

A State in Limbo:
Afghanistan, Warlords and International Intervention
(1979-1992, post-2001)

by

Matilka Krow

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Supervisor:

Readers:

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AUTHOR: Matilka Krow

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines approaches taken towards warlords and militias during the current U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan and that of the Soviet/Najibullah period analysing their impact on key state formation dynamics and state-building efforts. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis, the study finds that while the current intervention has seen its warlord and militia strategies produce generally negative results, the past Soviet intervention can arguably claim some partial successes. Though these partial successes provided an “exit strategy”, they did not aid in the state-building efforts or regime stabilization goals that had been Moscow’s initial and primary goals.

The study also point to the problematic omission of actors and social groupings, such as warlords and militias, in state-building theory, and shows how security goals as typically addressed in state-building need not be synonymous or conducive to the primitive accumulation of force that spurred dependency relationships in past state formation.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

ABP	Afghan Border Police
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
ALP	Afghan Local Police
AMF	Afghan Military Force
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANAP	Afghan National Auxiliary Police
ANBP	Afghanistan New Beginning's Program
ANCOP	Afghan National Civil Order Police
ANSF	Afghanistan National Security Forces
AP3	Afghan Public Protection Program
APRP	Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program
AUP	Afghan Uniformed Police
CDI	Community Defence Initiative
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN	Counter-Insurgency
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DIAG	Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups
DRA	Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
KhAD	<i>Khidimat-e Ittila'at-e Dawlati</i> , Afghanistan Intelligence Service during Soviet intervention
LDI	Local Defence Initiative
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PSC	Private Security Contractor
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SoFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN SRSG	UN Special Representative of the Secretary General
VSO	Village Stability Operations
WAD	<i>Wezarat-e Amniyat-e Dawlati</i> , expanded Afghanistan Intelligence Service during Soviet intervention

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Chapter I: Introduction

The Soviet and ongoing United States-led interventions into Afghanistan represent the most recent episodes in Afghanistan's long and often tortured engagement with outside powers. Since at least the time of the "Great Game", the country has served as ally, enemy and host to powers seeking to exert their influence on Kabul and Afghanistan's strategically placed territory.

The challenges encountered by both the Soviet and U.S.-led interventions have mirrored those encountered historically by previous outside powers and by Kabul itself. Since its founding and subsequent incorporation into the international state system, Afghanistan has had a limited resemblance to a modern legal-bureaucratic state. Successive rulers in Kabul have alternately ignored, begged, and sought to force policies on a population that typically saw them as irrelevant, secondary to traditional or local forms of authority, or predatory. The state's ability to exert authority outside the capital has historically been contingent on relations with local powerholders, who often violently resisted taxation, conscription, as well as, efforts at reform that would have increased state penetration.¹ Indeed, many of the challenges that have faced rulers in Kabul since Afghanistan's earliest days are reminiscent of those encountered by would-be European rulers in the early days of state formation.

¹ Ewans refers to a 1929 report by the then new British minister to Kabul who observed that,

Throughout the country the advantages of anarchy seem to have been better appreciated than its drawbacks, and the tribes were asking themselves why they should resign the freedom which they had enjoyed for the past year, and submit again to a central authority which would inevitably demand payment of land revenue, customs duties and bribes for its officials, and possibly the restoration of the arms looted from the government posts and arsenals.

Martin Ewans. 2001. *Afghanistan: A Short History of its People and Politics*. UK: Curzon Press. P.139.

This study will examine the approaches taken towards warlords and militias during the current U.S.-led intervention (2001-present) and that of the Soviets and the government they left behind (1979-1992), analysing their impact on key state formation-related dynamics and variables, as well as, state-building efforts undertaken. Historical state formation suggests that a reliance on armed non-state actors poses significant risks to successful state formation. Given that this study argues that the most basic requirements of state formation—a primitive accumulation of power and the development of mutual dependencies between “coercion-wielding” rulers and civilians—remain fundamental to the expectations placed on functioning states, this presents a problem for state-building insofar as state formation considerations are not sufficiently taken into account. In state-building efforts in which warlords and militias become a key element of strategies used, we would expect to see negative impacts on variables and dynamics related to state formation, with negative impacts for efforts in key state-building areas of interest. This study, through a qualitative examination and analysis of select variables (specifically, security force strength, territory under state control, and capacity for direct taxation) finds that the Soviet and current U.S.-led interventions indeed confirm these expectations.

1.1 WARLORDS AND STATE-BUILDING

At the core of the argument that will be presented here is the contention that the role of warlords and militias in the 1979 and 2001 interventions into Afghanistan point to fundamental gaps in state-building theory. This will in part be shown by tracing the progress of warlord and militia policies under the Soviets and President Najibullah, (1986-1992), as well as, the current Coalition intervention. It will also look to Tillyan state formation—with its close study of actors and social groupings—as providing both important insights and serving a diagnostic function in pointing to limitations in current understandings of state-building.

Though this thesis will focus primarily on warlords and militias in the context of security, force and power, there are a number of other gaps in state-building theory that these actors point to. Since these issues are inter-connected but cannot all be treated with the attention they merit, it is worthwhile to outline and examine them briefly here.

Perhaps most conspicuously, warlords point to the inability of state-building theory to address actors who have the capability to significantly impact on state-building efforts. The potential of these players was, of course, starkly illustrated in Afghanistan with the collapse of Communist President Najibullah's administration in 1992 at the hands of the "Commander" Abdul Rashid Dostum. While state formation theory explicitly addresses the role of local powerbrokers and "wielders of coercion", state-building literature has been noticeably silent on the issue of actors and the power networks they can wield. Given the recurrence and often highly powerful positions of domestic power-brokers in many intra-state conflicts, this omission represents a serious weakness.

A related point is state-building theory's somewhat limited treatment of dependencies between the state (centre) and the periphery. While efforts in areas of governance, and most particularly, democratization are aimed at establishing lines of communication and accountability between the government and different social groupings, they typically do so without taking into consideration the well-established non-state power relations and dependencies that often exist in states with weak governments, where they provide alternate forms of authority, legitimacy and order. Though warlords by definition often have a limited grasp on legitimacy, they have not infrequently acquired their power bases through the provision of some level of "security services" to select local populations. State building theory at present does little in the way of speaking to these powerful relationships and networks and the opportunities and constraints that underpin them.

Warlords and militias also raise the issue of the impact of external patronage. While some authors maintain that current economic globalization both allows and encourages warlords to fuel conflict indefinitely, undermining possibilities for state-building (and rendering historical patterns of state formation unworkable), the case of Afghan warlords would suggest that this is overstated. Of greater relevance have been the large amounts of external funding that have arrived with foreign patrons and state-building efforts. While Afghanistan's status as a rentier state has persisted for most of its history, external patronage has not always been directed at Kabul. As Giustozzi notes,

whenever the Afghan state ceased to play the role of buffer between neighbouring states, or worse still turned into a threat to them, it proved relatively easy for outsiders to arm disaffected sections of the population against Kabul.²

In more recent times, the significant external resources provided to warlords and the funding of militias have added to the precariousness of Kabul's hold on power, with the latter heavily dependent on foreign aid. State-building theory, in itself, predicated on external funding has yet to fully address the implications of this for the sustainability of its efforts.

Warlords, and more specifically their militias, can also serve to pit state-building goals against each other, underlining the unresolved tensions between competing visions of state-building. While some authors, such as Fukuyama, identify security as holding a privileged position in state-building interventions, other authors have focused on the centrality of institutions, capacity building, and rule-of-law. Although warlords and militias can come to be seen as assets to the security-dimension of state-building—as is the case with the lead partner in the current Coalition intervention—they are more or less anathema to efforts in areas such as rule-of-law, governance, human rights and others.

² Antonio Giustozzi.2008. "Afghanistan: transition without end. An Analytical Narrative on State-Making". Working Paper No. 40. London: Crisis States Research Centre. P.21, also pp.45-46.

1.2 WARLORDS: SECURITY ASSET OR THREAT TO THE STATE?

Of central importance to this study is the fundamental gap that can develop between security, particularly in the form of “stabilization” goals, and the primitive accumulation of power and capacity for state penetration that reliance on warlords and militias exposes. While Fukuyama and others have pointed to state-building’s democratization efforts as posing a fundamental obstacle to establishing a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, little if any attention has been paid to the potential problems that current approaches to “security” may pose.³ As the case of Afghanistan shows, security initiatives as currently understood and prosecuted in state-building need not be synonymous with the primitive accumulation of force central to state formation and may, in fact, undermine it.

The central role given to security in state-building practice and in much of the literature typically reflects two main objectives: the strengthening of security forces, which may extend beyond the military to police, intelligence or other forces; and a focus on “stabilization” goals intended to address problematic or destabilizing levels of violence. While current practice in evaluating and setting security goals can be expected to consider variables like growth in numbers of security forces personnel, numbers of casualties, attacks on government forces, and insurgents killed or “reconciled”, these numbers, though valuable, can also in some instances be grossly misleading, as the to-be-discussed case of recent Afghan militias deemed to have “completed” DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) shows.⁴ Furthermore, measures of “stability” are also prone to politicization, particularly in the case of casualty figures,

³ Francis Fukuyama. 2007. Liberalism versus State-Building. *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 18, No. 3. P.11. See also, Fukuyama. 2005. Building Democracy After Conflict: ‘Stateness’ First. *Journal of Democracy*, 16 (1). Pp.84-88.

⁴ Tallies of numbers of insurgents (and insurgents killed) can also be problematic: “In 2006, the British government estimated that the Taliban had an active strength of 1,000. ISAF claims to have killed over 14,000 in the last two years”. Matt Waldman, 8 July 2009. “The Aid Afghanistan Really Needs” www.guardian.co.uk

which can bring the domestic political dynamics of intervening states to bear on state-building strategies.

More importantly, while figures such as tallies of security forces may well be deemed to provide a measure of the coercive capacity of the state, other stabilization metrics may have little value in measuring the primitive accumulation of power or penetration the state has been able to affect. It is this process of centralizing coercive force, coupled with the creation of mutual dependencies between “wielders of coercion” and civilians, that was deemed central to historical state formation.

