Dynamics of Protest Mobilization and Rapid Demobilization in Post-2001 Afghanistan: Facing Enlightening Movement

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Abstract—Taking a relational approach, this paper analyzes the causal mechanisms associated with successful mobilization and rapid demobilization of the Enlightening Movement in post-2001 Afghanistan. The movement emerged after the state-owned *Da Afghan Bereshna Sherkat* (DABS) decided to divert the route for the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TUTAP) electricity project. The grid was initially planned to go through the Hazara-inhabited province of Bamiyan, according to Afghanistan's Power Sector Master Plan. The reroute served as an *aide-mémoire* of historical subordination to other ethno-religious groups for the Hazara community. It was also perceived as deprivation from post-2001 development projects, financed by international aid. This torched the accumulated grievances, which then gave birth to the Enlightening Movement. The movement had a successful mobilization. However, it demobilized after losing much of its mobilizing capabilities through an amalgamation of external and internal relational factors. The successful mobilization yet rapid demobilization constitutes the puzzle of this paper. From the theoretical perspective, this paper is significant as it establishes the applicability of contentious politics theory to protest mobilizations that occurred in Afghanistan, a context-specific, characterized by ethnic politics. Both primary and secondary data are utilized to address the puzzle. As for the primary resources, media coverage, interviews, reports, public media statements of the movement, involved in contentious performances, and data from Social Networking Services (SNS) are used. The covered period is from 2001-2018. As for the secondary resources, published academic articles and books are used to give a historical account of contentious politics. For data analysis, a qualitative comparative historical method is utilized to uncover the causal mechanisms associated with successful mobilization and rapid demobilization of the Movement. In this pursuit, both mobilization and demobilization are considered as larger political processes that could be decomposed to constituent mechanisms. Enlightening Movement's framing and campaigns are first studied to uncover the associated mechanisms. Then, to avoid introducing some ad hoc mechanisms, the recurrence of mechanisms is checked against another case. Mechanisms qualify as robust if they are "recurrent" in different episodes of contention. Checking the recurrence of causal mechanisms is vital as past contentious events tend to reinforce future events. The findings of this paper suggest that the public sphere in Afghanistan is drastically different from Western democracies known as the birthplace of social movements. In Western democracies, when institutional politics did not respond, movement organizers occupied the public sphere, undermining the legitimacy of the government. In Afghanistan, the public sphere is ethicized. Considering the inter- and intra-relational dynamics of ethnic groups in Afghanistan, the movement reduced to an erosive inter- and intra-ethnic conflict. This undermined the cohesiveness of

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the movement, which then kicked-off its demobilization process.

Keywords—Enlightening movement, contentious politics, mobilization, demobilization.

I. INTRODUCTION

WITH the sunrise of 23rd of July 2016, a huge wave of peaceful protesters, mostly associated with the Hazara ethnic community, poured into streets of Kabul to protest against the decision of president Ghani's cabinet to reroute the transnational power grid, known as TUTAP, from Turkmenistan to Kabul. According to the national electricity master plan, it was supposed to go through Bamiyan province (a Hazara populated region in lack of state-supplied electricity) [1]. A series of protests, calling themselves the Enlightening Movement, were brokered after the institutional politics did not respond to the social demand for implementing the project according to its original plan. The movement later added the demand of balanced development as one of its core claims. When anger mounted, people poured into the streets. When the wave of demonstrators arrived in *Dehmazang* square, barely two kilometers away from the presidential palace, it was targeted by twin suicide attacks, killing 80 and injuring about 400 people [2].

It was almost at the sunset that the IS-KP claimed the responsibility, calling the protesters as "a group of rejectionist polytheists" and branding the suicide attacks on civilians as a blessed operation bound to clean up the land Khurasan, the land of Muslims, from the contamination of polytheism [3]. The attack of that scale on peaceful demonstrators was accompanied by both internal and international outcry. After the attack, the movement demobilized in Afghanistan, but it diffused internationally as the Hazara associated diaspora demonstrated in major cities of the world to attract the attention of donor countries to Afghanistan. For instance, the diaspora community demonstrated in front of either the UN offices, parliament or Afghan embassies in Stockholm, Canberra, Tokyo, Manila (in front of ADB HQ), New York, Toronto, Warsaw, Vienna, Munich, Geneva, London, Brussels and other cities [4], [5]. The movement also undertook online activism as one of their contentious performances after the attack. Several thousands of people had participated in its tweetstorm campaign on Twitter and the 380,000 posted tweets, using Hashtag Enlightening Movement, become a twitter trend [6].

Despite its success in mobilizing different groups, with

different political orientation, the movement rapidly lost its momentum. Therefore, it did not achieve its goals of balanced electricity provision and balanced development. This successful mobilization but rapid demobilization of the Enlightening Movement (EM) highlights wider dynamics of contentious politics in post-2001 socio-political environment of the country. With the US intervention and collapse of the Taliban, a wider socio-political group of actors associated with a different political spectrum embraced the new government, established by Western intervention; hence, these groups made their claims, adopting the repertoires of action allowed by the state. Accordingly, passionate politics by means of taking to the streets to make claims added a new dynamic to the politics in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Meanwhile, certain rejectionist groups such as the Taliban, *Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin Hekmatyar,* and later IS-KP, continued making claims, using violent repertoires of action.

The context of Afghanistan, where collective movements unfolded, was drastically different from democratic, mostly Western states that are known as birthplaces of social movements. In democracies, for publicly funded organizations such as the state, it is crucial to be perceived as legitimate in the public sphere [7]. Thus, the public sphere is available for the people who do not have access to institutionalized politics. However, the public sphere as such arguably has not exited in post-Taliban Afghanistan. The protest movement in Afghanistan, a country known for social fragmentation, tribalism, chronicles of interethnic conflict, being highly unstable, affected by terrorism and dependent to international donors, has significantly shaped all contentious interaction in the country. Therefore, it is important to take a combination of causal mechanisms into account in order to explain the birth and trajectories of the movement. As it will be explained later in detail, the EM flared ethnic tensions, despite being able to cross the ethnic divide at the beginning; so, it was attributed as a revival of earlier inter-ethnic conflict between the Hazara and Pashtun ethnic groups. Yet, the EM instigated intra-ethnic tensions among Hazara's older and younger generations and of the generations of political actors as well.

EM, emerging in post-Taliban Afghanistan, had a phenomenally successful mobilization. It demonstrated a remarkable ability to mobilize tangible and intangible resources. Meanwhile, the organizers of its protest movements, mostly coming from emerging youth actors, were able to draw grassroot supports through their social appropriation strategies; thus, indicating great mobilizing competencies. Despite that, the movement lost its momentum and had a rapid demobilization without achieving its stated goal. Success in mobilization of that magnitude and the rapid demise is interesting as well as puzzling. To this end, the following question is addressed as the main question of this paper: How can we account for the successful protest mobilization and dramatic demobilization of the EM? The question will be studied by drawing on insights learned from the relational approach championed by [8] and [9].

