

The Failure of the Afghan National Army: The Haqqani Network Factor

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Abstract

This research study focuses on the impact of the Haqqani Network on the failure of the Afghan National Army. Mixed research methods were used in conducting this research study, including structured questionnaire and open-ended questions. Since the target population of this research study was Afghan citizens, therefore, 190 samples were collected, including 100 from Jalalabad and 90 from Peshawar. Multinomial logistic regression was used to identify the impact of the Haqqani Network on the failure of the Afghan National Army (ANA). While comparing the two factors, the Haqqani Network strength in terms of strong organization was 4.7 times higher than the ANA weakness in terms of internal fragmentation. The wald-statistics for the Haqqani Network strength was 3.942 while the p-value was .047 which meant that at $\alpha = .05$; we failed to accept the null hypothesis on the ground that the Haqqani Network had a significant impact on the ANA failure. Of 190 samples, 57.4% revealed that strong organization of the Haqqani Network was an exceptional quality while 34.7% were of the view that diversified sources of revenue was the real strength of the Haqqani Network. Moreover, a long history of more than four decades of constant engagement in fight and a clear sense of direction made the Haqqani Network an undefeated group of the Taliban. Their grouping and regrouping strategy was effective in maintaining strong organization in the Haqqani Network. On the other hand, internal fragmentation and

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lack of trust in the Afghan government were the main weaknesses of the ANA that were exploited by the Haqqani Network.

Keywords: the Afghan War, Afghan National Army, Haqqani Network.

Introduction

The geopolitical and strategic location of Afghanistan has always been an attraction to the regional and international great powers (Marvin, 2006). It has been a junction to Central Asia, Middle East, and South Asia. It shares its borders with Pakistan, Iran, the Central Asian states, and China. Among the regional states, the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan connects Eastern and Southern parts of Afghanistan and the Northwestern and Southwestern parts of Pakistan. This border is about 2611 km long that connects 11 out of 34 provinces of Afghanistan and 02 provinces of Pakistan (Ahmad, 2003; Imran et al., 2020). All these provinces on both sides are dominated by Pashtuns. In Afghanistan, Pashtuns consist of 42 percent of the total population while in Pakistan, Pashtuns comprise more than 15 percent of the total population. In Afghanistan, Pashtuns are the largest aboriginals, totaling 12.5 million, but in Pakistan they are the second largest group comprising 28 million (Imran et al., 2020; Marvin, 2006). Belief, ethnicity, and history are the strong binding forces among the Pashtuns. Familial relationship and historical tribal bonds still influence their daily activities. Majority of the Pashtuns from Afghanistan are associated with religious institutions of Pakistan (Borchgrevink and Harpvekin, 2010). The religious scholars of Pakistan have a strong influence on the people of Afghanistan, and their scholarship is respected in Afghanistan. One main reason that explains the inclination of Afghans to religious scholars of Pakistan is their command on Arabic and Persian alongside Pashto language. Since the Islamic scriptures are written and reviewed either in Arabic or in Persian, therefore, these two languages, in addition to Pashto, play a significant role in binding them together. Common ancestry, belief, ethnicity,

language, and culture trespass every political and social boundary. Similarly, the collective memories of the historical events of wars and warlords constantly influence the behavior of the common Pashtuns on both sides. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, majority of the Taliban were Pashtuns who protected Afghanistan at the cost of their lives. Their strong cooperation in the fight against the Soviets added more to their strength, trust building, and organization. There are other similar factors, culturally inherent in Pashtuns of both sides that give birth to deep insider/outsider reflexivity. However, belief, ethnicity, and history reign supreme in binding them together. These three dynamics must be considered before discussing in detail the failure of the Afghan National Army.

Despite the fact that Afghan National Army was trained and equipped with sophisticated weapons by the most skilled military force of the Western world, they were quite astonishingly brought to their knees within a few weeks by the Taliban. This collapse did not add as much strength to the Taliban as it caused damage to the political and moral credibility of the Western forces (Herd, 2021). It exposed the deterrence capabilities of the NATO forces and their submission to unilateral decisions by the U.S. The assumption that the U.S. always defends the strategic interests of the allies was redefined with a new notion that the U.S. may abandon allies. Whether it was a strategic failure of the U.S. and NATO forces or a lack of strong leadership among the Afghan National Army can be debated; however, what is certain is that Afghanistan proved to be an exception to the world where belief and ethnicity reigned supreme, and the forces of modernity such as democracy, industrialization, bureaucratization, and urbanization did not exist (Dorrnsoro, 2009; Kim, 2011). A long history of group conflicts devastated this country. Huge insecurity, uncertainty, chaos, and confusion gave advantage to the insurgents who compelled foreign forces to leave Afghanistan. There are many reasons that may explain the failure of ANA, however, the real cause that kept the Taliban organized with a constant regaining of strength, expansive

intelligence, strong leadership, and a clear sense of direction was the Haqqani Network. The foundation of the Haqqani Network has a long history in Afghanistan; indeed, this network was underestimated by the U.S. and NATO forces. This research study, therefore, aims to highlight the actual reason for the foundation of the Haqqani Network in Afghanistan, its inherent capabilities, and the real binding force behind them. But before going into the details of the history of the Haqqani Network, it is necessary to understand the historical background of the conflict.