It should be noted that the selective adoption of Weber’s concept of a monopoly on legitimate use of force, is arguably adequate in the broader state-building context given that it is entirely possible for a state to be faced with little in the way of political competition, while also having little in the way of institutions or other features of a modern state demanded by the current international community. Afghanistan and many other countries have in fact spent long periods operating, to borrow Reno’s phrase, as “states without institutions” and relying on an “enclave strategy” with limited ties and communication with their populations.⁵ Indeed, the presence of external resources in the form of economic rents, mercenaries, foreign military support, or aid flows (as occur during an intervention) can allow for precisely this dynamic. In this respect, state formation theory’s close examination of the role of mutual dependencies in establishing a self-sustaining polity can provide useful insights for state-building efforts.⁶

⁵ William Reno. 1998. *Warlord Politics and African States*. Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner.

⁶ The differences that the mutual dependencies described in state formation theory can make are strikingly illustrated by Rubin:

In 1789, on the eve of the French Revolution, 85 percent of that country’s population were peasants, and agriculture accounted for 60 percent of production. Most of the agricultural land was divided into small holdings. In 1978, on the eve of the “Sawr [April] Revolution” in Afghanistan, 85 percent of the population were peasants or nomads, and agriculture accounted for 60 percent of production. Most of the agricultural land was divided into small holdings. But in 1789, the tax burden imposed by the absolutist state fell mainly

State-building exercises which fail to speak to issues of primitive accumulation of power and state-society dependencies run the risk of ignoring not only the trajectory of past state formation dynamics, but also the (in some ways) more modest Weberian consideration of a state monopoly on the use of legitimate force. This thesis will argue that a reliance by intervening powers on militias and warlords as an aid to state-building represents perhaps the starkest example of such a gap. By extension, this thesis will also suggest that the Soviet and U.S.-led interventions have displayed differing levels of attention to the potential conflict between state-building activities and foundational state formation dynamics. This has been seen most clearly in the levels of willingness to incorporate militias and warlords into security and stabilization strategies, as well as, into state structures themselves.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

This study will adopt a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach comparing the current U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan (2001 to present) with the Soviet intervention and the final years of the Communist President Najibullah's regime (1979-1992). State-building strategies and changes to them over the course of the respective interventions will be discussed with special attention being paid to the approaches taken towards warlords and militias. Differences in these strategies and approaches will also be examined in terms of their impact on variables reflecting key state-formation dynamics. The examination of select data pertaining to the two interventions will provide not only a finer-grained analysis of the different approaches adopted but also

on the peasants, whereas in Afghanistan in 1978, the peasants paid virtually no taxes. The government relied instead on links to an international state system and market that had hardly existed two centuries earlier. The state paid its soldiers and bureaucrats with revenue from foreign aid, sales of natural gas, and taxes on a few export commodities. Despite their common antifeudal discourse, these two revolutions and the reactions to them differed as much as the states they overthrew.

Barnett Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. P.19.

their relative successes and failures in enabling the state experiencing intervention to work towards primitive accumulation of force and greater state penetration.

Included in the case studies is an examination of Kabul's own strategies during the respective interventions. While external actors bring considerable resources and tend to dominate and constrain the options available to domestic leaders, local actors nonetheless seek to push forward their own agendas. In cases where there is considerable dissonance in approaches between "interveners" and the "intervened" state-building activities can be significantly affected or undermined. This study suggests that the current U.S.-led intervention has experienced more fundamental levels of dissonance than the earlier Soviet one and points to what would appear to be an increased wariness in Kabul's approach to warlords and militias, in contrast with past historical practice.

Implicit in the approach taken here is a comparison of state-building theory and practice with state formation theory. There is little doubt that the challenges facing past rulers in Kabul who encountered an already well-developed state system differed markedly from those of early Europe. The role assigned to Afghanistan during the 19th century was that of a buffer state dependent on external support which aimed at generating coercive force, preferably in the form of functioning armies, controlled by a stable and "friendly" Kabul. This arrangement muted the external threats that might have engendered the mutual dependencies between the state and society that scholars such as Tilly have identified as an important element in past, characteristically bloody experiences of state formation.

Despite these differences, the internal dynamics of Afghanistan have persisted in owing more to Hobbes or Machiavelli than Weber, and many of the raw dynamics of Tillyan state formation, with its emphasis on "capital and coercion", are readily recognizable. Non-state actors and networks continue to represent powerful forces that have

regularly challenged central authority, or to use Migdal's phraseology, a "weak state" has regularly found itself confronted by a "strong society".⁷ This dynamic has been reflected in a fundamental (though decreasing) cleavage between urban areas and the countryside, which has often left the capital to function as an effective city-state, or what Rubin has characterized as a "nation-state enclave insulated from peasant-tribal society".⁸ In this sense, an exploration of Afghanistan with Tilly's model of earlier state formation in mind provides the opportunity to trace key forces and "wielders of coercion", such as warlords, that have impacted on efforts to exert authority across the country.

For the purposes of this study, a "warlord" will be defined along lines similar to those used by Giustozzi: as "a legitimate, charismatic and patrimonial military leader with autonomous control over a military force capable of achieving/maintaining a monopoly of large scale violence over a sizable territory".⁹ This definition is in harmony with a Tillyan perspective on state formation as organized crime in which would-be state leaders engage in the conceptual equivalent of "protection rackets" by virtue of offering "security" to populations within their area of operation. Excluded from this definition are actors whose motives are essentially commercial and for whom interests in networks (such as those used for trafficking) substitute for interests in physical territory. In itself, the term "warlords" will be used in a non-pejorative sense, though viewing these actors through an ethical lens is both legitimate and readily done. While attempts at academic detachment and objectivity have limited hopes for success, the author holds to the view that in the case of a study such as this one an attempt remains preferable to the alternative. An examination of—and numerous references to current literature on warlords—is also included given the differing circumstances facing early-

⁷ Joel S. Migdal.1988. *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁸ Barnett R. Rubin. 1988. "Lineages of the State in Afghanistan". *Asian Survey* 28. Pp.1190-1191 and p.1200.

⁹ Antonio Giustozzi. 2009. *Empires of Mud: wars and warlords in Afghanistan*. New York: Columbia University Press. P.5.

European “wielders of coercion” as compared to present-day warlords. While significant continuities persist, the notable changes in the “operating” environment of current warlords mean that a study of this type both requires and benefits from up-to-date study of these actors.

It should also be noted that although the terms “failed states” and “weak states” are included in this study, they are used with scare quotes as a reflection of their ubiquity rather than their conceptual strength. In addition to their susceptibility to politicization, it is worth asking if they mask more than they reveal. As the body of research into warlords and the work of Migdal, Reno, and others suggests an examination of non-state actors, their networks and ability to exercise influence may be a more useful approach to understanding the countries in question.

1.4 JUSTIFICATION

The methodology employed here allows for a systematic comparison of the Soviet and U.S./ NATO-led efforts at state-building in Afghanistan, particularly with respect to their use of warlords and militias. Though there is a considerable body of literature on both the current U.S.-led and earlier Soviet interventions in isolation, there has been little systematic comparison of the two. On the theoretical side, the author is unaware of any studies examining the intersections and tensions between state-formation and state-building theories using warlord-type figures and militias as an exploratory principle.

There has been considerable reluctance to compare the Soviet intervention to the current one, much of which has revolved around the contention (at least from the Western perspective) that the Moscow-led actions represented an occupation, in contrast to current efforts which enjoy legitimacy and approval provided by the international community. From an academic and practical perspective this is both problematic and ultimately unsatisfying. No two interventions—even those occurring in the same country and within a relatively brief period of time, such as the ones

considered here—can be free of important differences. The Soviet intervention relied on a single leading actor (not a multi-actor coalition), deployed an immediate and “heavy” footprint (not a “light” one), encountered immediate resistance from the population across the country (in contrast to the relatively warm welcome seen post-2001), and had distinctly more in the way of state structures and broader infrastructure to work with than the current intervention. These differences, however, occur in the context of fundamental similarities that underlie them. Both the Soviet and current interventions have seen large-scale, multi-sectoral efforts at state-building. Both efforts have also seen the deployment of substantial military and economic resources by a major power. These efforts have encountered significant resistance from the periphery and had to contend with an insurgency enjoying external assistance, which has resulted in both interventions directing efforts to support a state with limited power outside of Kabul.

Further to this, it is important to note that many of the obstacles that have faced both interventions are hardly without precedent in Afghanistan. Rulers have historically been faced with resistance to state efforts to expand its authority, often facing not only direct challenges and subversion of its attempts, but outright and violent opposition. It is in light of these considerations that the inclusion of state formation concepts in the analysis offers potential insights. While the dramatic increase in warlordisation seen as the result of the Soviet search for an “exit strategy” resulted in significant changes in the power architecture of Afghanistan—and the circumstances facing the post-2001 intervention—the significance of non-state actors and centres of authority has long figured prominently in Afghan rulers’ considerations. While the current armed non-state actor landscape presents greater threats to Kabul than it has historically—indeed the data in this study suggests that the situation has deteriorated further since 2001—these developments only serve to underline the limited levels of progress that have been achieved in accomplishing the basic prerequisites linked to successful state formation,

namely the primitive accumulation of power and the subsequent fostering of mutual dependencies between “coercion-wielding”-rulers and the civilian population.

Finally, the current form of state-building theory outlines a menu of various areas of intervention (security, development, democratisation, and governance, among others), with ensuing debates regarding whether problems in one area present greater or lesser obstacles to success. This study takes a rather different approach arguing that actors such as warlords represent an important if neglected factor in the successes and failures of state-building efforts. Though their classification as armed non-state actors places the emphasis on their role in security matters, warlords (and militias) represent not only quasi-military actors, but also political, economic, and social ones. Indeed, the areas of intervention associated with state-building are all regularly, and significantly, impacted by warlord activities, including efforts on their part to exert influence over a range of areas, including physical control over territory, extra-legal revenue collection, the fostering of ethnic divisions, and election results. Given the sheer number of ways in which state-building can be impacted and undermined, the relative lack of attention and underestimation of the potential of these actors is highly problematic.