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Acquisition Method

Data acquisition method includes collecting primary and secondary data. As for the primary resources, media coverage, phone interviews, reports, public media statements of the movement, involved in contentious performances, and social media like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are used. The covered period is from 2001-2018. As for the secondary resources, published academic articles and books will be used to give a historical account of contentious politics.

B. Data Analysis Method

A qualitative comparative historical study is utilized to uncover the causal mechanism associated with successful mobilization and rapid demobilization of the EM. To do so, both mobilization and demobilization are considered larger political processes that could be decomposed to constituent mechanisms, so the collected data are analyzed by adopting a process-mechanism-based approach. The search for mechanisms begins with observing the EM. Then, at least one "touchstone" case is introduced to check the "recurrence" of the uncovered mechanisms. As McAdam et al. have asserted, mechanisms qualify as robust causes, if they meet the requirement of being "recurrent" in different episodes of contention [8]. Therefore, the comparative historical method suits this study. Moreover, it is vital to check the recurrence of causal mechanism, using the comparative historical method, as past contentious events tend to reinforce the next events making a "continuous stream of contentions" [8].

Tabassum Movement, which unfolded on November 2015, is chosen as a touchstone case here, against which the "recurrence" of mechanisms is examined. The rationale behind this choice relates to the author's observation of the EM and discovery of its association with Tabassum Movement. After observing EM's claims, frames, and conducting interviews, it was revealed that although the EM's main claim was balanced electricity provision, the organizers of the movement were connecting the cause for mobilization to the incident that triggered the Tabassum Movement as well. As a matter of fact, the networks built in the Tabassum Movement were used as recruiting vehicles in the movement.

III. THEORIES OF CONTENTIOUS POLITICS AND THE RELATIONAL APPROACH

Like other established fields of inquiry, contentious politics has evolved through time. New research traditions have critiqued earlier traditions or have added upon them. This theoretical wrestling of scholars has produced a bulky amount of work. In the 1960s, the explanation of all forms of contentions was espoused by the study of social movements [8]. In the 1970s, the study of what termed as contentious politics today went through a paradigm shift; social scientist rejected the popular explanation of "mass movement" and other identical phenomena as crowd influenced "collective behavior" [8], [10], [11]. Miller has phrased this turning point, a shift from "collective behavior" explanatory tradition to

"collective action" explanatory tradition [10].

Theories of collective behavior tradition had argued that collective behavior comes out of deeply felt grievances due to social disruption and therefore, they are not a part of normal political process [11]. The tradition had covered a wide array of phenomena such as riots, mobs, craze, fads, social movement, and other forms of "irrational collective behavior" [11]. Thus, for the precursors of this tradition, any form of mass movements was a subcategory of irrational behavior, delusional, impulsive and in short moral epidemics [8]. Collective behavior approach gave birth to many theoretical explanations and theories such as social strain theory, theory of mass hysteria, mass society theory and relative deprivation theory; however, most of them did not pass further inspections by other researchers. Thus, only two prominent theories, situated in the camp of collective behavior, are reviewed here: Mass society theory and relative deprivation theory.

Championed as the father of mass society theory, William Kornhauser wrote *The Politics of Mass Society* in 1959. Recalling Émile Durkheim's study of anomie and increasing egoism in analysis of modern society, the theory linked phenomena such as mass movements and social movements to the rise of mass society [12]. According to the theory, the rise of mass industrial society is first marked with the decline in the binding force of interactional or intermediate networks which leaves many in the public isolated and detached from the "mainstream society." Second, in mass societies there is a lack of "social insulation" between elites and non-elites which makes the manipulation of non-elites easy. Subsequently, isolation creates a feeling of alienation among individuals which makes them participate in mass movements to fulfill their needs for belonging [12], [11]. Quoting Kornhauser in [12]:

> Mass society is objectively the atomized society, and subjectively the alienated population. Therefore, mass society is a system in which there is high availability of a population for mobilization by elites...[P]eople who are atomized readily become mobilized.

However, according to [12] and [11], the argument that attributes mobilizing in mass politics with socially isolated masses could not survive the scrutiny of further researches; instead, it was found "almost certainly false". Moreover, scholars such as Oberschall, in 1973 and Jenkins, in 1981, came to a totally opposite conclusion as mentioned in [12].

Another "collective behavior" theorical explanation of mass movements which was popular in 1960s and 1970s is the relative deprivation theory. According to the proponents of this theory, the core cause of participation in mass movement is the feeling of relative deprivation, generated by large-scale social change, within certain groups of people. However, according to them, only the shared feeling of grievance cannot sufficiently explain participation. Participation happens when people with grievance feel that their situation could be improved. Thus, it is not "the most aggrieved group," who engage in action but "the best off within the aggrieved group" [11]. Gurr's *Why Men Rebel* [13] is the most cited book associated with this line of thought. According to him, the potential for engaging in action lies with what he termed as relative deprivation which is the gap between what people think they deserve and what their real situation is. They assess what they deserve by comparing their disadvantageous position vis-à-vis other groups in the society. Despite being helpful in explaining why certain groups of people engage in collective action, the theory was strongly criticized. As Staggenborg notes, further researchers found it difficult to understand relative deprivation, which is a psychological state, from objective indicators such as unemployment; also, evidence did not find relative deprivation always conducive to rebellion [11].

As mentioned earlier, the decade of the 1970s was a turning point in the study of what is termed as contentious politics today, as scholars shifted their attention from the collective behavior approach. The decade is marked with "intellectual rebellion" against previous "historical writings" [8]. Unlike, mass society theory, social scientists of this epoch refuted against the excessive focus on the influence of elites in mobilization. Instead, they were campaigning "to reconstruct political experience of ordinary people, ground those experience in routine social life" [8]. Meanwhile, shared grievance as an indispensable precondition for action, which was promoted by the relative deprivation theory, was dismissed. For instance, "rational action" theorists such as Olson (1965) found a major drawback in asserting grievance as a determinant of mobilization since many people with grievance could not simply act [8].

A prominent line of such critiques was later termed as resource mobilization theory (RMT) which was initiated by McCarthy and Zald in 1977 and 1993 [8], [11]. While refuting the centrality of grievance in participating in collective action, RMT accentuated on the availably of resources, opportunity, organization, and coordination of the members as central in the analysis of movement politics. Resources could be tangible such as money, or intangible such as "commitment" of the members. In the same manner, resources could be mobilized from within the aggrieved group "the beneficiaries of the movement" or from outside of the aggrieved group "conscience constituents" who support the movement without personal gains [11], [8]. To put it in a nutshell, the proponents of this line of thought invoke on the significance of movement leaders or "movement entrepreneurs," resources, type of social movement organization and "mobilizing structure" in the analysis of movement politics. While resources are essential in undertaking collective action, movement's leaders play pivotal role in garnering support, inciting the public's sentiment and expanding their interest for change. Likewise, studies have demonstrated varying influence of more "formalized" and less "formalized" movements' structure on their trajectories and outcomes. Also, "mobilizing structure", formal and informal network groups have been observed to play a critical role in being an organizational vehicle to recruit participants for collective action [11]. McAdam et al. defined mobilization structure as "collective vehicles, informal, as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action" [14].

