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Journal of Political Studies

Vol. 31, No.2, July–December, Winter 2024, pp. 35–47

Hierarchies of Power and Prejudice; A Social Dominance Theory Analysis of the Subjugation of Hazara Community by the Taliban

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ABSTRACT

This research provides an in-depth analysis of the Taliban's subjugation of the Hazara community in light of the Social Dominance Theory. The literature present on the prosecution is widely divided into binary opposite beliefs. One group claims the reason behind the subjugation to be geo-political factors. In contrast, the other group claims that the intersectionality of the Hazara community is the driving force behind the discrimination against them. This research adopts a unique approach through its claims made in the light of the Social Dominance Theory. This research claims that the subjugation of the Hazara community is the result of Psychological and institutional discrimination, the legitimization of myths, and the use of disproportionate force over many decades that led to the creation of current power dynamics in Afghanistan. The research specifically focuses on the Taliban's subjugation of the Hazara community while carefully analyzing the factors mentioned above. In conclusion, the study states that the subjugation of the Hazara community is the result of multi-dimensional factors joining hands to result in the contemporary status quo of Afghanistan.

Received:
November 14,
2024

Revised:
November 30,
2024 &
December 07,
2024

Published:
December 31,
2024

Keywords: *Social Dominance Theory, Hazaras, Afghanistan, Taliban, Power Dynamics, Historical Contextualization, Systematic Discrimination.*

1. Introduction

10th December 1948 marks the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration promised a better future for mankind. It promised the inherent right to life of every individual. Yet, 75 years later, millions of lives are lost to the animosity, antipathy and hostility between peoples, groups, and nations. The fate of humankind looks bleaker than it ever did. Like the millions of people around the globe waiting to be led to peace, is a not-so-small community of 4.5 million

individuals living amidst the tall forbidding mountains of Afghanistan, being systematically persecuted based on the intersectionality of their race, religion, and ethnicity. These individuals are known as the Hazara community. The Hazaras have been historically persecuted by a race that claims to be ethnically and religiously superior; The Pashtuns.

Afghanistan, in contrast to what its name suggests; “The nation of Afghans”, encapsulates various ethnic groups within it. The four major ethnic groups residing within Afghanistan are Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and Pashtuns. There is a famous saying of the Taliban that goes on like this, “*The Tajiks to Tajikistan, The Uzbeks to Uzbekistan, and the Hazaras to the Graveyard.*” Many scholars claim that the reason behind the historical persecution of the Hazara community is the geopolitics in the region, while others claim that their visibly different features and minority religion are what makes them the enemy of Pashtuns as they construe the Hazaras as ‘others’ to alienize and dehumanize them. Is it the geopolitics or the intersectionality of their religion and ethnicity? What makes the Taliban loathe the Hazaras to the extent that they are persecuting them? This research will investigate the answer to these questions by using the lens of Social Dominance Theory. For a thorough understanding of the multidimensional issue, I will specifically focus on analyzing the Taliban’s prosecution of the Hazara community and the implications it might have for the future of Afghanistan. The research is designed as an explanatory case study that follows the analytical technique of explanation building grounded in social dominance theory.

2. Social Dominance Theory

The theory that this research is going to adopt to explain the subjugation of the Hazara community by the Taliban is the Social Dominance Theory, by Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto. Despite human kind’s best efforts to eradicate social inequality, it seems like it is still a universal phenomenon. What is important to understand is that the degree at which this social inequality exists is variable throughout the globe.

Social Domination Theory claims that many types of groups based social forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, religious marginalization, and classicism are used as tools by a superior group to maintain their social, cultural, economic, political, and military superiority. Hence for this research, I claim that the reason behind the Taliban subjugation of the Hazara community is not their intersectionality but rather the continued effort by the ruling Pashtun elite of Afghanistan to maintain and consolidate their power. The social domination theory explains the trimorphic nature of group-based social hierarchy. It believes that within a society one can experience three types of groups being subjugated. The first group is the children, who are in subjugation to their elders. The second kind of subjugation can be experienced at variable levels in the form of Patriarchy, in such type of social hierarchy the males subjugate the women. Lastly, and most importantly is a very antagonistic type of group hierarchy and it is named as the “**Arbitrary-set system**”. (Sidanius et al., n.d.).