Historical Background

Afghanistan previously signed many agreements with the British India that were all renounced when the partition plan was revealed on June 3, 1947 (Barfield, 2007). During a meeting between Afghan Prime Minister and British Secretary of Foreign Affairs on July 31, 1947, Shah Mahmud Khan deliberately cancelled all previous agreements that were reached between India and Afghanistan in respect of Indo-Afghan border. Among these agreements, the Durand line agreement of 1893, later amended in 1905 and 1919 were highly significant. The final amendment in Durand Line agreement was signed in 1921. The successive agreements/treaties, especially the Peace Treaty signed in 1919 and the Treaty of Kabul signed in 1921 were basically carried out to resolve this territorial dispute and remove the resentment shown by Afghanistan on the previous Durand line agreements (Yousafzai and Yaqubi, 2017; Biswas, 2013). Under this agreement a physical line was drawn between Afghanistan and British India stretching from the North to the South covering almost 2600-kilometer distance. Before the Durand line agreement, the border areas particularly federally administered tribal areas and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were controlled and dominated by tribal leaders under tribal codes of conduct.

When the partition plan was announced, Afghanistan resolutely cancelled all previous agreements/treaties on the ground that all those treaties were signed with British India, not Pakistan. Since

Pakistan was a new state and British India ceased to exist, therefore, all previous agreements stood cancelled. In response to this act, Pakistan strengthened its position and deployed its military on the Northwestern border and carried out an air strike in the border villages in Afghanistan. This act of Pakistan provoked King Zahir Shah and he asked for the return of Afghanistan's territory. On July 26, 1949, a meeting of the Afghan Grand Assembly (Loya Jirga) was called in which majority voted for the cancellation of previous agreements especially the Durand Line Agreement. The Grand Assembly also voted for the creation of Greater Pashtunistan, an independent state covering the tribal areas of the Northwestern border of Pakistan, parts of Balochistan, and Afghanistan. This official announcement of declaring Durand Line Agreement null and void and creating an independent Pashtunistan threatened the existence of Pakistan. The same stance was also adopted and emphasized by Muhammad Daoud Khan, after overthrowing his cousin King Zahir Shah. The new president of Afghanistan, Muhammad Daoud Khan was a staunch supporter of Greater Pashtunistan and declared Durand Line null and void and a non-negotiable issue. Here two main issues pertinent to the basic conflict are briefly discussed in light of Pak-Afghan bilateral relationship.

Cancellation of Durand Line Agreement

The Durand Line had been a strong contributing factor in escalating the tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Though Afghanistan cancelled all previous agreements that had taken place with British India but Pakistan rejected the decision of cancelling the Durand Line agreement on the ground that it was a unilateral decision, and this agreement would have been dealt under the succession of states convention. The Vienna convention on the succession of states Article 11 of VCSSRT clearly stated that all border agreements and rights and obligations are not affected by succession. Similarly, the International Court of Justice dealt such issues under the principle of *Uti Possidetis Juris*, which meant that

all rights and obligations concerning international border agreements passed on to the successors (UNTS, 2013). Since Pakistan was a rightful successor of British India, therefore, all previous agreements signed between Afghanistan and British India were passed on to Pakistan and remained intact. Moreover, the Indian Independence Act of 1947 clearly defined that all previous border agreements comprising the dominion of the successors would be passed onto them. However, Afghanistan cancelled all previous agreements/treaties with British India before the partition, therefore, the question of succession was redundant. It was also claimed by Afghanistan that the Durand Line agreement was not a physical boundary between British India and Afghanistan, but it was only the specification of the zone of influence between the two states. The areas on the Durand Line were neither controlled by the British India nor by Afghanistan, and that the aim of the Durand Line was to restrict Afghanistan's political influence. Similarly, the foreign secretary of British India argued that Durand Line agreement was to restrict spheres of influence between Afghanistan and British India and create a strong buffer. Though Pakistan assumed the line as ratified and recognized by Afghanistan in the treaties of 1919 and 1921, however, the subsequent treaties of 1919 and 1921 were foreshadowed by the original Durand Line agreement of 1893 (Imrana Begum, 2015; Biswas, 2013; Yousafzai and Yaqubi, 2017; Barfield, 2007; Hudson, 2001).

