikh & Greenwood, 2013) This was followed by a few rounds of negotiations in Doha in 2011. At the beginning of the meeting in Qatar, there was a sense of gloom. Bowe Bergdahl, an American soldier held at Guantanamo Bay, was released in return for the release of five Taliban prisoners, but the trade could not be completed. The Taliban were not ready to guarantee that prisoners released would not take part in combat operations against US troops. They were not ready to guarantee Taliban negotiators called off the talks less than two months after they began, blaming the United States

for not making any forward on the long-standing precondition of a prisoner swap.(Sheikh & Greenwood, 2013)

The Obama administration's peace talks with the Taliban showed some realistic tendencies and results that will take place in the future. First and foremost, the Taliban made it clear from the beginning that they were not interested in negotiations. A political settlement was still on the table, but not with the Afghan government, whose legitimacy had been called into question. As for the requirements of a political settlement, they were rigorous and uncompromising. Even if the talks broke down, it appeared as if they were prepared to accept that outcome but not to compromise on their position. Because they understood that "you have watches, but we have time," the Taliban took advantage of the US' haste to leave Afghanistan throughout the negotiations.(Yousufzai & Boone, 2016) Third, they were in a position of strength when they entered the negotiation. Regardless of the peace talks, they kept up their aggression against the American military. Negotiations broke down due to the Taliban's adamant attitude and zero-sum mentality, so President Trump took on the Afghan peace process with a specific goal in mind.

1) Plan of Action for Exit

The internal pressure on the United States to terminate the everlasting war has grown as the US operation in Afghanistan has dragged on for years without producing any real results. To end the US military campaign in Afghanistan, the Obama administration created a two-pronged strategy. Counter-insurgency operations would be stepped up, while national security forces would take over responsibility for Afghanistan's security starting in 2011, according to one section of the strategy. The United States' Afghanistan policy was to clear, hold, build, and transfer power.(Fair, 2010)

United States President Barack Obama has named General Stanley A. McChrystal to lead US and foreign forces in Afghanistan as part of the implementation of his military plan. General David Petraeus took over as commander from General McChrystal after a year. With the deployment of 33,000 extra troops, the total number of troops in Afghanistan now stands at almost 100,000.(Thomas, Hacker, Gill, & Peters, 2021) With this step, the goal was to weaken the Taliban, speed up the training of Afghan security forces, and transfer over the duty for protecting Afghanistan to them.. Nato countries said in November 2010 that they will complete the handover of all Afghan security responsibilities and a large decrease of international troops by 2014.(Musa & Umar, 2021)

Because of major flaws in the US military plan for Afghanistan, the future course of US operations in that country has been jeopardised. Because it was time-bound, the strategy proved ineffectual because of the timeliness and deadlines for the troop surge, troop withdrawal, and handover of responsibility. Taliban gained an advantage both psychologically and militarily as a result of this. The Taliban took advantage of the United States' waning temporal advantage to build both morale and insurgency. According to President Obama, his approach in Afghanistan was primarily focused on appeasing domestic public opinion and NATO partners rather than taking into account local realities. President Obama's rushed choices to boost and decrease the amount of soldiers in Afghanistan were a second influence. In 2010-11, the number of American troops peaked at 100,000 and fell below 10,000 in 2015. To drastically reduce troop numbers was an impractical decision that didn't augur well for the US's future involvement in Afghanistan if the military solution was viable. It was finally

completed in December 2014, when the United States handed over entire responsibility for Afghanistan's security to Afghan forces, limiting its participation to training and military support for special operations under Operation Resolute Support. Afghan soldiers, on the other hand, were unable to hold off the Taliban insurgency. As a result of this military insufficiency, the Taliban gained ground and eventually took control of the entire country of Afghanistan.

US-Taliban Peace Agreement under Trump's Presidency

President Trump was the driving force behind the U.S. approach of peace talks with the Taliban that culminated to its ultimate withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021. There had never been a formal political process involving two competing factions before. In the past, the United States was reluctant to participate in open and public negotiations with the Taliban because of its status-consciousness and hopes for a favourable outcome. However, President Trump was driven to enter direct discussions with the Taliban after becoming mired in an endless conflict and facing internal criticism on the cost of war. Zalmay Khalilzad, an Afghan-American diplomat, was named as the Trump administration's ambassador to the Taliban for peace talks.

A zero-sum solution was desired by all parties participating in the war, but they failed and ended themselves in an endless conflict in Afghanistan. Both the United States and the Taliban suffered as a result of the most protracted and ever-expanding conflict. In the beginning of peace negotiations, both sides realised that a zero-sum approach to ending the conflict would not work. The signing of a peace agreement in Doha was contingent on both sides agreeing to a seven-day ceasefire on February 22, 2020.(Network & Ruttig, 2020) US and the Taliban concluded a historic peace agreement in Doha on February 29, 2020. The accord was not welcomed by the Afghan administration. In the end, President Ashraf Ghani accepted and freed roughly 5,000 Taliban inmates over the course of several months after first rejecting the demands of a prisoner swap.