2.1 Arbitrary-Set System

In an arbitrary-set system the hierarchies established are the result of historically and contextually evolved power dynamics between socially constructed societies. As a result, different societies have variable level of social inequality. The social

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dominance theory postulates that oppression is the result of multidimensional factors. For example, to explain the Taliban's prosecution of the Hazara community it would claim that Psychological, socio-structural, ideological, and institutional forces all join hands to lead towards the oppression of that certain group (Sidanius et al. 2004).

The theory claims that oppression of any form is always systematic, and it's legitimized through common ideologies and viewpoints. A large number of people with a common perspective tend to support institutions that will in turn benefit them, which is a recurring behavior seen historically to date. In the case of the Taliban's persecution of the Hazara community, we can also witness the same case. Not only the ideology of Afghan Pashtuns is based on Ethno-religious centrism but that ideology is being reflected contemporarily in their social institutions. For example, the lack of representation of the Hazara community in the Taliban's central government.

2.2 Positive and Negative Social Values

Lastly, in the case of our research, it is important to understand another concept devised in the Social Dominance theory and it is the attribution of the Positive and Negative social values to dominant and oppressed groups respectively. Members of the dominant groups tend to enjoy positive social values that include, access to good food, housing, and educational and health care institutions. Along with the control of socio-political institutions such as the military, government, and various administrative structures. While the members of the subjugated group get the negative social values. These include unemployment, stigmatization, unlawful punishments, and condemnation (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin 2006).

Hence the society of interest for this research is Afghanistan. Within Afghanistan, the Taliban are the dominant group, while the Hazaras are the subordinate group. The type of hierarchy established is based on the Arbitrary-set system as given in the social dominance theory. The positive social values are attributed to the Taliban, while the negative social values are attributed to the Hazaras. I believe the oppression of the Hazaras is the result of the collective forces of Legitimizing myths, psychological prejudice, Institutional discrimination, and the use of disproportionate force, which are going to be explored in detail in the later sections of this research.

3. Historical Contextualization

To understand the oppression of the Hazara community by the Taliban, first, it is important to understand the historical context in which the certain power dynamic emerged, as claimed in the social dominance theory's postulation of the arbitrary-set system. Hence this section of the research will shed light on the Historical context of the subjugation.

There is a saying in Afghanistan that states, "When God created the donkey, The Hazaras cried". The Hazara community is one of the most marginalized and prosecuted minority groups. The Hazaras are believed to be the third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, after Pashtuns and Tajiks (Frantzell, n.d.). The word "Hazara" has different interpretations. The most prevailing interpretation claims that the word comes from the Persian word, 'Hazar', which means 'One Thousand'. However, no

consensus exists on what exactly 'One Thousand' classifies. Some say that it reflects the region's geographical history, i.e., the existence of one thousand rivers, mountains, and creeks in Hazarajat. Some claim that it refers to the historical political practice of the Hazaras to give away one thousand soldiers to the ruling government instead of taxes. While the religious interpretation is that before the spread of Islam in the region there were 1000 idols which were destroyed and replaced by a thousand mosques (Emadi 1997, 364).

The Hazaristan or Hazarajat are the terms used for the regions or provinces in Afghanistan in which the majority of the Hazara population reside. The total population of the Hazara community is subject to ambiguity, with the Hazaras themselves claiming it to be between 6 to 7 million. There are different theories about the origin and existence of the Hazara community. Some claim them to be living in the region since time immemorial. While others claim that they are the direct descendants of the Mongolian army. However, some claim that they are a mixture of Turks and Mongols (Zeerak, n.d., 2). Concerning their religion, the majority of the Hazaras are Shiite. The Shiites split after the death of Imam Jafar Sadiq in 765, those who followed the eldest son were known as the Ismailis, and those who pledged their allegiance to his other son who started the concept of 12 Shiite Imam genealogy are known as Athna Ashari. In contrast to the Athna Ashari's the Ismailis believe that line of genealogy continues to this date. They advocate the breakdown of the status quo through radical measures. Moreover, their practice of Islam is different than those of orthodox Sunni Muslims. These differences in orthopraxy and orthodoxy of Ismailis and proponents of Sunni Muslims led them to be labeled as heretics and enemies of Islam (Emadi 1997, 365).

