



US WITHDRAWAL PROCESS FROM AFGHANISTAN AND ITS EFFECTS ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article's main concern is to come to an understanding of the reasons why the Afghan army could not be successful against the Taliban during the withdrawal process and what the effects were of this failure on international relations. The main argument in the study about the failure of the Afghan Army is that because the transition stages from the lower identity to the upper have not been completed, and the identity structure was left as a tribal-based one rather than integrated Afghan identity, the loyalty to the state could not be fulfilled and therefore the practices like bribery or favouritism in assignments led to corruption in the system causing an imperfect structure with a failure against the Taliban. As to the effects on international relations, the withdrawal of the USA from the region caused the power vacuum in Afghanistan to deepen even more. Whilst analyzing the aspects of the reasons why the Afghan army had failed against the Taliban, the on-site observation method is used lasting 6 months between June 2017 and January 2018 and the on-site interviews were personally carried out during this aforementioned time period.

Keywords: Afghanistan, USA Withdrawal, Taliban, Social Constructivism, Maturity Theory.

ABD'NİN AFGANİSTAN'DAN ÇEKİLME SÜRECİ VE ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLERE ETKİLERİ

ÖZ

Bu makalenin temel kaygısı, Afgan ordusunun geri çekilme sürecinde Taliban'a karşı neden başarılı olamadığını ve bu başarısızlığın uluslararası ilişkilere etkilerini anlamaktır. Çalışmada Afgan Ordusunun başarısızlığına ilişkin temel argüman, alt kimlikten üst kimliğe geçiş aşamalarının tamamlanmamış olması ve kimlik yapısının bütünlük bir Afgan kimliği yerine aşiret temelli bir kimlik olarak bırakılması sebebiyle devlete sadakatin sağlanamaması ve bu nedenle rüşvet, görevlendirmelerdeki kayırmacılık gibi uygulamaların sistemde yozlaşmaya yol açarak Taliban'a karşı başarısızlıkla sonuçlanan eksik bir yapıya neden olduğudur. Uluslararası ilişkiler üzerindeki etkilerine gelince, ABD'nin bölgeden çekilmesi, Afganistan'daki güç boşluğunun daha da derinleşmesine neden olmuştur. Afgan ordusunun Taliban'a karşı başarısız olmasının nedenleri incelenirken, Haziran 2017 ile Ocak 2018 tarihleri arasında 6 ay süren yerinde gözlem yöntemi kullanılmış ve söz konusu zaman diliminde mülakatlar gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afganistan, ABD'nin Çekilmesi, Taliban, Sosyal Konstrüktivizm, Olgunluk Teorisi.

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Introduction

The new world order after the collapse of USSR has led to significant impacts on international relations discipline. The ineffectiveness of the basic theories in the discipline to analyze the new world order caused the need to new approaches and thus the constructivist point of view used previously in other disciplines such as sociology has begun to show its effects on the international relations discipline. On this basis, scholars began to explain international relations through cultures, ideas and identities instead of structures such as power or market economy on which realist or liberalist theories were based, and moreover the effect of this newly developed social structure on international relations was defined (Fierke, 2007).

Within this framework, social constructivist theory criticized the assumption that the international system had an unchanging structure, emphasizing that social structures were shaped through the concepts of identity, perception and learning, therefore defined foreign policy as "social relations in a constantly changing state" (Karakoç, 2013: 132). Social constructivist theorists, who also advocate the necessity of starting from individuals in the social and material world in the analysis of international relations, articulate that the behavior of the actors determines the structure of the international system, but that the structure and agents affect each other in the process of social construction (Wendt, 1992: 391-426). For this reason, according to social constructivism, interstate relations are a process in which actors (agents) and the world (structure) in which these actors live are mutually constructing each other (Onuf, 1989: 49).

Social constructivists, who determine their fields of work as identities, rules and structures (Wendt, 1999:38-39), base the acts of actors on non-material normative structures such as norms, culture and identity (Boekle, Rittberger, Wagner, 2001: 105-140). Identity, a concept that social constructivism particularly emphasizes, is defined as how the actors define themselves, and it is argued that identities built in the process affect relations with others. For this reason, identity in social constructivism is not permanent, it is evolutionary (Jepperson vd., 1996), and since structure and factors mutually affect each other, identity evolution affects both domestic and foreign policies of countries, as seen in the example of Russia (Hopf, 1998: 179). As a matter of fact, in Afghanistan, which is the main subject of the study, the pattern of the effects of identity on social structure and factors and its effects on the domestic/foreign policies of the country is observed hereinafter.

Afghanistan has been plagued by hostilities and interventions and has engulfed in a battle that has lasted over four decades (Rashid, 2001: 396-402). For the past 20 years, the struggle has been fought between the US, the Kabul government, and the Taliban. However, because of their failure to gain an advantage over one another, the parties began peace discussions, which is a non-violent alternative to armed warfare. Following the negotiations, it was believed that the US would leave Afghanistan and the Kabul government and the Taliban would sit down to negotiate. The destiny of peace procedures is determined not only by the opposing parties but also by third-party actors.

Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the US government invaded militarily in Afghanistan. The United States, which deposed the Taliban government in Kabul,

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quickly seized control of the country and played a key role in the formation of a new government. However, beginning in 2005, the Taliban launched another onslaught, beginning a 16-year process that culminated in the United States' withdrawal.

In their fight against the US, the Taliban exploited religious grounds to portray the US as an intruder. Should the other interventions be analyzed in a retrospective context, it will be explicit that the operations carried out by Britain and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan show how difficult it is to control and manage the geography in question (Cordesman and Hwang, 2020: 18-24). In fact, this is the most important reason why the US has set the peace table with Taliban. Discussions on withdrawal have started in the USA in 2009. With Donald Trump's election as president, Washington has put into action its plan to disengage from nations that do not benefit it directly. The US government sat at the bargaining table with the Taliban during this process, and with the final deal, US troops in Afghanistan came home. The United States, the Kabul administration at the time, and the Taliban were the primary players in the Afghan peace negotiations. However, numerous regional and global entities are recognized to have an impact on the process. Yet, because of the nature of the process, certain actors had disrupted the peace talks, while others were supporting them (Curran, 2018: 3-7).

In addition to the actors directly involved in the Afghanistan Crisis, Europe, China, India, Iran, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Russia and Türkiye, which also include the actors of the Second Great Game, are countries that have the capacity to influence the peace process (Hamidzada and Ponzio, 2019: 9-17). While the inter-Afghan talks were continuing, the Taliban continued their military advance and eventually captured Kabul on August 15, 2021. The peace process started in Afghanistan came to an end without the signing of any agreement. Ghani left Afghanistan and the Taliban took control of the country. Therefore, no peace treaty was signed and the peacebuilding process could not be implemented with a four-stage expectation for the peace process. These were the realization of peace negotiations, the signing of the first agreement, a transition period in which the agreement was implemented and the Taliban joined the administration, and finally, the transition to a more permanent management structure with the end of the transition process. However, it cannot be concluded that these stages are realized in a healthy way (Lewis, 2021: 6-12).