Attention to organizational process that RMT called upon was very helpful in explaining why sometimes grievances give birth to movements and sometimes it does not; however, the theory received critiques such as exaggeration in "deliberate strategic decision" and forgetting about the emotional, contingent part of movement politics [8]. In addition, excessive attention on the significance of available resources makes this line of thought more concentrated on the material aspect of movements, forgetting the fact that movements may be born in the absence of material resources.

Taking the organizational aspect of RMT, political process theory (PPT) built up on the previous perspective by adding interaction of movement actors with states, political *opportunities*, and *threats* as affecting factors in the emergence and trajectories of movements. The concept of "political opportunity structure" plays a pivotal role in this approach. It tries to explain how political phenomena such as protest movements are shaped by the political environment in which they emerge [15]. Eisinger's is the first work utilizing this framework to study why some American cities experienced more riots in 1960s than others. Eisinger found a curvilinear relationship between protests and the openness of the political environment [16]. According to the curvilinear model developed by Eisinger, protests are most likely to occur in a system which inhabits a mix of open and closed factors; therefore, according to him, protests are unlikely in "extremely open" (responsive) and "extremely closed" (repressive) systems [16]. He further added that protests are likely to occur in mixed systems because in these systems, the pace of change does not meet the expectation of people who are frustrated about it [16]. Other scholars who developed this perspective, which links social movements with institutionalized politics, were Tilly [17], McAdam in 1982 and Tarrow in 1983 [8].

Charles Tilly's book *From Mobilization to Revolution* is one of the most cited works associated with political process models. Through this work, Tilly developed his popular theoretical model called the "mobilization model", through which he divided political actors in two categories of "polity members" and "challengers". According to the model, both polity members and challengers are in a nonstop struggle for power; all challengers pursue to enter the polity and all polity members struggle to maintain their membership. Entries into and exits from the polity depend on the contenders' interests, organizational and resource mobilization, and collective action capacities along with the available opportunities [17].

Political process model is particularly interested in opportunities for and threats against collective actions. Potential collective actors might engage in collective action when they come to a conclusion that the time is right to act or the time is most favorable [11]. Recalling Tarrow's (1998) conception of political opportunity, Staggenborn enumerates several elements of political opportunity as: "The extent of openness in the polity, shifts in political alignments, division among elites, the availability of influential allies and repression or facilitation by the state" [11]. Staggenborg further adds that *threats* could equally instigate potential actors to engage in action due to the perceived urgency of the situation and feeling of outrage [11]. Political process model also added the culturally limited ways, termed as *repertoire of contention*, through which people make claims as another dimension to the study of movement politics [8].

Both the political process model and resource mobilization model were later criticized for being too structural and forgetting about human agency. Other factors such as the cultural perspective and the shared meaning that people attribute to their situation could have a catalytic role in mediating among opportunity, mobilizing structure and collective action [14]. According to them, the availably of mobilizing structure and opportunity is not always conducive to collective action unless, at least, people feel both aggrieved and optimistic that their collective action would trigger change. This line of thought was developed by scholars such as Goffman, Snow, and his colleagues such as [18] and [19]. Advocating for "brining culture back in", Snow gave a pivotal role to idea, sentiments, collective attribution, and social construction of ideas in collective action which he termed as the *framing process*. Snow defined the concept of *framing process* as: "Conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understanding of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action" [14]. In Williams's words, scholars of this camp have paid more attention to the interpersonal process through which people understand their actions and find "ideational, moral and emotional" bases for their action [20]. Thus, framing process filled in the gap which existed in structuralist perspectives by turning attention to human agency and interpretation of work done by them. According to Rhys' review of the framing perspective, scholarly works and academic debates around *framing* have focused mainly on the deployment of symbols, claims, and identities in collective action; therefore, it has added to our understanding of dynamics of recruitment for mobilization and maintenance of solidarity of the movement [20].

In the analysis of collective action frames, scholars have paid attention to "cultural environment" and "frame disputes" that limits or help movements. According to William, two concepts of "boundedness" and "resonance" provide the theoretical ground for the cultural environment [20]. Boundedness refers to availability of cultural resources, in other words, what is "counted inside a culture and what is not" or what is valued and what is sanctioned by a particular culture; resonance on the other hand, refers to particular cultural resources that resonate better than others [20]. It is because drawing on some cultural resources might not resonate with the *receivers*. In the same manner, certain cultural resources might resonate with one group and do not resonate with other groups; thus, they could curb the ability of SMO's to motivate and recruit supporters. Staggenborg has elaborated on "frame disputes". According to him, occurrence of "frame disputes" is inevitable since movements do not include unified actors. Moreover, it is vital in the analysis of rhetoric that may occur within the movement or between a particular movement and a countermovement, because it could consequent in the decline of some cultural resources available

to the movement in order to win people's approval [11]. Thus, effective framing is vital in a movement's success to garner support.

Most scholars had focused on one of the aforementioned theoretical explanations to explain collective action [14]. McAdam et al.; however, synthesized the insights learned from all the scholarship on political opportunities, mobilizing structure, and the framing process into a single model. The model was praised for providing a baseline to explain social movement. However, it was criticized for being static and not accounting for the dynamic nature of movements especially outside Western democratic polity [8].

Discontented with the structural and static nature of the previous political process model, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, who once played a big role in its development, wrote *of Contention* [8]. The book was a shift of focus from the static explanatory accounts of contentious politics that had previously prevailed in the study of the field, to a dynamic explanatory account. Referred to as the relational approach, it departed from the existing explanatory accounts at ontological, epistemological, and methodological levels [8]. Ontologically, the relational approach gives a pivotal causal importance to "social transactions"; epistemologically, it tries to uncover the "recurrent causal mechanisms" and "processes" in a wide array of contentious politics. Methodologically, it concentrates its attention to explanation of "webs of interactions among social sites." Meanwhile, they are hesitant about attainability of general laws that could explain contentious politics. Instead, they probe for selective recurrent mechanisms and processes that appear in a wide variety of settings in different combination and thus producing different outcomes. To explain this difference, analogy of the static explanatory account of contention with physical mechanism, where finding pure governing laws are attainable, is given. In the same manner, analogy of dynamic analysis of contention with molecular biology, where different combination of molecules produces different outcomes is provided [8], [21].

Dynamics of contentions comes with its own conceptual cluster. While the term "collective behavior" was widely used in the collective behavior approach and "collective action" was used in the political process approach, the term "contentious politics" is operationalized in the dynamics of the contention approach, referred as relational approach. Contentious politics bring "contentions", "collective action" and "politics" together [22]. Contentious politics is defined as:

Episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one the claimants [8].