3.1 Institutional Mechanisms of Oppression

To understand the Taliban's prosecution and subjugation of the Hazara community, this research will first shed light on the systematic mechanisms of oppression that were historically used against the Hazaras. The Hazara community wasn't always living in the mountainous region of Hazarajat. It was during the reign of Ahmed Shah Abdali that they were cornered to this cold, harsh, and inarable region of Afghanistan. Although this region was not suitable for a decent living, the Hazaras used the mountainous landscape and harsh climatic features in their favor to rebel against any attempt to snatch their autonomy. Their ability to resist gave them the title of "Yaghistan" or the "land of rebels". Afghanistan is a heterogeneous community composed of four major ethnic groups; Tajiks, Uzbeks, Pashtuns, and Hazaras. What makes the Hazaras fundamentally different is not only their ethnicity but out of these four groups, only the majority of the Hazaras follow the Shiite Ismaili sect of Islam.

King Abd Ur Rehman is titled as the architect of modern Afghanistan. It was during his reign that the present-day boundaries of Afghanistan were defined. On his path to modernize Afghanistan, he willfully handed over the management of foreign affairs of the country to British officials. He wanted to expand and consolidate his power. While doing so many ethnic groups and smaller communities within Afghanistan turned against him. The Iron Amir of Afghanistan began the tradition of exploiting the ethnolinguistic and religious diversity in Afghanistan. By the end of his reign, Afghanistan ironically became a unified country that was socially fragmented to its core. It was the same era when to silence the other ethnic groups,

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he unified the entire Pashtun ethnicity to fight against everyone based on differences of religion, language, or race. It was the beginning of the superiority of one ethnic group at the cost of others.

The strategy of King Abdur Rehman to consolidate power over the Hazarajat was two-phased. The first phase of his plan was to manipulate and pit the KHANS of Hazara against each other. He wanted to break their unity by turning them against each other. Once he knew he had broken and divided them from within, he began the second phase of his plan in the early 1890s. He started to force the Khans to willfully hand over their power to him. When the Khans realized the plans of the Amir, it was already too late to resist. The war that followed was one of the bloodiest in the country's history. It is believed to have been motivated by the desire to annihilate the Hazara community. It was by the end of this war that the Hazara community, once unified against foreign and internal interventions was completely dismembered. Rehman's government announced incentives and tax exemptions for Pashtuns to illegally settle in lands that the Hazaras had their right over. Many of the Hazaras migrated to the neighboring regions to save their lives. The Khans and Hazara scholars who did not take part in the war were all collectively called into Kabul. It was at that time that Abdur Rahman announced his "*DeShittization Policy*". It was during this time that many of the Hanafi Mosques present in the Hazarajat region were constructed, along with that he forced people to convert to Sunnism. To solve the problem of those Shiites who started to adopt the practice of "Taqiyya" which allowed them to conceal their faith to save themselves from persecution, the Amir introduced a Sunni State system, that was inherently discriminatory against the Hazaras regardless of them being Sunni or Ismaili. (Ibrahimi 2009). The unified people of Hazarajat were finally divided into the regions of Bamyan, Ghazni, Ghor, Uruzgan, Maidan Wardak, Parwan, etc. The annihilation of the collective bargaining power of the Hazaras marked the beginning of the Pashtunization of Afghanistan. The Pashtuns were considered as first-class citizens, while the Hazaras were relegated to the ranks of, "Poor, Filthy, Foreign infidel donkeys". To erase the Hazara identity, the name of the region Hazarajat was replaced by "Manatiq e Mazari" or the central regions. Khalid Hussein, in his award-winning novel, "The Kite Runner" sheds light on the miseries of the Hazara community. The facial features of the Hazara community further added to their dehumanization. They have broad faces, flat noses, and narrow eyes. Hussein claims in his novel that the Hazaras are often called out as "mice-eating, **flat-nosed**, load-carrying donkeys." (Noor and Hosseini 2004). The Afghan Pashtuns started to demonize the Hazaras. They began to link the Hazaras of Bamyan to monsters, who can slit open someone's throat and steal all their money, without having second thoughts. In further efforts for Pashtunization, policies were made that banned the history telling of Hazaras in schools or literature. Anyone who tried to glorify the history of the Hazaras was sent to exile or faced severe punishments. Books like "Pata Khazana (The Hidden Treasure)" were published to glorify Pashto culture, history, literature, and Arts. Similarly, to further erase the identity of the Hazaras they began to link the names of cities of Hazarajat to the Pashtu language. The policy makers of that time claimed that the names of the cities like, Ler Wand originated from the Pashtu words, "Lar" which means road, and "Wand" which means block. The Afghan kings in their efforts to justify their consolidation of power essentialized

the identities of the Hazaras to mere heretics and dehumanized them by calling them names, such as load-carrying donkeys, etc.