According to Biswas (2013), the treaty of 1919 was signed between the two states, however, this treaty never mentioned or dealt with the question of succession or permanent binding. It was mentioned that the binding agreement was for three years unless terminated by either of the contracting parties with twelve months notification. The power of the contracting parties to terminate the agreement clearly abolished the question of unilateral decision. It meant that the decision of the Prime Minister of Afghanistan to nullify the Durand Line agreement in July 1947, though unilateral, was a rightful decision. This stance of Afghanistan to cancel all

previous agreements/treaties signed with the British India, highly fueled the tension between the two states.

The Creation of Independent Pashtunistan

There were many factors that fueled the movement for the creation of an Independent Pashtunistan.¹ Though it was primarily a slogan, the demand gained momentum with the rising mistrust between the two states. It was a threat to the existence of Pakistan when it was unanimously agreed upon by the members of the Grand Assembly of Afghanistan on July 26, 1949. It was alarming for Pakistan because Pashtuns on both sides had strong ethnic and religious ties. Many Pashtun families of the tribal areas were tied in hereditary relationships in Afghanistan. Even Pashtun elders of the tribal areas of Pakistan were the honorary members of the grand assembly of Afghanistan. They used to settle disputes among people in Afghanistan. When Afghanistan proclaimed reincorporation of the territories demarcated through Durand Agreement, it was welcomed by them collectively. Firstly, they were highly tilted towards Afghanistan because of their historical association with the country, previously part of the Durrani Empire. Secondly, the Pashtuns of both sides were highly influenced by the charismatic personality and leadership of Bacha Khan, the sole propagator of non-violence. Bacha Khan was a prominent leader of the Pashtuns who was against the partition of British India. In 1935 general election, majority of the Pashtuns in the Northwest voted against Muslim League, and the election was won by the Indian Congress Party. It was due to the strong association of Bacha Khan with Congress and his opposition to the partition of British India. In addition, Afghanistan, highly relied on the Pashtun belt for its trade with India. Therefore, Afghanistan wanted reincorporation of the land divided through Durand Agreement. This announcement was made by Afghanistan when the partition plan was revealed, but the British Empire of India left this matter to the will of the successor state. This issue was left unresolved, and it negatively impacted the bilateral relationship of

the two states. Though Afghanistan cancelled the Durand Line agreement and called for the creation of Independent Pashtunistan, it was seen as a threat by Pakistan, which contributed to the foundation of the Haqqani Network in Afghanistan.

The Foundation of the Haqqani Network in Afghanistan

Afghanistan's firm denial of Durand Line and proclamation of territorial reincorporation to build an Independent Pashtunistan was a constant threat to the territorial sovereignty of Pakistan though this proclamation did not receive international acceptance. Pakistan had come to learn lessons from the bitter experience of the secession of East Pakistan in 1971, therefore, it tried to convince the procommunist government of Afghanistan to endorse the Durand Line Agreement; however, to no avail. Consequently, Pakistan adopted the strategy of destabilizing Afghanistan by identifying some hardline Muslims with anti-state sentiments and organizing them in small groups.

The first Islamic movement was started in Afghanistan in the 1950s with some Islamic intellectuals qualified from Egyptian Universities. Popular among them were Ghulam Muhammad Niazi, Sibghatullah Mujaddedi, and Burhanuddin Rabbani. These intellectuals were Afghans, but they were educated in Arab universities. This movement was non-violent, and its objective was to promote Political Islamⁱⁱ in Afghanistan and hinder the rapid spread of the socialist ideology promoted by Marxist intellectuals. Babrak Karmal (Sultan Hussain), Noor Muhammad Taraki, and Mir Akbar Khyber were some of the prominent Marxists who were also the founders of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. They were also the supporters of the liberal democratic reforms introduced in Afghanistan. The initial controversy between Muslim intellectuals and the socialist thinkers was limited to public debate and discussion only; however, later it resulted in the foundation of the Muslim Youth Organization (MYO) in 1969. Many young members joined this organization in which Gulbuddin Hekmatyar,

Ahmad Shah Masoud, and Habib Rahman Wahdatyar were also included.

This organization gained momentum with the passage of time but was disliked by many pro-communist politicians. When Muhammad Daoud Khan overthrew King Zahir Shah in mid-1970s, he started a crackdown against the MYO. Muhammad Daoud Khan's government was a pro-communist government; therefore, his ascendancy was resented by the MYO. Muhammad Daoud Khan arrested many members of the MYO and treated them harshly, a majority of whom migrated to Pakistan. This was an opportunity for Pakistan to avenge Afghanistan because Muhammad Daoud Khan declared Durand Line a non-negotiable issue and staunchly supported the creation of an Independent Pashtunistan. When majority of the members of MYO were forced to leave Afghanistan, they came into direct contact with the government of Pakistan that started training these people against Muhammad Daoud Khan while also supporting People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan to tackle Muhammad Daoud Khan's government. From 1973 to 1977, Pakistan trained about 5000 militants and deployed them in Afghanistan against Muhammad Daoud Khan (Sharifi, 2016). One of them was Jalaluddin, who also resented the ascendancy of Muhammad Daoud Khan.

