

TURBULENT AFGHANISTAN

A Critical Analysis of the US Politics of Confinement and the Rise of the Taliban

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PRELUDE

The scene

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PRELUDE

The scene

Historical events occasionally bear striking resemblance to one another because social and political contexts might appear similar at times, but are different in varying degrees. In some cases, however, history seems recurring, which explains the old adage widely attributed to Karl Marx about the repetition of history. Marx, commenting on Hegel's argument about the "twice" appearance of "great historic facts and personages" had only pointed to a sequential omission of "once as tragedy, and again as farce" (Marx, 2009, p. 1). Nevertheless, as a champion of the materialist conception of history, he did not believe in its outright recurrence. People, Marx argued, make their history, not through self-chosen circumstances but from already existing conditions which have a significant and inseparable connection with the past.

For Afghans, however, history repeated itself in the August of 2021, when, amid swift withdrawal of the U.S.-led international troops, the Taliban¹, a militant group from the late 1980s, took control of Afghanistan for the second time in over two decades.

The recurrence of events similar in scope and magnitude in the central and southwestern Asian country, I claim, differs from Marx's (re) conceptualization of Hegelian thought in four distinct, yet closely linked, ways. First, the Taliban's first seizure of power in 1996 was made possible by the existing catastrophic circumstances born out of the civil war, and their subsequent over five-year rule was the epitome of the tragedy. This was followed by the U.S.-led international invasion as a response to the events of September 11, 2001 (hereinafter called 9/11), and 20-year occupation of Afghanistan – yet another tragedy for all its paradoxes

and inconsistencies. Third, the conditions for the Taliban's violent takeover of the country were not *a priori* as Marx suggested in his analysis of Napoléon III's mid-19th-century coup d'état in France; instead, the U.S. constructed them and that too not in farcical terms but in a gut-wrenching fashion to let the tragedy of (and *in*) Afghanistan continue in a different form. Finally, *the farce* (and in fact, the climax) was the abrupt end of the U.S. occupation because it had been disguised behind the perplexing, reductionist, and self-contradictory discourse of liberty, democratization, and the broken promise of "enduring partnership" (Obama, 2012; Trump, 2017; Biden, 2021d).

In this book, I have attempted to untangle the U.S. discourse on post-2001 Afghanistan to see its formation and dominance and to critically analyse it, which could then open horizons for making sense of the Taliban's rise to power and for offering a plausible and comprehensive analysis to their governmentality discourse.

The historical description of the previous 20 years, I argue, is inundated with tragic, and at times, farcical events and paradoxical discourses. To illustrate further, I present a brief overview of key events (and their contradictions) during the previous two decades before discussing central themes of the book, which is followed by a description of the theoretical and methodological frames, the theory, and practice of state-building and book outline.

In 2001, the U.S. and dozens of its allies, in response to the 9/11 attacks by al Qaeda militant group based in Afghanistan, invaded the country and toppled the Taliban regime, which had been in power since 1996. The post-9/11 world, I contend, is by no means of less significance than the events of the end of Cold War and the rise of a new time and space which compelled Fukuyama (2006) to go beyond the positivist conviction and tradition and to rather sweepingly claim the *end of history*.

Ontologically speaking, the attack of 9/11 can itself be seen as a noteworthy question mark on the notions of national and international orders, sovereignty, and borders. The post-9/11 world led to remarkable changes in the established international Westphalian order and the advent of abruptly changing and transforming international phenomena. For example, the War on Terror (WoT) in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, Nigeria, Mali, and elsewhere and the war against alleged and non-existent weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq were just the beginning of continuously changing and evolving scenes.

During the next two decades, the U.S.-led international coalition would continue the WoT and the rebuilding of the Afghan state along democratic lines. From George W. Bush to Donald Trump, all American presidents claimed that Afghanistan had been *liberated* from the *extremist Taliban* and that the country had a *democratically* elected government. Washington

alleged that Afghanistan had a resilient national security force ready to defend the country. That is why in the beginning of 2015, following the drawdown of the U.S.-led international combat troops from Afghanistan, all security responsibilities were transferred to Afghans, thus making them symbolically *in-charge* of the state of affairs. However, as the transition of security transfer ended, the war in Afghanistan raged. Many districts fell to the Taliban, and according to the United Nations (UN), out of the total 34 provinces, security situation rapidly deteriorated in 29 of the provinces. At the same time, an affiliate militant group of the Islamic State (IS)² called the Islamic State–Khorasan Province (IS-K)³ emerged, (Giustozzi, 2018; Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018) in the eastern province of Nangarhar. On the other hand, for the first time in 15 years, the northern and northwestern provinces like Kunduz, Baghlan, Faryab, and Badakhshan faced increasing insecurity due to the Taliban insurgency.

A year earlier, world leaders had hailed the “successful” and “secure” Afghan presidential election of April 05, 2014. According to the Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC), almost seven million people (out of 12 million registered voters) turned out on Election Day. Following the conclusion of the voting, Ahmad Yusuf Nuristani, the then Chairman and Commissioner of IEC, told a news conference in Kabul that approximately 36% of women and 64% of men had voted for their presidential and provincial candidates. It was, according to Nuristani, the *first time* that women personally went to the polling stations across the country. Before that, during the presidential elections of 2004 and 2009 and the parliamentary elections of 2005 and 2010, official records showed a relatively large number of women who voted; however, most of those votes were cast by the male members of their families, ergo, allowing massive fraud.

The *peaceful* election in April, as the then President Hamid Karzai and interior minister Mohammad Omer Daudzai claimed, was a “proof” that Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) were fully capable of taking security responsibilities and defending the country against internal and external threats. But at the same time, on the day of the election, militants launched as many as 690 attacks⁴ (Van Dyk, 2014). Afghan interior minister, Daudzai, also acknowledged that at least 16 ANSF members were killed across the country in attacks. More than 200,000 ANSF service members were deployed near and around the polling stations and on the eastern border of Pakistan to tackle any cross-border militant activity and ensure election security. Former president Hamid Karzai said in a statement that it was one of the largest “Afghan-led and Afghan-owned” military operations and that the whole process of voting was handled by the IEC which was “entirely composed of Afghans” (Karzai, 2014).

The presidential candidate Abdullah, however, challenged the election, claiming that the results were manipulated in favour of his rival Ashraf

Ghani. To end the impasse, John Kerry, the then U.S. Secretary of State, travelled to Afghanistan and negotiated a deal between Abdullah and Ghani to form a National Unity Government (NUG). The agreement however undermined the very democratic ideals which Washington claimed was strengthening and preserving in Afghanistan. The second election in 2019 faced a similar fate. The U.S. administration, under President Donald Trump, mediated a power-sharing deal between Ghani and Abdullah for the second time. The turnout in the 2019 presidential election was historically low – around 1.6 million of the almost 10 million registered voters cast their ballots. During the years since January 2015, the levels of political violence had kept rising, and according to the UN, more than 10,000 Afghans were killed and wounded in 2019 alone.

The next year, Trump signed a peace deal with the Taliban (Department of State, 2020), and then the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the militant group, for the first time in 19 years since 9/11, formally began the peace and reconciliation process in Doha, capital of Qatar. The Washington–Taliban agreement paved the way for the complete withdrawal of the U.S. and international troops from Afghanistan by the middle of 2021, in return for security guarantees from the Taliban such as breaking ways with terrorist organizations like al Qaeda, fighting against the IS-K, and preventing Afghanistan’s territory from being used as a sanctuary for the militant groups who seek to endanger the security of the U.S. and its allies.

The inauguration of the negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban (called the intra-Afghan dialogue) in September 2020 was just the beginning of a lengthy and challenging process which could take years to arrive at its core objective, i.e., restoring order in the country convulsed by protracted conflict since 1992 and political disorder stretched to 1973 that resulted in the killing of hundreds of thousands of Afghans, displacement of millions, and a permanent state of destitute for over 38 million people.

Nevertheless, President Joseph Biden decided to withdraw all troops from Afghanistan, which led to the collapse of the government and the rise of the Taliban to power again.

Themes and questions

The overview offered suggests that there are two predominant subjects concerning Afghanistan. The first is the continuation of war and security challenges, and the second is the democratization. I focus on the post-2001 WoT and state-building discourse(s) in Afghanistan and argue that both are inseparable. In other words, the U.S. discourse on WoT and the discourse of state-building imply each other; thus, examining them independently breaks

down the holistic context and mars plausible explanations and conclusions which this work seeks to present.

Many liberal and positivist studies identify post-2001 Afghanistan as a *problem*. They argue that despite global efforts of war against terrorism, conflict resolution strategies, state-building, and the introduction of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) (Hynek & Eichler, 2011; Marton & Hynek, 2013), the successfulness and viability of international and Afghan efforts could not be established. Additionally, ever since 2001, Afghanistan has remained in a state of perpetual conflict. Mainstream literature also points to other major issues such as the fragility of the Afghan economy and its democracy (Rashid, 2008; Ghani & Lockhart, 2009); poppy cultivation and drug trade remaining as high as it had been during the Taliban rule of the late 1990s⁵; corruption being the second biggest concern for Afghans (Rashid, 2008; Cordesman, 2010a); high poverty and illiteracy rates (UNESCO, 2012; Ghani & Lockhart, 2009); and the weakness of state organs, inefficiencies of formal institutions,⁶ and lack of capacity to enforce already existing legal frameworks (Katzman, 2009).