The central role of warlords and militias in the collapse of the Najibullah regime in 1992 bears witness to the power that local strongmen and militias can wield. Given the increasing prominence of intra-state war in contemporary conflict, warlords and other non-state actors have not only become central to conflict dynamics but represent a persistent and under-examined factor in state-building operations. The strong likelihood that the international community will find itself facing so-called weak states compromised by local power brokers and “strongmen” in the future suggests that the importance of understanding the dynamics within a state like Afghanistan, and how external interventions interact, impact on and are affected by them, should not be underestimated. This study hopes to provide insights in this regard.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Since the days of the “Great Game” and competition between the British and Russian Empires, Afghanistan has increasingly faced political forces related to the international state system. In recent times, Afghanistan has experienced two external interventions that engaged in state-building activities, while also being added to the list of countries deemed weak or failed states seemingly unable to satisfy the ideal of the modern state and integrate into the formal state system. In light of this, studies of contemporary Afghanistan have often referred to both state formation and state-building, and the case of Afghanistan provides important insights into both.

This chapter will examine these two bodies of theory, as well as, examine work regarding another key element on the Afghan political landscape—the “warlord”. It will outline the substantive theoretical differences between state formation and state-building’s perspectives on countries with limited levels of “stateness”. It will also present some of the considerable internal debates and tensions within state-building theory and practice, as well as, the difficulties it faces in addressing the impacts of local powerbrokers. The chapter will show some of the potential limitations affecting state-building theory and practice in responding to the circumstances of states facing (or likely to face) intervention, particularly in terms of incomplete state control over armed non-state actors and the lack of mutual dependencies between the state and population, factors that have played a role in Afghanistan historically, as well as, in the recent Soviet and U.S.-led interventions.

2.1 THE BIRTH OF THE “STATE”

Though the “state” and accompanying “state-system” date to the 17th century, entities resembling states in different forms have existed throughout history. In the broadest sense—and in contrast to the rational-legal characteristics of the ideal Weberian state—Tilly defines states as “coercion-wielding organizations that are distinct from households

and kinship groups and exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories”.¹⁰

Studies of state-formation characteristically refer back to the bloody power struggles of early modern Europe. A notable outcome of this work and Tilly’s extensive study of state formation points to a paradox central to the creation of European states, namely, that it represented the unintentional by-product of competition between powerbrokers and their pursuit of military capacity for waging war with rivals and external threats.

According to Tilly, there were several reasons for this outcome. In general terms, leaders (“wielders of coercion”) trying to strengthen their armies were required not only to disarm rivals and the general public as best they could, but also required increased extractive powers in the face of wars which were growing in size and scale. These expanding needs necessarily led to the creation of civilian administrative extractive capacity, as well as, the promotion and support of a capitalist class which could finance the increasingly expensive business of war-making. The development of a civilian administrative apparatus and capitalist class created social groups distinct from military classes with claims and influence on leaders and the proto-state, a development which effectively served to constrain military forces and their influence.

In state formation’s early phases, wielders of coercion focussed primarily on the primitive accumulation of power, a process which Tilly characterizes as similar to large-scale organized crime, and more specifically to “protection rackets”.¹¹ In its later phases,

¹⁰ Charles Tilly.1992. *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990-1990*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. Pp. 1-2. An entity similar to Weber’s can be found in a separate entity that Tilly terms the ‘national state’—something he deems a historically rare entity—distinct in its capacity for “governing multiple contiguous regions and their cities by means of centralized, differentiated, and autonomous structures”.

¹¹ Charles Tilly. 1985. ‘War Making and State Making as Organized Crime’. In *Bringing the State Back In* edited by Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

civilian elements became increasingly influential as a result of ever more ambitious and expansive war-making objectives, a paradoxical process which saw increasing militarization going hand in hand with increasing “civilianization”.

Although the forces at work in early modern Europe were arguably particularly conducive to the formation of states, they did not guarantee states’ survival. Indeed, many states that were propelled along the different paths toward state formation did not survive the process and were ultimately absorbed by their neighbours. Many of the different activities implicated in state formation inevitably posed great risks. Disarmament of rivals and the public, increasing taxes, confiscation and channelling of production to war-making efforts, and in later phases, reliance on mass conscription, all ran the risk of provoking popular revolt, while making the state increasingly dependent and answerable to public demands.

Ultimately, the process of state formation required ever increasing “state penetration” into the lives and activities of the population, turning states from “wasps” that stung fiercely but infrequently, to “locomotives” that were increasingly ponderous and tied to the “rails” of civilian administration and popular support.¹² Tilly’s minimum trio of essential state activities—statemaking, warmaking and protection (which addressed internal rivals, external threats, and threats to both internal and external allies respectively)—typically expanded into other more risky activities of adjudication of disputes, the distribution and allocation of goods, and control over production. This was often accompanied by efforts to homogenise populations through the imposition of common languages, currencies, religions and legal systems, alongside efforts to develop trade, communication and transportation systems. These activities often sparked massive resistance and subsequent efforts by states to plead, repress, bribe, or otherwise bargain with various elements of the state and its population.¹³

¹² Tilly. 1992. P. 96-97.

¹³ Tilly. 1992. P. 101.

2.2 THE (IM)POSSIBILITIES OF CONTEMPORARY STATE FORMATION?

Contemporary debates concerning the Tillyan model often revolve around its level of applicability to current circumstances. Some, like Leander, argue that globalization fundamentally “alters the effects of the central processes which Tilly (and others) argued placed war making and state making in a positive relationship.”¹⁴ A drift toward the “externalization” of state formation (which was discussed by Tilly himself) has resulted in states being able to forego the mutual dependencies required by earlier state formation processes, as they look to outside sources for both resources and legitimacy. Sørensen, who concedes that there is considerable empirical support for Tilly’s model, nevertheless, argues that the links between war-making and state-building simply have not materialized in the “Third World.”^{15, 16}

Ultimately, for Sørensen, the path from war-making to state-making falters in the “Third World” because of the undermining of the applicability of a Tillyan model in contemporary international contexts. More specifically, the inability of war-making to give rise to state formation is explained by three inter-related factors. Firstly, strong international norms protecting state sovereignty stand in direct contrast to earlier European experience in which leaders faced “two-fronts”, one against domestic rivals and the other against external threats to state-survival. Secondly, current international norms which provide a “life insurance” policy against state extinction have not prevented significant political and economic involvement from outside states. The pursuit of these interests has “often led to violent conflict, but it is a kind of war making

¹⁴ Anna Leander. 2003. ‘Wars and the un-making of states: taking Tilly seriously in the contemporary world’. In S. Guzzini and D. Jung, eds. *Copenhagen Peace Research: Conceptual Innovations and Contemporary Security Analysis*. London: Routledge. P.3.

¹⁵ Georg Sørensen. 2001. “War and State-Making: Why Doesn’t it Work in the Third World?” *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 32, No. 3. Pp. 341-342.

¹⁶ Youssef Cohen, Brian R. Brown, A.F.K. Organski. 1981. The Paradoxical Nature of State Making: The Violent Creation of Order. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 75, No. 4. (Dec.). Pp. 901-910.

which only rarely contributes to state-making”.¹⁷ Finally, Sørensen contends that under these circumstances, domestic factors, including leadership, become decisive. While analyzing the impacts of leadership is problematic, he notes that there is typically little in the way of external pressure that would impel leaders to act as meaningful state-builders. On the contrary, the “guarantee” of state survival may in fact encourage short-term opportunism at the expense of long-term state consolidation.

Some of the points made by Sørensen are expanded on by Jackson and his study of what he has termed “quasi-states”. His analysis implicitly questions the current the conception of “weak” states, focussing instead on the international norms which privilege juridical norms over the empirical reality of many states.

...some states have always been less substantial and capable than others...The history of the modern state is in no small part a history of rulers who are illegitimate, governments that are disorganized or incompetent, and subjects who are indifferent, alienated, cowed, or in rebellion...What has changed is not the empirical conditions of states but the international rules and institutions governing those conditions.¹⁸

It is important to note that Tilly himself maintained that there was a limited resemblance between 16th and 17th century Europe and the contemporary circumstances surrounding state formation. One important difference, according to Tilly, has been a greatly increased disproportionality between militaries and other forms of social organization in “Third World” states, a situation seen in client states during the Cold War and others.¹⁹ This preponderance of military-level organization has been accompanied by a broader and fundamental “externalization” of state formation.

Over the last three centuries, compacts of powerful states have increasingly narrowed the limits within which any national struggle for power occurred. They have done so through impositions of international war settlements, organization of colonies, diffusion of standard models for armies, bureaucracies, and other

¹⁷ Sørensen. 2001. P. 348.

¹⁸ Robert H. Jackson. 1990. *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁹ Tilly. 1985. P. 186.

elements of the state apparatus, creation of international organizations charged with tending the state system, collective guarantee of national borders, and intervention to maintain domestic order. The narrowing restricted the alternative paths of state formation. Throughout the world state formation converged on the more or less deliberate construction of national states...according to models offered, subsidized, and enforced by the great powers.²⁰

Tilly also points to expanded state opportunities for leaders to generate “capital” and “coercion” on international markets through expanded international trade, the global arms trade, and military aid and patronship, side-stepping risky activities such as increasing taxation or implementing conscription that would ultimately lead to greater accountability of government to the population. In the current environment, civilianization no longer seems likely to accompanied militarization; militarization results in militarization, typically in a fashion that has inhibited the dynamics central to state formation.

Tilly’s contention, and it one that is echoed by Sørensen, is that exploration of earlier state formation can nevertheless provide an important tool in better understanding the forces at work in contemporary conflict in “Third World” states. It is worth noting that the processes central to Tillyan state formation—the need to address rival wielders of coercion, the development of civilian administrative capacity, the securing of foundations for private economic activity and capital development and, perhaps most importantly, the fostering of mutual dependencies between military forces and civilian actors—continue to be key elements to functioning states, and especially democratic ones. Seen from this perspective, early state formation theory can potentially serve a highly useful role in better understanding the dynamics undermining the achievement of functions and capacities associated with so-called “strong” or democratic states.

2.3 BUILDING THE BETTER STATE

²⁰ Tilly. 1992. P.182.

