

Kabul's Urban Identity: An Overview of the Socio-Political Aspects of Development

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Summary

When passing through Kabul today, it is obvious that huge glass facades have been introduced as a new element in the urban appearance of the city. It seems that many commercial and private buildings sparkling like glass palaces in the mud-brown landscape of Kabul represent a new modernity. In fact, since the fall of the Taliban a new era has started, one that is different from the past. The first steps in modernising the city started in the early 20th century, but these failed because the modernisation process was so fast and radical. During the reign of Nadir Shah (1929-1933) and later that of his son, Zahir Shah (1933-1973), a policy of carefully opening to progress followed, which left traces in the urban development of Kabul. With the invasion of the Soviet Army, urban development gained more ideological aspects. This process was interrupted by heavy fighting during the civil war (1992-1994) when Kabul suffered from severe destruction. With the invasion of the Taliban in 1996, Kabul was enclosed in a vacuum. Following their fall from power, the reconstruction process started in 2002; Kabul then witnessed a development it had never seen before. The capital of the country, the city seemed to be an open gate for new influences due to modern ideas and developments.

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