Furthermore, even after almost two decades of liberal state-building efforts, a political culture necessary for the formation and functioning of political parties (Reilly & Nordlund, 2008) had not been constructed and the legislature did not function appropriately (Joya, 2009). Some of the studies on Afghanistan rightly identify the regional context, arguing that the country faces challenges of militancy and destabilization from neighbouring countries like Pakistan (Fair et al., 2014; Waldman, 2010; Riedel, 2012; Economist, 2011; Rashid, 2012; Shahzad, 2011). Before the Trump administration's efforts, Pakistan's influence on Afghan Taliban on several occasions had hampered and sabotaged the American reconciliation and Afghan-led peace processes with Quetta Shura⁷ of the Taliban. Afghan government officials and some parliamentarians have also complained repeatedly of the Iranian involvement in the internal political and social affairs of Afghanistan (Joya, 2009; Bush, 2010; Waldman, 2010).

However, I argue the rationalist construction of Afghanistan as a problem is unstable, inconsistent, paradoxical, and loaded with discrepancies. Some of the studies cited above fall short of offering a fuller picture by not adopting a holistic approach and they keep reconstructing and fixing dominant forms of social reality. They establish linear causal links, suggesting that a policy needs to offer a solution and a stable, fixed end result.

This book inverts the equation by problematizing the U.S. discourses and their consequences before questioning the Taliban government's discourse. Ergo, I do not provide a solution to the problems of conflict and state-building in Afghanistan, and instead of progressing in a simplified, linear way, the book exposes the complexities of Afghanistan, contemporary state-building discourses, and practices and the illiberalizing and oppressive

effects of the U.S. discourses which finally led to the rerise of the Taliban to power in August 2021.

The central themes of the book revolve around providing plausible answers and explanations to the following questions:

- i. How George W. Bush shaped and made his WoT discourse dominant in Afghanistan? Why a reinterpretation of his discourse is important almost two decades after 9/11?
- ii. How the (dominating) discourses on WoT and state-building during the terms of three American presidents were (re)shaped, ordered, organized, and operationalized in post-2001 Afghanistan?
- iii. What are the implications of the U.S. WoT and state-building discourses for Afghanistan and beyond?

I argue that the U.S. discourse(s) did not achieve the stated goals of defeating *terror* and rebuilding a liberated, democratic Afghanistan, but it instead led the state to further confinement. To elaborate on that, the book develops a Foucauldian-inspired concept of the *politics of confinement* and asks a fourth equally important question:

- iv. In what ways, the U.S. WoT and state-building discourses are representative of wider depoliticization of the society and paved the way for the illiberal, oppressive politics of confinement and necropolitics?

The discussion around the notion of the politics of confinement and necropolitics vis-à-vis WoT and state-building in Afghanistan constitutes the core of this theory-driven work. Moving ahead with the critical reinterpretation and reflexive analysis of the U.S. WoT and state-building discourses, I arrive at the fall of the Republic and the rise of the Taliban to power and offer a critical, and comparative, analysis of the Taliban governmentality of their first and second regimes.

Theoretical agenda: the symbiosis of ontology and epistemology within the confines of discourse

This book scrutinizes the WoT and post-2001 Afghanistan state-building discourses through a Foucauldian poststructuralist theoretical framework because, first, rationalist and positivist approaches are reductionist ones and can veil important phenomena by not paying attention to details. A mainstream theoretical approach, as Richmond (2008) claims, “repeats and tests the narrow parameters of reductionist and parsimonious orthodoxies in liberal institutional settings” and does not look for “new areas of understanding not determined by pre-existing conventions” (pp. 134–135).

For example, a bulk of literature available on the concepts and practices of conflict management, post-conflict reconstruction, peacebuilding, and state-building provides a liberal view of what the problem is and how to solve it.

In the case of Afghanistan, efforts of the international community after the Bonn Process in 2001 clearly demonstrate the implementation of the liberal model to (re)construct and rehabilitate the society (Edwards, 2010). The poststructuralist approaches in International Relations (IR), on the contrary,

indicate that knowledge is discursively produced and reproduced, rather than objective, and that discourses of power and truth merely represent hegemony and interests, rather than neutral, value-free and universal theories. They view liberal–realism as ‘primitive positivism’ which disguises the fact that power and knowledge are intricately entwined, as are theory and practice.

(Richmond, 2008, pp. 137–138)

Second, a fundamental issue with most of the literature on post-9/11 Afghanistan is that it constructs, presents, and represents it as a *problem* and not only suggests a *solution* but provides justification and legitimacy to the U.S. and its allies’ actions there. The discourse and practice of “fixing ailing” states first require the construction of a problem that is necessary to legitimize intervention for its solution.

Finally, the kinds of aforementioned rationalist approaches are theoretically unsatisfactory and inadequate. As Blanco (2012) argues, the problematizations of such works are “often shallow” as they, more or less, focus on construction of peace in a society through “problem-solving” strategies and exercises of power. Additionally, from a Foucauldian viewpoint, the practical use of liberal state-building conceptual tools and models seems like a complex amalgam of both coercive and disciplinary technologies of power (Foucault, 1991). Liberal approaches view post-conflict societies through the ideals that were constructed, formed, and grown through decades (and even centuries), thus shaping the liberal world. Such *normalizational* state-building viewpoints are practised using various technologies of power completely ignoring the context in which any society (and in this book’s case, Afghanistan) dwelt or presently exists. Thus, I argue that the shallowness and undertheorized approaches may not explain the socio-cultural characteristics and consequences of international discourse and practice of WoT and the (re)building of Afghanistan.

During the research, we encounter some ontological choices and epistemological ways of how to arrive at the social reality or alternatively, what are the modes of knowing, understanding, and explaining various representations of the social reality which according to post-positivist or anti-positivist

perspectives does not exist *a priori* but is rather constructed by the continuous imposition of meaning through discourse.

Ontology in its precise form is “the study of being and existence” (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 7), and in social sciences, ontology deals with assumptions of how one sees the world. In other words, what is the nature of, and what are the basic elements that make up, the social world? (Halperin & Heath, 2012). Historically, it was Aristotle who separated theology from ontology and universal science in his work *Metaphysics* (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 7).

The challenges Afghanistan has encountered since 2001 are constructed as *problems* through predominantly liberal lenses of analysis. These perspectives make both the state-building discourse(s) and the practices Western centric and are not sufficient in understanding Afghanistan and exploring its complexities. In his critique of realist and liberal ontologies and epistemologies on peace, Richmond (2008, p. 139) argues:

a Western meta-narrative of “timeless wisdom” represents war and violence as an inevitable aspect of political actors’ interactions, and tends to be extremely conservative in its representation of peace, though it also acknowledges that a normative framework for peace exists. However, the way realism is deployed in IR and in the policy, world more generally accepts security as the main priority before all other objectives can be seriously addressed. Post-structuralists would argue that this means that the states’ obsession with security becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy of surrealist proportions. Similarly, this critique can be extended to liberal claims about states, internationalism and international society whereby such universal norms are represented as fact, but actually merely disguise the interests of powerful actors.

The noted argument makes it evident that realist and liberal – as well as other mainstream approaches in IR – ontological and epistemological positions are both essentialist and foundationalist (Smith et al., 2008), which means that such an ontology (or ontologies) will fall short of understanding the problematic of Afghanistan’s security- and democracy-building; thus, an alternative approach ought to be employed.

That is why, I argue, whether the fragility of democracy is taken into account or whether militancy within Afghanistan or in a regional context is concerned, all the phenomena, can be better understood through anti-essentialist, anti-foundationalist, ontological, and epistemological standpoints as social world is multifaceted, multi-layered, and complex and does not reveal itself to us but is constituted and constructed in the form of entities, such as institutions and classes (Halperin & Heath, 2012; Rosenberg, 2008; Sheehy, 2003).

Put differently, social reality and the social subject are constructed through complex processes that are influenced by and are closely linked to the circumstances and phenomena of the society where the subject is living (Bryant, 2011). It means that socio-cultural forces, socio-economic, and socio-political conditions of a society directly influence the making of a subject and social reality. For example, when Foucault argues that productive power is used to discipline individuals to normalize them as subjects (1991), he considers the functions of various institutions like prison, schools, and universities. It shows how social conditions, structures, institutions, and power relations are involved in the construction of modern subjects.

Comprehending it from this perspective makes ontology and epistemology mutually constitutive, which means that the way we look at the social world consequently impacts and influences our conceptualization of it. By employing an anti-foundationalist epistemology, “the possibility of building knowledge on, or around, apparently permanent categories or essences” is problematized and questioned that leads to the subversion of essence and meaning. That is how and when:

Political analysis becomes a question of examining the unevenness, and the relative permanence, of certain ensembles of meaning. According to an anti-foundationalism perspective, there are no foundations to rely upon for an understanding of the world. Thus, socio-political phenomena must be understood by looking at the way in which actors, objects, and politics are constructed within a discourse.