There were many internal and external reasons why the United States and its allies lost the war. Chief among these are: The fact that a regular army and intelligence could not be established in Afghanistan. Most of the soldiers who appeared on the record were actually ghost soldiers. The officers pocketed their pay by making it seem like they had soldiers who didn't really exist to get more pay. Also, the high level of corruption among Afghan rulers, the fact that many administrators pocket the money they receive, including international aid. Another reason is that the Afghan soldiers joining the army to get money, leaving the army without getting paid, many times deserting from the army, changing sides or secretly working for the Taliban. Also, frequent human rights violations committed by the United States and its Allies and insufficient punishment for these violations. Finally, the Afghan government's inability to represent the people (Mishory, 2016: 3-4).

The main argument in the study about the failure of the Afghan Army is that due to the events occurring in Afghanistan, the transition stages from the lower identity to the upper could not be completed, and therefore, the identity structure in Afghanistan should still be perceived

as a tribal-based one rather than an integrated Afghan identity, and because these identities prevent the establishment of a secure environment, unlawful practices have become entrenched, and although the Afghan army has been trained for years by the coalition forces, this incomplete identity-building process has led to the relative failure of the Afghan army against the Taliban during the US withdrawal process.

Whilst analyzing the aspects of the reasons why the Afghan army had failed against Taliban, on-site observation method is used lasting 6 months between June 2017 and January 2018 and interviews were carried out during this aforementioned time period. With the help of the on-site observations, the applicability of the trainings given by the US consultants in the field was supervised, and with the help of the conducted interviews, it was aimed to determine whether the Afghan army members' loyalty was directed towards a certain tribe or Afghan identity itself.

The information of the individuals was kept confidential in the interviews due to the fact that the terrorist attacks against the members of the Afghan army by the Taliban were still life-threatening. The reason behind this action was our belief to the "right to life" as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. In addition to these efforts, in order to analyze the effects of the withdrawal process from Afghanistan, interviews with individuals who were once Afghan translators working for NATO were also conducted.

As for the subject of the US' withdrawal; we believe that the actors primarily use military means to achieve their ends; that is, it uses violence. However, if the parties fail to gain superiority over each other, it is seen that the conflicts reach a dead end. This situation is described as a mutually hurting stalemate. As a result, the mutually damaged actors start to look for alternative options to overcome the problem due to the prolongation of the conflicts. Thus, the ripeness theory, pioneered by Ira William Zartman, is realized. As a result of maturation, the actors, who have been in conflict for a long time and have suffered great losses, decide to solve the problem through negotiation from non-judicial methods. Zartman states that conflicts can be resolved if the parties are ready. In this, they need to feel the ripe moment, that is, the time when the parties realize that they cannot achieve a one-sided and satisfactory result (Zartman, 2010: 16-21).

In this process, the parties become aware of the conflict that takes a long time and brings with it wearing costs. Because zero-sum win-lose starts to evolve into lose-lose thinking. An actor with this mindset becomes open to new proposals and methods. In this sense, Kissinger states that the solution comes with a dead end (Hanhimäki, 2003: 638-51).

According to the maturity theory, the process is not conducive to mediation activities because the conflict is immature. As a result, the parties, who cannot benefit from or gain superiority from the conflicts, hold peace negotiations, hoping to benefit in peace agreements. The most important example of this situation is the Arab-Israeli conflicts. As seen in this conflict, maturation takes place after a very long and wearing process. From this point of view, maturation begins in the process of conflict or war. Then the peace process comes into play. In addition; negotiation processes can become even more fragile due to various attacks as well as the distrust of the parties to each other. On the other hand, the inclusion of different actors involved

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in the negotiations leads to a difficult but more solid progress of the process (Zartman, 2015: 4-26).

After all, the view of shortening the maturity stage will be the most all-encompassing idea. The parties' departure from the tendency towards violence and returning to the settlement negotiations as soon as possible will lead to constructive solutions. Because, as a result of wars that last for a long time and cause significant costs, states enter into a process of wear and tear. Most importantly, the decisions of the two actors cause quite a lot of mass deaths (Zartman, 2001: 138-144).

It has been emphasized that by the US there has not been a single successful international terrorist attack planned from Afghanistan since the war began. But despite the intervening 20 years, the Taliban is far from being defeated and has a frightening fighting power. According to the information obtained from the region, June was the most violent month since 2001 and hundreds of people lost their lives. Infrastructures such as schools, government buildings, and electricity distribution facilities, which had been built with difficulty for years, were also under threat as they were damaged in the conflict. Al Qaeda, ISIS, and other militant groups did not disappear. Now they are being resurrected, and the fact that the last Western soldiers are about to leave the country is undoubtedly encouraging (Abbas, 2023: 106-119).

Afterwards, the parties to the conflict for the last 20 years have been the United States, the Kabul administration, and the Taliban (Shinn and Dobbins 2011: 71-77). However, because to their failure to gain an advantage over one another, the parties began peace discussions, which is a non-violent alternative to armed warfare. After the talks, it was expected that the US would withdraw from Afghanistan and that the Kabul administration and the Taliban would sit at the negotiating table. The fate of peace processes is not only the conflicting parties; It also determines the activities of third parties. It is known that actors such as Europe, China, India, Iran, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Russia, and Türkiye were influential in the Afghan Peace Process (Derksen, 2019: 2-8).

Considering the practices of the Taliban administration, which took over after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, it can be said that the applicability of maturity theory is still far away. Because, if we assume that the concepts of democracy, human rights, peace and freedom will be expressed in the peace talks to be developed between the Taliban and the USA, we can say that none of these will flourish in Afghanistan. Thus, the issue will move towards acceptance rather than peace talks, which will deepen the existing crisis in the long run.

Historical Background

Afghanistan, gained its independence with the Rawalpindi Agreement that was signed as a result of the defeat of England after the third Afghan-British war (Şen, 2022, p. 80). After the agreement, it took its place among sovereign actors in the international system on 8 August 1919. Before the Bolshevik Revolution, the Russians, who tended to add Afghanistan's lands to their own country borders, became the first country to recognize Afghanistan after the revolution, and by signing the Cooperation and Friendship Agreement with the Soviets on 12 September 1919. After this agreement, a friendly relationship was longed to be established between

the two countries, unlike the Imperial period. Afghanistan aimed to usher in a new era by signing a cooperation agreement with its former neighbor, which "tends to swallow" itself, and became the first country to recognize the USSR in this context (Şeyhanlıoğlu, 2008, p. 68).

After Türkiye's membership to NATO in 1952, the military training programme provided by Türkiye had to be terminated and therefore Afghanistan had to expedite its military personnel to the Soviet Military Academy. The personnel trained within this model tended to acquire and conserve the "Soviet Spirit" and carried out the revolutionary structure of the Socialist System back to Afghanistan. Hence forth, the then government, which was closer to the Soviets in cultural sense, welcomed the aid in the form of grants in 1957 and easily accepted the principle of on-site control of Soviets, which was determined as the only condition by Khrushchev (Şeyhanlıoğlu, 2008, p. 69). This situation enabled Soviet technicians to influence the country under the name of consultants, and the infrastructure of the roads built under the grant for tank crossings facilitated the Russians' arrival at the US-supported Pakistani border in two days.

These developments led to the formation of a pro-Soviet army in Afghanistan, and the events that started with the coup d'etat of King Mohammed Zahir Shah's cousin and former Prime Minister Mohammad Davud to overthrow the monarchy ended in civil war, and eventually the pro-communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (ADHP) came to power. At that time, the statements that Afghanistan would be occupied by the Soviet Union by its two neighbors, Iran and Pakistan, and that a new country would be established under the name of Pashtunistan, which was planned to be connected to Pakistan later, caused the ADHP government to have a pro-Soviet perspective (Şeyhanlıoğlu, 2008, p. 69).