As indicated earlier, the international norms that all but guarantee state survival have not precluded significant international involvement in the inner workings of states. In addition to growing numbers of international organizations and conventions, “Third World” states and states perceived as “weak” or “failed” have been subject to numerous forces from outside their borders. These have included everything from financial reforms and Structural Adjustment Plans (SAPs) to pressures associated with emerging international initiatives and norms in areas such as human rights. While external threats from neighbouring states—which Tilly described as an integral part of the pressures that led to earlier state formation—have been significantly reduced, the threat of external force remains, particularly for those states that are seen as least integrated into the state system. While both “rogue” and “failed” states cannot discount the possibility of “regime change”, governments of “failed” states face the additional and somewhat paradoxical “threat” of humanitarian or security-driven interventions which incorporate state-building activities.

Although state-building lends itself to exploration by economics, international development studies, anthropology and other fields, much of the literature on the topic has come from the domains of political science and international relations. Given that the practice of state-building has outpaced theory, the literature has tended towards the technical needs of policy makers and field practitioners, seeking to identify preconditions and facilitating factors for state building activities. The prevailing sense that in failed states “everything is a priority” has similarly led to extensive debate on issues of sequencing and prioritization.²¹

²¹ Verena Fritz and Alina Rocha Menocal. 2007. *Understanding State-Building from a Political Economy Perspective – An Analytical and Conceptual Paper on Processes, Embedded Tensions and Lessons for International Engagement*. DFID’s Effective and Fragile States Team Report. London: Overseas Development Institute. P. 33 quoting Patrick Stewart 2007. “Haiti: New Terms of Engagement?” Comments at United States Institute of Peace event on Haiti, ‘Haiti: No Longer a Failed State? 7 February.

An example of the latter is the identification by Dobbins *et al* of six state-building areas. Starting with security, Dobbins *et al* outline a sequence of activities that continues with humanitarian relief, governance, economic stabilisation, democratisation and finally, development.²² In addition to debates about the use of this sort of one-size-fits-all “checklist” model, some scholars maintain that experience shows that sequencing of different areas of state-building is insufficient and must be accompanied by careful sequencing *within* areas of state-building.²³ A particularly contentious point of debate, which has also been raised in the case of Afghanistan, has been the scheduling of democratization initiatives, such as elections, which some scholars warn may undermine efforts at stabilization, if improperly timed.²⁴

Though there has been considerable attention paid to establishing which factors might facilitate successful state-building, Kipping notes that there has been “little coherence in the factors that are identified”.²⁵ Fritz and Menocal, for their part, point to a whole host of contextual factors and their potential implications that are illustrative of the range and breadth of items that have been identified as relevant or even crucial to state-building efforts. The authors’ list includes: the “starting point” of the state with respect to the present or absence of conflict and/or occupation; characteristics of peace arrangements; the range and/or depth of external engagement; the degree of pre-

²² See James F. Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, and Beth Cole DeGrasse. 2007. *The Beginners’ Guide to Nation-Building Operations – a guidebook for effective nation-Building Operations*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

²³ Fritz and Menocal are one example, describing this type of ‘internal’ sequencing as “crucial”. Fritz and Menocal. 2007. P. 5.

²⁴ Other priorities have been raised by other authors. Some of these, such as transitional justice or security sector reform, have also been seen as potentially risky and subject to special concerns over timing. For an example of debate concerning the timing of democratization initiatives see, Carothers, 2007 versus Mansfield and Snyder. Thomas Carothers. 2007. “The ‘sequencing’ fallacy”, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.18, No.1. P. 12, and Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder. “The Sequencing ‘Fallacy’”, *Journal of Democracy* 2007. Vol. 18, No.3. P.5.

²⁵ Martin Kipping. 2010. “Two Interventions: Comparing Soviet and US-led State-building in Afghanistan”. Afghan Analysts Network.

http://aan-afghanistan.com/uploads/AAN_Two_Interventions.pdf

conflict “stateness” and/or presence of the state as a service provider; previous regime characteristics; specific risk factors (narcotics, natural resources, unstable neighbourhood, level of ethnic homogeneity, concentrated ethnic blocs, the sense of a “national public”, degree of modernisation); difficulties of geography; density of population; external interests and/or interference; level of economic opportunities; and the amount of external assistance available.²⁶

As a counterpoint, Scott has argued that factors that would be presumed favourable to state-building such as a high level of economic development or “previous experience of democracy” have failed to be consistently identified as facilitating factors. Indeed, Scott’s own work has indicated that high degrees of social cohesion, good leadership and an active civil society are particularly relevant to state-building efforts, though the implications of this aren’t entirely encouraging given that state-building efforts have characteristically been pursued in states experiencing high levels of social fragmentation and tension.²⁷ The sheer range and inconclusiveness of efforts to identify facilitating factors had been seen as encouraging a mushrooming of priorities and tasks deemed essential to state-building. In Ottaway’s words, “in an attempt to remedy early mistakes and avoid future failures, the international community has developed a set of prescriptions for state reconstruction that is so exhaustive that it cannot possibly be followed in practice”.²⁸

2.4 WHEN STATE FORMATION AND STATE-BUILDING MEET

Given that state-building efforts are particularly likely to occur in the context of states facing state-formation challenges, the marked differences between the two bodies of theory is significant. The endogenously driven and unintentional processes of state formation stand in sharp contrast to the externally driven, often foreign-led and highly

²⁶ Fritz and Menocal. 2007. Pp.19-20.

²⁷ Scott. 2007. Pp. 9-10.

²⁸ Marina Ottaway. 2002. “Rebuilding State Institutions in Collapsed States”. *Development and Change*, Vol. 33, No.5. Pp. 1008-1009.

deliberate activities of state-building. While state-building's ostensible aims focus on institutions, government functions and outputs, state formation is more attuned to the opportunities and constraints, as well as, power relations confronting actors and social groupings.

These contrasts have led some to question whether current state-building practices can succeed in light of their sharp divergence from historical state formation processes. Fukuyama, for one, has argued that state formation and state-building are fundamentally contradictory insofar as the promotion of liberal democracy remains an end goal. He maintains that a fundamental state-building objective of establishing a Weberian monopoly on the legitimate use of force through concentration of the means of coercion stands at odds with liberal democratization goals that aim to constrain state power through decentralization, rule of law, and its subjection to public accountability.²⁹

Related to this has been discussion of the place of "nation-building", with its focus on the creation of national identity, in the context of state-building. In the often highly fragmented states in which state-building interventions take place, efforts to promote national identity are often considered important components of state-building activities. But scholars such as Ottaway have argued that, much as in the case of democratization, state-building and nation-building represent opposing forces in the face of the calls to self-determination that nation-building can ultimately produce.³⁰ Parallel arguments have been made about the potential risks and opportunities associated with decentralization efforts aimed at marginalized groups or regions, occurring in socially heterogeneous contexts. Desires to strengthen the "centre" can run counter to the reforms seen as necessary to engage—or at least pacify—the "periphery".

²⁹ Fukuyama. 2005. P. 87 and Fukuyama. 2007. P. 11.

³⁰ See Marina Ottaway. 1999. 'Nation-Building and State Disintegration'. In eds. Mingsteb, K. and Daddieh, C., *State Building and Democratisation in Africa*. London: Praeger.

Jung maintains that the usual “sequencing” seen historically, with state-formation preceding many of the activities associated with state-building, is effectively reversed and confused in many contemporary situations.

In cases such as Afghanistan and Iraq, institutional features of the second phase – constitutions, elections, representative bodies – were implemented before achievement of the first phase, the establishment of a legitimate state monopoly of physical force. Oriented toward the normative image of the modern state, current state-building processes tend to invert the social logic of European state formation, in which the coercive formation of state monopolies preceded both the juridification of political authority and the enhancement of state capacities.³¹

Ottaway makes a similar observation arguing that while a “shortcut” to an ideal Weberian state would allow current states to avoid the bloody paths of past state formation, current state-building practices have unfortunately failed to produce these highly desirable results. The reason for this lack of success is that “internal attempts [at reconstruction] hinge on re-establishing power, the donor-directed ones on building institutions...the problem is that what is good in the long run does not work so well in the short run, because in the short run power trumps institutions”.³²

This issue of domestic power relations is rarely explicitly addressed in formal state-building practice and literature, despite internal power dynamics forming the working environment for state formation processes, state-building initiatives and other efforts for strengthening central authority or implementing reform. Other scholars have explored these power relations, however, with authors such as Migdal arguing that the power of non-state actors and social groupings constitute formidable forces and centres of legitimacy within many “Third World” states.

Migdal has argued that, contrary to the usual perception of a powerful centre overshadowing a passive periphery, the impacts between the two are mutual and that

³¹ Jung. 2008. P.39.

³² Ottaway. 2002. P.1015.

“peripheral” areas can in many instances have significant effects on state outcomes. The medium for this impact is the ability of non-state groupings to undermine central authorities’ ability to exert control and enforce change in society, an ability which can threaten not only the state’s capabilities and effectiveness, but its survivability.³³

Given the power and legitimacy of existing social dimensions and networks, their reach often extends into state structures, such as armed forces and ministries, where it can pose existential threats to state leaders. As a consequence, leaders with little ability to mobilize their societies typically resort to patronage, patrimonialism, bargaining and divide-and-rule strategies to address and accommodate other powerful domestic actors. The resulting “politics of survival” produces one of the paradoxes of “weak” states, namely that their leaders are often central to the undermining and even dismantling of the very agencies needed to increase their authority, capacity and push forward their policy agendas.³⁴ Contrary to usual understandings, a lack of institutions is not a cause of “weak states”, so much as a result of them.³⁵

2.5 WARLORDS AS RIVALS TO THE STATE

Although local strongmen and powerbrokers have been an ever-present factor in Afghan political life, the rise of warlordism in the 1990s in Afghanistan has complicated political and military power balances and made a consideration of these actors increasingly important to understanding the dynamics and circumstances within the country.

³³ Migdal. 1988. P. 181.

³⁴ Migdal. 1988. Pp. iv and 213.

³⁵ Reno’s work also presents this argument. See Reno. 1988. P. 4.