The history of the persecution of the Hazara community makes it quite evident that the Hazara community was subjugated because of their contextualization as the inferior group. The subjugation took place when this ideology started to be used a tool to systematically subjugate them economically, culturally, and religiously.

3.2 Taliban's Rise to Power and The Hazaras

In an interesting turn of events during the last decade of the 20th century, a rather unknown Islamic fundamentalist group rose to power in Afghanistan. (Barth 2004) Without delving into more detail, for this research, it is only important to understand that different Islamic groups rose to power amidst the political and economic turmoil due to a plethora of factors. Some of them were the Soviet invasions, the internal political turmoil, and the dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan due to the Durand Line, the border between the two countries. The Taliban were trained by the mujahideen in the refugee camps. They were a group of young people, tired of the infighting and chaos around them, and were easily susceptible to accepting fundamentalist ideals. It is important to know that, although at the time it did feel like the Taliban rose to power out of nowhere, they did have ideological predecessors like the *Wahabi movement in Saudi Arabia, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt*. Like these movements, the Taliban also had a very staunch approach about Islamic ideals. They rigorously believed in the idea of Jihad against anyone who didn't fit into these ideals. When it comes to the Taliban it is important to understand that not only are they the most religiously conservative group in Afghanistan, but they are also Pashtuns. As discussed in the previous phases of the History of the Hazara community, it is easy to deduce that Pashtuns are the historical enemies of Hazaras. Moreover, it was rather easy for them to show this hostility as they have been in positions of power for centuries in Afghanistan. (Frantzell, n.d.) The Hazara community has time and again been labeled as a religiously liberal group in Afghanistan. Hence, they existed in stark contrast to what the Taliban believed in. The Taliban imposed *Shariah* in Afghanistan as soon as they assumed power, which meant strict punishments such as stoning to death for anyone who tried to violate the *Shariah Law*. They banned women from schools and colleges, made it mandatory for women to wear veils and other punishments such as cutting of arms for theft were introduced. The patterns of persecution by the Taliban of the Hazara community will be further discussed in detail in the next section. Lastly, The Taliban movement is purely based on the Ideals of Sunni Islam and hence leaves no space for the Shiite branches of Islam.

4. Case Study: The Taliban Subjugation of the Hazara Community

This section of the research will specifically focus on the Taliban's subjugation of the Hazara community considering the four main factors mentioned in the Social Dominance Theory that led to the development of Arbitrary-set system of social hierarchy between Afghan Taliban and the Hazara community.

4.1 Legitimizing Myths

The Social Dominance Theory posits that the subjugation of one group is often made acceptable when certain myths or stereotypes surrounding the group are historically

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framed in a way that presents them as an objective reality. The authors of Social Dominance Theory provide the example of the Doctrine of Manifest Destiny that legitimizes the myth of Native Americans being ‘Savages’ and hence making the American expansion justifiable or acceptable. (Pratto and Stewart 2012) This section will explore the myths surrounding the Hazara community and their framing as objective truths by the Afghan Taliban to justify their prosecution and hatred towards them.

Kubra Mohammadi, a Hazara Afghan refugee in an interview for the show called “A Better Shrewsbury” said that the Taliban claimed that the Hazaras didn’t belong in Afghanistan. This is by in large the narrative being played out by the Taliban in Afghanistan. As mentioned in detail in the previous section, the history states otherwise. King Abdul Rehman Khan began the tradition of massacring the Hazara community and spreading the narrative of Hazaras being foreign, infidel donkeys. The Taliban continue to legitimize this myth to subjugate the Hazara community. It is believed that many Sunni Muslim scholars in Afghanistan termed the killing of the Hazara people as the “*Key to Paradise*”. The claims made by the Hazara community estimate fifteen thousand Hazaras to have been massacred by the Afghan Taliban. What is more disturbing to understand is the fact that the Taliban spokesperson with their return to power have claimed responsibility for their past atrocities on the Hazara people, along with the threat to kill more Hazaras (Mohammadi & Askary 2021).