The regional turmoil, which started in 1979 upon the invitation of Babrak Karmal, who was allegedly brought to power by the Moscow administration after the coup in the country deeply affected the international system. Then caused and still persistent problems in Afghanistan - as the gateway to Asia - created situations that are still yet to be resolved. The USSR, with the aim of creating a buffer zone on the Soviet border and going one step further in the historical goal of "descent to warm seas" (Marshall, 2015: 12) politically and culturally intervened Afghanistan in 1979. While instilling communist values, the USSR faced an important reaction from the society which was in a relatively feudal structure, and it was not possible to internalize the values connected to socialism in a short time where Islamic values were at the forefront (Alagöz et al. 2015, p. 120).

Afghan groups, which were initially in opposition with armed actions, later developed their forces against the Soviets with the support of the USA and turned into organized and armed actors from resistance groups inadequate in terms of weapons and ammunition (Erman, 2018, p. 305). In the face of this effective resistance and guerrilla tactics, the Soviets, who tried alternative methods at first, finally decided to withdraw from Afghanistan on February 15, 1989, due to the conjuncture of the period and the process they lived in (Han, 2011, p. 85). During the intervention of the Soviet Union, the anti-government forces, who received support from the USA, took an active position in the administration of Afghanistan with the withdrawal, and thus the rebuilding process by the USSR came to an end (Erman, 2018, p. 316).

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The civil war that lasted for three years after 1989 resulted in the overthrow of the government in 1992 and the Islamic State of Afghanistan was founded with the Peshawar Agreement signed on April 24, 1992. However, Pakistan-backed Hezbi Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's opposition to the agreement started a new civil war in Afghanistan. The Taliban, which meant students, subsequently was established consisting of Pashtun refugees who had previously been educated in madrasahs in Pakistan and fled the war, gradually turned into soldiers trained in sharia schools and refugee camps, and in 1996 took control of Kabul. During this four-year period, the Taliban, who received training and logistics support from the USA in refugee camps within the borders of Pakistan (Şeyhanlıoğlu, 2008, p. 73), was considered as an alternative to the Soviet influence in Afghanistan, and for this reason, its methods on human rights was not adequately and exhaustively questioned by agencies and actors of international system.

On September 11, 2001, 3 thousand people lost their lives in the attacks in the USA. Targeting the World Trade Center and the US Department of Defense with three passenger planes they hijacked, another plane that the hijackers tried to seize crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. The bombings were quickly blamed on Osama bin Laden, the head of the Islamist group al-Qaeda. The Taliban, the militant Islamist group that rules Afghanistan and guards bin Laden, has refused to hand him over. A month after the attack, the US began airstrikes against both al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

After the Taliban's attack on the Twin Towers of the USA-New York World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the US claimed that Osama Bin Laden, who instigated the aforementioned action (Önal, 2010, p. 44), was protected in the country and changed the perspective of the Taliban administration. Taliban's unquestioned ideology, tactics and the management era by The USA was left behind (Şeyhanlıoğlu, 2008, p. 79). As a matter of fact, US President Bush explained the action with "*We are at war, there is a war waged by terrorists against America, and we will respond to it. We will find out who did these things and we will bring them to justice by pulling them out of their hiding places.*" (BBC, 2011) and that the attacks were carried out by the Al-Qaeda Terrorist Organization acting under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden, and that the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan provided logistical and financial support to this organization. Just nine days after the events, he announced his new National Security Strategy in the speech he gave in Congress, the main goals of this strategy were counted as "to maintain peace by fighting terrorism and dictatorship, to establish good relations between the great powers, to support and sustain free and open societies all over the world" (Ward, 2006, p. 79).

After these statements it was concluded in the UN Security Council as a result of the insistence of the USA that the issue was discussed and resolved in the UN Security Council (UN Security Council Resolution 1368, 2001). With the mentioned resolution, the attack was described as a terrorist act and in response to this act, the right of each state to defend itself was strongly referred to (Özer, 2017, p. 143). Although Resolution 1368 did not contain a definitive provision regarding the creation of conditions for the use of the right of self-defense regulated in Article 51 of the UN Charter, it represented a political support that force could be used on the basis of the right to self-defense against terrorism. As a matter of fact, in the third paragraph of the resolution, it was stated that the UN was ready to take all necessary steps to respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and all kinds of counter-terrorism, by recognizing the right of individual or collective self-defense specified in the United Nations Charter.

As a result of the combination of the Bush's "*We cannot allow the enemy to attack.*" principled preventive war policy and the reference to the right of self-defense regulated in the 51st article of the UN Charter in Resolution 1368, consensus was formed on the international platform on the intervention in Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was established with the support of the resolution 1368. ISAF, whose mission was to assist the Transitional Government of Afghanistan in maintaining security in Kabul and throughout Afghanistan, contributing to the development of Government institutions and expanding the government's authority throughout the country, supporting reconstruction and humanitarian relief efforts, has carried out a mission under the command of NATO (Acet et al. 2017, p.63).

Article 5 in the founding agreement of the alliance was taken as the main legal basis for ISAF to carry out a mission under the command of NATO. According to this article, an armed attack against one or more of the members of the alliance in North America or Europe would be considered as an attack against all of them, and if such an attack occurred, the individual or collective right of self-defense recognized in Article 51 of the UN Law would assist the attacked party or parties, individually and together with others, to take action deemed necessary, including the use of armed force, to ensure and maintain security in the North Atlantic Any such attack and any action taken as a result should be immediately reported to the Security Council. These measures would be terminated when the Security Council took the necessary measures to establish and maintain international peace and security (NATO 2022).

As a matter of fact, the terrorist attacks of September 11 resulted in the execution of the provisions of Article 5 of NATO, and in this context, NATO has evolved into a new era in terms of the fight against terrorism (Özlük et al. 2014, p. 2015). With the intervention that took place after the September 11 attacks, which can be considered as a breaking point for both NATO and the Taliban, The Taliban regime in Afghanistan was destroyed and thus the country was aimed to be redesigned (Alagöz et al. 2015, p. 123).

Developments During the Intervention Process and the Situation of Law Enforcement in Kabul:

The main aim of the US intervention in Afghanistan was to prevent terrorist activities at the source, thus ensuring the security of the citizens of the country within the borders. However, it was also important that the control of Central Asian oil and natural gas lines was to be and remain in the control of the USA as an externality. In addition, Iran, which could pose a threat to the USA due to its supposedly nuclear power, would be encircled from the north and control of the old enemy, new "friend" Russia from the south would be ensured (Şeyhanlıoğlu, 2008, p. 79). The USA therefore had taken a step towards dominating Eurasia while dominating Afghanistan, described as the gateway to Eurasia (Mackinder, 1962, p. 241).

The most fundamental issue in the US intervention process in Afghanistan has been the security problem (Özer, 2021, p. 110; Fakılı, 2022). The inability to provide an environment of trust due to the situation in the country both undermined the country's efforts to achieve prosperity and caused foreign investors to turn to short-term investments due to the lack of confidence in the country. This situation led to the further progress of uncertainty and the management of both commercial and political life with daily concerns.