To analyze the dynamics of contention while taking a relational perspective, one can follow a mechanism-process-based procedure to uncover the "constituent mechanism" and "processes". Mechanisms are causes and defined as a "delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations" [8]. It is also stated that mechanisms do not function on their own; they usually coexist with other mechanisms into bigger processes [8]. Processes are defined as "regular sequences of mechanisms that produce similar (generally more complex and contingent) transformations of those elements" [22]. Therefore, to explain contentious processes one must unpack the associated family of mechanism within the processes. Mechanisms combine in larger socio-political processes. Mechanisms could be environmental, cognitive, and relational [8], [23], [24]. Environmental mechanism is concerned with the interaction of "social sites" with their physical environment or "relations between social circumstances in question and their external environment", while cognitive mechanisms are associated with individual or collective cognition, relational mechanism is associated with interaction among "social sites" [23], [24]. However, to explain processes, it is indispensable to integrate environmental, cognitive, and relational mechanisms in a combination [8].

The relational approach is used as the theoretical framework of this paper. Hence, to explain both mobilization and demobilization while adopting the mechanisms-based procedure, it is emphasized to look for the constituent bundle of contingent mechanisms of both processes; it is because both mobilization and demobilization are considered larger processes that are congealed of associated mechanisms [9]. In other words, to explain the complex processes of mobilization and demobilization, it is necessary to identify mechanisms that play a significant causal role in both processes. For instance, the process of mobilization could be kicked off by environmental change and constitute a combination of recurrent mechanisms such as "attribution of opportunities and threats", "social appropriation", "boundary activation", "construction of frames", "brokerage", "coordination", "and "diffusion". In the same manner, the process of demobilization can be decomposed to its constituent mechanisms such as "targeted repression", "institutionalization", "polarization", and "defection" [8], [21]. Mobilization is defined as the "increase of the resources available to a political actor for collective making of claims"; demobilization is defined as the "reduction of this aggregation of resources" [21]. In the study of contentious politics, mobilization refers to "how people who at a given point in time are not making contentious claims start to do so; demobilization, in the same manner, refers to "how people who are making claims stop doing so" [21].

IV. DESCRIPTION OF THE HISTORICAL EPISODES OF CONTENTION

A. The Historical Antecedents of Hazara-State Relations

The relation between the central state and the Hazara community has been at odds for over a century. Ibrahimi has summarized this contentious relations to three periods: The Hazara War from 1891–1893, which started with the Hazara rebellion against state-building project; state consolidation period and formal exclusion of Hazaras from the national socio-political sphere in 1901–1978, a final period of state-fragmentation and Hazara's struggle for recognition after 1979

[25]. The Taliban period is also important to accentuate as its sectarian violence, which started in 1996 and ended in 2001, especially targeted the Hazaras. The post-2001 period was accompanied by an upward social mobility of Hazaras amid with new waves of sectarian violence and deprivation from the national cake. This period was also paralleled with passionate street politics. These periods of almost a century have marked genocidal attempts of the state against the Hazaras, formal and informal discriminations. The Hazara rebellion against the centralizing efforts of the state led by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan for instance, changed to a full-blown war between the state and the Hazara ethnic community. The war further intensified as Amir announced *Jihad* against those labeled as *Kafir* or infidel Hazaras. According to Kateb, the royal court of the time had approved to eliminate the rebel *Kafirs* of *Hazarajat* and enslave their boys and girls, attesting that killing these infidels during the holy war, is in a great conformity with the laws of God and that every Muslim's duty shall be to fight them and distribute their properties among themselves [26]. According to Ibrahimi, referencing Taki Khan, the Hazara War ended with total annihilation of 45 Hazara tribes and the destruction of the entire *Hazarajat* [25].

With the consolidation of the state in *Hazarjat*, a systematic campaign of enslavement, dehumanization, discrimination, and exclusion against the Hazaras had begun, both formally and informally. As a result, the Hazaras, in the words of Mousavi, became a "nation imprisoned at the hands of their Pashtun captors" [27]. According to Mousavi, in the 19th and 20th century, the slave trade became a legal source of income for the government, making 60,000 to 70,000 rupees annually. The price of slaves fluctuated between 120 to 160 rupees and according to government reports of the time about 7,200 Hazara men and women were sold as slaves in *Kanadahar* alone [27].

Land confiscation and banning the Hazaras from grazing in their own lands was another official policy which was followed by the Afghan states. After the Hazara War ended in 1893 and their rebellion was crushed, Abur Rahman Khan issued a decree, banning all Hazaras from grazing their flocks in the entire pasture of their region, blaming them for having destroyed the pastures in the past. As a result, all the pastures were given to the government or Pashtun nomads little by little, and the Hazaras gave up on herding [26]. Moreover, according to Mousavi, with the consolidation of the state over *Hazarajat*, 16 different taxes were levied on Hazaras, some of which continued up to 1987 [27]. Among the long list was the *nafs* tax, which was imposed in 1897, obliging every Hazara man, woman, and child (every *nafs* or individual regardless of age or gender*)* to pay 1 Kabuli Rupee per head [27].

The formal dehumanization of the Hazaras resulted in normalizing the informal humiliation of the Hazaras, which decreased their social status as second-class citizens in the eyes of all other Afghans. Mousavi listed several offensive phrases and expression that have become common in the daily conversation of Afghans. For instance, *Hazara-e Moosh Khor* translated as mouse eating Hazara which is a commonly used as an expression of disrespect, referring to the poverty and assumed filthiness of Hazaras, which is an insult since mice are considered impure or *najis* in Islam. Another offensive phrase is *Hazara Khar-e Barkash* translated as Hazara load carrying donkey, indicating the social inferior status of Hazaras as most Hazaras do the most menial and inferior jobs [27].

The Taliban regime (1996-2001) took discrimination against Hazaras to the next level. according to Human Rights Watch Report, titled: *Afghanistan: The Massacre in Mazar-I Sharif,* the Taliban had searched every house in the city, deliberately finding and killing thousands of Hazaras civilians. The report states:

The Hazaras were singled out because they are Shi'a. The Taliban are Sunni Muslims and followers of a strict conservative sect that considers the Shi'a to be infidels. During their search operations in Mazar, the Taliban ordered some residents to prove that they were not Shi'a by reciting Sunni prayers. Over a period of several weeks, Governor Niazi made inflammatory speeches against Hazaras in which he ordered them to become Sunnis, leave Afghanistan, or risk being killed [28].

Brennan has also documented some of the heinous hate slogans of the Taliban used against the Hazaras. According to him, the Taliban would say:

Tajiks, your homeland is Tajikistan, go home; to the Uzbeks, your homeland is Uzbekistan, return to your homeland; and to the Hazaras, you have no homeland, your homeland is *guristan,* a Farsi word referring to graveyard [29].

This formal and informal maltreatment of Hazaras in Afghanistan have been accumulated as social grievances in the collective memories of the Hazaras, which later had a profound impact on both the relations between the Hazara and Afghan state as well as the relation among the Hazaras and other ethnic groups, particularly Pashtuns.