Jalaluddin was born in Paktia and received his early education from a local Madrassah in Paktia. He then travelled to Pakistan and got admission in Dar-ul-Ulum Haqqania in Akora Khattak. After graduating from Dar-ul-Ulum Haqqania, he won the title of "Jalaluddin Haqqani". He was a prominent leader of the Haqqani Network in Afghanistan. Haqqani Network consisted of all those members who belonged to Afghanistan but had graduated from the same Madrassah and formed a network in Afghanistan. Though Jalaluddin Haqqani was a graduate of Dar-ul-Ulum Haqqania, he was one of those people who were against the communist influence in Afghanistan. Along with Jalaluddin Haqqani there were other

notorious leaders such as Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, Younis Khalis, Ahmad Shah Masoud, and Burhanuddin Rabbani who were also anticommunist. Majority of them were previously members of the MYO. They were pinpointed and trained by the military intelligence of Pakistan to tackle Daoud Khan's government in Afghanistan whose plans for an Independent Pashtunistan constantly haunted Pakistan.

In the second half of the 1970s, different anticommunist movements started in Afghanistan. Basically, these movements were anti-Daoud but to attract the attention of the common people they were represented as anti-communist. One of these movements was Hizb-i Islami that got the patronage of Pakistan. This movement was headed by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar along with Younis Khalis, Rabbani, and Jalaluddin Haqqani. In the subsequent years, this movement was split into Hizb-i Islami Khalis and Hizb-i Islami Hikmatyar groups. Jalaluddin Haqqani became the sole commander of Hizb-i Islami Khalis and was assigned the command of the Southeast region in Afghanistan. Haqqani was successful in gaining support of the adjacent tribes and extended his command to greater Paktia in Afghanistan. These anti-communist movements soon became popular in Afghanistan. In April 1978, People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan was successful in dethroning Daoud Khan which ignited a political crisis in Afghanistan. Since Daoud Khan's government was a pro-communist government, his assassination was followed by the Soviet invasion in December 1978.

Since the Soviet war was a result of the assassination of Daud Khan, all previous anti-Daoud movements became anti-Soviet movements. These groups were headed by Haqqani, Ahmad Shah Masoud, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, and Younis Khalis. Huge insurgency was started in Afghanistan but behind this insurgency was the endless bitterness of Pakistan caused by Afghanistan's firm stance on territorial reincorporation and the creation of an Independent Pashtunistan.

Haqqani's impetus in Afghanistan was very rapid and he controlled many provinces including Greater Paktia. A religious scholar and a trained warrior, he was fluent in Arabic, Persian, and Pashto. Trained by the Pakistan's military intelligence in North Waziristan, he was successful in creating a greater network of Mujahideen including Afghans, Pakistanis, and Arabs. In the war against the Soviets, he connected Greater Paktia through Khost Province with North and South Waziristan. In this belt many training grounds were established for Mujahideen. Besides Pakistan, he also received financial and logistic support from the Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia during the pilgrimage season. Direct financial support was received from the Gulf States that had established fundraising offices while indirect support, including weapons and finances were received through ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) from the U.S. ISI was also responsible for providing training to Mujahideen who came either from the Gulf States or from Pakistan. The power of the Haqqani Network constantly grew and gradually almost every single group of Mujahideen was under the influence of Jalaluddin Haqqani.

During the war against the Soviets, Haqqani's cunningness was incredible in the formation of a strong network with the Taliban from the Arab world and Pakistan. Almost every group of the Taliban, including the Mujahideen (the common fighters), Al-Qaida, and TTP (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan) relied on the Haqqani Network during the fight against the Soviets as well as the U.S. They formed a unified front during the war against the Soviets while in the war against the U.S. and the NATO forces, Haqqani Network was disguised. However, every single attack carried out by the Taliban was planned and backed by the Haqqani Network. During the fight against the Soviets, the Haqqani Network was steered by two main councils, the Quetta Shura and the Miramshah Shura. These councils were under direct influence of the ISI. They consisted of members from Haqqani Network, TTP, and the Mujahideen leaders. The duty of the councils was to oversee power delegation, territorial annexation, re-distribution

and negotiation/resolution of conflicts. The real strength of the Haqqani Network was vested in its capability in keeping the Taliban organized and motivated.