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As aforementioned, the lack of identity within the Afghan society led to the disbelief of a progress in the public affairs and having lost all or nearly all hope, the people started to take illegal actions like bribery. In fact, the high level of bribery in the public sector had become a survival strategy in the new government style. As a matter of fact, Afghanistan took its place as one of the four worst countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index made by Transparency International in 2014 (Kabil Commercial Consultancy, 2017, p. 39). In 2019, Transparency International ranked Afghanistan 173rd out of 180 countries. (EASO, 2020, p. 23).

During the intervention period, the acts of violence that took place against both law enforcement personnel and their families hindered the effective performance of public services. Therefore, the civil servants in charge prioritized the safety of themselves and their families over public service. The constraints in the living conditions of the law enforcement officers throughout Afghanistan and the fact that the monthly salaries were quite low compared to the risks of the job has created a fragile structure in Afghanistan in terms of security. And multiple levels of urban and life security problems have been experienced in this context.

Should an assessment be made about Afghanistan- Kabul, the living conditions of the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) personnel responsible for ensuring security before the Taliban came back to rule the country, were at very low levels. The Kabul City Police (KCP) personnel, whose living accommodations consisted of 21 square meters of makeshift containers, had difficulties even in meeting their basic needs, and this caused a lack of morale and motivation in the personnel. Law enforcement personnel could not bring their families to Kabul due to the conditions such as the cost of living and the rental prices in the city being too high to be covered by the salary of an Afghan policeman, and the occasional assassination of the families of the personnel also constituted a different reason for the families to reside in their hometowns. There were even drastic cases that the security of the personnel's own residence areas could not be ensured.

The 9 outposts responsible for eliminating possible attacks on the city of Kabul were inspected on-site by the authors and inspection results were as followed: The lack of personnel and logistical deficiencies either caused personnel casualties in the Taliban attacks or resulted in the surrender of the personnel without any resistance. As a matter of fact, in 2017, Afghan Security Forces personnel preferred the second situation as a result of the cost-benefit analysis and left the police station with the weapons inside without any counter-attack. In an on-site interview with an Afghan Police, who insisted to remain as anonymous, the personnel stated that *"when they saw that the incoming force consisted of at least 100 people in the dark, they left the police station because they realized that they could not do anything against the Taliban forces, barely saved their lives and they could not think of anything else at that moment"* (Kabul City Police A, interview, 18 August 2017).

The same personnel also declared that the salary he received was not worth dying for and that he took this position only for living but neither for the ideals nor for the country itself. During the above mentioned interview, other group members next to the interviewer stated that they shared the same opinion, and that they would act in the same way if they faced the same situation (Kabul City Police B, interview, 18 August 2017). This sense of belief was declared by various police officers or army members during the 6 month period which this study was conducted and it can be deduced that there was a slight sense of identity belonging for the

personnel with whom the interview was conducted. In other words one of the aforementioned hypotheses of this study was confirmed as the transition stages from the lower identity to the upper one have not been completed yet, the identity integration in Afghanistan could not be fulfilled causing a reduced motivation level to resist against the Taliban.

Also, the high number of bribery cases in Kabul City Police caused the public's trust to diminish and deteriorate towards low levels. For example, in an interview with a police officer who requested anonymity in 2017, the personnel stated that some traffic policemen rented their uniforms to civilians at night, and that those civilians disguised as police officers would collect money from the public under the name of traffic tickets without any receipt (Afgan Police Officer A, interview, 10 October 2017). This situation constitutes not only a negative case but also an unlawful act in the attitudes and behaviors towards the police in the eyes of the public. In addition, the fact that the Head of the Personnel Department, who is responsible for making assignments within the Kabul City Police, was caught red-handed while receiving bribes from the personnel in return for those assignments is an example of the level of bribery within the police organization.

Both the habit of gaining certain ranks and positions through bribery - and the presence of unmotivated city police - who decided to drop their weapons immediately in case of any possible conflict, threatened the security of the city of Kabul in the future Taliban attacks. The US President Biden stated that nearly 300,000 Afghan law enforcement personnel were trained in Afghanistan (Biden, 2021). However, some authorities considered that, like the intensity of bribery incidents, there might have been corruption in the number of personnel in question. There were also files that showed some of the soldiers on paper, called "Ghost Soldiers", were registered in the system by some influential people only for the purpose of receiving a salary and that the personnel in question were actually not even alive. As a matter of fact, as a result of a confidentially run investigation conducted in 2016, it was determined that the personnel in a battalion within the Afghan Local Police were "made up / faked" on paper and that the salaries of those personnel were shared by this organized crime organization and criminals were prosecuted. (SIGAR, 2016, p. 9-10).

It must be taken into account that The US has made significant contributions to the infrastructure reconstruction in Afghanistan, and provided both training and logistical support in the execution of the ISAF mission, which ended in 2014, under the name of Resolute Support by NATO. (Acet et al. 2017, p. 65). The existence of the mentioned logistical support was also expressed in Biden's statements, "*We provided Afghanistan with advanced weapons. And we will continue to provide funding and equipment. And we will ensure that they have the capacity to maintain their air force.*" As can be deduced from the statement, it is clear that the USA supported Afghanistan in the construction of the army in terms of both equipment and training (Biden, 2021).

In addition, although Biden stated that the USA did not intervene Afghanistan to build a country, he has always played a leading role in the economic, military, social and legal aids to be made in the process of rebuilding a country. As a matter of fact, for the adoption of the Afghanistan Constitution, the Bonn Agreement was signed under the leadership of the USA, and the Constitutional Commission was established. The new constitution was adopted in 2004, provided that it would not be changed until 2020 (Acet et al. 2017, p. 65). As one of the sponsor countries in the Tokyo Conference, which was held within the scope of the development

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projects, the USA committed to donate \$296 million in aid for the 2002 fiscal year, and the priority areas in this conference were the payment of civil servants' salaries, education, health, road-electricity-communication infrastructure, especially for girls, zoning, structuring of the economic system and agriculture were determined (Fakılı, 2022).

Although the country was financially supported by the sponsorial countries in high levels, the deficiencies in infrastructure, which is one of the main problems in Afghanistan, could not be rehabilitated even as of 2020 (Kabil Commercial Consultancy, 2020, p. 14). Electricity cuts, which were frequently experienced in the mentioned years, affected every aspect of life, the hospitals had to interrupt operations from time to time due to the cuts, and food safety could not be ensured. Unplanned and mismanaged urban development has caused deficiencies in the management of sewage and wastewater, diarrhea etc. in the country where it was very difficult to access drinkable water. Child mortality due to diseases has remained at advanced levels.

However, despite all these aforementioned contributions, as can be determined from on-site observations and surveys carried out during the 6 month period, the actual situation differed from the statements of the US' that one of its goals in Afghanistan was to build a sovereign and independent country because the assignments were kept as tribe based and these assignments led to the aforementioned lack of identity building process in Afghanistan's history both creating a void in the daily life and obstacles to independence.