Mullah Niazi the commander of the Mazar e Sharif attack on the Hazara community in 1998 in one of his speeches claimed that “Hazaras are not Muslim, they are Shi’a. They are kafir [infidels]”. The claim of Hazaras being infidels is one of the most widely used. Considering the Social Dominance Theory, it can be said that the repetitive and recurring nature of this claim has cultivated itself in the minds of most people in Afghanistan especially the Taliban to be the ultimate truth. Hence for them, it’s an objective reality and that alone makes it justifiable to persecute them according to their version of Islam. (“Hazara Research Collective-Written Evidence (AFG0008) International Relations and Defence Committee: The UK and Afghanistan, call for Evidence,” n.d.) Words like, “Infidels, Rafidah (The rejector), kafir, heretics” are some of the most used in the statements made by influential Taliban leaders. It is important to remember that the Social Dominance Theory states that the legitimization of myths by the dominant group is done to maintain their domination in the social hierarchical structure. In the case of Afghanistan, a Sunni majority country with Taliban, a mono-cultural, ethnocentric group in power, with low literacy rates, it is very difficult to induce acceptability towards a group that is being demonized historically. Hence, such myths are easily legitimized in turn leading to the domination of one group over another.

4.2 Social Domination Orientation

The Social Domination Orientation aspect of the theory deals the psychological orientation of a group or individual towards domination. (Pratto & Stewart 2012). In the Case of Taliban this research claims that in addition to the psychological need of the Taliban to dominate and maintain the status quo in Afghanistan, one of the reasons adding towards the additional hate towards the Hazaras, might be the community’s history of rebelling against invaders. As mentioned in the historical

section of this research, the Hazarajat was known as “Yaghistan”, which translates to the “Land of Rebels”. This might be one of the major factors behind the continuous yearning of various Pashtun governments in Afghanistan to subjugate and persecute the Hazara community. The word Yaghi itself means uncontrollable and unmanageable. The land was projected in History as the land where monsters and beasts live, with the desire to kill people. Colonel Brazier Creagh of the Indian Army wrote about Yaghistan, “It was impossible to go inside and if you did your bones would be left there” (Babban 2017) In light of the Social Dominance Theory, the desire to control and dominate over another group, the Hazaras, in this case, was further strengthened by the widely accepted believe that the people residing within these areas are uncontrollable and unmanageable.

4.3 Institutional Discrimination

Discrimination against any group is not possible without the intervention of internal and external political, economic, and social institutions. In the article, “A Violent Nexus: Ethnonationalism, Religious Fundamentalism, and The Taliban” written by Niamatullah Ibrahim (Ibrahim 2023) the nexus between the Taliban’s strategy and colonial politics has been shown. The author claims that through the help of foreign patronage, the Afghan kings subjugated and divided the country’s diverse cultural populations. Similarly, Niamatullah Ibrahim, also talks about the contemporary marginalization of the Hazara community by the Taliban especially in Politics, as they are not present within the central government’s cabinet. An article published by the “India International Centre”, titled “The Taliban Phenomenon” is one of the very few pieces of literature present, that relates the Taliban’s persecution of the Hazara community to external power dynamics. The geopolitical interests of the USA, and the complicity of countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran led to the rise of this religious fundamentalist group that wreaked havoc in the lives of the already historically marginalized and persecuted community (Chakravarty, 2002).

The takeover by the Taliban after the end of the War on Terror has been claimed as the emergence of a state of nature in Afghanistan, where life is Brutish and Short. The life of everyone has been subjected to oppression under the Taliban’s rule, but the Hazara community suffers severe discrimination. This discrimination is reflected systematically through the creation of institutions that snatch away the basic human rights of the Hazaras. Social Dominance Theory claims that institutional discrimination is one of the methods through which dominance is maintained. Institutional discrimination deals with the allocation of resources vital for a good life to the dominant group, while the subordinate group is subjected to a systematic lack of resources. This includes political, social, and economic discrimination against the Hazaras.