Failure of the Afghan National Army

There were many factors responsible for the failure of the Afghan National Army. Some of these constantly eroded its strength and ultimately resulted in its immediate collapse. The top leadership of the ANA was deeply divided by their self-seeking politics (Cordesman, 2021). Since majority of the top military leaders were previously warlords, they were highly self-centered. They did not serve for the collective benefits of the state; rather they developed personal relationships with other warlords for strengthening and protecting their territories, families, and clans. The police chief of the Southern Afghanistan, General Khan Muhammad, the governor of Balkh province, general Atta Muhammad, and the police chief of Eastern Nangahar, general Hazrat Ali were previously warlords (Herd, 2004). They used to rule their territories and did not accept foreign intrusion. Therefore, they kept recruiting their supporters in the Army to protect their personal interests instead of those of the state. From top to bottom, they were engaged in illegal activities of collecting bribe and extracting favors from the people. It was unclear how much of the taxes and duties from border crossing went to the exchequer of the state. There was no proper accounting mechanism at district or provincial levels. Rent seeking behavior among the soldiers and their top leadership divided them into groups associated with and protected by top leadership.

Since the top leadership of the ANA was involved in the protection of their interests, they were highly resistant to political activism and change (Herd, 2021). The governor of Herat, Ismail Khan, did not tolerate any political activism, which resulted in a decline in the 2005 general election turnout. The same intolerance was also shown by other governors but none of them was removed or punished. President Karzai's entire focus was to keep them happy by offering them key positions. There was no merit for promoting

an individual to a high rank in the army. No previous record of qualification, experience, conduct, service, or social activism was checked. Majority of them were illiterate and immature in their dealings with the soldiers. They usually gave rice and wheat as incentives to their soldiers, the way landlords used to distribute rice and wheat among poor tenants. There was no policy of allowances or other benefits for the families of soldiers who died during service. These circumstances resulted in lack of trust in the Kabul government.

There were 22000 soldiers in the ANA who were highly trained. They were the ANA commandos and the real force that backed all operations carried out by the army. They never wanted to surrender; however, the top leadership of the army was highly corrupt, which impacted their morale as well. Secondly, the government especially the ministry of defense was reluctant in fighting against the Taliban. The Ashraf Ghani government was comparatively weak that impacted the political morale of the entire country. Especially the government's decision of non-retaliation broke the momentum in the army, and soon rumors of surrendering plagued the country.

The ANA dispersed when some of their top leadership surrendered and fled which disheartened the soldiers who saw their colonels surrendering before the Taliban. On the other hand, the Taliban were very organized. They brutally killed soldiers who resisted and forgave those who surrendered. About 60000 soldiers lost their lives and two-third of them were killed in the last 6 years of the Taliban's re-emergence into power. The fear factor among the army was very high; soldiers felt insecure whose families were targeted by the Taliban. Since the focus of this research study is more on the Haqqani factor in the failure of the ANA, therefore, in the subsequent paragraphs the strengths of the Haqqani Network are discussed in comparison to the weaknesses of the ANA.

Research Methodology

This research study used mixed methods in data collection and analysis as this approach was highly compatible to the research study. Previously, it was thought by many researchers that quantitative and qualitative research methods were different epistemological paradigms, but they now agreed upon the combining of the two for better and more authentic epistemological output (Levy, 2008; Brady and Collier, 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 2008; Bennett and Elan, 2006). Studying conflicting groups or a war-torn country required rigorous research that justified each claim. Therefore, data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Questionnaire with close-ended questions were considered appropriate in extracting specific information about the problem (Barakat, et al., 2002; Weinstein, 2007; Abbas and Teddlie, 2003) while open ended questions were deemed effective in retrieving in-depth information on the problem (Creswell, 2003; Bryman, 2008; Gilbert, 2008; Kothari, 2008). In the questionnaire, responses were artificially controlled while in the interviews the responses were unleashed to access ground realities.

A total of 190 questionnaires were completed by the respondents and two focus group discussions were held. Each focus group consisted of 10 respondents. The data was collected from the common citizens of Afghanistan. Of 190 samples, 100 were collected from the Southeast of Afghanistan while 90 samples were collected from Peshawar. In Peshawar, the data was collected from Afghans living in Peshawar or engaged in any kind of business in Peshawar. In Afghanistan, the data was collected from Jalalabad only. Out of the 190 samples, only 30 respondents were posed open-ended questions. The following table shows details of samples collected from Peshawar and Jalalabad.

Table-1.1, shows details of samples selected for this research study

Location	Samples	Number of Samples	Total Number of Samples
Jalalabad	Students	60	100
	Teachers	20	
	Farmers /Traders	20	
Peshawar	Traders	40	90
	Truck Drivers	20	
	Shopkeepers	30	
Total	-----	190	190

In Jalalabad, the data was collected from Jalalabad University, mainly students of the history department. Of 100 samples, 60 were students while 20 were teachers. Among other samples, 20 farmers/traders were selected. In Afghanistan, data was collected through social networks while in Peshawar, samples were randomly selected. In Peshawar, of 90 samples, 40 were traders, 20 truck drivers, and 30 shopkeepers. The two FGDs were conducted in Peshawar. For statistical analysis, multinomial logistic regression was used to identify the impact of the Haqqani Network on the ANA.