Afghanistan Peace Process and All Actors:

Under the administration of Afghan President Hamid Karzai at the time, Kabul tried to contact the said movement, arguing that a compromise should be reached with the Taliban in order to end the conflicts in the country. In September 2007, the Taliban agreed to meet, stipulating the withdrawal of foreign troops and the implementation of Sharia rules. However, the desired result could not be achieved and the process was disrupted. In 2009, the first discussions about the withdrawal from Afghanistan started during the time of US President Barack Obama. Obama stated that if Afghan forces were able to provide security, they would be able to leave Afghanistan. However, in 2011, Osama bin Laden, the leader of the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, was killed and Obama said in a statement on June 22, 2011, that some soldiers would withdraw. Announcing that steps will be taken to ensure security in Afghanistan by the Afghan security forces until 2014, Obama stated that they focused on the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda (Cronin, 2019: 7-11).

In addition, Obama has announced that he will participate in initiatives that will ensure reconciliation in Afghanistan, including the Taliban. Obama's main conditions in such a situation were that the Afghan government should lead the process, those who wanted to be a part of a peaceful Afghanistan should leave Al Qaeda, stop violence, and abide by the Afghan Constitution. Obama stated that by this means, they could establish a lasting friendship with the Afghan people. The USA has been a state that has entered the process of being worn out as a result of the conflicts that lasted for a long time and caused significant costs. The interventions it carried out in various countries and its inability to declare a decisive victory pulled the USA into a

detrimental stalemate. Therefore, it can be said that Washington wants to get out of this deadlock by withdrawing from Afghanistan. For this, various contacts have been started between the parties since 2011 (Rubin, 2020: 6-12).

In the period after the first contacts were made between the parties for the implementation of peaceful methods, the policy was to come to an agreement with the Taliban on various issues and then to reconcile the Kabul administration with the Taliban. The basic conditions of the Washington administration during the withdrawal process were the protection of human rights, Afghanistan not to become a terror hotspot, and not to pose a security issue to the United States and its allies. However, US President Joe Biden stated that the Taliban maintains its relations with the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda. Despite this, the withdrawal of the USA from Afghanistan shows that it has worn out from the conflicts, domestic politics affects foreign policy, aims to create a center of instability in Asia, and there is a policy change in Washington.

During the peace negotiations, the demands of the Kabul administration were a ceasefire, the continuation of the republican system, and elections in the transitional period. However, the Taliban opposed them. For this reason, the Kabul administration was reluctant to make peace with the Taliban. There were important differences of opinion between the Kabul administration and the Taliban during the processes of the peace negotiations. In addition, although the Kabul administration was one of the parties to the conflict, it actually turned into an ineffective element in the negotiations, in which the USA was also involved, due to the pressure and influence of Washington (Cordesman, 2020: 2-12).

Considering that there is a ceasefire between the Taliban and the USA and the USA wants to get out of Afghanistan, The Washington administration was disturbed by the attitude of the then Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. The demands of the Taliban in the peace talks were about the departure of foreign soldiers from the country, the administration of Afghanistan itself, and the establishment of an Islamic Emirate to be governed by religious rules. The demands of the Taliban, which conflicted with those of Kabul, made the peace process fragile. However, it is possible to say that the Taliban established itself as a reality and an actor after a long period of struggle. One of the most important problems between the USA, the Kabul administration, and the Taliban was experienced in the establishment of a transitional government, which would include the Taliban. While the USA and the Taliban support this plan; Gani, on the other hand, opposed the plan, saying that the elected would not stand aside for the unelected. Knowing that the US is uncomfortable with Ghani's attitude, the Taliban stated that Ghani is the only obstacle to peace. The reason the Kabul administration objected and insisted on its terms was that they could not trust the Taliban. It is also possible to say that it is persistent in its conditions in order to strengthen its position and gain some gains against the Taliban (Basit, 2020: 9-14).

After the death of a US soldier after an attack in Afghanistan, the perception in the world public opinion that the peace process was disrupted and that the US would resume operations against the Taliban was strengthened. However, the Washington administration, with an intention to withdraw from the region, continued negotiations after a while. It was also quite difficult to think about the process of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of the Taliban. Because the Taliban, not only politically, thought that they should be strong militarily as well. The Taliban, who argued that they were in power during the US intervention, aimed to be the dominant power after the foreign soldiers withdrew. Therefore, it was not possible to say that

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the Taliban saw the Kabul administration as an actor to be taken into account or to make peace with (Dobbins et al., 2020: 3-9).

The Taliban had a different feature in sitting at the peace table. The US and the Kabul administration were in a stalemate however, the Taliban continued to advance in the country. Therefore, it can be said that the Taliban have psychological superiority. Moreover, the Taliban did not willingly participate in the peace talks. This situation created the perception that the Taliban is the winner of the conflicts and can act more easily. This was one of the reasons why the Taliban did not see the Kabul administration as an interlocutor. Looking at the historical development of the peace process, after the first contacts were established in 2011, the Taliban announced in a statement in 2013 that they would open an office in Doha, the capital of Qatar. As a result of the development approved by the USA, a healthy communication channel was established between the two sides. One of the most important details in peace processes is the existence of a dialogue channel between the two sides. The situation in question provides a significant advantage in terms of getting to know each other closely, eliminating misunderstandings, and re-connecting even if negotiation attempts are unsuccessful (Kousary, 2015: 30-32).

By 2014, the USA announced that it would withdraw most of its troops from Afghanistan and that they would end their military presence by 2016. In 2015, the Kabul administration and the Taliban came face to face for the first time for official peace talks in Pakistan; however, no progress has been made. Even though there were various contacts between the parties, there was no ceasefire in Afghanistan. Officials from China, India, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan met in Moscow in April 2017 to rekindle the dialogue between Kabul and the Taliban. In October, Washington announced its willingness to negotiate. In addition to the positive atmosphere between the parties, the clashes between Kabul and the Taliban continued, and the Taliban greatly increased its influence in the rural areas. That's why the USA and the Kabul administration were trapped in the city centers (Tellis and Eggers, 2017: 3-11).

In 2019, the Trump administration started to meet with the Taliban through the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad. Mullah Abdul Gani Brother, one of the founders of the movement, represented the Taliban in the meetings held in Doha. During the negotiations, the most important issues between the US and the Taliban were the withdrawal of troops, the ceasefire, and Afghanistan not turning into a threat center. The Taliban did not consider a ceasefire without the United States making a firm commitment to troop withdrawal because they did not trust Washington on this issue. The US, on the other hand, was not considering announcing its plan to withdraw troops before the Taliban started talks with the Kabul administration. However, as a result of these negotiations, an agreement was reached. After an attack was made during the negotiations, Trump announced that he was suspending the negotiations and they resumed in the last quarter of 2019 (Blackwill, 2019: 49-53).

As a matter of fact, the negotiations between the USA and the Taliban were concluded and the Doha Agreement was signed on February 29, 2020. The USA also announced a statement with the Kabul administration, which was similar to the content of the Doha Agreement. This situation indicates that the USA adopted a stance that would include all actors in the country's future, which was uncertain after the US withdrew from Afghanistan by making both sides accept the process (US Institute of Peace, 2021: 77-79).

The negotiations between the Kabul administration and the Taliban, which were constantly postponed, officially started on 12 September 2020. However, it was decided that there would be no mediator in the negotiations. Despite this, conflicts continued in the country and the Taliban continued to seize various regions. While this situation fueled distrust between the parties, it endangered the future of peace talks and made it difficult to sign a final agreement. The process, which had slowed down with the effect of the elections in Afghanistan, started again and ceasefire calls were made against the Taliban in this period. However, talks between Afghans were abandoned in February 2021 and resumed in July (Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, 2021: 1-3).