(Sayyid & Zac, [1998] 2007, p. 250)

The anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist epistemology and ontology reject the possibility of a given or valid “truth” about the world (Renner, 2014, p. 265), suggesting that “truth is not discovered” and that “the analysis of political processes cannot rely on categories which are prior to or ‘outside’ the process itself” (Sayyid & Zac, [1998] 2007, pp. 250–251). It means, there is no fixed, *selfish* human nature through which “control” over others is sought (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 13) or there is no *Will of God* responsible for specific processes occurring or continuing.

Rejection of “given truth” about the social and political world, however, does not equate with negation of materiality of the world because in that case it will be an idealist – not a poststructuralist – assumption. To clarify further, Laclau and Mouffe’s ([1985] 2001) famous and widely quoted example suits well here:

an earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of “natural

phenomena” or “expressions of the wrath of God,” depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence.

The arguments provided reveal that ontology and epistemology are bound together, and rather than dealing with them on separate levels and aspiring for a positivist, objective knowledge, investigating the social world is dependent on the mutual constitution of both ontology and epistemology; i.e., they imply each other. Neumann (1999) paraphrases Nietzsche and argues that the world outside “does not simply present itself to human beings, but that the activity of knowing is a formulation of the world. This knowing cannot take place from any solid foundation” (p. 12). Similarly, following the Nietzschean tradition, Foucault believes that the world does not itself “turns towards us a legible face which we would have only to decipher” (Foucault, 1981, p. 67); rather, it is formed and understood through discourse.

Understanding ontology and epistemology in this sense opens up horizons for interpretivist research, which breaks away from the positivist tradition in a radical way. The methodology, hence, becomes mostly qualitative (Furlong & Marsh, 2010, pp. 185–187), and instead of focusing on causality through the interplay of independent and dependent variables, an alternative and critical reinterpretation is sought. Moreover, since ontology and epistemology are in a symbiotic relationship due to the power effects of discourse, phenomena and factors appear as forming a mutually constitutive union as well and cannot exist independently from each other.

If we take the example of the U.S. WoT discourse, it is itself embedded in pre-existing discourses and is dependent on them. As Chapter 2 reveals, the effects of the discourse are not confined to security/war in Afghanistan only but are widespread. In the meantime, the conditions and the situation in Afghanistan and the region also had a profound impact on the U.S. discourses on WoT and state-building in the country.

Discourse

IR, in general, is problematic and unsettled when it comes to the complexities surrounding definitions of certain notions that in fact make up the core premises and parameters of the discipline itself. From the conceptions of state, sovereignty, democracy, and international/domestic (dis)order, to power and (in)security, all definitions are deeply contested and incomplete. For example, in Hobbesian or Morgenthau’s sense, the notion of *power* is something that is possessed (Morgenthau, 1978), in liberal sense; however, it is existing in many forms like *hard*, *soft*, or even *smart* power (Nye, 2004),

yet, in Foucauldian thought, power is not only possessed but rather ubiquitous and having varied effects. Likewise, discourse, as many of Foucault's ideas, is also not well defined and is contested. Nevertheless, I try to provide a sketch of the notion of discourse and then fix it – albeit temporally – within the confines of this research only.

A discourse not merely is a text but in fact denotes an organized “order, or a field, which makes specific beings and practices intelligible and knowledgeable, and makes us who we are, and what we do and think” (Malmvig, 2006, p. 3).

The idea of discourse is scattered in Michel Foucault's work. In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, he puts forward the idea of discourse as a group of statements that is behind the production, transformation, and reproduction of objects, subjects, and concepts (Foucault, 2002b). This way, a *statement*, like an atom in an element or a cell in a living-being, is the building-block of the body of discourse but a statement is not just a sentence. However:

this is not to say that a statement cannot include sentences, that it cannot make sense, and that speech acts are not in fact series of properly arranged statements. It is to say that propositions, sentences and speech acts are categories at different levels of analysis. A statement must also be distinguished from a sign (...) If there were no statements (“descriptions”), there could be no language. Yet the sign is not simply contained in the statement. It is imposed on it and controls it, since a sign is a part of the system for the construction of possible statements which is called language (*langue*). So Foucault's statement, although it is always composed of an identifiable set of signs, exists at a very peculiar level: a level which is neither the level of the sign itself (that is, the abstract level of *langue*) nor the level of its material manifestation – such as a letter that is randomly typed on a typewriter and printed on a page.

(Ditrych, 2014, p. 11)

Ditrych, explaining Foucault's concept of a statement, notes that it is “a modality of existence proper to signs and their series which allows them to be more than a mere sequence of marks, endows them with a ‘repeatable materiality’, and makes it possible for them to relate to the domains of objects”; ergo, discourse can be comprehended as a group of statements and at the same time as “a system of their formation and ordering,” that is “not externally imposed on the statement as it is being formulated, but rather is constituted through the statements' articulation and their interactions” (Ibid., pp. 11–12). It is this understanding of discourse which makes it omnipresent and infinite in the same way as power (Grbich, 2004, p. 40). In the *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, Foucault (1978, pp. 100–101) argues:

discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.

Sara Mills (2003) gives the example of ideology in Marxist thought to unfold the concept of discourse. She notes that some theorists have suggested that “certain statements and ideas are authorised by institutions and may have some influence in relation to individuals’ ideas” She, however, warns against such reductionism of discourse arguing that whereas *ideology* is built up on a “set of false beliefs” thus is thought of as “negative” and “constraining,” Foucault sees *discourse* as both the “means” of oppression, and of resistance (pp. 54–55).

An additional interesting aspect of discourse is that it generates knowledge, and as knowledge and power are inseparable and forming a nexus, discourse begets power as well. In fact, then, it is that power in return which enables the possibilities of transformation, changes, and (re)building other forms of discourses. It is this peculiar characteristic of discourse that ultimately results in its dominance or suppression – an aspect that this book demonstrates in detail in the case of Afghanistan.

The power/knowledge nexus in the production of a discourse that stands on its own as *true* demands greater attention because at the end, based on its effects, it dictates a certain way of life. Foucault (1980, pp. 93–94) notes:

Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit. In the last analysis, we must produce truth as we must produce wealth, indeed we must produce truth in order to produce wealth in the first place. In another way, we are also subjected to truth in the sense in which it is truth that makes the laws, that produces the true discourse which, at least partially, decides, transmits and itself extends upon the effects of power. In the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power.

The power embedded in discourse can be either coercive or disciplinary or biopower. For example, laws of a country possess juridical power. It is law that settles the definition and meaning of justice and punishment. Juridical discourses represent coercive/sovereign power for they prohibit or permit certain actions and decide the nature and way of a punishment that can

sometimes include death sentence which is the domain of the sovereign. The manuals of prisons or of the military are discourses that train or discipline subjects. The discourse of medicine, for example, urging people to maintain a hygienic lifestyle or demands them regularly to do exercise to stay physically fit, possesses disciplinary power. Both juridical and medical discourses claim to be based on *reason* and are taken as *true*. Hence, they are powerful.

At the same time, however, sovereign power, or the power of a state, also constructs various discourses. For instance, in the late 1990s when the Taliban came to power, they claimed the previous constitutions and sets of laws in Afghanistan were un-Islamic and declared them null and void. They contended their discourse was truly Islamic. They crafted a new kind of discourse that was a reinterpretation of previously existing political Islamist discourse(s). By using coercive or sovereign power and violence, they made their discourse dominant.

Another case of sovereign power constructing a discourse is the written history. In India, for example, Mughal emperors had official historians who wrote books about an emperor's reign. The king's opinion mattered more than empirically observable facts. Books written during the rule of Mughal emperors in India served as true, authentic, and credible historical accounts. So, it was the sovereign power forcing scholars to construct *the* history – no matter if it was contrary to ground realities.

Most of the written Afghan history is one more example of a discourse that is embedded in the Western-centric, rationalist thought processes. The discourse on Afghanistan and its history, in other words, embodies and reflects dominant Western, rationalist thought. The official U.S. discourse on WoT and state-building in Afghanistan, too, is a dominant discourse (and practice) involving power relations and effects. Once conceived this way, discourse itself becomes a product of power. Since the power/knowledge nexus builds up a discourse and at the same time reveals its mode(s) of construction and domination/marginality, a dominant, power-emitting discourse transforms and destabilizes the established power/knowledge organization. This means that a discourse, at the same time, affects social reality and determines what can be taken as true, universal, and fixed. Discourse fixes and destabilizes the meanings of things, objects, identities, ideas, politics, and so on.

To summarize, this discussion on the notion of *discourse* reveals that while being a product of power/knowledge, it is a source and a site not only of power/knowledge but also of action and, therefore, entails practices. In other words, the power effects of a discourse are vividly visible in forms of various transformative, altering, disruptive, destructive, and constructive practices. For example, the construction of Bush's discourse on WoT resulted in the invasion of Afghanistan and the continuation of war there.

So, the WoT discourse is in action, having visible, material existence, effects, and consequences.

Having said that, I do not reduce *discourse* to language, conversation, speech, text, policy, framework, roadmap, or ideology but, following Foucauldian thought, see it as a source of power, oppression, and resistance. Therefore, whenever the word “discourse” is mentioned in the following chapters, it must be understood as accompanying *practice* as well. In some places, I reiterate this point by intentionally mentioning both, i.e., discourse (*and practice*) to remind the reader that the notion not only means a perspective, a policy, or a collection of ideas/statements but involves *actions and practices*, too.