B. Post-2001 Epoch

With the US intervention in 2001, the Taliban relinquished power and the political space opened to ethnic minorities. The Bonn Agreement laid the foundation of a broad-based multiethnic state. The primacy of having a fully representative government was enshrined by the article five of the Final Provision of the Bonn Agreement [30]. During this period, under the watchful eyes of foreign advisors to the new Afghan government, participation of the marginalized groups in bureaucracy and administrative units increased exponentially [31]. The Taliban, however, continued their militant offenses against the government. Also, the political groups who had accepted the post-2001 order resorted to new repertoires of action, whenever the institutional politics did not respond, therefore, peaceful protests, strikes and other means of passionate street politics were added in addition to the institutional politics. The climax of this passionate street politics unfolded with the emergence of the Tabassum Movement and the EM in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

C. Tabassum Movement

Among other bloody campaigns against the Hazaras in 2015, the beheading of a nine years old girl, Shukria Tabassum, hit the community extremely hard. Therefore, it became a rallying cry for one of the largest peaceful protest movements in the history of the country. Tabassum was among seven Hazara hostages from Jaghuri, who were allegedly abducted by militants associated with IS-KP [32], [33]. After a month of being held captive, their bodies were found by Taliban militias on 7th of November 2015, who had claimed to have pushed back the IS-KP fighters led by Mansur Dadullah, a defected Taliban commander [34]. The throats of the victims were cut, apparently with a type of string that Afghans use in flying kites. The photos of the victims, taken at a hospital circulated widely in social media, activated a furious reaction on 8th of November 2016 and a call for protest [35].

1. Timeline of the Key Events of Tabassum Movement

1) November 8th, 2016: A meeting was convened between a delegate from the government and local elders in the west of Kabul on what to do with the bodies. During the meeting, a disagreement broke out between the delegate of the government and four uninvited young local students. The representative of the government wanted the bodies to be carried to Jaghuri for a quick burial. The students, on the other hand, wanted the bodies to be carried to Kabul to be shown to the world in a big demonstration [36]. The demonstrators were arguing that the government is deliberately neglecting the security of Hazaras as no army corps was established in their region.

2) In the evening of the same day, Zaki Daryabi, a young director of *Etilaatirooz*, an influential newspaper based in Kabul, posted a notice on Facebook, trying to publicize the government's decision for a quick burial. The Facebook post was widely circulated and provoked further anger among the people [37].

3) November 9th, 2016: A meeting was convened between the local elders and young local students, in which the students took the agreement of the elders to bring the bodies to Kabul [36].

4) November 10th, 2016: The bodies of the victims arrived in Ghazni province to be given to their families for burial ceremony; a group of young activists organized a demonstration in Ghazni, demanding the bodies be carried to Kabul where a big protest was planned [38].

5) November 10th, 2016: The bodies were taken to Kabul, where thousands of people holding candles awaited their arrival in *Mussalla-e Baba Mazari* [39].

6) November 11th, 2016: Demonstration started from the western suburb of Kabul towards the presidential palace, the *Arg*. The demonstrators were carrying the coffins of the victims on their shoulder. The demonstrators, who were from all ethnic backgrounds and political sheds, were also carrying flyers and chanting slogans demanding the government provide security and calling for the president to resigns [40], [41]. When the protestors arrived at the gate of the Presidential Palace, they set up camp while chanting slogans. The government initially responded with silence, which made some of the protestors impatient. Some impatient protestors tried to make their way through the security gate, which panicked the security forces who then started firing into the air [42].

7) November 11th, 2016: In the late evening, President Ghani responded with a televised speech expressing his condolences and promising justice [43]. At 9:00 p.m., the government accepted a group of representatives of the people in a live-televised meeting that was convened in the presidential palace [44]. The government was represented by the President, CEO Abdullah, the Second Vice President Danish, Second Deputy of CEO Mohaqiq, minister of interior affairs, minister of defense, Ghazni MPs, and the director of Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission. The demonstrators were represented by a delegate of some influential locals. According to Bijlert, the three people who spoke on the behalf of the protestors were not from among the organizers of the protest [38]. The President, the CEO and Mohaqiq spoke for the government (the later associated with the Hazara community). To the surprise of the audience, who were expecting Mohaqiq to advocate for them, he lashed out at Daoud Naji, an organizer of the movement, accusing him of having staged the protest for failing to secure a position with the government [45]. The alleged representatives of the protestors in turn spoke, demanding justice, revenge, and the establishment of a *Qol-e Urdo*, army corps in *Hazarjat* [46].

8) The protest demobilized in Kabul the next day. The reason for the demobilization according to [38] was the polarizing along ethnic lines and the failure to be clear on their demands, becoming Afghanistan's version of 'Arab Spring'. Also, according to sources on social media, Mohaqiq, the second deputy of the CEO and a Hazara influential had instructed the mosques in the west of Kabul to refrain from accepting gatherings associated with advocacy for the blood of Tabassum [47].

D. The EM

In May 2016, *Jonbesh-e Roshnaye* or the EM emerged in reaction to the government's decision to divert a 500 kV electricity transmission route, known as the TUTAP electricity project. It was supposed to bypass the Hazara populated province of Bamiyan, before arriving to Kabul, according to the initial master plan. In the background, however, the hurt from the brutal murder of Tabassum in 2015 was still alive in the collective consciousness of the Hazara community. Diverting the line by the government, was like walking on the land mines, triggering a big explosion of somewhat sustained waves of protests across the country and in major cities of the world by the diaspora.

Afghanistan's Power Sector Master Plan was prepared by Fichtner, a German Engineering Consultancy Company. It had suggested the Bamiyan route for TUTAP electricity project, over the other suggested route known as the Salang route. The

reason was Fichtner's conclusion after a detailed comparative study of the two routes. In its 451-page report, Fichtner had enumerated several reasons for this decision; among them were economic, technical, and environmental reasons. The document prepared by Fichtner reads:

For the additional Hindu Kush crossing, it is recommended to use the so-called Bamiyan route for a new transmission line on 500 kV level. The Bamiyan route will avoid the narrow space and difficulties along the Salang Pass, will allow connecting further generation by coal fired power plants along the route and will secure the power supply of Kabul and south Afghanistan by using a separate route [1].

Despite the professional opinion of Fichtner Consultancy, *Da Afghan Breshna Sherkat* (DABS), which is the state-owned company in charge of the power supply of the country, had decided to re-route the TUTAP transmission line through Salang. This decision of DABS was confronted with disagreement from the second Vice President of Afghanistan Sarwar Danish, who is ethnically a Hazara. To convey his disapproval of the rerouting, Danish had written a letter to the President, with copies sent to the Ministry of Energy and Water as well as DABS, calling the decision against the national interest. The contents of the letter came into public's attention after it was published in *Etilaatroz*, a newspaper in Kabul, on January 9th, 2016. The reaction to the news kindled the grievances of the Hazara community once again, since they assessed that the decision as ethnically motivated.