It is not a secret that there is not a single Hazara individual in the Taliban’s cabinet presently. The opportunities for the Hazaras are being snatched away by the de-facto authority of Afghanistan. The fate of Hazaras is already written, no matter their expertise in a certain policy area, or educational level. The Hazara scholars of Afghanistan claim that their practically no employment opportunities for them as the governmental entities have imposed a ban on their recruitment for jobs. One such instance is the killing of Mawlawi Mahdi. The case of Mawlawi Mahdi is important in this context as he was the first leader of the Taliban from the minority Hazara community. His appointment by the Taliban was seen as a beacon of hope

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by the Hazaras. It looked like the Taliban were changing their stance about the minority Hazara community. Yet all hopes were shattered when he was killed by the Taliban in his attempt to flee the country. The Defence Ministry of the Taliban described him as the “Leader of the Rebels”. The use of the word like ‘rebels’ is where the myths surrounding the Hazara community join hands with the systematic oppression of a community.

The Hazara community faces systematic discrimination at the hands of the Taliban. One can easily draw out a pattern of targeted attacks by the Taliban on Hazara mosques, schools, transport services, hospitals etc. The United Nations Assistance mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) claimed that only during the first six months of 2021 there have been twenty instances of targeted violence against the Hazara community leading to 500 casualties. Continuous instances of Bombings in schools of Hazara majority neighborhood inculcated fear in the hearts and minds of parents, leading them to stop their children from attending educational institutions. Since the Taliban came into power, they also systematically discriminated against Hazaras based on their religion. One example of such practice is that the Taliban abolished the program by the Ghani government to provide weapons to the Hazara community for self-defense in the case of violence during religious gatherings. (“Human Rights Conditions for Hazaras in Afghanistan Under the Taliban Regime Report Release-February 7, 2023,” n.d.) The Taliban systematically subjugate the Hazaras in every sphere of life. They are rejecting the Hazaras' basic right to life, and on top of that they are snatching away the right to equal opportunities. Since they rose to power, they destroyed settlements of the Hazara community by claiming that they were illegal, they bombed educational institutions to inculcate fear that led to the Hazaras dropping out of schools and universities. They have fired individuals from jobs and administrative areas of Afghanistan, creating severe unemployment and poor living conditions for the Hazaras. All of this is being done to consolidate and maintain their power.

4.4 Disproportionate use of Force

The last factor mentioned in the Social Dominance Theory is the disproportionate use of force by the dominant group to maintain their hegemony. While there are countless instances of the disproportionate use of force by the Taliban against the Hazara, this section of the research will only focus on two specific cases. The Taliban’s massacre of the Hazara community in Mazar-i-Sharif and the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban.

4.4.1 The Mazar e Sharif Massacre

It is believed that after the reign of King Abdur Rehman the worst incident of violence against the Hazara community happened during the Taliban rise to power. The incident referred to is commonly known as the Mazar-i-Sharif Massacre and it occurred in August 1998. The Taliban governor of the time announced publicly that the Hazaras were heretics which led to the death of over 2000 Hazaras by the Taliban fighters in the city. (Simon 2021) Witnesses of the Massacre describe the scene as a “killing frenzy” where the Taliban shot anything that moved. In the days that followed the massacre, the Taliban conducted a house-to-house search to eliminate the male members of the Hazara minority group. The leaders of the Taliban justified their acts by claiming that they did it to make sure no one rebelled against them. In

a speech given by the Taliban governor of that time Mullah Manon Niazi, the blame for the killing of the Taliban in 1997 was put onto the shoulders of the Hazara community and hence the massacre was justified as an act of revenge (“The Massacre in Mazar-i Sharif” 1998).

4.5 The Destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas

Said Reza Husseini in his article, “Taliban Iconoclasm and Hazara Response” claims that what look like religious iconoclasm to the world is more than that. He is talking about the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban in 2002. Afghanistan has faced countless invasions over centuries, yet no one dared to destroy the Bamiyan Buddhas. There is no specific reason behind it, nor do the statues were in any way more special than any other statue present in the world. They were the site of cultural heritage. To understand the continuous bombing of the Buddhas by Taliban, one must understand what they meant for the Hazara community. The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas can be accurately explained in light of the theory of Social Dominance. The use of force on inanimate objects was done by the Taliban to maintain their hegemony, by publicly humiliating the Hazara community and tarnishing their identity. It was the most accurate example of the disproportionate use of force by the Taliban to maintain their superiority. The Taliban justified the bombings of the statue by claiming that the Hazara community worships these statues and once again the use of words like heretics and infidels were used. The Taliban claimed that it is against the Shariah and claimed that Islam supports the destruction of idols. This act of violence did not only perpetuate a negative image of Islam worldwide but shattered the hopes of the Hazara community. For the Hazara community, the idols were never equivalent to God. The statues held a close place in the hearts of the Hazaras as they were a part of their literature and Folklore. It is important to understand that the Hazaras hadn’t attached these statues to religion. They believed these statues to be the emblem of their identity, as they had the same features and were painted by their ancestors. Phil Zabriskie in his article, “The Outsiders” claims that the destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas had nothing to do with religion but more with overpowering the Hazara community, and letting them know that they were inferior. (Zabriskie 2008). They never worshiped those idols. The Bamiyan Buddhas were a symbol of unity and resistance in the face of oppression for the Hazara community. The leaders of the Hazara community in their speeches after the destruction of Buddhas claimed that the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas is equivalent to the destruction of the Hazara identity. The Hazara community claimed that the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas is one of the many ways through which the Hazara community is slowly erasing the Hazaras from Afghan soil (‘Husseini 2012).