Warlords and other “strongmen” are commonly seen as violent rivals to central authority in “weak states”.³⁶ With limited power being projected by state authorities, a security gap is left open to the influence of other actors. As Jackson puts it,

...a characteristic of most fragmenting states is a devolution of power from the centre to the local level. As state agents of coercion (army and police) cease to function, local police act on their own behalf to provide security. As physical security lessens, localised protection becomes necessary because force becomes the only mechanism through which stability can be created within society. In some cases, the development of this protection contributes to the very breakdown of local society as new forms of cultural conventions are formed. It is in these situations of societal breakdown that the patronage of a “big man” becomes crucial.³⁷

It is precisely this social dimension which some scholars have focussed on, examining the social dynamics of “weak states” and their impact on governance and central control. Migdal places warlords within a larger pattern of social fragmentation undermining the ability of the state to either control opposition or effectively mobilize social forces towards leaders’ goals. While the threats posed by individual warlords can, in most cases, readily be dealt with by state leaders, their inability to exercise broad and effective social authority remains.

This fractured nature of power dynamics in “weak” states is described in Migdal’s model of a triangle of accommodation, involving “implementers”, leaders/politicians, and “strongmen”.³⁸ Both national leaders and leaders at local and regional levels (“implementers”) ultimately establish patterns of accommodation with “strongmen” in light of the opportunities and constraints posed by an environment governed by the

³⁶ For the purposes of this study, warlords, local powerbrokers and strongmen will be used to refer to armed non-state actors playing a security role and with interests in maintaining or expanding power in terms of territory and political influence. Excluded from this are actors whose primary aims are financial and the control of networks as opposed to territory; it also excludes armed non-state actors who are primarily ideologically driven.

³⁷ Paul Jackson. 2003. “Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance”. *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol.14, No.2. Pp. 133-4.

³⁸ Migdal. 1988. P. 239.

needs of political survival. This is not, however, to say that Migdal's strongmen represent dominant players. The often significant dependency of strongmen on state resources, their fragmentation, and frequent lack of organizational capacity ultimately reflects mutual dependencies between all three players in the triangle. The paradox in terms of state formation and state-building lies in state leaders being dependent on the very strongmen who will use state resources to undermine them.

Though current debate persists on questions of degree, there is some consensus that globalisation has provided warlords with additional tools with which to rival the state. This facilitation can occur in a number of fashions, though scholars have often focussed on the advantages that accrue to warlords able to establish control over natural resources or trafficking activities. Jackson contends that the wealth and power that can result from commercial "savvy" combined with the leveraging of markets in a globalised environment can be substantial, resulting in some warlord organizations taking over government or even "completely replacing it".³⁹ In this and related worst case scenarios, some authors argue, the benefits generated by globalisation prove self-sustaining and substantial enough to lead warlords to go beyond "filling" security gaps afflicting "weak states" to effectively creating and perpetuating them in order to maximize the profits available.

The work of both Giustozzi and Menkhaus has suggested that viewing the global economic incentives that accrue to warlord-behaviour as indefinitely self-perpetuating overstates the impact of globalisation. The reason for this, according to Giustozzi, is that economic activity and profitability is compromised with prolonged violent conflict, not just in broader terms, but with respect to the individual warlord himself. More

³⁹ Jackson, Paul. 2003. Pp. 143-144: Unburdened by bureaucracies, state debt, or pressure to support development activities in their areas of operation, warlord organizations can channel revenues into the arms needed to support their position of power, with the result that some warlord organizations, according to Jackson, are "as, if not more, economically successful than many legitimate states in Africa."

specifically, there is also a limit to the amount of profiteering that can take place in many conflict environments, with war “unlikely to generate a virtuous economic cycle capable of sustaining ever greater returns”.⁴⁰ The implication is that with diminishing returns and potentially increasing risks faced by the warlord, peace—and the stability that could be used to secure existing assets—could become increasingly attractive providing opportunities for co-optation of warlords into political structures or their move from military-type activities to somewhat less damaging illegal criminal operations.⁴¹

Menkhaus’ field driven studies of conflict in Somalia have produced observations that echo Giustozzi. He indicates that,

Over the course of the past decade, the interests of some members of these groups have shifted. Some warlords, merchants of war, and others who initially profited from looting and diversion of food relief have shifted into quasi-legitimate businesses requiring protection of assets and open commercial arteries. As a result, they have come to possess a greater appreciation for basic rule of law. War and banditry are no longer good for business, at least for a growing section of the Somali commercial and political elite.⁴²

Given this, an economic-causes or war-economy theory provides only a partial explanation of the warlord dynamic. Ultimately, a purely economically-driven approach seeking to maximize profits and outcomes should be unlikely to result in complete state

⁴⁰ Antonio Giustozzi.2005. “The debate on Warlordism: The Importance of Military Legitimacy”. Discussion Paper No. 13. London: Crisis States Research Centre. P.6.

⁴¹ Another influential and related argument on this topic has been Mancur Olson’s concept of ‘roving’ vs. ‘stationary’ bandits. Olson suggests that the latter will ‘like a rancher’ naturally have an ‘incentive to provide public goods at the same time that he extracts the largest possible net surplus for himself’. See Mancur Olson. 1993. “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development”. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No.3. (Sep.). P.569.

⁴² Ken Menkhaus. 2003. ‘Warlords and Landlords: Non-State Actors and Humanitarian Norms in Somalia’. Paper presented at the ‘Curbing Human Rights Violations by Armed Groups’ conference, Liu Institute for Global Issues, University of British Columbia, Canada, 14-15 November. Pp. 25-26.

http://www.socialamissionen.a.se/pub/administrationkit/filebrowse/resources/menkhaus_paper2003.pdf

“failure”. Instead, warlords and elites would generally be expected to collude to produce what Menkhaus refers to as a “paper state” and pursue the path of “warlord rulers”, who use their formal position atop the state to leverage the benefits of sovereignty and thereby maximize their profits.⁴³

Giustozzi has suggested that understanding the significance of economically motivated activity is likewise more complicated than it might appear, given that the need to supply and maintain support of armed forces remains both expensive and essential to a warlord’s survival and, thus, outside of a motivation centred on pure greed. He also points to the military background and orientation of many warlords as a key characteristic differentiating them from more entrepreneurially-oriented non-state actors in terms of both behaviour and motivations.⁴⁴ Warlords are more open to the temptations of power and political legitimacy than a purely economic understanding would suggest, with Giustozzi noting that, “in Afghanistan, warlords have been trying hard to become appointed as ministers and governors, and in Africa at least some of them have clearly tried to obtain legitimisation by seeking to win presidential elections (Taylor and Savimbi)”.⁴⁵

2.6 GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

While considerations of internal competition for power, domestic actors, and centre-periphery dynamics all have fundamental importance from a state formation perspective, they are rarely given attention from a state-building one, which, if it looks to actors at all, tends to attribute greater importance to external players—not only

⁴³ Perhaps, the key text exploring the dynamics of state leaders employing ‘warlord strategies’ is Reno. 1998.

⁴⁴ Giustozzi’s approach to defining warlords emphasizes points including military leadership, charisma and patrimonialism. Giustozzi. 2009. P.6 and pp. 16-17.

⁴⁵ Giustozzi. 2005. P. 8-9.

intervening powers, but even neighbouring states—and their capacities and prerogatives.⁴⁶

Aside from situations in which domestic powerbrokers and “warlords” have been viewed as potentially powerful and disruptive enough to require special handling “in the field”, there has been limited theoretical exploration of their impact and role in state-building efforts. Similarly, to the degree that state-building practice has overlapped with the “hearts-and-minds” dimension of counter-insurgency (COIN) theory, sporadic attention has been paid to domestic actors as regards security considerations, most notably in the form of tribal leaders and militias. Given the tactical and instrumental considerations involved, local or regional balances of power and issues surrounding the legitimacy of force or authority involved have largely been overlooked or seen as having limited importance.⁴⁷ While state-building theorists and practitioners have readily acknowledged the benefits of enlightened leadership and reliable “partners” in developing a base on which security, institution-building, the rule-of-law and democracy can be established, this has often been treated as something to be hoped for as opposed to an objective or variable implicated in state-building activities.

State-building’s focus on capacity, outputs, and functions leaps ahead to the ideal-form of a rational-legal bureaucratic state leaving it ill-equipped to incorporate domestic powerbrokers and address balances of power and centres of legitimacy and force within the state. This serious limitation may well account for the persistent recurrence within

⁴⁶ Dobbins et al. 2007. P.xxii. Dobbins et al indicate that “nation-building always requires the integration of national and international efforts”. These are described as layers that start with an inner circle of ‘major powers that care most about the success of the enterprise and are prepared to commit personnel and money to it’ and proceed outward to international financial institutions and finally neighbouring powers.

⁴⁷ Fritz and Menocal. 2007. Pp. 6 and 21; “Interestingly, despite the critical importance of internal actors in state-building efforts, the fragile states literature has focused in considerable detail on external actors, whereas domestic/internal actors and their interests are less frequently and deeply analysed (especially in comparative perspective).” ; See also p. 28-29 regarding the neglect of centre-periphery issues.

state-building literature of “ownership” issues, highlighting not only the tensions between endogenous state formation and externally authored state-building, but also issues of influence and competition between domestic power centres. The high degree and multiple points of intervention demanded by state-building efforts (which typically cover a range of sectors from security-sector reform to social reform, capacity and institution building and the provision of public services) expand the risks attendant to not addressing the domestic power architecture.

Until recently, very little attention has been paid to the incentives and constraints that interventions present to local powerbrokers or warlords, and the overall interaction between state-building activities and state formation activities. Though the term “state-building” is suggestive of activities to fill the vacant lot where the state ought to be, as Reno, Migdal, Duffield and other scholars have argued, the apparent “weakness” of some states can obscure highly developed informal networks of influence and power.⁴⁸ In these environments, attempts at state-building with their focus on institution building and the expansion of state penetration through service provision and other even more controversial means (such as economic, justice or social reforms) face the real prospect of sustained resistance and “spoilers,” as domestic actors work to protect neo-patrimonial and patronage networks, as well as, their local authority and power bases.

Indeed, the ongoing challenges posed by non-state powerbrokers and “wielders of coercion” to state-building efforts suggest that despite the important differences in early European state formation and contemporary circumstances, state formation theory may be useful in enhancing understanding of the dynamics underlying the role and behaviour of powerbrokers in state-building interventions and states with weak central governments.