Methodology⁸

I employ a (poststructuralist) critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Jäger, 2001; Meyer, 2001; van Dijk, 2001) as a methodological frame to question, understand, explain, and critically examine the U.S. WoT and state-building discourse(s) and practice(s) in Afghanistan and the rise of the Taliban. As noted earlier, discourses not just are a *reflection* of the *reality* but *construct* it and, thus, not merely can be confined as “groups of signs” but are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 2002b, p. 54). The Foucauldian concept of discourse, involving power relations, is tangled in the “production and reproduction of particular subjectivities and identities” and exclusions (Hansen, 2006, p. 16). In this sense, discourse not only offers “stable unity of meaning and identities,” but also is representative of a “gap which prevents full closure” (Sayyid & Zac, [1998] 2007, p. 260). This means that there are certain limitations, contradictions, and inconsistencies in discourses that can be efficiently unveiled through CDA (Wodak, 2001, p. 65).

CDA, as a methodological approach, extends “the critical tradition in social science” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 78) focusing on modes and ways of discrimination (Meyer, 2001, p. 15) or on revealing the dividing practices in action in societies. Put differently, *the critical* exhibits a rather explicitly radical approach what van Dijk calls “an attitude” in discourse analysis (2001, p. 96). Still, it is not to imply that this *attitude* sets the researcher free from all ethical academic considerations because in that sense the research does not add value but rather reduces to a polemic.

Any researcher utilizing CDA cannot be situated beyond or outside the discourse as subjects are “themselves the historical outcome of discourse,” and therefore, the researcher’s “possible bias is not based on truth, but represents a position that in turn is the result of a discursive process” (Jäger, 2001, p. 34).

Poststructuralist CDA suits well research works like the one in this book because it is a “text-reducing” (Meyer, 2001, p. 16), strategy. Other forms

of discourse analysis, for example, Foucault's archaeology (2002b), entail archival discourse analysis which is appropriate for a study of a period that includes extended timeframes or a huge volume of literature. Foucault's archival and genealogical analyses such as in *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Ibid.), *Discipline and Punish* (1991), and *Madness and Civilization* (Foucault, 1988) cover periods of around 400 years. Foucauldian genealogy is an extension of archaeology involving power relations (Ditrych, 2014; Fairclough, 1992), which is indeed an effective methodological tool for studies like this research.

However, since CDA also deals with power domination and subjugation relations, a poststructuralist theoretical setting is already a radical enterprise, and as this book is not only about exposing or analysing the power/knowledge nexus but also about the linguistic makeup of discourses regarding Afghanistan, CDA is an appropriate choice for exploring the U.S. WoT and state-building discourses in Afghanistan. In other words, this research project delves into the discourses and narratives as they take shape and become dominant and the power relations that assert them as a fixed social reality, as a gigantic complex or regimes of truth.

The first pre-requisite for (C)DA is "extant knowledge" of the chosen topic which gives the researcher "competitive advantage" equipping her/him with "cultural competence" (Neumann, 2008, p. 63). But it should not be taken as getting closer to the same essentialism that poststructuralists reject; instead, it enables the researcher to "demonstrate variations in meanings and representations" (Ibid.) and makes the research relatively easy. In this context, possession of general knowledge is of paramount importance that I have gained from an exhaustive reading of texts – primary, secondary, and scholarly resources – to be able to provide a *complete* picture and remain within the contextual parameters.

Method

In terms of method, the book draws upon the text selection and delimitation criteria of Lene Hansen (2006) and Ondrej Ditrych (2014) to investigate the post-9/11 WoT and state-building in Afghanistan. Hansen describes three intertextuality models concerning selecting, delimiting, and analysing texts. Model 1 deals with official discourse, while Model 2 includes the "prominent discourses" of the opposition, media, and institutions as well, thus expanding "analytical scope beyond official discourse." Models 3AA and 3B are concerned with other representations and marginal discourses (Hansen, 2006, pp. 53–57).

I selected a variety of texts to not only comply with the requirements for Hansen and Ditrych's frames but also delineate the complex nature of (dominant) discourses vis-à-vis Afghanistan, reveal their cracks, and highlight their paradoxes and inconsistencies.

Paraphrasing Foucault's work on discourse, Peci et al. (2009) determine that "truth is centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it" and is "subject to constant economic and political incitement" (p. 382) which means that there is always demand for truth, exactly in the same way as economic production. The "truth" produced through the discourse of various state institutions circulates throughout the social body via educational system(s) and media. Furthermore, the state sanctioned truth is always produced and transmitted under control (Peci et al., 2009).

To grasp the whole picture of the WoT and state-building discourses regarding Afghanistan, it was necessary to choose an array of texts as primary and secondary sources first to understand the formation and complex dominance of discourses on state-building – precisely those related to WoT, security, and democratization – and then to delineate their consequences. For this purpose, I conducted a thorough reading and examination of thousands of pages of texts, within the timeframe between 2001 and 2021, i.e., 20 years.

Timeframe, text selection, and delimitation

This book covers a period of almost two decades. The timeline begins with the events of 9/11 (hence, the time of shaping the discourse on global WoT) and extends to the late December of 2022, more than a year after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan where they have already (re)constructed and hegemonized their discourse.

I physically read and selected texts following three-step criteria.

First, according to Hansen's models, I selected official texts that were related to the discourses on U.S. WoT and Afghan security and democratization as well as the Taliban rule. During the reading and selection process of relevant texts, the volume steadily grew to thousands of pages.

It is worth noting that, in a discourse analysis, a *text* does not necessarily mean a *written word* and/or a *sentence*; rather, it includes spoken words, images, and video-footage as well. In the case of this book, although images and cartoons were not included, spoken statements, video interviews, and press-talks (in case transcripts were not available) were incorporated in addition to the written texts. Most of the videos on the archived White House websites during Bush, Obama, and Trump rule and on the active White House website of the Biden presidency included textual transcripts which I used, and only in a few cases, I transcribed relevant texts from videos such as those from Bush's interview with the National Geographic Channel (2011).

A breakdown of the process of selecting texts which are representative of the discourses of the three U.S. presidents is as under:

1. For the selection of texts regarding Bush discourse, I conducted a thorough reading of policies, speeches, statements, and other government-released texts that were published by the White House in three booklets (The White House, 2008; The White House, 2009; Thiessen, 2009) comprising over 800 pages. At times, the information in the publications of the White House was repetitive yet important to fully understand the discourse and policies of the Bush Administration. The repetition is also indicative of the stress and efforts of the Bush Administration to ensure the dominance of certain categories of truth. In other words, it represents some sort of inculcation for the audiences both at home and abroad to prove the administration's seriousness in providing security, and that it remained determined and committed to fight terror globally. Additionally, Bush's video interview 10 years after 9/11 (National Geographic Channel, 2011) and his autobiography (Bush, 2010) also serve as the text sources for his discourse on WoT and state-building in Afghanistan.
2. For Obama discourse, I searched for keywords *Afghanistan*, *Afghanistan Obama*, *Obama+Afghanistan* that generated more than 4,000 entries on the White House website, which, after the end of Obama's tenure, is archived and frozen in time. The results included speeches, orders, press releases, press conferences, policy and national security strategy documents, fact sheets, blog posts, videos, and pictures. All graphics/pictures/galleries were omitted, and as every video had a text transcript, only textual versions were taken for the ease of choosing quotes. After doing this, I examined written texts, read them, and then conducted a refined and focused search for phrases "*Obama Afghanistan*" and "*Afghanistan Obama*" in inverted commas⁹ on the archived website, getting more than 100 results. These were the main texts that formed the structure and foundation of Obama discourse. From the entries appearing on the website, I chose texts on new Afghanistan strategy announced in 2009, the annual review of the strategy in 2010, his policy statements at international summits on Afghanistan, the policy texts on the beginning and end of the security transition in the country leading to drawdown, the change of the strategy regarding the withdrawal of troops valid until the end of his second term, his addresses to Americans and during his trips to Afghanistan, and the document of National Security Strategy (NSS). All these texts defined and delineated the U.S. WoT and state-building discourse under Obama administration. More than 2,000 other texts in the form of press releases, fact sheets, statements, and remarks included the same narratives regarding the war and state-building in Afghanistan during the period of 2009–2016. Since CDA is a text-reducing approach, and to avoid unnecessary reiteration,

I omitted those texts from the body of the primary sources for the Obama discourse.