Conclusion

The Hazara community is the third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan yet one of the most persecuted groups in the world. The fate of the Hazara community seems bleak considering the contemporary Taliban regime in the country. The persecution of the Hazara community is a textbook definition of persecution as given by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Afghanistan is in dire need of the incorporation of intra and interfaith harmony. The nation and its people have been subjected to countless wars, bloodshed, killings, and massacres. The government of the Taliban should understand that to move on from its past and lead Afghanistan to the International political arena it needs to formulate a cabinet that represents the ethnic

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diversity in Afghanistan. Article 22 of the Constitution of Afghanistan states that there shall be no discrimination against any citizen of Afghanistan. A constitution of any state represents a contract between the citizens of any state and the ruling regime. The Taliban cannot expect to rebuild the foundations of their state without fulfilling the rights promised to the Afghans in the constitution. The problem in the case of Afghanistan is that the Taliban does not consider any other ethnicity, be it Tajiks, Uzbeks, or Hazaras to be the citizens of Afghanistan. As mentioned in the research paper the Social Dominance Theory perfectly sheds light on the reasons behind the brutal treatment of the Hazaras by the Taliban. Throughout the history of mankind, various societies have been constructed with one group dominating on the others. These groups use various tools of oppression such as racism, nationalism, sexism, classicism, etc., to subjugate one group. In the case of the Taliban, they use religion and ethnocentrism as their driving force to dominate other ethnicities in Afghanistan. Hafizullah Emadi in his article, "The Hazaras and their Role in the Political Transformation of Afghanistan" published in the journal, "Central Asian Survey" (Emadi 1997) focuses on the political transformation of the Hazara community. In the article, he claims that only 13.4 percent of the Hazara population was enrolled in educational institutions post-independence. The author claims that even during the era of modernization the state institutions were designed to further marginalize the community. He further discusses the emergence of three political movements in retaliation to the state policies. The movements were, "Islamist, Hazara Nationalist and Socialist". He goes on to explain in detail the efforts of these three political movements to demarginalize the Hazara people. He claims that one of the reasons behind their failure was that they were unable to unite and fight for their identity, rather they began to fight for leadership positions. The Hazaras should learn from their past, and they should collectively unite to fight against their oppression. If the Hazaras start scheming against each other, then Afghanistan will once again fall prey to the vicious cycle of everyone trying to grab power, in turn destroying national security, harmony, and peace. Annika Frantzel in her Thesis, "Human Security, Peace Building and the Hazara minority in Afghanistan" (Frantzell, n.d.) focuses on the significance of providing security to marginalized groups in non-Western societies. She mentioned the ethnic cleansing of the Hazara community by the Taliban, due to their different features and beliefs. As mentioned in her article, the West has an important role to play in the demarginalization of the Hazara community. Or like other instances, the persecution of the Hazara community would forever tarnish their image as the providers of human rights. The marginalized community of any state should be capable of challenging the lack of pluralism and representation in the institutions without the fear of being killed. Afghanistan can never achieve long-term peace and security without making sure every individual in their country is being provided with their basic right to life, health, education, and safety. It has been seen in history that groups that have seen historical persecution, and marginalization, one day or another group and revolt against that oppression and bring about a destructive transformation in that region. The Taliban should not turn a blind eye to such capabilities. Lastly, history has always depicted that a power-hungry individual, group, or nation follows a path to its own destruction. The Taliban should realize that it's never too late to rectify past mistakes and lead the entire nation toward its betterment.

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