With the election in November 2020 in the USA, Joe Biden's assuming the presidency, not at the end of 14 months as determined in the Doha Agreement; He announced that he would withdraw on September 11, 2021. Despite this, the process remained intact and the date announced by Biden was accepted. The Kabul administration, on the other hand, announced that they would continue the peace talks. However, despite this, the USA, which withdrew from Afghanistan, was making various statements to slow the progress of the Taliban. In a statement, the US State Department declared that if a group seizes power in Afghanistan through armed means, international support would not be provided to the country and its legitimacy would not be recognized. While the inter-Afghan talks were continuing, the Taliban continued their military advance and eventually captured Kabul on August 15, 2021. The peace process that started in Afghanistan came to an end without the signing of any agreement. Ghani left Afghanistan and the Taliban took control of the country. Therefore, no peace treaty was signed in Afghanistan and the peacebuilding process could not be implemented (International Crisis Group, 2021: 4-13).

The Effects of the Process with the Withdrawal Decision on International Politics and Afghanistan

With the change of administration in the USA, the policies towards the Middle East and overseas countries have also changed, and as a matter of fact, the US-Taliban negotiations have begun, which can also be considered as an effort to put an end to the "endless wars of America" by the Trump administration. This process, which started in Doha in 2019, was signed by an agreement in 2020 to completely leave the country on May 1, 2021, following the reduction of the American forces to 2,500 until January 15, 2021 (Türkmen, 2021, p. 2).

However, the developments within the withdrawal process significantly affected the perspective of foreign missions in the country. As a matter of fact, there is a case where Afghan civilian workers came to the gates of the barracks to protest the situation in Hamid Karzai Airport Base, due to the fact that the British troops did not pay their translators in full during the withdrawal process. This situation carried the perception of foreign missions to a different dimension in the eyes of the Afghan people and created a feeling of abandonment and deception in the eyes of the people.

In a statement by the US President Biden, announced that Afghans who provided translation support to their own country would be granted asylum and the opportunity to live in the United States if they chose, and that they could wait in third countries until the visa procedures were completed and that the mentioned personnel could be recruited from the countries they

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were in after the completion of the procedures (Biden, 2021). When evaluated in this context, the mentioned course of action used by the USA for translators, technicians, etc. shows that the USA is trying to ensure the safety of the employees and carry on its political and social ties with the region by making the granting the personnel US citizenships.

In the same statement, Biden announced that the USA intervened to Afghanistan to eliminate the terrorists who attacked his country on September 11 and to bring Osama Bin Laden to justice, that the aim was to prevent Afghanistan from befalling a terrorist base, and that the same situation could be prevented from happening elsewhere again. Emphasizing that these goals have been fulfilled, Biden also added that their main goal while intervening to Afghanistan was not to build a country, but that it was only the right and responsibility of the Afghan people to decide their own fate and how they choose to be governed. Biden, who stated that he trusts the capacity of the Afghan army, which is better trained, more equipped and more competent in war, in case the Taliban took over the administration of the country with the withdrawal, emphasized his confidence in the Afghan government in case of a possible civil war.

In addition, the USA made a request from Türkiye that the Turkish Armed Forces and the Turkish Gendarmerie General Command personnel would remain in Afghanistan-Kabul to ensure the security of Hamid Karzai International Airport even after the NATO forces withdrew. Relations between Türkiye and Afghanistan have a historical background. Türkiye is geographically far from Afghanistan; however, it is one of the close actors in terms of common values and historical ties. The basis of Türkiye's policies in Afghanistan is the establishment of peace and stability in the country in question. Ankara supported the peace talks within the framework of peaceful reconciliation on the stabilization of Afghanistan. Türkiye's aforementioned ties with Afghanistan and its neutral stance enabled it to be in contact with various actors within the country. This situation has also strengthened the idea that Türkiye can play a mediator role in the peace process. The conference, which was planned to be held between April 24 and May 4, 2021, aimed to accelerate and contribute to the negotiations for a just and lasting solution in Afghanistan. However, this summit could not be convened despite Türkiye's well-intentioned efforts (Mrdalj, 2022: 209-218).

Türkiye's demands on operating the Hamid Karzai Airport's from the US were on three conditions consisting of diplomatic, logistical and financial support. Negotiations on this issue were held at the Ministry of National Defense in Ankara on 24-25 June 2021. After two separate phone calls between Hulusi Akar and Lloyd James Austin, the Ministers of National Defense of Türkiye and the USA, on July 7 and 8, 2021, a statement was made that the intergovernmental negotiations continued (Ergan, 2021).

The Taliban, on the other hand, declared that they would characterize all foreign troops that will remain in Afghanistan as invaders as of 01 May 2021, and stated that they would not tolerate Türkiye in this regard. As a matter of fact, in a statement dated July 13, 2021, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid once again emphasized that they did not want Turkish soldiers in Afghanistan, and said that they would not tolerate any foreign soldiers in the country after NATO's withdrawal from the country, including Türkiye (Sedat, 2021). Mujahid also emphasized that they had already rejected Türkiye's offer and added, "*After the US withdrawal, we will not allow other foreign powers to stay in the country under any pretext.*"

Upon this statement, AKP spokesperson Ömer Çelik stated that they considered the statements in question as a "communication accident" (Altaş, 2021). President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said, "*World leaders have not recognized the Taliban's current position yet. They are in pursuit of recognition by other countries. We will provide the Afghan people with every kind of support in relation to these requests so long as the administration in Afghanistan adopts a just stance in its international relations as well as in its relations with us for the protection of the Afghan people's rights. So long as this is the case, it would be out of the question for us to neglect them since we have historical brotherhood with the Afghan people,*" (Sevencan, 2021). President Erdoğan also stated that "*Just as the Taliban made some negotiations with the USA, it should be more comfortable with Türkiye, because Türkiye has nothing wrong with its beliefs.*" (Kaplan et al. 2021) With this high level presidential response, he aimed to develop the dialogue with the Taliban and to ensure that the Turkish Armed Forces and Gendarmerie General Command personnel stayed in Kabul as a result of the negotiations to be held between the Taliban and the Republic of Türkiye.

Emphasizing that the USA wished the operation of the Airport in Kabul to be continued by Türkiye, on July 20, 2021 President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that Türkiye could keep its troops in Afghanistan only if political, financial and logistic support was provided by the allies (Kaplan et al. 2021). In addition to these conditions, Türkiye demanding that Hungary be among the countries that support it, tried to get support from Pakistan during the negotiations. However this initiative was not successful and the troops had to leave Kabul.

In the early stages of the withdrawal, the Taliban again expanded its sphere of influence in Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, in a statement to the Russian Ria Novosti agency, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid stated that they have taken control of 90 percent of the borders of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iran, that is, 90 percent of the borders were under their control (Göksedef, 2021). As a result, with the withdrawal, the Afghan law enforcement officers, who were trained by the RS troops in Afghanistan who were believed to be taught to use these trainings effectively, decided to lay down their arms or leave the country due to reasons aforementioned like lack of identity and fear for life. Thus the Taliban ascended to a dominant and active position in the country's administration again.