⁴⁸ See Reno. 1998. *Warlord Politics and African States*. Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner; Duffield, 1998. Post-modern Conflict: Warlords, Post-adjustment States and Private Protection. *Civil Wars*, Vol.1, No.1. Pp.65-102.

Finally, though there is considerable literature about both the Soviet and current U.S.-led interventions in Afghanistan, as well as, studies of different dimensions of Afghanistan's politics, history and particular social dynamics, there is exceedingly little in the way of comparative examinations of the two interventions, or of their interaction with the Afghan state. This thesis will seek to make this omission a little less noticeable.

Chapter III: The Soviet Intervention – The Long Road across the Amu Darya

While considerable attention has been paid to the military tactics employed by the Soviets, much less attention has been directed towards the state-building initiatives that were initiated during the years of their intervention into Afghanistan. For so long as state-building remained central to the Soviet presence, irregular militias and their leaders were relied on in only a limited fashion, with ideologically-motivated state militias pursued as a preferred option, though the latter showed only modest outcomes.

The tenacity of the insurgency saw hopes for an expansion of Kabul's power from urban centres into the periphery fade and with the latter half of the 1980s state-building was abandoned and the imperatives of identifying an exit strategy and regime survival took over. Militia use, and consequently their influence, surged. The initial caution and scepticism on the part of a number of Soviet advisors regarding militias was perhaps ultimately vindicated when President Najibullah and the Communist experiment in Afghanistan ended with his toppling at the hands of a northern warlord in 1992.

This chapter will argue that although initial Soviet strategies to achieve security (and thereby facilitate state-building) presented limited conflict with the centres' ability to seek a monopoly on the large-scale use of force, over time and with the increasing reliance on warlords and militias, the two became effectively pitted against one another. While the shift to a militia-based strategy was taken up as state-building was abandoned and ostensibly intended to allow the Red Army to withdraw and provide support to a Moscow-"friendly" government in Kabul, it points to some of the difficulties attendant in such an approach, even in case of the less ambitious goal of regime survival. In the face of the negative impact that the shift to militias had produced on the recruitment and functioning of regular security forces—a centre-piece of Moscow's earlier state-building efforts—the need to ensure funds to secure warlord

loyalty was heightened. The indefinite funding and patronage required to maintain warlord support and a militia-based strategy proved unworkable within a few years.

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The Soviet's decision to invade Afghanistan was made reluctantly and arose out of growing concerns over the behaviour of the Afghan Communist leadership in Kabul, its impacts on the Socialist project in the country and how this state of affairs might affect broader Cold War dynamics. Indeed Ewans quotes a Soviet official in Moscow reported to have said, "If there is one country in the world where we would not like to try scientific socialism at this point in time, it is Afghanistan".⁴⁹

The overthrow of President Daoud by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in the Saur Revolution in April 1978 apparently came as a surprise to Moscow. The persistent internecine conflict between the two main PDPA factions of *Parcham* and *Khalq*, and the assessment that Kabul was moving far too quickly also provoked significant concern. Moscow saw the PDPA as effectively alienating the population through hasty reforms, a situation made worse through Kabul's neglect in following an established principle of Sovietization, namely the early development of party cadres.⁵⁰

⁵¹ The revolt in Herat in March 1979 which saw hundreds of Soviet advisors and their

⁴⁹ Ewans. 2001. P.186.

⁵⁰ Anton Minkov and Gregory Smolynec. 2009. 'Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989: Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan'. Ottawa: Defence R&D Canada Centre for Operational Research and Analysis. P.24, fig. 16, 25. "Within months of coming to power, the PDPA regime promulgated a series of decrees aimed at transforming Afghan society and expanding the social base of the regime. The three reforms which had the most profound impact were aimed at reducing social inequality in the countryside by redistributing land, cancelling land related debts and limiting the burdening payments to the bride's family required from the grooms in marital arrangements".

⁵¹ See Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. P.119.

families tortured and killed confirmed Soviet fears that the Afghan Communist project was moving in dangerous directions.⁵²

Concerns about potential damage to Soviet prestige and the progress of the broader international “revolution” should Afghanistan fail coupled with fear of an American move to replace the Soviets should their influence wane finally led the U.S.S.R. to enter Afghanistan in December 1979.

3.1 THE SOVIETS AND STATE-BUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN

Despite the U.S.S.R.’s initial reluctance to intervene, once there, ideology ultimately required state-building efforts (of a Soviet variety) in order to try and salvage the Afghan experiment with Communism. Financially, the Soviets had, even before the invasion, been major patrons of Kabul and this grew substantially over the years of the intervention.⁵³ Militarily, the Soviet presence was immediate and substantial: “within a few days, 50,000 troops and 1,000 armoured vehicles were occupying the main population centres of the country. Within a few weeks, three further divisions were committed and total numbers grew to some 85,000”.⁵⁴ The initial ambitions of the Soviets were moderate, to hold key population centres and sites (including the Ring Road connecting major points in the country) while supporting Afghan forces which would deploy into the countryside to address the substantial resistance which had sprung up almost immediately with the Red Army’s entry into the country.⁵⁵ With

⁵² Ewans. 2001. P. 197

⁵³ By 1978 Afghanistan was the third largest recipient of Soviet aid \$1,265 billion; Anton Minkov and Gregory Smolynech. 2007. “Economic Development in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989: Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan”. Ottawa: Defence R&D Canada Centre for Operational Research and Analysis. P. 3.

⁵⁴ Ewans. 2001. Pp. 203-4.

⁵⁵ Kipping. 2010. P. 10.: “the Soviet army only ever concentrated on twenty-five locations and on securing the transport corridors between them”. ; Ewans. 2001. P. 223.” In 1981, the mujahedin initiated over 5,000 attacks on Soviet and Afghan units, in the first nine months of 1982, the number almost doubled to 7,600.”

efforts to stabilize the PDPA and a short program of strengthening Afghan security forces, the hope was that indigenous troops could regain control of the country and allow the Soviets to return home after what would amount to a brief intervention, initially anticipated to require six months.⁵⁶

The insurgency proved stronger and more persistent than had been anticipated and the Soviets had no choice but to stay and address it as Afghan forces, for various reasons, proved unable to counter it on their own. As a consequence, state-building efforts were soon expanded beyond addressing PDPA dysfunction and the security realm. Militarily, the tactics adopted by the Soviets were severe. In contrast to a traditional counter-insurgency strategy of separating insurgents from the population and attempting to starve the former while deploying a “hearts-and-minds” strategy towards the latter, efforts relied on depopulation and “scorched earth” tactics. Large numbers of Afghans were driven out of the countryside by attacks on villages, which were subsequently destroyed along with fields and anything else that might be of use to the insurgency.⁵⁷

The arrival of a young Mikhail Gorbachev to Moscow resulted in one more year being given to the Red Army generals to bring the situation under control, but by November 1986 “the Soviet leadership concluded that they had “lost the battle for the Afghan people.”⁵⁸ In the final years of the intervention, a stalemate persisted with Afghan forces still in a precarious state and “only 5 out of a total of 18 million people under government control”.⁵⁹ The Soviet army ultimately withdrew back over the Amu Darya in February 1989.⁶⁰

3.2 SOVIET STATE-BUILDING INITIATIVES

⁵⁶ Ewans. 2001. P. 217; Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. P.123.

⁵⁷ Ewans. 2001. Pp. 220-221.

⁵⁸ Ewans. 2001. P. 231.

⁵⁹ Ewans. 2001. P. 226

⁶⁰ The Geneva Accords officially ending the conflict had been signed in April, 1988 after over six years of negotiations.

The resources dedicated to Afghanistan by the Soviets were substantive, with the swift buildup of forces within the country leading to relatively stable troop levels that varied between 90,000 and 115, 000 over the course of the conflict, while estimates for the amount spent on the war range between 3 and 12 billion a year.⁶¹ Though these troop levels were insufficient for counter-insurgency they were significant and coupled with the provision of substantive military resources—1986-1990 saw Afghanistan ranking as the fifth-largest importer of weapons globally—represented a major commitment; indeed, financially it is doubtful that the Soviet Union could have afforded much higher levels of expenditures.⁶²

Despite the harshness of the military tactics used in the countryside, the ideological dimensions of Soviet engagement meant that state-building activities were carried out on a number of fronts. Given the amount of aid being provided and the highly dependent state of the government in Kabul, Moscow was able to exert considerable leverage on policy, perhaps most especially when factional conflict within the PDPA became most debilitating.⁶³ Indeed, despite its efforts—which included the killing of President Hafizullah Amin by KGB Special Forces Unit Group Alpha to make way for the installation of Babrak Karmal—the Soviet Union was never able to stabilize the Afghan Communist party, which continued its past practice of devoting considerable energy to inter-party rivalries and purges.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ewans. 2001. P. 223. Ewans estimates that between 7 and 12 B a year spent over the 9 years of occupation. By contrast, Rubin estimates it at 3-4 billion per year (Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. P. 109) and Barfield estimates \$5 B annually. Barfield, Thomas. 2004. 'Problems in Establishing Legitimacy in Afghanistan'. *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, (June). P.282.

⁶² Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. p.109.

⁶³ Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. P.125

⁶⁴ Minkov and Smolyneec. 2009. 'Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989". P.10. "It was estimated that by the end of 1979, 16-17,000 PDPA members had been killed, purged or had left the party... Since at the time of the invasion, the insurgency was not yet in the position to pose any threat to the existence of the government,43 there is no doubt that the level of disintegration of the state and the party in 1979 was one of the main reasons for the Soviet intervention."