3. The four years of Trump administration reveal a lack of focus on Afghanistan. The search on White House website for phrases “*Trump Afghanistan*” and “*Afghanistan Trump*” generated a total of 337 results, and the word “*Afghanistan*” produced 422 results including videos and pictures and photo galleries. I examined and read all texts, excluding all pictures and videos (because each video has a textual transcript). After that, I removed over 200 texts which just mentioned the word “*Afghanistan*” in passing without having a connection with the Trump discourse. For example, in an address to industrial employees in Pennsylvania, vice president Michael Pence mentioned someone who fought against the militants in Afghanistan (Pence, 2020). A few other texts (such as remarks by Pence, press releases, and fact sheets) repeated the same policy and strategy that Trump had outlined, and so were removed from the selection. Through the examination of the remaining texts, I identify five major areas that form the Trump discourse on the war in Afghanistan and state-building: first, the new Afghanistan and South Asia strategy; second, exerting pressure on Pakistan to change its course vis-à-vis Afghanistan; third, Trump’s proclamation that Islamabad was going to help the U.S. “extricate” itself from the Afghan war; four, the beginning and developments concerning peace negotiations with the Taliban; and finally, the peace agreement and efforts for the talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban alongside the process of withdrawing troops from Afghanistan.
4. I followed a similar process as above to select the Biden presidency texts within the timeframe between April 2021 (the unveiling of his strategy on Afghanistan) and September 2022, i.e., the moment when he terminated Afghanistan’s designation as a Major non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally. In this way, I was able to delimit more than 20 texts in total from both the White House website and media.
5. All the mentioned texts for Bush, Obama, Trump, and Biden represent their discourses on WoT and state-building in Afghanistan and serve as the *primary sources* for this research. The primary texts also include texts about the U.S. WoT and state-building discourses which have been published in widely circulated global media outlets. Such texts are helpful to complete the discourses of four American presidents and to offer a fuller picture.
6. To offer a critical analysis and reinterpret the Taliban discourse of their current regime and their previous rule in the 1990s, I rely on both primary and secondary sources. I received most of the Taliban government texts issued from a WhatsApp group for journalists which I joined on August 26, 2021. These primary sources included transcripts

of the Taliban leaders' remarks, policy statements, decrees, and press releases. In addition to that, I took texts from *The Taliban Reader* (van Linschoten & Kuehn, 2018), which is a collection of the Taliban policies and decrees during their first rule, and from some other works for a detailed analysis. The timeframe for the analysis of the current Taliban regime begins with the first week of September 2021, i.e., with the announcement of their cabinet, and ends with late December 2022. The timeframe for their previous rule includes years between 1996 and 2001.

The second phase of the text selection and delimitation involved the cross-checking procedure. As I stated earlier, a discourse is not merely a text but representative of an order that constructs subjects, objects, things, and concepts; therefore, its dominance and/or suppression as well as its expansion or existence in the social body should be determined in some way. To do that and to ensure the credibility and the circulation of discourse (Ditrych, 2014, pp. 21–22) regarding Afghan security, the WoT, and democracy, I cross-checked all the selected texts in international and Afghan media. For this purpose, I examined all texts in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *BBC* because of their wide global circulation. Then, in Afghanistan, as radio has remained the most popular medium of information since 1980s in both urban and rural areas, I checked, instead of newspapers, the media coverage of the texts through news programs and articles available at the websites of *Azadi Radio* (Radio Free Afghanistan), *Mashaal Radio*, and *BBC Pashto*.

The third step of the text selection and utilization dealt with the *secondary sources*. Most of these are journalistic and scholarly works used to build necessary contexts, provide background information, and crosscheck facts regarding the U.S. discourse on Afghanistan and to offer a critical and comparative analysis of the Taliban's current and previous governmentality discourses. Scholarly works have helped to enrich the theory-driven, epistemological discussion in the book.

Limitations

The first and foremost limitation of this work is that it does not offer an all-encompassing study of the state-building of post-2001 Afghanistan. As the final section of this chapter reveals, state-building is an overarching enterprise – as both theory and practice – but I have chosen only security- and democracy-building and to a smaller extent the economic (re)construction from it, meaning that these pages fall short of showing a fuller picture of post-2001 Afghanistan. There are certain blurry parts in this picture and some are totally missing from it, which include, but are not limited to, central

and local governance issues, institution-building, capacity of the institutions, the development of monetary bodies, a comprehensive analysis of the economy, and infrastructure reconstruction. However, since persistent war and conflict have profoundly impacted other areas, and the U.S. discourse in Afghanistan also remained largely focused on WoT and security and democracy building, that is why I am subjectively inclined towards these themes.

A second, and equally important, gap in this book is that it does not discuss peripheral discourses. I offer an extensive critique of the U.S. discourses of war and state-building, claiming that their hegemony suppressed and subjugated Afghan society, but do not elucidate the Afghan discourse. While, I have not attempted to resuscitate the stifled Afghan discourse, I have presented a detailed account of the Taliban discourse.

Finally, I have not offered due space to other less dominant discourses vis-à-vis the war and post-2001 reconstruction of Afghanistan. These include policy discourses of all the U.S. allies such as NATO member states, European and other countries, and organizations which have been practically engaged and involved in Afghanistan for two decades. While it could enrich the work considerably, including the analysis of the Afghan and U.S. allies' discourses would mean sliding away from the central theme of this work and entering into different terrains.

Some considerations

In this book, I have used terms like “tribe” and “tribal” in some parts that have their roots in the colonial past of the region. While postmodern, post-structuralist, and postcolonial theoretical positions are critical of the use of such terms describing them as stemming from Orientalist discourses, I still retain their usage albeit with a different understanding.

A tribe reflects the social and political organization of Afghan society for centuries and rather than having negative connotations (such as being barbaric or uncivilized as Orientalist literature suggests), is held in high esteem because of its indigenous origins.

The Afghan tribal structure is embedded in ancient codes of *Afghaniyat* (Afghanism) and *Pashtunwali* (Pashtunism), which, if understood in the Afghan context, are not about barbarism and savagery and are representative of not a stone-age but an ever-evolving way of life. Tribe is a social and political system that complies with domestic and historic legal frameworks. Hence, tribe or tribal are mentioned not as labels or in oppositional relation with civilization/civilized but as local manifestations of Afghan social reality.

Other terms such as Islamic and Islamist are also used with precise meanings. I argue that Islam as a faith system and Islam as a political discourse are separate yet normally viewed as one in the mainstream literature – which

is in fact the point from where predominant misunderstandings originate. It is not the faith system that I problematize but the political Islam as a discourse (and practice) leading to the establishment of, for example, the Taliban rule in Afghanistan. The words, *Islamic* and *Islamist*, thus are used only to describe the political aspect and the politics of Islam as a grand discourse. This is where approaches such as poststructuralism challenge and problematize rationalist representations and labels such as Islamic fundamentalism, religious extremism, and terrorism – notions which I challenge and see as *political*.

The following section offers a concise critical literature review of international state-building theories and practices before putting the notion of state-building in the context of this book. I do that primarily due to two reasons. One, the literature is helpful to grasp and make sense of the U.S. state-building discourse in Afghanistan, and two, I discuss the emergence of a novel state-building discourse based on which I develop the notion of reverse-state-building discourse in the third chapter.

International state-building: theory, practice, and critique

“There is no terrorism beyond the discourse of terrorism,” argues Ondrej Ditrych (2014, p. 1), emphasizing on the role of discourse behind practices that are understood as social reality. The same can be said vis-à-vis state-building discourses too. Discourse and practice are embedded in each other and are inseparable. At social and political levels, there is no point where one can imagine practices that are not founded on a certain type of discourse, which precisely means that there is no discourse/practice of state-building before the discourse of failed/fragile states. That is, to *fix* something, it needs to be *broken* beforehand. To elaborate, it is important to offer a comprehensive literature review and critique of international state-building theory and practice.

While the international state-building does not have a “clear-cut definition,” Grzegorz Gil (2017) gives it “five core attributes” saying that international state-building is “coercive,” “territorial,” “transformational,” “temporary,” and above all, “internationalises” the “context” of “failed” or “fragile” states (p.87). The internationalization of the state failure in fact provides the pretext for intervention. Failure of a state, however, is not something which lies *out-there* but is rather constructed politically and academically. Jack Straw, former foreign secretary of the United Kingdom (UK), is frequently quoted for his claim that states, like humans, need *doctors* to offer a cure for their intrinsic and extrinsic ailments. He had argued,

in medicine, doctors look at a wide range of indicators to spot patients who are at high risk of certain medical conditions – high cholesterol, bad

diet, heavy smoking for example... this approach does enable the medical profession to narrow down the field and focus their effort accordingly. We should do the same with countries.

(quoted in Lemay-Hébert, 2013, pp. 6–7)

Whereas the mainstream literature on state failure and reconstruction agrees to an extent with Straw's argument, critical scholars are often at odds with it because it assigns biological characteristics to political entities. What is noteworthy here is the implicit depoliticization of state failure and state-building. By equating state problems with an ill human who must go to a doctor, Straw depoliticizes the state and its problems and prepares the ground for an external, professional (thus largely non-political) intervention. It also takes away the right of self-diagnosis and self-treatment from an ailing state because as in medicine, state-building should be the domain of *professionals* who, based on their knowledge and experience, have a set of *prescriptions* ready. Fukuyama advances that argument from another angle by constructing state-building as "one of the most important issues for the world" because he identifies weak or failed states as the source of many of the world's most serious problems, ranging "from poverty to [acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)] to drugs to terrorism" (2004, p. ix). In other words, he deems intervention in failing states essential because if not handled, their problems can cause a pandemic.