1. Timeline of the Key Events of the EM

1- January 9th, 2016: People in Bamiyan province demonstrated against DABS's decision. It was also suggested that the Hazara MPs should boycott parliament in response [48].

2- January 12th, 2016: Mohammad Mohaqiq, the Second Deputy of the CEO, and the leader of *Hezb-e Wahad Mardumi Afghanistan* party asserted his disapproval of the reroute in a post on his Facebook page, see [49].

3- After the conflict arose between DABS and Hazara high ranking officials in the government, the president set up a technical committee to investigate the matter. According to Ruttig, the committee released their report on 10th of March 2016, with two paradoxical recommendations: First, the report had recommended that TUTAP should be implemented through Bamiyan. Second, it had recommended that if the route is implemented through Salang, an additional 220 kV grid should be considered for Bamiyan [50].

4- April 30th, 2016: The cabinet of ministers opted for the Salang route over Bamiyan as the main grid, approving an additional 220 KV subline for Bamiyan [51].

5- May 2nd, 2016: Ahmad Behzad, a parliament member, posted a notice on Facebook, asking the Hazara community in Kabul to gather for a consultation meeting regarding the issue in Baqir Ul-Uloom mosque [52]. The post was widely shared on Facebook.

6- 3rd May 2016: The meeting gave birth to a decision-making board named *Shuraye A'aku Mardumi*, translated as People's High Council. The Council issued its first public statement calling the cabinet's decision a national treason and issuing a 72 hours ultimatum to the government to change its decision to the original plan [53]. On the same day, the minister of Energy and Water held a press conference, admitting Fichtner's report is favor of Bamiyan route. Despite that, he asserted that the reroute was the decision of the previous government and a fait-accompli. He added that the preparatory work of the project was complete, and thus, further changes would delay the electricity supply to 12 southern Pashtun provinces [54].

7- May 6th, 2016: The first protest of EM was organized in Bamiyan after the government failed to respond to the ultimatum [55].

8- May 9th, 2016: People's High Council called for another meeting in *Mosala-e Shahid Mazari* to prepare for a bigger protest. Several Hazara political leaders and MPs had joined the gathering. Among them were the former Vice President Khalili, the Current Vice President Danish, the Second Deputy of CEO Mohaqiq. In a symbolic move, the leaders left the VIP platform and sat with the rest of the crowd [50]. A decision was made to organize a protest on May 16th.

9- May 12th, 2016: some of the diaspora supporters of the movement interrupted President Ghani's speech at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in London three times, calling him a liar, racist and corrupt [56].

10- May 14th, 2016: Hazara MPs walked out of the parliament, vowing not to return unless the decision was revoked [57]. Meanwhile, the EM issued its 7th public statement, calling for city-closure of the entire Kabul on May 16th, the Great Monday according to the statement [58].

11- May 15th, 2016: Thousands of people demonstrated in the southern Pashtun provinces in favor of the government's decision, marking the first countermovement [59]. Also, the proponents of the movement organized demonstrations in Ghani and Marzri Shariff provinces [60].

12- Overnight on May 15th, 2016: The government, which had experienced a big turnout of participants in the Tabassum Movement, had blocked all streets leading to the presidential place. To cordon off the city, 560 metal shipping containers, each rented for 4,000 Afs (equivalent to US$58), were used [61].

13- May 16th, 2016: Thousands of people participated in the pre-announced demonstration. Mohaqiq and Danish had not participated as they had withdrawn from the movement after the government's decision on giving a 220 kV subline to Bamiyan [62]. It marked the first major defection.

14- In response, the government formed a national commission to address the conflict. The commission came up with a report on 24th of May, calling the project a fait-accompli that should not be stopped, and increasing the

capacity of the suggested subline from 200 kV to 300 kV [63].

15- May 29th, 2016: The movement called for a civil disobedience against the government and a refraining from paying electricity bills [64].

16- Amid the intra-disagreement, the movement resorted to social appropriation strategies such as gathering in mosque every night for the whole month of *Ramadan* [53].

17- In its 22nd public statement, the movement announced 23rd of July as the beginning of an unlimited demonstration. It had designated 10 separate routes to march toward *Arg* [65].

18- July 23rd, 2016: A big wave of demonstration started from the west of Kabul, marching toward Arg. However, the government had placed containers in Dehmazang square to cordon off the city center. When the peaceful demonstrators arrived in Dehmazang and found their path blocked, they were targeted by twin suicide bombers that killed 85 people and injured 413 people [3].

19- The protestors demobilized after they were targeted by suicide bombers.

V. EXPLAINING THE MOVEMENT'S DYNAMICS OF SUCCESSFUL MOBILIZATIONS BUT RAPID DEMOBILIZATIONS

To explain the successful mobilization and rapid demobilization of EM, a mechanism-based explanation is utilized to probe for the significant causal mechanisms associated with the puzzle. In this pursuit, first major episodes of contention were described to locate the processes of successful mobilization and rapid demobilization of the EM in "continuous streams of contention" [8]. Second, the constituent mechanisms of both mobilization and demobilization as larger socio-political processes, as in [9], are unpacked. Mechanisms here are the significant causes; and they qualify as mechanisms if they meet the requirement of being "recurrent" in different episodes of contention [8]. Here, the Tabassoum Movement, which was described in Chapter II, is introduced as a touchstone case; out of this historical comparison, recurrent mechanisms associated with successful mobilization and rapid demobilization are singled out, as in [8].

A. Mechanisms of Successful Mobilization

Mobilizations could be activated by a combination of environmental, cognitive, and relational mechanisms. An environmental change might trigger a movement, success in mobilization maybe attributed to a combination of other mechanisms such as "attribution of opportunities and threats", "social appropriation", "category formation", "construction of frames", "brokerage", and "coordination" [8]. Mobilization here will be unpacked by the insights learned from the above theoretical arguments.

1. Socio-Economic and Political Environment

Protest mobilizations could have been triggered by some environmental mechanisms. The environmental mechanism is concerned with the interaction of "social sites" with their physical environment or "relations between the social circumstances in question and their external environment". Likewise, it refers to "externally generated conditions affecting social life" [23], [24], [8]. However, as covered earlier, environmental mechanisms are not always conducive to collective action. Thus, the cognitive components associated with how people view and interpret the environmental change along with the relational mechanisms can account for successful mobilization.

The EM responded to a wide range of interrelated environmental mechanisms such as the political deprivation of the Hazara ethnic group in one hand, and the shrink in security amid the ongoing ethnic and sectarian violence against the Hazaras, on the other. However, at the background was the laden historic and collectively felt sense of socio-economic and political deprivation from the "national cake" and a desire to act. The historical grievances were further fueled by the international community and the government's inability to implement development projects evenly throughout the country. Unfortunately, the country's economy in post-2001 has been donor-driven, and heavily dependent on international aid [66]. Moreover, international aid has not been responsive to the needs of local Afghans. Instead, it has been guided by the so-called principle "to win the hearts and minds" of the people [66], [67]. Thus, international aid targeted mostly the southern, high conflict areas; neglecting most rural areas such as West Central which included Bamiyan, Daykundi, and Ghor, the so-called *Hazarajat* (Hazara regions). The area, which is mostly located in rural part of the country, is characterized by the World Bank's Poverty Status Update Report as a "lagging region" because of its mounting poverty rate and high concentration of population [68]. This collectively felt sense of deprivation is observable from the onset of the movement's claim-making campaigns. In its first public statement, the EM referred to the reroute of TUTAP electricity transmission as a national treason, pinpointing to the principle of social justice endorsed by the Article 6 of the Afghan Constitution. The movement further announced provision of balanced development as one of their major goals [53].