The threat of the insurgency notwithstanding, significant state-building activities were initiated in a number of areas including attempts to build party structures, the strengthening of security forces, development of state industries and distribution systems, and education, including cadre formation, with several (controversial) social reforms also initiated.⁶⁵ Kipping refers to the last commander of the Soviet army, Gen. Boris Gromov, who estimated that military operations represented only 40 percent of overall Soviet efforts in the country.⁶⁶

Economically, and in line with Soviet theory, the main focus was on the development of state industries and bilateral trade. While success in the former was modest, bilateral trade increased from a pre-intervention level of 30% to over double that by 1982.⁶⁷ However, despite these efforts the Soviets were unable to address the perennial rentier status of the Afghan economy. Indeed, natural gas which was exported to the Soviet at a discount combined with high levels of foreign further entrenched it. Between 1979 and 1988, rentier income derived from Soviet aid and natural gas sales ranged between 32 and 62% of Afghan government income with domestic revenues only able to pay for between 24% (1988) and 50% of expenditures. The shortfalls that emerged in the late 1980s were financed by domestic borrowing (the printing of money) in ever increasing quantities.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. P.126.

⁶⁶ Minkov and Smolynech. 2009. 'Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989'. Pp.1-2.

⁶⁷ Minkov and Smolynech. 2007. 'Economic Development in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.' P.15.

⁶⁸ Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. Pp.296-7; Minkov and Smolynech. 2007. 'Economic Development in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.' P.16. With the exception of 1980, from 1978 to 1988 expenditures exceeded revenue by a significant margin.... The efforts to build up the army's capabilities and costs associated with the national reconciliation process made state expenditures rise sharply.

On the social front, reforms were initiated as part of efforts to modernize and Sovietize the population, though these efforts inevitably had greater success in urban areas than in the countryside, where concerns about the insurgency coupled with resistance from the population prevented many initiatives from taking root or being implemented at all. In addition to efforts targeting education, ethnic equality and women's rights, a major effort was made to introduce land reform and establish co-operatives and state farms in the dominant agricultural sector.⁶⁹ The latter efforts, despite various attempts were a signal failure antagonizing farmers and colliding with traditional values surrounding the sanctity of land ownership. In 1982 their number stood at 1,217, growing slightly to 1,274 by 1984,⁷⁰ while a government survey indicated that only 53% of peasants who received land actually cultivated it.⁷¹ The damage caused by failed land reform, though significant, was outweighed, however, by the damage done as a result of counterinsurgency efforts to destroy the economic and logistical supply base the countryside provided the insurgent *mujahedin*.

The state-building aim which most preoccupied the Soviets, however, was the rebuilding and strengthening of Afghan security forces. Military aid increased significantly with the intervention and continued to rise over the course of the Soviet intervention. By 1980 military aid was sevenfold higher than pre-1978 levels. The first year of the Soviet withdrawal saw military aid spike to an unprecedented level of almost 4 billion rubles.⁷² While the building of Afghan security forces faced numerous challenges, the development of intelligence and domestic surveillance capacity marked one of the major institution-building successes of the Soviets. The KGB-organized Afghan

⁶⁹ Minkov and Smolynec. 2009. 'Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.' P.33.

⁷⁰ Minkov and Smolynec. 2007. 'Economic Development in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.' P.11.

⁷¹ Antonio Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-1992*. London: Hurst. P.27.

⁷² Minkov and Smolynec. 2009. 'Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.' P.4.

intelligence service KhAD (*Khidimat-e Ittila'at-e Dawlati*), and its later upgraded ministerial incarnation, the WAD (*Wezarat-e Amniyat-e Dawlati*), became an important force within Kabul's power architecture, active in militia recruitment, and was possessed of enough coercive force and resources that it became a key player in counter-insurgency operations.⁷³

Once the Soviets abandoned the idea of a six month occupation, Moscow's aim was to use an extensive program of state-building to provide the base for a stabilized Afghan Communist party allowing it to maintain its position and eventually advance the revolution. Through a combination of a more functional party apparatus and strengthened security forces, state penetration and social and economic reforms could be brought to the countryside. Similarly, through careful expansion and the cultivation of a new elite nurtured through educational reforms support for the regime would be strengthened, sapping the insurgency. The insurgency, however, proved a formidable force that ultimately limited the Soviets to an "enclave" approach, focusing and reducing much of its state-building efforts to cities. The ensuing urban-rural / centre-periphery disconnect mirrored the historical difficulties that had long been encountered by rulers in Kabul, and meant that, as in the past, a lack of institutions that could

⁷³ Counter-insurgency activities included bringing rebel groups over to the government, the creation of fake mujahedin units to alienate civilians, safeguarding key military positions, and activities through special operations units including thirty mobile units with 12,000 men as of 1986. Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.99; See also Giustozzi. 2008. "Afghanistan: transition without end". P.26, "...it could be argued that by the second half of the 1980s most of the counter-insurgency effort was on KhAD/WAD's shoulders. However, the creation of specialist counter-guerrilla battalions and of special security units to protect key facilities was not the main aspect of KhAD/WAD's role. The focus of the agency's effort was to recruit rural militias from among the ranks of the insurgents and use them to expand the government's influence over the villages. The recruitment pattern remained slow until 1989, probably because few leaders of non-state armed groups were willing to make deals with a government they thought was likely to be doomed in the long run. Also, deals with the government in the presence of a Soviet army would have discredited the local leaders with the clergy and its closest followers".

connect rulers to the periphery left military force as the prime option for implementing policy.⁷⁴

Indeed, the need to address the lack of a monopoly over force (legitimate or otherwise) in the countryside and the appeal of a military solution to address challenges to state-building underlay one of the major policy and strategic choices of the occupation: the decision to look to armed non-state actors.

3.3 THE SOVIETS, MILITIAS, STRONGMEN, AND “WARLORDS”

The use of militias has long numbered among the strategies available to Afghan rulers. The Soviets’ adoption of a modest level of militia use as a strategy occurred relatively early in their intervention under the umbrella of broader pacification efforts. That being said, the later arrival of Gorbachev signalled a fundamental re-alignment—and downgrading—of goals for Afghanistan that called on militias to play a pivotal role in efforts to secure a Soviet exit from the “bleeding wound” that the intervention had become.⁷⁵

Prior to Gorbachev’s arrival and revisiting of Afghan policy in 1985-1986, efforts to pacify the periphery had already been pressed forward on a number of fronts including initiatives to co-opt religious scholars (the *ulama*)—who were potential mobilizers of armed opposition—and traditional divide-and-rule strategies playing off of existing tribal divisions and rivalries. There had also been some effort put into creating ideologically-oriented party militias, though these enjoyed limited success.⁷⁶ The decision to explore the use of non-state militias brought both advantages and disadvantages:

⁷⁴ See Minkov and Smolyne. 2009. “Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.” Pp. 21-22.

⁷⁵ Ewans. 2001. P.225.

⁷⁶ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P. 48.

Soviet strategists and the Kabul regime realized that in order to defeat the mujahidin they had to engage them on their own ground and to use their methods. In 1983, a Jirga in Kabul sanctioned the use of tribal militias to complement the state security forces. The objective was to create a structure based on the traditional principles of state defence in Afghanistan. Furthermore, since these troops were recruited from the local inhabitants, the tribal units engaged sectors of the rural population, which would have refused to serve in the regular army. On the negative side, the central government had difficulty controlling the militias.⁷⁷

With Gorbachev's conclusion that the Afghan intervention was not winnable at a cost that the Soviet Union could afford, revised and more modest goals for the intervention were decided on. Accordingly, a National Reconciliation policy (and a new President, Najibullah) were unveiled in the final months of 1986. In place of Soviet state-building, the new aim was to negotiate a political resolution with armed opposition that would allow for Red Army disengagement whilst keeping Afghanistan non-aligned and out of the American orbit.⁷⁸ Indeed Giustozzi has argued that pacification policies and their after effects represented a shift from an "ideological strategy" focused on strengthening the armed forces, making peace with tribal and religious figures and the building of a political base (including the intelligentsia, petty bourgeoisie, and peasants) to a "flexible strategy" aimed at responding to Afghan realities and ensuring regime survival.⁷⁹

In tandem with National Reconciliation, militia formation was substantially expanded with militias also brought into a prominent role in counter-insurgency efforts. Given that militias and their members "were exempted from any government programs they found objectionable, including conscription into the regular armed forces", efforts to increase their numbers ultimately depressed attempts to recruit and strengthen the Afghan

⁷⁷ Minkov and Smolyneec. 2009. "Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989." Pp. 16-17.

⁷⁸ Minkov and Smolyneec. 2009. "Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989." P. 19. As a first step, the government declared a unilateral ceasefire (effective January 15, 1987) and general amnesty (January 24, 1987).

⁷⁹ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. Pp. 9 and 119.

security forces, a central element of Soviet state-building.⁸⁰ Some authors have argued that the other significant impact of the reliance on militias and larger pacification process was the reinforcement of traditional social structures at the expense of Sovietization and modernization goals.⁸¹ While militia use and pacification efforts did reinforce the influence of the periphery, militia use and subsequently warlordisation may be more readily seen as a significant step in the deterioration of traditional tribal structures as the resulting “new khans” increasingly overshadowed older authorities. While traditional social structures were retained inside militias, the role and source of authority for militia groups both increasingly diverged from traditional patterns and undermined them.⁸²

Though the National Reconciliation Policy was not accepted by the political parties representing the insurgency, individual *mujahedin* commanders proved much more open to the significant concessions on offer. These included local autonomy and material support, amounting to effective self-rule and a range of other benefits:

The minimum requirement of the armed groups was to guarantee the security of their own areas and lead a “peaceful life”...Those who made peace were guaranteed land ownership, “free choice of work in the area of transport, industry, trade and agriculture”, the writing off of past taxes, allowances for the disabled and the families of martyrs. Moreover “arms and ammunition [would] not be taken away from them”.⁸³

The role of militias in National Reconciliation was central insofar as *mujahedin* who signed on were not disarmed and instead were generally incorporated into militias that promised not attack the government; as a reward they were offered substantial salaries

⁸⁰ Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. P.144.

⁸¹ Minkov and Smolyneec. 2009. ‘Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.’ P.14. To bridge the two approaches, an attempt was made to reconcile the traditional social structure and institutions with the new party-state structure and institutions.

⁸² Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. P.144.