Narratives which construct state failure as merely a technical problem take out politics from conflict and portray "the intervention (military or otherwise) of Western powers as above politics," thereby camouflaging the state fragility as an "ethical" issue than political. This can explain why most international state-building discourses and practices "privilege bureaucracy, law, and administration above the political" and why "critical focus on these developments in many academic circles" remains little (Chandler, 2007, pp. 78–79). Various models (mostly implemented by international organizations like the UN, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the European Union (EU)) delineate the importance of building peace in conflict-affected societies. Many of such studies (Zoellick, 2009; Fukuyama, 2004; OECD, 2008; OECD, 2009; Ghani & Lockhart, 2009; Pease, 2007) in the post-"end of history" era are based on the norms and values of the West (Chandler & Sisk, 2013). In this regard, policy tools and some studies on state-building explain the "theory and practice" (Hehir & Robinson, 2007) of transposition of socio-political and socio-economic makeup of a war-wrecked country (Benedek et al., 2011). The practices of post-Cold War state-building aim for (re)constructing a society on liberal-democratic lines (Sisk, 2013), thus trying to make it synchronized with the West.

The practices of contemporary international state-building and those after World War II point to a fundamental contradiction that can better delineate their dwindling success rate presently. It is important to understand and conceptualize state fragility politically because after all it is the “breakdown of political authority” that is at the heart of the “conflict and warfare” which subsequently gives rise to “humanitarian problems, such as refugee flows,” famines, outbreak of communicable diseases, malnutrition, high child mortality rate, and poverty (Robinson, 2007, p. 1). Linking statehood and peace together, Robinson (2007, p. 1) further explains:

Enfeebled state power has also provided various forms of armed groups – ethnic, religious, criminal, ideological or some combination thereof – to organize and extend their operations beyond national boundaries, and most famously in the case of Al-Qaeda.

Robinson’s argument demonstrates that if the weakening of a state is a political process, its reconstruction ought to be political too, but on the contrary, the mainstream international state-building discourses since the 1990s have detached the state from the political, revealing a significant paradoxical shift from the practices of state reconstruction in the post-World War II era where:

external administrations of Germany and Japan engaged the local populations in a major project of social, economic and political reconstruction, and through doing so won a high level of popular legitimacy and support, international administrations, such as those in Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq, have excluded all but token local input into the making and implementation of policy.

(Chandler, 2007, p. 81)

The depoliticization of the state-building practices leads to the imposition of policies from the top because weak states, lacking “infrastructural power,” are understood as “not adaptive” but rather as “based on despotic power,” meaning that the officials “centralize, or try to centralize, decision making rather than embed it in society”; the state policies are crafted by the elites without negotiating them democratically with its citizenry and are “enforced through the state’s possession of coercive resources, rather than accepted and enacted by society generally” (Robinson, 2007, p. 4). Besides, the mainstream “scholarly or policy-oriented” contributions to state-building literature, starting from “the Weberian approach to statehood” redefine the state by equating it to its institutions where “state collapse is understood in terms of the collapse of state institutions, and state-building implies their reconstruction” (Lemay-Hébert, 2013, p. 3). It is the very idea of the creation of institutions during the peacebuilding phase in a state troubled by conflict

that has led to the strategy what Paris (2004) calls “Institutionalization Before Liberalization (IBL),” which revolves around the (re)building of institutions and producing favourable conditions before devising the political framework, i.e., the electoral system and form of the government. In his view, post-conflict states need the “establishment of effective administration” first before “peacebuilders” can “initiate a series of gradual democratic and market-oriented reforms,” thus postponing the “liberalization” and restricting the “political and economic freedoms in the short run, to create conditions for a smoother and less hazardous transition to market democracy – and durable peace – in the long run.” He sets up a step-by-step procedure of his IBL strategy, noting:

1) postponing elections until moderate political parties have been created, and mechanisms to ensure compliance with the results of the election have been established; 2) designing electoral rules that reward moderation instead of extremism; 3) encouraging the development of civil-society organizations that cut across lines of societal conflict, and proscribing those that advocate violence; 4) regulating incendiary “hate speech”; 5) promoting economic reforms that moderate rather than exacerbate societal tensions; and 6) developing effective security institutions and a professional, neutral bureaucracy.

(Paris, 2004, pp. 187–188)

The IBL, like other institution-building strategies in a fragile or post-conflict society, is one of those bureaucratic exercises that deal with a state as an apolitical structure having far reaching consequences. Apart from being an *ad hoc* and temporary solution, IBL exposes the international state-building “dilemma” because “external construction of political institutions on the basis of the norms of *good governance*¹⁰ often leaves little room for state institutions to develop their links with societal forces” (Chandler, 2007, p. 76). Paris (2004) contends that democracy-building works well in stable states. According to this view, stabilization and building of institutions take precedence over holding elections, prompting Chandler to criticize the “interventionist project” which not only focuses on the reconstruction of a state but also attempts to “transform the mindsets of the inhabitants of a post-conflict state” (Ibid., p. 75), which is something that is the “symmetrical opposite of the 1990s” as it insists on the “need to construct viable, autonomous states,” thus bringing the state “back” into the international political arena (Cunliffe, 2007, p. 50). A major issue with the international state-building approaches in the 21st century is that they maintain and emphasize on “the regulatory role of international institutions and suggest that locally derived political solutions are likely to be problematic” hence taking the local, grassroots, societal approaches of fixing matters for

granted. These approaches “privilege” internationally supervised and monitored “frameworks of good governance” over locally derived government and structures (Chandler, 2007, p. 71) that make the international state-building discourse(s) and practice(s) paternalizing. It is not to, as Robinson claims, negate the importance of international assistance in terms of necessary “resource and knowledge transfers”; nevertheless, “it highlights some of the dangers that these transfers can bring when they take the form of state-building rather than assistance in state-building” (2007, p. 2).

The discussion until now showed how the mainstream state-building discourse operates vis-à-vis conflict-ridden and troubled states. The orthodox views on state-building discursively (re)produce a state as something *material, physical*, or something that *exists out-there*, needing to be rediscovered. However, what the very orthodox discourses (and practices) fail to do is that they do not create a state, but a “state effect.” Koddenbrock, critically assessing three Congolese stories, argues that the “state effect” is “an intertwined process between practices that try to embody the state and practices that ascribe the state concept to these practices,” which itself is based on the conceptualizations of “failed” and “weak” states leading to enacting a “different ‘state’ from that seen from other perspectives, of those living in these areas” (2013, pp. 120–121).

The literature on failed/fragile/weak states is crucial in understanding the Western-centric (Richmond, 2008, p. 141) nature of the discourses that are aimed at the reproduction of a state. These discourses, as pointed out earlier, either offer strategies such as IBL or in a post-conflict setting insist on:

the provision of security, including the introduction of stabilization forces, a program of demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants, and reorganization or reconstruction of the key security institutions in the process of security sector reform (SSR).

(Marton & Hynek, 2013, p. 305)

In other cases, economy takes precedence over “the social and cultural” which results in a mismatch or disconnect between the international state-building practices and the culture of the society. The focus on “material gains” is not only “counterproductive, but also inherently violent and a way of monopolising the ‘developing’ body and mind in order to homogenise politics within the broader liberal community of states” (Richmond, 2008, p. 141).

In their chapter on state-building of post-2001 Afghanistan, Marton and Hynek rightly point out the “challenge” that the “strongmen” in the country pose to the state-building practices. Notwithstanding that, their narrative remains engulfed in the orthodox international state-building discourse when they draw parallels between the “resistance” of Afghan warlords and

what they call “different magnates to the centralization of power in medieval European polities” (2013, p. 306).

Such comparisons locate fragile/weak states in the farther past, distant from modern societies but also reinforce the narratives of identity/difference that I have argued about in detail elsewhere (Sahill, 2017) where the “other” is defined, identified, and represented with respect to “us” and where “the ‘us’ is maintained at the expense of the ‘others’” (Lebow, 2008, p. 475), constructing an imbalanced and unequal relationship where the “us” is privileged and glorified. Similarly, a failed state is defined after a “successful state” is constituted and established first. In the dominant state-building discourse, a successful state becomes the *norm* and the failed one, the *exception*, privileging the successful state, as a regulatory ideal (Moreno, 2015, pp. 67–68). Marta Fernandez Moreno, in her poststructuralist discourse analysis of the available literature on failed states, makes a startling claim that,

by labelling states “failed,” one names *what they are not* rather than *what they are*, thus precluding the possibility of taking states as objects of study *per se*.¹¹ Thus, instead of thinking of alternative paths for these societies as legitimate objects of analysis, most analysts assume their development to be, beforehand, an abnormality.

(Ibid., p. 68)

These discourses present before us the European modern states, based on the Weberian criterion of monopoly over the use of legitimate power and violence as an epitome of success, disregarding the differences among cultures and societal evolution of the non-European and non-Western states. This way the international state-building practices impose external ideals over the troubled societies without feeling the need for receiving a prior consent and approval from the local because the mainstream state-building discourses advocate narratives that the backward, underdeveloped, conflict/war-hit states and people do not possess the necessary know-how of establishing modern state institutions. As Richmond concludes:

Many commentators, pundits, scholars, and policymakers only talk to each other rather than to local actors below the elite level. They do not travel outside the isolated and secure bubbles that are provided for them “out there,” normally in national capitals, and so tend to circulate among themselves gossip as knowledge and fact, or use very limited raw data.

(Richmond, 2014, p. xi)

These practices not only lead to an almost complete neglect of the countryside where traditions, norms, values, and cultural codes are the strongest

but also result in unequal, vertical development surrounding the capital and some other major cities, further strengthening the sense of deprivation amongst rural people who, due to many reasons, were already sceptical about the motives and objectives of international state-building or intervention. This is, as it will be discussed in detail in the next chapters, how the U.S.-led coalition's efforts in Afghanistan disregarded the domestic and local socio-political makeup of the society.