Being off-grid and the lack of electricity in *Hazarajat*, as well as how this lack of electricity has been attributed to politically driven motives in the eyes of the Hazara ethnic group, were among the major environmental drivers of many protests, including the EM. Reference [67] examined the nexus between the lack of electricity and its interpretation as a systematic discrimination in the eyes of the Hazaras. Moreover, discrimination and politics of ethnic preference in all sectors - such as employment, civil service, public administration, and the educational sectors – also exacerbated the collective grievances of the Hazaras ethnic group. This also fueled their desire to act for change. There are several reports confirming a systematic discrimination against particularly the Hazara ethnic group, see [69]-[75].

The security also shrunk gradually after 2013; it was coupled with an increase in orchestrated targeting, hostage

taking, and abduction of Hazara civilians. It sparked a new wave of sectarian violence in the country. The Asia Foundation's Survey of the Afghan people and AIHCR has reported both the deterioration of security and the increase in direct violence against the Hazara community [76], [32]. The number of reported deaths and injuries incurred as a result of sectarian motivated attacks on the Hazara community is shown in Fig. 1 (the numbers are based on the existing report, compiled by the author).
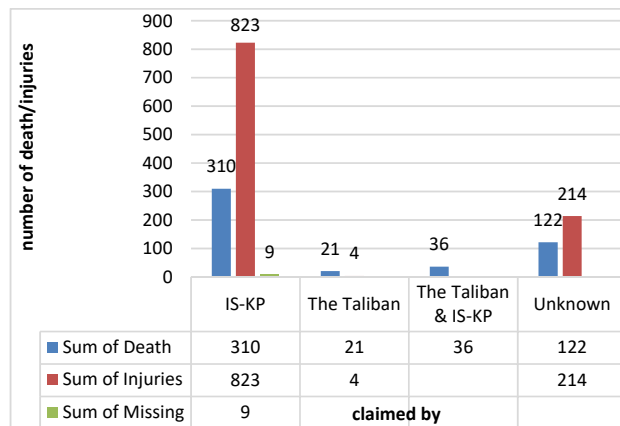

Fig. 1 The sum of deaths and injuries caused by deliberate attacks on Hazara civilians between 2014-2018

2. Attribution of Opportunities and Threats: Cognitive Mechanism

As discussed, environmental mechanisms alone cannot explain protest mobilizations. According to [8], "attribution of opportunities or threats" is considered as activating mechanisms that contribute in mobilizing the previously inactive people. Therefore, unpacking the cognitive mechanisms of how people interpreted the environmental change is equally important. According to [8], "cognitive mechanisms mediate between environmental and relational effects". In definition, "cognitive mechanisms are associated with individual or collective cognition"; moreover, they "operate through alterations of individual and collective perception; words like recognize, understand, reinterpret, and classify characterize such mechanisms" [23], [8].

Observing the EM's frames, slogan and other associated SNS data reveals the important role that the mechanisms of "attribution of opportunities and threats" played, both in its mobilization and demobilizations. Attention to some of the frames, and slogans used by the organizers of the movement, "the beneficiaries of the movement", sheds light on the role that these mechanisms played. For instance, the movement used large and small-sized banners while demonstrating on the streets of Kabul printed with slogans such as "TUTAP is our redline," "Don't eliminate us!" "Silence is not our right!" "Rerouting TUTAP is an example of the systematic discrimination" [77]-[80].

As seen above, the organizers of the movement attributed a grave threat to the reroute of electricity coupled with other environmental mechanisms to create a collective urge to act.

As Staggenborg had argued, "threats" could equally instigate potential actors to engage in action due to the perceived urgency of the situation and feeling of outrage [11]. The EM's mobilization was born out of such a collective perception of threat and urgency associated with Hazara's survival in Afghanistan. Likewise, the Hazara ethnic group and the organizers of EM appropriated a great opportunity for ascending communal mobility and greater socio-political clout in the presence of international actors, after the Taliban relinquished power in 2001. Chivenda et al. coined the post-Taliban period as a renaissance for Hazaras [31]. Staggenborg argued that potential actors might engage in collective action when they feel that the time is most favorable [11]. Taqi Amini, an organizer of the movement, emphasized on the opportunity to act as a result of post-2001 order [81].

As demonstrated above, the mechanism of attribution of threat and opportunity was clearly at work to activate the sluggish Hazara community to act.

3. Resources and Social Appropriation

As explained above, the availability and appropriation of both tangible and intangible resources is vital in activating collective action. The mechanism of social appropriation, in this regard, is used to account for alteration of nonpolitical actors into political ones by utilizing the most powerful institutional and organizational bases in order to build solidarity and carry on their campaigns [21]. In terms of appropriating the existing organizations as active sites for mobilization, the EM appropriated Shai mosques located in the west of Kabul as tools to recruit people. Appropriating *Mosala-e-Shahid Marzari*, literally translated as Shahid Mazari's House of prayer and Baqer-Ul-Uloom mosque effectively as sites of mobilization, the movement matched to a large degree with the religio-cultural framework of the Hazara community; hence, it was successful in making a sturdy bond of mutual trust with the Hazaras to eventually broker a strong movement and mobilize thousands of people. In Afghanistan, Mosques and their *imams* enjoy a special support and trust of people for being a sacred institution; every small town has at least one mosque and they are used for mass prayers, religious rituals and preaching the principles of Islam [82].

Mosala-e-Shahid Mazari has become an animated intersection of Hazara religious and collective experience, since it is both a religious mosque where people gather to perform their religious rituals and it is named after the Hazara leader, Abdul Ali Mazari, who was killed by the Taliban in 1955. According to [31], fieldwork in Afghanistan, the "Karbala Paradigm" and "Shiite narratives of martyrdom, suffering, persecution and resistance" is clearly at work, both in the way local Hazaras' talk about the collective experience of their ethnic groups and interpret them, and in the rhetoric of their leaders. Reviewing 50 public statements and online calls for mobilization, it became clear that the movement had appropriated Mosala-e Baba Mazari as an effective site for mobilization. Most gatherings were held there and it was highly promoted as a site for social justice, see [83], [84].

Besides appropriating the existing key institutions as sites for mobilization, the movement utilized Facebook and Twitter widely as a vehicle to reach the online generation and Afghan diaspora. Most of its public statements were posted on its Facebook pages. Among other online activities, its tweetstorm campaign on Twitter attracted attention of the international media and gained traction worldwide [85], [6].