Hypothesis

H₀ : The Haqqani Network had no significant impact on the ANA failure

H₁ : The Haqqani Network had a significant impact on the ANA failure

Results and Discussion

This research study has identified many strengths of the Haqqani Network that made it more than a common militant group as per the perception of the U.S. and the NATO forces. The ground realities were different from the media representation. Though it seemed that the Taliban were divided into different groups with different leadership, they were nevertheless highly organized in their command and control. One main factor that held the Taliban organized was the clear direction of the Haqqani Network and their firm commitment to a unified cause—the cause of establishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The following table (table-1.2) shows details of the Haqqani Network strength:

Table-1.2, shows Haqqani Network strength

		HN Strength	
		Frequen cy	Percent
Valid	Strong Organization	109	57.4
	Warfare Tactics	3	1.6
	Strong Intelligence	12	6.3
	Diversified Sources of Revenue	66	34.7
	Total	190	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Of 190 samples, 57% revealed that strong organization was the main factor that made the Haqqani Network an exceptional group of the Taliban. Strong organization in the Haqqani Network was due to the strong allegiance of the members to the ideology of the group that was purely belief centered. Behind every action of the Haqqani Network was the motivation for the establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Since they considered their cause purely righteous, they strongly believed that Afghanistan would eventually be released from the clutches of the so-called heathens. Their strength was group cohesion—a trait that was missing

among other groups and that made the Haqqani Network an undefeated group of the Taliban. The second reason that explained strong organization in the Haqqani Network was more than forty years of teamwork. Since the foundation of the Haqqani Network in Afghanistan dated back to 1973 before the Soviet raid of Afghanistan, this period of over four decades of continued fighting gave them experience and strength. They remained unfragmented and every member obeyed the instructions of the Ameer (leader). Moreover, both the councils, the Quetta Shura and the Miramshah Shura, disallowed separatist sentiments among the fighters. Each dispute was immediately resolved by the two councils, and the dispute settlement mechanism was purely sharia based (Islamic). Whether the dispute was related to subordination and over-ordination, territorial distribution and re-distribution, or power distribution, all were resolved by the two councils. This strong organization in the Haqqani Network with a long history of teamwork and firm motivation was an unmatched quality.

Similarly, the grouping and re-grouping strategy of the Haqqani Network was quite unique. The Haqqani Network members secretly monitored every activity of the common Taliban group members. The Haqqani Network used to immediately remove, replace, or even kill their own commanders when they did not comply with the commands of the main councils or detracted from their main objectives. The Haqqani Network was very skillful in regrouping or the selection of new commanders. The Taliban lost many popular commanders such as Mullah Berader, Mullah Dadullah, and Mullah Akhtar Usmani one after the other, but this did not cause any fragmentation in the group. The Haqqani Network strategy was to regroup whenever they faced any challenge. Their strategy of temporary withdrawal and reorganizing constantly maintained their strong resilience. Their strategy of temporary setbacks and regrouping provided them an opportunity to think, regroup, and react. This think-regroup-react strategy of the Taliban protected them from a huge loss of lives. On the other hand, the ANA and the IC (International Coalition)

strategy was to target and supply troops until the area is cleared. The ANA and IC forces had no strategy for setbacks, which often resulted in serious damage including loss of human lives.

Unlike Iraq, there was no leadership struggle or rivalry among the Taliban in Afghanistan. Regardless of the leader, they thought it their duty to comply with the directives of the Ameer (commander) and stay firm for the righteous cause of establishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Although Jalaluddin Haqqani controlled greater Paktia and absorbed tribal allegiance beyond the Southeast, he also paid homage to Mullah Omer and accepted his commandership. When Jalaluddin Haqqani was succeeded by his son Sirajuddin Haqqani, he strictly followed in his father's footprints. On the death of Mullah Omer, there were some skirmishes among the Taliban groups regarding the new Ameer, but Sirajuddin was eventually successful in paving the way for Mullah Mansoor. The Haqqani Network maintained a soft corner for all groups and never allowed any space for fragmentation. This professional adaptability of the Haqqani Network members proved it an unmatched group of the Taliban that was highly organized while internal conflicts among the ANA were quite usual that constantly contributed to their disintegration and eventual failure. Of 190 samples, 42% revealed that the ANA was internally fragmented. On the other hand, the Haqqani Network was highly organized, and this strength was an exceptional quality. While comparing the two contributing factors, the strength of the Haqqani Network was 4.7 times higher than internal fragmentation in the ANA, as given in table-1.5.