Building an existing state: the birth of a novel discourse

Apart from already fragile, weak, or war-torn societies, the idea of disrupting and failing an existing, functioning state also gained prominence among some Western governments – especially the U.S. – for some time during the 20th century to combat Marxism and developmentalism. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the discourse of inducing shocks through covert intelligence-led operations lost its power; however, in the beginning of the 21st century, a more direct kind of intervention under various pretexts to dismantle the functioning state apparatuses and rebuilding them on liberal–democratic lines once again resurfaced. For example, as it was observed in the case of invasion of Iraq in 2003, the state did not exhibit any symptoms of failure as such because a functioning government, economy, and institutions existed. Nevertheless, Iraq was understood as posing a significant threat to the international security; thus, the solution that the U.S. offered was to invade it, oust the regime of Saddam Hussein, install a new government, and introduce pluralistic democratic model and liberal institutions.

Naomi Klein's (2007) theorization of "disaster capitalism" is helpful to grasp the emergence of what I call a *novel discourse* on (international) state-building where state failure is to be founded materially and visibly to offer a remedy. Discussing the theorizations of the so-called *Chicago School*, she offers a sound critique of the discourse that aimed at "depatterning societies, of returning them to a state of pure capitalism, cleansed of all interruptions—government regulations, trade barriers and entrenched interests" (Klein, 2007, p. 50), even when they function *normally* but sometimes exhibit some symptoms or signs of weaknesses, fragility, or are seen as incompatible to the international democratic capitalist organization of states. She interprets Friedman's ideas and writes that he "believed that when the economy is highly distorted, the only way to reach that prelapsarian state was to deliberately inflict painful shocks" (Ibid., p. 50), and after that leave the economy and markets operate on their own or, in other words, adopt an ultra-laissez-faire system. Based on positivist epistemological agenda, the Chicago School thinkers such as Friedman and Frank Knight understood the economic theory was "sacred," and "not debatable," equating the forces of "supply, demand, inflation and unemployment" with the "forces of nature" that

remained “fixed” and unchanged through times. Building upon the laws of nature, Klein notes, “just as the eco-systems self-regulate,” the Chicago School claims, if the markets are left without governmental intervention, they would end up in perfect balance, bringing inflation rate to zero and increasing employment opportunities, thus offering a representation of capitalism as an incredibly successful and beneficial system (Ibid., pp. 50–51).

But it was just a theory, a model, or a discourse boasting of economics as *science* that offered the best possible solution to societies. Upon graduation, the Chicago School students had a challenging objective to accomplish in their native countries: to prove the discourse was viable and workable and was delivering what it promised. As Klein’s in-depth research shows, starting from Iran in the 1950s to Southern Cone and several other Latin American countries and Indonesia in the 1960s and 1970s, with the help of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the U.S. State Department and some top government officials, all what the Chicago School and *Berkley Mafia* (funded by the *Ford Foundation*) graduates brought to their homelands was the ruthless imposition of Western-centric capitalist discourse that resulted in massive economic, political, and social shocks culminating in the torture and killing of thousands (Ibid., pp. 57–128). By the end of 1980s and in the beginning of 1990s, the dust of widespread destruction had settled, and the Soviet Union’s fall had weakened the power effects of the discourse that aimed at inducing shock therapies in the societies. Despite that, in the late 1990s the “shock doctrine” was applied in several countries, including Russia, albeit by the governments themselves. After the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the policies of shock were fully implemented. Calling it the “full circle, overshock,” Klein argues that the “war advocates” saw the lack of “free-market democracy” in the Middle East as the “true” reason of the problem. They were in the quest of a country which “needed to serve as the catalyst” where the “model theory” could be implemented to completely overhaul and reshape the region thus eradicating all possible future threats to the security of the U.S. and its ally, Israel. She contends that, “fighting terrorism, spreading frontier capitalism and holding elections” were part of a “single unified project,” which the former U.S. president Bush had “simplified” as bringing “freedom” to the “troubled region”. The proponents of the *theory* argued that this would in turn “set-off waves” of liberal–democracy in the entire region (Ibid., pp. 327–328), Klein concludes.

Nevertheless, what the invasion of Iraq brought was not a new, liberal, democratic country but total carnage and gave birth to a fractured society divided along religious, sectarian, and tribal lines what the U.S. government defined as pluralism. The policy of the U.S. and its allies led to the emergence of the IS militant group that, by announcing the *Caliphate*,¹² broke down the very post-Westphalian and Weberian political order in the region that is considered as a regulatory ideal by the governments in the West and

by mainstream IR scholars. The same interventionist discourse in the post-Arab Spring the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region led to the split of Libya into two de facto states, devastating civil war in Syria, obliteration of Yemen, and above all, the withering away of the state as a social reality that was invented through the centuries-old practices and positivist epistemological research enterprise.

It is, however, not to argue that the totalitarian or authoritarian regimes of the MENA region were beneficial to their populations. It is also not to enunciate that such tyrannical rule reflects the socio-cultural *modus vivendi* of the vastly expanded region under question. Saying so is part of the same Orientalist (Said, 2003) narrative that this book intends to resist. The central aim of the argument here is rather to reveal the paradoxical and detrimental nature of the mainstream and (novel) state-building discourses. These discourses (and practices), instead of equipping the region with democracy, capitalism, and modernity, depatterned it and reversed its evolutionary social, political, and economic journey.

During the occupation of Iraq, the idea, as Thomas Friedman (2005) pointed out, was not state-building but “nation-creating,” arguing that the invasion proved that Iraqi state was already “busted and bankrupt” that “fell apart” like a “broken vase” and that rebuilding it resembled reconstructing, not a post-World War II but a “medieval, pre-modern Germany – the Germany of clans and feudal fiefs” (Friedman, 2005) – which was indeed a challenging task. In his op-ed in *The New York Times*, Friedman agrees with the pundits of mainstream traditions by arguing that troubled states must be built along Western liberal and democratic lines. He also ignores the importance of putting state-building in local social and cultural contexts hence depoliticizing the entire process and preventing the society to look for political solutions to its problems.

Going after a stable country like Iraq represented the birth of a new state-building or state-creation discourse that did not need a pre-existing foundation of *fragility* or *failure* for external intervention. This discourse reveals the dangers of securitizing political matters and at the same time constructs an invisible yet omnipresent enemy who needs to be fought, thus opening the possibilities for an endless war. It is the discourse that goes against the argument in the mainstream security studies, that status quo of the international political order guarantees the preservation of security.

Putting state-building of Afghanistan in the context of the book

The U.S.-led experience in Afghanistan after 2001 is a complex amalgamation of both discourses that stem from the understanding of a state as failed, fragile, or weak and from the conceptualization of destroying and rebuilding a modern state, or what I call a novel discourse of state-building. Some might argue that the Afghan state under the Taliban in the mid-1990s

until 2001 did not operate as liberal and democratic, so how can the U.S. state-building discourse there be equated with the novel discourse in action in other societies such as in Iraq? It is a valid question because the Taliban rule was undemocratic and oppressive. However, the U.S. state-building discourse completely rejected the idea of incorporating the pre-1990s social, political, and economic institutions and norms which were deep rooted in the society and had an enormous potential to become democratic and liberal.

In other words, the U.S. discourse ignored the fact that the Afghan state and society had evolved through various phases since the beginning of the 20th century, before being disfigured. The state organs had been functioning before the onset of the civil war, and above all, a centuries-old Afghan social and political code existed which could aid the rebuilding of a modern and democratic state.

Ergo, the U.S. state-building discourse in Afghanistan has two facets or dimensions. The first is the idea of understanding Afghanistan as a failed state that needs to be fixed, and second, in order to prevent Afghanistan from posing a threat to global peace and security, it requires to be a completely new modern, democratic (yet Islamic), and liberal capitalist state without having any significant connection and relation to its previously existing and functioning modern past. The second dimension, hence, adds the novelty to the U.S. state-building discourse.

State-building, in theory and practice, is an expanded enterprise that cannot be undertaken comprehensively here, which is, perhaps the biggest limitation of this book. In other terms, (international) state-building discourses in conflict-hit societies encompass a plethora of projects and practices ranging from peacebuilding and security-building to establishing rule of law, the (re)formation of the judicial structures, restoring the political space ensuring the participation of all, designing a well-suited governance apparatus (mostly democracy construction), forming and strengthening state institutions to enable it to provide social welfare (education, health included), to economic reconstruction, development, infrastructure building, and so on, thus forming a state-building concatenation in its entirety. Tackling the holistic state-building in Afghanistan not only constitutes an overarching endeavour but also leaves limited space for a theory-driven critical inquiry of the most important aspects of the U.S.-led experience in Afghanistan.

I do not wish to overshadow the WoT and security- and democracy-building discourses of Afghanistan by delving into other dimensions of the reconstruction of the country. I also do not intend to mean the breakdown of each part of the state-building based on their technicalities as is done in several aforementioned studies, because this book sees the discourses of international state-building as political and does not agree with the depoliticization of certain facets such as the institution and capacity-building or reviving economy, which are often described as areas of the experts, thus pushing

them away from the domains of the political. Equally, I do not endorse the IBL strategy and argue that in the process of state-building, introducing democratic values and democracy should go on side by side and simultaneously with the institution-building within and in accordance with the local social and political context of a country. While accepting the (re)construction of a state as a wholesome process, this book, however, only takes a portion – namely, the war, security-, democracy-, and economy-building – from the whole for the purpose of critical investigation.