When it comes to appropriating financial resources, the Hazara diaspora community organized fundraising events to raise funds for the movement, see [86]. Drawing on these religio-cultural stocks of the Hazara community, the movement, consciously or unconsciously matched their claims with the socio-cultural context of the Hazaras; therefore, it had no problem in brokering a large movement and mobilizing masses of people inside and outside Afghanistan.

VI. Explaining the Dynamics of EM's Rapid Demobilization

Even though the EM had a phenomenally successful mobilization, it demobilized rapidly, without achieving its stated goals. This section tries to unpack the process of demobilization of the EM to some of its constituent mechanisms. It is argued that demobilization as a lager socio-political process includes a combination of mechanisms such as cooption, defection, and repression [21]. The EM's trajectory also follows that of cooption, defection, and repression. After observing the EM, it became clear that the mechanism of defection and repression played a big role in its demobilization; however, the demobilization partly happened as a contingent outcome of mechanisms that played a part in its mobilization as well.

A. Unintended Consequences of Framing and Social Appropriation Mechanisms

Both framing and social appropriation mechanisms had some contingent and unintended consequences. On framing, William had put an emphasis on 'resonance,' it is because social movement entrepreneurs (SMEs) will have to draw from some cultural stock or resources to attract audience and supporters [20]. The EM mainly appealed to the cultural and religious stock of Hazara community by its framing and social appropriation strategies. Thus, it framed its claims as an endeavor to end the systematic discrimination against the Hazaras in all its demonstrations, as illustrated in [82]. This resonated well with the Hazara community, but it derailed its transethnic capital. Appropriating Shia mosques put the movement unintentionally against the Sunnis. Moreover, some felt threatened by the frames some elements of the movement used. For instance, Moulana Mojib Urrahman Ansari, a Sunni cleric, equated the EM to a sectarian war against Sunnis, in *Wesalhaq* TV program of *Shabakay-e Jahani Neda-e haq* [87]. This sort of exchange of rhetoric and the 'frame-disputes' between supporters and opponents, reduced the cohesion and unity that the movement had demonstrated at the onset; therefore, it derailed some of the movement's mobilization capacity.

B. Mechanisms of Defection and the Internal Dynamics

As described in the descriptive section of this paper, certain key figures, representing major political orientations in the Hazara community and who had an influential impact on mobilizing many people, defected as events unfolded. As described earlier, after the defection of these key figures, some mosques were refraining from providing loudspeakers for the demonstrators. Apart from that, the success in mobilization presented a tempting platform for opposing Hazara parties to gain popularity. Hazara political parties have always suffered from an internal disagreement between the ethnic grievance-oriented secular-constituents and ideological religious-constituents. The disagreement dates to the establishment of Hazara political parties during the resistance against the Soviets, in which Iran played a big role in supporting the establishment of multiple Hazara political parties, since Iran feared that the existence of a single political party would restrict its influence over Shia movements in Afghanistan [25]. Therefore, the movement gradually changed to an erosive intra-ethnic conflict, derailing its mobilizing capacity. Karimi has clearly illustrated the disagreement among some key members of the movement on who to offer speeches during protests [36].

C. Mechanism of Repression

Although the movement was not directly repressed by the state, Nonstate actors, however, continued targeting gatherings associated with the Hazara community. Targeting peaceful demonstrators on 23rd of July and subsequent attacks on mosques, sport complexes and schools made it very unsafe for the Hazaras to gather in big numbers. As illustrated in Fig. 2, the number of attacks on Hazara gatherings sharply increased after 2016 (the numbers are based on the existing report, compiled by the author).
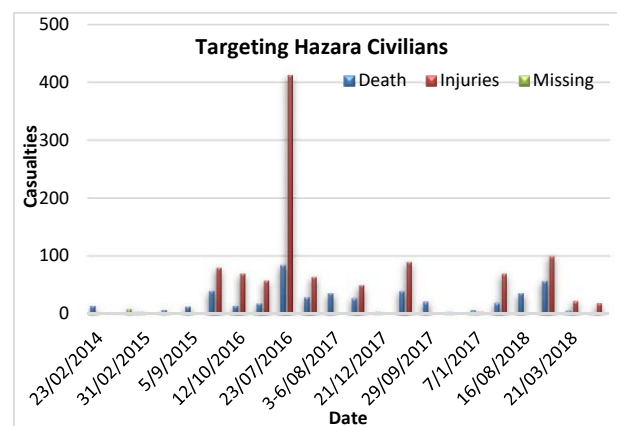

Fig. 2 The increase in the number of attacks on Hazara civilians after 2016

VII. Comparative Account: Tabassum Movement as a Touchstone Case

The search for the constituent mechanisms of both mobilization and demobilization of the EM started with

observing it. To establish the robustness of the unpacked mechanisms, the Tabassum Movement was introduced as a touchstone case, through which the recurrence of mechanisms is tested. If they were recurrent, they can quality as significant causal mechanisms, as in [8].

As described above, both movements were triggered by environment mechanisms; both movements had a successful mobilization but rapid demobilization. The Hazara community attributed threats to both the brutal killing of a little girl and the rerouting of an electricity project. Both movements appropriated Hazara mosques located in the west of Kabul and both framed their claims in a way to resonate with the socio-cultural stock of the Hazara community. Also, defections and repression derailed some of the mobilizing capacity of the movement. Last, but not the least, both movements changed to an erosive intra-ethnic conflict. Therefore, the unpacked mechanisms seem to be robust.

VIII. CONCLUSION

To understand the successful mobilization and rapid demobilization of the EM, insights learned from the relational approach were drawn. Both mobilization and demobilization of the EM were taken as larger socio-political processes that could be decomposed to their constituent mechanisms. Then, to check the robustness of the unpacked mechanisms, a touchstone case was presented. Through this comparative study, the recurrence and thus robustness of each uncovered mechanisms were established.

The puzzle of successful mobilization and rapid demobilization was solved, taking a dynamic relational approach. The implication from the relational approach suggests that both mobilization and demobilization could be unpacked to their constituent environmental, cognitive, and relational mechanisms. In this pursuit, several empirically supported environmental, cognitive, and relational mechanisms were discussed to explain the successful mobilization and rapid demobilization of the EM.

As revealed through the paper, the public sphere available for peaceful movement in Afghanistan is ethicized and drastically different from the public sphere available for contenders in Western democracies. Therefore, claims made by protesters could be easily changed to an erosive intra and interethnic issue, derailing much of mobilizing capacity of the contenders in the Afghan case. Also, as seen, security issues and contingent terrorist attacks could also impact on people's willingness to gather in large numbers.

While studies on contentious politics in Afghanistan has focused on hotly fought battles, the focus of the peaceful movements such as the EM have not attracted much attention; potentially because peaceful movements were added as new repertoires of action in the post-2001 period. Therefore, it is expected that the current paper would be a small contribution to the advancement of the state of the art.

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