There were counter-operation assurances, US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Afghan dialogue, and a full ceasefire as part of the agreement between the United States (US) and the Taliban (Taliban).(Maizland, 2020) It defied the facts on the ground. For agreeing to support the Taliban and withdraw troops from Afghanistan, the Trump administration was widely panned. The Ghani government took an extreme posture, fearing that power sharing would erode its authority, making any attempt at intra-Afghan dialogue a non- issue. As a means of achieving power sharing, Taliban-strategy Ghani's was illogical from the first. In contrast to the Taliban, President Ghani believed his government was constitutional under Afghan law. A peace agreement and a ceasefire could never be achieved as a result of the United States-Taliban peace arrangement. As a result, rather of achieving peace, the US-Taliban peace talks ended in a pull-out agreement.(Maizland, 2020)

Exit of the US under Biden's leadership

Former Vice President Joe Biden described the political agreement reached by the Trump administration as a poor bargain' and referred to it as a "review." However, he continued to rely on Zalmay Khalilzad's role because of the complexities of the Afghan situation and the limited alternatives available to him. The Taliban, on the other hand, rejected the idea of renegotiating and hoped that the Biden administration would stick to the February 2020 agreement. Biden administration officials ultimately rejected the

idea of going back and redoing things, instead opting for a May 2021 withdrawal date and a push for an intra-Afghan political agreement. The Afghan government was the main impediment to an intra-Afghan political settlement. Until presidential and legislative elections were held, President Ashraf Ghani would not support any sort of power sharing. He even rejected Mr. Khalilzad's suggestion for an Afghan interim government.(Shalizi, 2021)

A political settlement within Afghanistan has not been reached, but the Biden administration has not changed its pull-out strategy. When President Biden announced the pull-out from Afghanistan in April 2021, he emphasised that it will be safe and orderly.(Ullah, Sultana, & Kokab, 2020) As a result, President Biden's hopes for a smooth and orderly exit from Afghanistan were dashed. In July 2021, the United States began withdrawing its forces from Bagram Airbase, Afghanistan's main military base, giving the Taliban more room to expand across the country. After a two-week assault, the Taliban were able to seize metropolitan areas with little resistance from Afghan security forces, proving all political predictions and intelligence reports wrong. Afghan capital Kabul was taken over by the Taliban after President Ashraf Ghani fled the nation on August 16, 2021. The United States was forced to shut down its Kabul embassy and seize control of Kabul Airport in order to direct the evacuation from Afghanistan in the wake of this unforeseen event.

Afghanistan's 2001-2002 American occupation ended in a shock and embarrassment. The US war in Iraq, which lasted for more than two decades, cost \$2 trillion, resulted in the deaths of 2,300 soldiers and injured over 20,000 more.(Musa & Umar, 2021) Despite a substantial investment in training and equipping 300,000 Afghan security forces, they disintegrated within a few days of the Taliban's arrival. Upon the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, they also gained control of the country's billion-dollar arsenal. President Biden and his aides maintained that Afghan forces could resist the Taliban insurgency because they outnumbered Taliban fighters and had modern weapons. A quick and overwhelming triumph by the Taliban, however, challenged this premise.

After the humiliating pull-out from Afghanistan, President Biden was roundly criticised and blamed. He may be blamed for the botched US pull-out, but the elements that led to the Taliban's victory against the Ghani government had been evolving for some time before he became president. First and foremost, the US dates for pull-out, from Obama to Biden, always favoured the Taliban psychologically. Retaking Afghanistan from the Taliban became more appealing when the United States began its military pullback and transferred security to Afghan forces. The US was persuaded by the Taliban's military might to negotiate with them and make concessions to them. The Afghan government and its security forces felt the effects of these two issues on their mental well-being.(Hashimy et al., 2022) Trump administration's US-Taliban peace accord favoured the Taliban politically and militarily, as well. There was an agreed upon timetable to complete departure from Afghanistan without an intra-Afghan political settlement. Apprehensive of being marginalised, President Ashraf Ghani was reluctant to enter into a power-sharing agreement with the Taliban. A ceasefire was agreed upon between the United States and the Taliban, allowing Afghan forces to combat the Taliban alone. A lack of morale among Afghan security personnel allowed the Taliban to step up its attacks against them. What happened afterwards was self-evident.

Conclusion

In terms of strategic aims, policies, and actions, the US involvement in Afghanistan lacked coherence and consistency. Armed operations against al Qaeda and the Taliban were largely successful in the early stages of the conflict. It was only after 2003, when the United States began focusing more on state building and diverting resources from Iraq, that the Taliban were given new organisational means by which to fight against the US-led coalition. The Taliban had an advantage in Afghanistan's physical and social environment because they were local. In the same way, the US state-building initiative in Afghanistan had major constraints and failed because of the absence of democratic institutions, economic development, and social cohesion there. Persistent hostilities also harmed the environment needed to foster state formation. To sum it all up, Kabul's governing class failed to extend its influence beyond its capital city and instead remained mired in a power struggle and corruption.

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