Table-1.3, shows contributing factors of ANA failure

		ANA Failure	
		Frequenc y	Percent
Valid	Lack of trust in the Afghan Government	82	43.2
	Internal corruption	21	11.1
	Internal fragmentation	80	42.1
	Fear factor of the Taliban	7	3.7

Total	190	100.0
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Source: Primary Data

Of 190 samples, 34.7% revealed that diversified sources of revenue were an exceptional strength of the Haqqani Network. The HN's long history in Afghanistan and their constant engagement in fighting provided opportunities for recruitment and revenue generation. In the initial stages, the Haqqani Network mainly relied on opium production and trade. In 2003, Afghanistan's contribution to total world opium supply was more than 75% and the estimated value of this production was US \$35 billion (Herd, 2004). Thousands of farmers produced opium and paid part of their share to the Taliban, especially during the fight against the Soviets. During this period, Jalaluddin Haqqani controlled greater Paktia and gradually extended his command to the rest of Afghanistan by attracting greater tribal allegiance, therefore, every single tribe financially supported Jalaluddin Haqqani for his stance for the holy cause. However, during the Taliban's rule, opium production declined to almost 5% in 2001, however, during this time the Soviet war had ended, and the entire country was controlled by the Taliban.

Previously, sources of revenue of the Haqqani Network were mostly internal but during the fight against the Soviets, these sources increased. The main financial sources at this time were Pakistan, the Arab world, Iran, and the US through the ISI. Jalaluddin Haqqani exploited every single source of revenue. He opened offices for collection of charity in the entire Arab world, and motivated people to contribute towards the righteous cause. He used to visit Saudi Arabia during the annual pilgrimage to attract more people and generate more revenue. During the fight against the Soviets, the Haqqani Network received income from the entire Arab world, African countries, and Pakistan. During the fight against the U.S. and NATO forces, the Haqqani Network received income from the same sources; however, while previously this support was open, this time it was not apparent.

On the other hand, the ANA completely relied on the U.S. for economic support. When the Trump administration announced the withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan in February 2020, this announcement unsettled the ANA, and their trust in the Afghan government eroded. Among the respondents, 43% were of the view that there was lack of trust on the part of the ANA in the Afghan government. Reasons that explained their mistrust in the Afghan government included withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO forces, an unending threat to their families, rent-seeking behavior of the military commanders, and peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban. Many commanders of the ANA were previously warlords. They recruited their men in the ANA and their primary and ultimate objectives were strengthening and protection of their tribes and families. These warlords had their groups in the ANA who collected rent for them. They were neither sincere nor had any trust in the government.

Crosstab

Count

		Previous Support					Total
		HN	CM	NA	Al-Qaida	ISK	
Taliban History	Yes	47	51	00	5	00	103
	No	28	11	20	10	18	87
Total		75	62	20	15	18	190

Table-1.4 People’s Previous Support for the Taliban

Source: Primary Data

In the above table (table-1.4), people’s support for the Taliban was associated with their history. The Haqqani Network was supported by people because it had a long history of fighting against the Soviets. The common mujahideens (CM) were also supported because of their previous history. The Northern Alliance (NA), Al-Qaida, and the Islamic State of Khurasan (ISK) did not have any support. Previously, there was no concept of ISK or Al-Qaida during the war against the Soviets while the Haqqani Network and

the CM had a four-decade long history of fighting in Afghanistan, which was one of the basic factors for people’s support. When a respondent declined to disclose the group they supported, they were asked about his previous preferences during the war against the Soviets. This data basically revealed previous preferences of the respondents.

The following table (table-1.5) shows results of the multinomial logistic regression. In comparison to lack of trust of the ANA in the Afghan government, the wald-statistic for the Haqqani Network strength is 2.065 while the p-value is .041, which means that at $\alpha = .05$; we failed to accept the null hypothesis on the ground that the Haqqani Network had a significant impact on the failure of the ANA. Similarly, in comparison to internal fragmentation of the ANA, the wald-statistic for the Haqqani Network strength is 3.942 while the p-value is .047, which means that at $\alpha = .05$; we failed to accept the null hypothesis on the ground that the Haqqani Network had a significant impact on the failure of the ANA. While comparing the two factors, the Haqqani Network strength in terms of strong organization was 4.7 times higher than the ANA weakness in terms of internal fragmentation.

Table-1.5 The Strength of the Haqqani Network and the Failure of the ANA

		Parameter Estimates					95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)		
		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
ANA Failure	lack of trust in AG	Intercept	2.037	.614	11.011	1	<.001		
	[HN strength=1]		1.654	.802	2.065	1	.041	2.718	.399 9.271

The Failure of the...

	[HN strength=5]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.	.	.
internal corruption	Intercept	.693	.707	.961	1	.327			
	[HN strength=1]	.629	.904	.484	1	.487	1.875	.319	11.021
	[HN strength=5]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.	.	.
internal fragmentation	Intercept	1.204	.658	3.345	1	.067			
	[HN strength=1]	1.658	.835	3.942	1	.047	5.250	1.021	26.984
	[HN strength=5]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.	.	.