First, it is indeed the discourse of war that is an inseparable part of the state-building discourse. A second valid argument for doing so is that Afghanistan, since 2001, has not been a post-conflict state as understood widely. From the perspective of the simplest and shortest definition of war, that is, the “use of lethal violence between two or more” (Eichler, 2017, p. 19) political groups, Afghanistan has been indeed in the state of perpetual war, exception, and emergency since 2001. That is why the most crucial aspect is to read, examine, observe, assess, and analyse the discourses of WoT and security- and democracy-building in Afghanistan. The third reason for picking up a certain part from the whole is that the over-repeated argument which the U.S. and its allies have put forth is this: defeating the terrorist groups, securing Afghanistan, forming its security apparatus, and endowing it with democracy would function together to serve the telos of stabilization, restoration of peace, and preventing the country from being a source of threat to the U.S. and the world. Hence, the term “state-building” used in this research work strictly signifies the WoT and security- and democracy-building discourses (and practices).

Outline

The **first chapter** of the book opens official discourses of the four U.S. presidents regarding the war and state-building in post-2001 Afghanistan. The first portion delineates president Bush’s discourse on WoT and security- and democracy-building in Afghanistan during his two terms in the White House. This section shows how Bush constructed a terrorism discourse and made it dominant. I argue that revisiting his discourse almost two decades after 9/11 is essential to offer alternative insights regarding the WoT in Afghanistan. The second segment of the chapter deals with the discourse of Barack Obama from the time he took office in 2009 until the end of his tenure in 2016. This section delves into how Obama strengthened and expanded the WoT discourse and in what ways advanced the state-building of Afghanistan. The next section provides a detailed overview of president Trump’s discourse regarding the war and state-building in Afghanistan, while the final part of the chapter discusses Biden’s discourse. I claim that the discourses of the four U.S. presidents – Bush, Obama, Trump, and

Biden – complement one another. While reading texts and examining the formation, consolidation, and domination of their discourses, I observed a peculiar unity and sameness among their discourses that I try to reveal with the help of the CDA in the chapter.

Drawing upon poststructuralist theoretical and philosophical ideas, the **second chapter** critically analyses the U.S. WoT and state-building discourses in post-2001 Afghanistan. The discursive process of identifying and framing al Qaeda and the Taliban as evil, barbarian, and anti-freedom is what this chapter sees as part of the depoliticization of the conflict and society, having serious consequences. The first section delineates the process of depoliticization through *evilization* before turning to the Foucauldian-inspired concept of the politics of confinement that I see as oppressive and illiberalizing.

Bush's discourse on WoT made the politics of confinement possible in Afghanistan through which spaces of confinement were established. This part, building upon Foucault's analysis of psychiatry and the emergence of asylum centres in Europe, claims that the interplay of power/knowledge nexus becomes increasingly visible when the dividing practices are strengthened with the foundation of scientific reason. It argues that as the medical knowledge operates as a new mode of social control in the confinement centres for the mad, in the same way the WoT discourse through wider depoliticization clears the path for the politics of confinement which is unilateral and subjugating and is a system of construction of the spaces of confinement where the opposing voices (if any left) are forcefully silenced. From here, the chapter proceeds to Obama's discourse and argues that it expanded the politics and spaces of confinement beyond Afghanistan's borders. Drone war in neighbouring Pakistan's tribal areas is a phenomenon that explains well the expansion of the spaces and politics of confinement during Obama's presidency. It shows the politics of confinement transcending the juridical and sovereign borders of states and regions as well as the boundaries of the airspace and waters. After a critical discussion on Obama's drone war, the chapter suggests that the politics of confinement and necropolitics go hand in hand in Afghanistan.

To explain the rise of necropower/necropolitics, I turn to Foucault's notions of biopower and biopolitics that are the epistemological source for the theorization of Mbembe's concept of necropower. I argue that the U.S. WoT and state-building discourses under three presidents exhibit characteristics of complete domination through various power technologies including necropower.

The third section of the last chapter identifies shortfalls, discrepancies, inconsistencies, and paradoxes of building democracy and economic development in Afghanistan and then elucidates four forms of the politics of death (necropolitics) within the country, arguing that necropower constructs a society where people breathe, eat, and walk but are socially dead. This

segment of the chapter also sheds light on the (re)construction of the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) and discusses how the state security apparatus became a tool or an agent of exercising necropower. I argue that the rationalist, problem-solving U.S. discourses (and practices) did not achieve the objective of resolving Afghanistan's issues but resulted in further solidifying existing illiberal circumstances.

The next section of the chapter reflects upon Trump's peace process and the signing of the agreement with the Taliban, and the final part of the chapter discusses Biden's discourse on the endgame in Afghanistan.

The **third chapter** argues that Orientalist arguments incorrectly identifying the Taliban *merely* as an *extremist religious* group need to be contested. Poststructuralist CDA is not possible without intertextuality, and to offer an alternative representation and reinterpretation of the discursively established, dominant forms and modes of social reality, it is substantially significant to comprehend and put in perspective the advent and evolution of political-religious thought in Afghanistan that culminated in the Taliban rule in 1996 and the subsequent *Talibanization* of Afghanistan. Talibanization, in the book, is seen and understood as a reverse state-building discourse and process that the last section of the chapter elucidates.

The **Epilogue** summarizes the findings of the book and offers concluding remarks.

Notes

- 1 The word Taliban is the Pashto version of *Talib* in Arabic. The root of the term Talib is *Talab*, which means *to seek* or *to demand* in Arabic. *Talib*, thus, is a noun, meaning *seeker*. In Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, and some Arab countries, *Talib-e Ilm* means *the male seeker of knowledge* or precisely a *student*. The word in Afghan and Pakistani religious schools/seminaries (or *madrassahs*) is often abbreviated as Talib. In other words, every male student at religious school is called Talib instead of Talib-e Ilm. The female student is formally called *Taliba-e-Ilm* and shortly *Taliba*. The plural for Talib and Taliba in Arabic is *Tulaba* and *Talibaat*, respectively. The plural for Talib in Pashto is *Taliban*. The term Taliban is repeatedly used incorrectly by the Western media, scholars, politicians, and international troops in Afghanistan. They use it as a singular when referring to Taliban both as an extremist group and as a single militant. Following the Pashto structure and meaning of the word, this book takes Taliban as plural and thus uses *are*, *were*, *them*, and so on instead of *is*, *was*, etc.
- 2 The group in the beginning was known as *Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant* (ISIL), which is also called *Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham* (ISIS). It formally changed the name to *Islamic State* (IS) after announcing its Caliphate (Khilafah or Khilafat in Arabic) in 2014 (Dabiq, 2014).
- 3 Islamic State in Khorasan (in Arabic: *ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi Khorasan*) is the regional militant wing of the IS for its so-called Central Asian province. Khorasan was the name of a region in ancient Afghanistan. The IS-K appeared in 2014 after Hafiz Saeed Khan, a former *Tebrik-e Taliban Pakistan* (TTP) – the Taliban Movement of Pakistan – commander, brought together some other

members of the TTP after parting ways with the main militant wing and pledging allegiance to the IS in Iraq and Syria. The IS-K is responsible for Afghanistan and Pakistan operations (for a detailed account, see: Giustozzi, 2018). This book uses IS as an acronym for the main Islamic State group and IS-K for its affiliate in the Central Asian region.

- 4 This includes all small- and large-scale attacks through IEDs, coordinated militant attacks, launching rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), and cross-border attacks from Pakistan.
- 5 Multiple annual reports of the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) reveal that Afghanistan is still one of the world's largest producers of opium which is smuggled through Karachi of Pakistan and Central Asian countries to Europe and North America. The report in 2013 said that during 2012 and 2013 the area on which poppy was grown increased by 35%.
- 6 I am using Douglass C. North's interpretation of the word *institution* here, which means both formal and informal laws of the country. The informal laws come from culture; for details, see North (1990).
- 7 Quetta is the capital of southwestern Balochistan province in Pakistan. The word Shura in Arabic means council. Mulla (widely and erroneously wrote as *Mullah*) Mohammad Omar, the first Taliban Supreme Leader, alongside other important Taliban leaders were based in Quetta where they had formed a council called the Quetta Shura. Two other important Taliban councils, Peshawar Shura (the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Miramshah Shura (capital of North Waziristan district), exist in northwest Pakistan.
- 8 Parts of this section have been published in the peer-reviewed journal *Insight Tukey*, see Sahill (2019).
- 9 Inverted commas or quotation marks (“”) and other symbols such as plus (+) or minus (–) are used to refine search results on websites and search engines.
- 10 Emphasis original.
- 11 Emphases original.
- 12 Caliphate (or Khilafah or Khilafat in Arabic) is a type of a large state or a union of countries (or geographical entity) ruled by a Caliph (or Khalifa) in accordance with the Islamic law. The first Caliphate was established after the death of Muhammad by Abu Bakr Siddique in the 7th century. The last Muslim Caliphate was the Ottoman Empire that fell during the First World War.

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