It is known that various European countries took on various tasks within the framework of NATO during the US stay in Afghanistan. However, while Europe supported the establishment of peace in Afghanistan, it also had various concerns about security. In particular, the uncertainty of Afghanistan's future, the possibility of the country becoming a threat center and the migration wave based in Afghanistan worried Europe. When viewed within the scope of NATO, the common approach between European countries and the USA was that they would leave together as they entered together. However, it is obvious that there was a disturbance in both Europe and NATO. In particular, it was thought that 20-year gains would be endangered if the Taliban took over the administration, as well as the continuation of the rebuilding process in the country, the inability to ensure security and the absence of an authority established in the country. In short, Europe, which supported the peace process in Afghanistan, was worried that an early and hasty withdrawal would affect security and create instability (Atkinson, 2023: 73-83).

In the event that the US withdraws from the region and Afghanistan stabilizes, China's new target will be to make various investments in Kabul, which was included in the Belt-Road

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Project in 2017. The withdrawal of the USA from Afghanistan means the removal of one of the most important obstacles in front of China regionally. While this allows China's regional influence to spread over a wider area; it will also allow access to underground resources in Afghanistan where is claimed to be mines worth more than 1 trillion dollars. This is among the factors that attract China. On the other hand, China is uncomfortable with the conflicts and radicalization in Afghanistan. The instability and power vacuum left as an undesirable legacy in the region after the US withdrawal offers a living space for terrorist organizations. China, which does not want to leave its business to chance in Afghanistan, has established good relations with both the Kabul administration and the Taliban. One of the reasons why China supports the Taliban is that the attacks by the Taliban forced the USA to withdraw and damaged its prestige (Imran, 2019: 54-67).

Iran is another actor whose relations with the USA have been poor since the revolution in 1979. It is known that during the US intervention in Iraq under Saddam Hussein and Afghanistan under the Taliban, Iran was warm to invasions. In fact, Tehran cooperated with Washington during the overthrow of the Taliban administration. Later, Iran became concerned that it was surrounded. For this reason, they developed a discourse regarding the withdrawal of the USA from the countries in which it intervened, and even established a relationship with the Taliban, which was overthrown by the USA, through anti-Americanism. It is possible to say that a peace negotiation that will lead the US to withdraw from the region is also supported by Iran. In this process, Tehran, which reconsidered its policies, adopted an attitude towards establishing good relations with the actors in Afghanistan. Despite the increasing activities and geographical gains of the Taliban, the reason why Iran continues its relations with the Kabul administration is that it does not want Afghanistan to be ruled by the Sunni Taliban (Rashid, 2022: 197-205).

Convincing the Taliban to sit at the negotiating table, Pakistan is one of the most important states in establishing stability in Afghanistan, thanks to its connections and influence in the region. It can be said that Pakistan supports the peace process that will result in the withdrawal of the USA from the region. Because Pakistan, which had close relations with the United States in the past, is now closer to China (Moeed, 2015: 1-4). As a result, Islamabad sees the US presence in the region as a problem. In addition, the convergence between Iran and the Taliban over their anti-US sentiment may harm Pakistan's regional influence and policies. On the other hand, it can be stated that Pakistan supports the peace process since the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan have made the region an important base for terrorist organizations (Mairaj-ul-Hamid, 2017: 73-79).

Russia wanted the USA to be worn out in Afghanistan and to withdraw in a difficult situation. The allegations that Russia supports the Taliban strengthen this determination. It can also be said that Moscow supports any peaceful initiative that will result in the withdrawal of the USA. Because from the Russia's point of view, most of the problems in Asia have emerged as a result of foreign interventions. With the fact that military interventions did not produce a positive result, the US-based interventions became an obstacle to Russia, which increased its influence as of 2010. Even if the withdrawal of the USA from Afghanistan creates an important space for maneuver for Russia, the increasing activities of terrorist organizations in the region is an important problem. Supporting the peace processes, Moscow wanted to act as a mediator

between the Kabul administration and the Taliban. For this purpose, various meetings were held in Moscow. As a result, Russia supported the peace talks in order to solve the problems in the heart of Asia, which is rising against the West, as well as for the security of its immediate surroundings (Menon and Rumer, 2022: 10-17).

Conclusion

Afghanistan has been a tribal community that has not matured to a nation state throughout history. The power struggles between Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara and other ethnic groups hindered and undermined the unifying of the country, holding up the construction of a common identity. This lack of unity paved the way to the country being defined as a failed state in the international system. When the proportional scarcity of the arable parts of the country's geography, insufficiency of water reserves, and the effects of the desert-style climate on agriculture are added, even the agricultural economic development of the country has become uncomprehensible. Also, the lack of industrial clusters and infrastructure in the country and the fact that the country does not have a coast to the sea pointed to the absence of essential issues for widespread and balanced urban and regional development.

The inability to talk about a homogeneous society related to any structure in the country located in such geography, and therefore the failure in the construction of national identity, has led it to be support dependent by others at all times. As a matter of fact, the personnel whom were trained by the Republic of Türkiye later began to be trained by the Soviet Union's advisers, and even the Taliban, which caused the civil war, were trained by the Pakistani secret service. After September 11, Coalition Forces continued to provide training to Afghan law enforcement officers under the name of consultancy. When evaluated from this point of view, the absence of an ethnic-based or a religious-based nation in the country shows that it will always be open to foreign political and/or military influence and/or interventions.

The USA, which intervened in Afghanistan after 9/11 with the aim of "*giving Osama Bin Laden the punishment he deserved*", also claimed that the terrorist elements in the country would create a new formation that would not pose a threat to their own country, and that the Taliban would not take control of the country's territory. Its declaration was a sign of failure for the United States. While the main aim of the coalition forces was to build the administrative, economic and military structure that will govern the Afghans themselves, the current situation of the country did not coincide with the aim. Both the corruption in the past, the lack of motivation in the law enforcement, the presence of ghost soldiers, the illegal migration of the young population who can fight to other countries, the lack of identity and loyalty building process have led to the failure of the law enforcement against the Taliban in the recent events.

Law enforcement officers in Afghanistan were first trained by Turkish officers, later under Russian influence, and eventually trained by personnel in coalition forces. Even this change in understanding in education affected the equipment used and caused confusion in terms of logistics. When the weapons and ammunition used differ from each other, the supply system cannot work effectively. Since an army that cannot operate the supply system effectively cannot achieve success in any conflict. It is certain that the Afghan Army and law enforcement forces

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would lose power in the face of the Taliban. In addition, the lack of motivation in law enforcement personnel has spread to other personnel and the society, and significant waves of migration have been witnessed.

When the public service corruption, drug trafficking, illegal immigration, human smuggling, and sexual abuse of young children in the last 20 years are evaluated, it is seen that the consultancy services provided by the USA in the inner workings of Afghanistan, both economically, militarily and administratively, the first periods of the intervention were not sufficient. Although the US officials declared that they did not go to Afghanistan for nation-building, it is clear that an unsuccessful operation was carried out in this context, as nation-building activities were carried out in the country. Even the fact that the cabinet constituting the temporary administration of the country consisted of 29 ministries, 11 of which was Pashtun, 8 of which was Tajik, 5 of which was Hazara, 3 of which was from Uzbek and the rest from other ethnic groups, had reinforced a management style that was divided into ethnic compartments. In this respect, we can conclude that the identity construction phase was not successful.