- a. The reference category is the fear factor of Taliban.
 b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.
 Source: Primary Data

In addition, the direction of the ANA was not clear while the Haqqani Network had a clear direction. Their war strategy was based on three main areas. Firstly, they attacked the U.S., NATO, and the ANA troops and killed them whenever they found an opportunity. Secondly, they targeted those families who either supported the ANA or joined the ANA. Thirdly, they never missed an opportunity to take revenge from any individual tribe, family, or person who raised weapons against them. The Taliban never pardoned anyone: at times, it would take years for them to take revenge from a family or person, and this was the main factor that maintained a constant fear of the Taliban for the ANA. Besides, the revenge was taken publicly to make it an example for the rest of the people. Some revenge footages were electronically recorded and released by the Taliban to maintain a strong psychological impact on the ANA. When the American forces withdrew from Afghanistan, the Taliban diverted their focus towards those families that either supported the ANA, or whose family members were recruited by the ANA. One of the respondents explained:

“Two months ago about 300 men of the ANA were founded slaughtered in Herat where majority of them were among the disappeared men, and their parents were searching for their whereabouts.”

This assassination campaign compelled thousands of soldiers to flee Afghanistan and move to Central Asian States, Iran, and Pakistan. The Taliban never changed their strategy of stalking the streets of Afghanistan, which sustained a constant fear among the people. This had a strong psychological impact on the ANA who could not meet the expectation of defending their state.

Conclusion

In this research study, different factors were found that resulted in the failure of the ANA; however, the dominant among them was the existence of the Haqqani Network which the US and the NATO forces could not dismantle despite two decades of war against the Taliban. Strong organization based on their grouping and regrouping strategies made the Haqqani Network an undefeated group of the Taliban. Their foundation in Afghanistan dated back to 1973; four decades of engagement in war equipped them with warfare tactics, multiplied their sources of revenue, attracted tribal allegiance and support; and increased recruitment. During their fight against the Soviets, they formed a unified front while during their fight against the US and the NATO forces, they were disguised. All major attacks, including suicide attacks were planned and carried out by the Haqqani Network against the US and the NATO forces in Kabul. They had a clear direction while carrying out attacks, settling disputes, or negotiating conflicts. They even reached a settlement with the Canadian forces in Kandahar, the German forces in the North, and the French forces in the South, as revealed by some respondents in the open-ended questions. This deal was a quid-pro-quo settlement. They never targeted them unless they went out for operations beyond the specified areas against the Taliban. Similarly, their impact on the ANA was significant. They knew the weaknesses of the ANA which they kept exploiting. The ANA was completely dependent on the US for financial support. They had little trust in the Afghan government. The trust was completely eroded when a peace deal was made between the US and the Taliban. They felt insecure

because the Taliban continuously targeted their families. In addition, they were internally fragmented and divided into different groups, working for their commanders. Their allegiance was to their commanders who were previously warlords and guaranteed them protection. These two factors in comparison to a strong organization and diversified sources of revenue of the Haqqani Network highly to the failure of the ANA.

It is a fact that the Haqqani Network was founded by Jalaluddin Haqqani in Afghanistan, and he was trained by the ISI in Pakistan. But every member of the Haqqani Network is not associated with or a graduate of the Haqqani Madrassah. Moreover, the main objective of founding this group in Afghanistan was to weaken the sentiments for the Greater Pashtunistan that was a constant threat to the territorial sovereignty of Pakistan. Muhammad Daoud Khan was a procommunist leader and a staunch supporter of the Greater Pashtunistan. The main ignition point was his declaration of the Durand Line a non-negotiable issue. The situation became doubly precarious when the Soviet intruded into Afghanistan. However, the Pakistan army and its agencies were capable of maintaining their territorial sovereignty despite a constant threat of more than four decades of war on the Western Border that resulted in huge collateral damage. Currently, there are no grievances or redressal councils as were previously operative in the name of Quetta Shura and Miramshah Shura; nor are there any training camps as they were during the Soviet war. However, the strategy of Pakistani intelligence agencies is defense centered, which will never change unless Afghanistan ratifies the historical Durand Line and makes sincere efforts to establish a politically stable government. Ratification of the historical Durand Line under the principle of *Uti Possidit Juris* of International Court of Justice would be the primary measure of bilateral trust building between the two states. Because peace in Afghanistan is associated with constant efforts to settle disputes through negotiation/political dialogue, Pakistan will continue to have a major stake in this process.

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ⁱ A movement for the creation of an independent area for ethnic Pashtuns including the Northwestern areas of Pakistan and the Southeastern areas of Afghanistan.

ⁱⁱ Politically contaminated ideology projected in Afghanistan to tackle the Socialist thinkers and contain their momentum rather to establish the Islamic Laws or Islamic State.