As a matter of fact, during the Taliban's resettlement process in Kabul, the law enforcement officers who could not integrate around an identity could not show necessary means, and the people who experienced this impotence in the law enforcement could not resist the Taliban elements with the fear of life-threatening. Although there were protests, especially by women, that the Taliban administration would restrict their freedom, in the early periods, these protests could not be resolved effectively again due to the fear of life-threatening danger.

As a result, in a 20-year period, the NATO-supported USA and Western countries carried out with the claim of re-establishing the democratic structure in Afghanistan, initially operational, but in the following periods, by training and equipment support which resulted ineffective and unsuccessfully. All the informational and operational training provided to Afghan law enforcement officers could not ensure the security and survival of the current government in Afghanistan, which was a group of tribes that could not melt under a common identity pot.

In addition, the protection of personal freedoms and rights in Afghanistan could not be performed as it can be observed by the recent developments. As a matter of fact, preventing women's education rights until a second commandment, preventing and/or banning the employment of female personnel and ultimately transforming the Ministry of Women into the Ministry of Invitation to Good and Prevention from Evil shows the latest level of the trend towards abandonment of human rights in the country. In this context, the liberal democracy elements that the USA was trying to establish were deliberately undermined and interrupted by the Taliban administration. In addition to all these, the power vacuum that emerged in Afghanistan, where the administration's right to power is questioned, allowed new power centers such as China to seek and sustain a place for them in the region.

Given what has been mentioned above, this article's main concern was to come to an understanding of the reasons why the US-trained Afghan army could not be successful against Taliban at the withdrawal process and what the effects were of this failure on international relations. The answer to those questions is that the incomplete identity construction process in the Afghan society has led to set of events which caused the failure of the Afghan army against

the Taliban and the withdrawal of the USA from the region caused the power vacuum in Afghanistan to deepen even more.

The actors, who could not gain superiority over each other in Afghanistan, turned to peaceful alternatives instead of military methods, which have become wearisome. The fact that Kabul and the Taliban put forward some conditions and that a ceasefire was not signed in Afghanistan has caused the peace talks to become fragile and to raise doubts about its future. After the withdrawal from the region the power vacuum in Afghanistan deepened and it was thought that regional and global actors, especially Russia and China, would fill this power vacuum. However, at the point we have reached today, although there are various security problems in Afghanistan, the states are waiting for an actor who is ready to obtain external legitimacy by providing an internal one. It cannot be claimed that the actors, who do not want to take a big risk because this has not happened yet, have taken a concrete step to fill the gap. It is seen that all these actors have the capacity to influence the peace process in a positive or a negative way. It can be argued that regional and global actors, who could disrupt the peace process in Afghanistan by fueling conflicts, did not realize this because they would gain more from the withdrawal of the USA and stabilization.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Afghanistan has been plagued by hostilities and interventions and has been engulfed in a battle that has lasted over four decades (Rashid, 2001: 396-402). For the past 20 years, the struggle has been fought between the US, the Kabul government, and the Taliban. However, because of their failure to gain an advantage over one another, the parties began peace discussions, which is a non-violent alternative to armed warfare. Following the negotiations, it was believed that the US would leave Afghanistan and the Kabul government and the Taliban would sit down to negotiate.

While the inter-Afghan talks were continuing, the Taliban continued their military advance and eventually captured Kabul on August 15, 2021. The peace process started in Afghanistan came to an end without the signing of any agreement. Ghani left Afghanistan and the Taliban took control of the country leaving an unresolved issues. These were the realization of peace negotiations, the signing of the first agreement, a transition period in which the agreement was implemented and the Taliban joined the administration, and finally, the transition to a more permanent management structure with the end of the transition process. However, it cannot be concluded that these stages are realized in a healthy way (Lewis, 2021: 6-12). In this process, the Afghan army failed against the Taliban.

The main argument in the study about the failure of the Afghan Army is that due to the events occurring in Afghanistan, the transition stages from the lower identity to the upper could not be completed, and therefore, the identity structure in Afghanistan should still be perceived as a tribal-based one rather than an integrated Afghan identity, and because these identities

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prevent the establishment of a secure environment, unlawful practices have become entrenched, and although the Afghan army has been trained for years by the coalition forces, this incomplete identity-building process has led to the relative failure of the Afghan army against the Taliban during the US withdrawal process. Moreover, this process caused a power vacuum in the region.

Whilst analyzing the aspects of the reasons why the Afghan army had failed against Taliban, on-site observation method was used lasting 6 months between June 2017 and January 2018 and interviews were carried out during this aforementioned time period. With the help of the on-site observations, the applicability of the trainings given by the US consultants in the field was supervised, and with the help of the conducted interviews, it was aimed to determine whether the Afghan army members' loyalty was directed towards a certain tribe or Afghan identity itself.

As aforementioned, the lack of identity within the Afghan society led to the disbelief of a progress in the public affairs and having lost all or nearly all hope, the people started to take illegal actions like bribery. In fact, the high level of bribery in the public sector had become a survival strategy in the new government style. During the intervention period, the acts of violence that took place against both law enforcement personnel and their families hindered the effective performance of public services. Therefore, the civil servants in charge prioritized the safety of themselves and their families over public service. The constraints in the living conditions of the law enforcement officers throughout Afghanistan and the fact that the monthly salaries were quite low compared to the risks of the job has created a fragile structure in Afghanistan in terms of security. And multiple levels of urban and life security problems have been experienced in this context.

As for the subject of the US' withdrawal; we believe that the actors primarily use military means to achieve their ends; that is, it uses violence. However, if the parties fail to gain superiority over each other, it is seen that the conflicts reach a dead end. This situation is described as a mutually hurting stalemate. As a result, the mutually damaged actors start to look for alternative options to overcome the problem due to the prolongation of the conflicts. Thus, the ripeness theory, pioneered by Ira William Zartman, is realized.

Considering the practices of the Taliban administration, which took over after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, it can be said that the applicability of maturity theory is still far away. Because, if we assume that the concepts of democracy, human rights, peace and freedom will be expressed in the peace talks to be developed between the Taliban and the USA, we can say that none of these will flourish in Afghanistan.

One of the aforementioned hypotheses of this study was confirmed as the transition stages from the lower identity to the upper one have not been completed yet, the identity integration in Afghanistan could not be fulfilled causing a reduced motivation level to resist against the Taliban. However, despite all these aforementioned contributions, as can be determined from on-site observations and surveys carried out during the 6 month period, the actual situation differed from the statements of the US' that one of its goals in Afghanistan was to build a sovereign and independent country because the assignments were kept as tribe based and

these assignments led to the lack of identity building in Afghanistan's history both creating a void in the daily life and obstacles to independence.

The actors, who could not gain superiority over each other in Afghanistan, turned to peaceful alternatives instead of military methods, which have become wearisome. The fact that Kabul and the Taliban put forward some conditions and that a ceasefire was not signed in Afghanistan has caused the peace talks to become fragile and to raise doubts about its future. After the withdrawal from the region the power vacuum in Afghanistan deepened and it was thought that regional and global actors, especially Russia and China, would fill this power vacuum. However, at the point we have reached today, although there are various security problems in Afghanistan, the states are waiting for an actor who is ready to obtain external legitimacy by providing an internal one.