⁸³ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. Pp.163-164.

and given landholdings.⁸⁴ Indeed, the offer to *mujahedin* commanders to effectively move their armed units into a negotiated truce with the government became the key tactic used by the government to address the threat posed by the insurgency.⁸⁵ By 1988, the combined number of militia irregulars including tribal militias, village self-defence units and party militia (such as the Groups for the Defence of the Revolution, GDR) stood at 150,000.⁸⁶ The militias growing influence increasingly undercut the role of security forces, as militias took on more substantive roles in counter-insurgency activities progressively marginalizing regular forces.⁸⁷

By offering a lucrative package at little cost, National Reconciliation proved attractive to large numbers of *mujahedin* commanders and tribal leaders. Indeed, the initiative was deemed a success in the short term with 70-80% of *mujahedin* commanders signing “protocols” agreeing to cease military operations against the government by 1989. Minkov and Smolynec note that “by the end of the war, 25 percent of all non-government armed units had signed reconciliation agreements while 40 percent had ceasefire agreements with the government. It is estimated that only 12 percent of the mujahidin rejected any deals”.⁸⁸ Consequently, the overall security situation improved,

⁸⁴ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. Pp.163-164.

⁸⁵ See Giustozzi. 2007c. “The Missing Ingredient: Non-Ideological Insurgency and State Collapse in Western Afghanistan, 1979-1992.” Working Paper No. 11. London: Crisis States Research Centre, for an in-depth exploration of the dynamics that revolved around warlord and militia leader dynamics with respect to “going over” to the government.

⁸⁶ Minkov and Smolynec. 2009. “Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.” P.16-17.

⁸⁷ Minkov and Smolynec. 2009. “Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.” Pp.16-17. In 1988, the Kabul regime had at its disposal 460,000 armed forces, including state security forces and militias. Combined with the Soviet 40th Army, more than half a million men were fighting on the side of the regime.

⁸⁸ Minkov and Smolynec. 2009. “Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.” Pp.19-20.

with 1986 and 1987 United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR) reports indicating that the number of civilian deaths was down 65-70%, as compared to 1985.⁸⁹

Key to the success of the National Reconciliation policy was the fact that its generous terms were interpreted by many tribal powerbrokers, strongmen, and mujahedin commanders as a climbdown by a state that had overstepped its bounds and “corrected its mistakes”.⁹⁰ The net effect was that,

the National Reconciliation policy resulted in a situation where regional power centers enjoyed unprecedented autonomy. Instead of ensuring the stability of the regime, the National Reconciliation policy and the tribal policies only perpetuated the power of local centers as alternatives to the state. The connection between countryside and government under the banner of National Reconciliation was an artificial one, which could persist only as long as the central government was able to re-distribute the resources coming mostly from foreign aid.⁹¹

Unsurprisingly, subsequent attempts to regularize or otherwise control or discipline the militias that mushroomed, particularly over the second half of the 1980s, met limited success with militia members reserving their primary loyalties to their militia commanders.⁹² Though some of them proved to be quite capable fighters, the regular and violent excesses of these irregular forces proved a liability to the government and its efforts to bolster support for itself among the population, an important factor given that the relative strength the regime had been able to achieve in urban areas had hardly been matched in the countryside.

Ultimately, the resort to militias served to signal the abandonment of Soviet state-building efforts in the countryside—where insurgency and security efforts would dominate—and the hardening of an “enclave strategy” which saw the Kabul

⁸⁹ Minkov and Smolynec. 2009. “Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.” Pp.19-20.

⁹⁰ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. Pp.171-172.

⁹¹ Minkov and Smolynec. 2009. “Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.” P.33.

⁹² Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.220.

government increasingly isolated. While earlier pacification policies had been intended as a supportive measure to address challenges to the state-building project, National Reconciliation marked a fundamental shift in aims. Sovietization effectively ended and the search for an exit strategy and regime survival began in earnest.⁹³

3.4 THE AFGHAN STATE IN THE MIDST OF SOVIET STATE-BUILDING

The case of the Soviet intervention—both in terms of Moscow’s changing goals, and the increasingly precarious nature of the government in Kabul—reflected the growing gap between attempts at state-building and the imperatives of survival in the face of state formation challenges.

The “partnership” between Moscow and Kabul was a fraught one given the persistent factionalism that weakened the PDPA. In spite of the growing dangers, tensions plagued the party to its last days and interfered with Soviet-led state-building efforts, even, and perhaps especially with regards to efforts surrounding security forces.⁹⁴ In this sense, as Kipping points out, “the PDPA leaders turned out to be anything but the Soviet puppets both opposition groups and western analysts labelled them as.”⁹⁵

Despite this, there was a certain convergence in terms of overall strategy which was admittedly aided through the replacement of leaders who proved determined to ignore Moscow. Given both the military and financial resources offered by the Soviets and the Afghan government’s dependency on them, “during the Karmal period and the early

⁹³ Minkov and Smolynec. 2009. “Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.” P.19-20. “Marxist propaganda and promotion of Afghan-Soviet friendship was gradually discontinued while English replaced the study of Russian. Religious instruction in schools was reintroduced. In November 1987, a Loya Jirga accepted a new constitution which removed the word “democratic” from the name of the country.”

⁹⁴ Kipping. 2010. P.10. In addition, because of the strong presence of their factional rivals, both Karmal and Najibullah tended to obstruct Soviet efforts to decisively strengthen the Afghan army.

⁹⁵ Kipping. 2010. P.10.

part of Najibullah's rule, Soviet personnel were the final decision makers for the Afghan state, especially when the PDPA was paralyzed by factional conflict...All major policies were approved if not initiated by Soviet advisers".⁹⁶ With the departure of the Soviets, Najibullah continued on the path of militia reliance and efforts at establishing indirect rule that had been mapped out in the wake of Gorbachev's withdrawal of support for the Afghan project, and if anything, pursued it all the more aggressively.

The PDPA regime in Kabul up until the mid-1980s displayed an almost impressive level of indifference in pursuing policies and reforms that had historically provoked considerable resistance. The low levels of risk aversion are all the more striking given that the development of the party as a key structure in pushing forward reform and bolstering support for the government remained problematic. Minkov and Smolynech cite a 1987 letter in which a Soviet advisor, "compared the PDPA to a —circulation system without blood, and characterized it as a —party of membership cards. According to Tsagolov, the party was moving toward its political death."⁹⁷ The strategy of cultivating a new party support, especially of youth, was inconsistently undertaken and poorly implemented leading to a growing predominantly urban-based group of potential supporters that instead became disenchanting and radicalized.

As the insurgency persisted with little success in taming it and the Soviets started to question the prospects of successful state-building, the historical survival tactics of Afghan rulers became increasingly central to regime strategy. The precariousness of the situation demanded a nimbleness that institution-building was ill-suited to. Moscow's sudden surge in aid in anticipation of its withdrawal was gratefully received and the combination of patronage networks, patrimonialism and handouts of resources provided by external sources were once again central to survival. The printing of money to finance expenditures which had increased markedly during the intervention became

⁹⁶ Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. P.125

⁹⁷ Minkov and Smolynech. 2009. "Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989." P.13.

even more pronounced during Najibullah's regime as Soviet funding ceased to be an option, and the need to maintain the "loyalty" of warlords and their militias became more pressing.⁹⁸ Faced with a continuing lack of legitimacy, June 1990 saw a dramatic change of course as the PDPA renounced Marxism, embraced free-markets and renamed itself the Fatherland Party (*Hizb-e Watan*). The only requirements for its members was that they be "good Muslims" and accept the National Reconciliation policy.⁹⁹

From the time of the readjustment in Soviet strategy and announcement of withdrawal plans, the National Reconciliation process paired with the standing up of militias became the lynchpin for PDPA survival. While Kabul happily took advantage of the farmers and young men who had become habituated to war and displayed little interest in returning to their villages to bolster militia strength, this practice ultimately "fostered the creation of warlords all over the country" and, given the large numbers of the population involved, made a return to a peace economy after the fall of Najibullah and Kabul in 1992 substantively more difficult.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. Pp. 296-7. "Until 1992, the difference [between expenditures and revenue] was covered by foreign aid from the Soviet Union and some Eastern European countries. Despite the steady increase of foreign aid from 8,874 million afghanis in 1980 to 33,774 million by 1988, representing a 380% increase, the deficit in 1988 could not be covered by foreign aid anymore. The government increasingly resorted to internal borrowing which increased more than 10 fold from 1983 to 1988."

⁹⁹ Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. P. 109; Also, Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. Pp.158 and 61.

¹⁰⁰ Giustozzi. 2000. P. 236; Giustozzi. 2009. "The Eye of the Storm: Cities in the Vortex of Afghanistan's Civil Wars". Working Paper No. 62. London: Crisis States Research Centre. Pp.8-9. "From the beginning of jihad a number of fighters were involved in the war full-time, but the numbers grew as the economy was disrupted by the war and military needs dictated that military leaders have at least a few "full-timers" around them. The emergence of full-time fighters was key to the future "political economy" of Afghanistan, as these would not smoothly re-integrate into society as the part-timers could. There were maybe 6,000 military leaders in Afghanistan by the end of the 1980s, each with a number of full-time fighters ranging from as little as four to as many as a few thousand."

3.5 CONCLUSIONS

For so long as the Soviets remained ideologically and strategically committed to the rooting of Communism in Afghanistan, the conceptual gap between the security needs associated with combating the insurgency and national stabilization remained limited.

The militias and warlords that were increasingly relied upon, particularly during the rule of Najibullah, reflected an abandonment not only of Sovietization goals but of state-building as an increasingly level of feudalism asserted itself. It is worth noting that though militias were ultimately accepted as potentially valuable in securing an exit strategy, in the context of state-building Soviet advisors were in many instances both negative and wary about their growing influence in which they saw the potential for dangerous revolt. A similar dislike of militias was not present among the Afghan leadership.¹⁰¹ Indeed, it is estimated that Communist PDPA President Amin had already mustered between 250,000-300,000 armed men just prior to the 1979 Soviet invasion, with most of them in the form of militias.¹⁰² Towards the later years of the intervention, Najibullah declared that “national reconciliation is a precise calculation of the present national and tribal structure of our country.”¹⁰³

The efforts directed to the support of warlords and their militias reflected a deteriorating security situation occurring in the context of a state which had progressively reduced its aspirations in areas tied to state-building. The inability to monopolize large scale violence or penetrate society resulted in a push towards extensive alliance building and patronage efforts not altogether dissimilar to the state formation dynamics of early modern Europe. In Giustozzi’s words,

Najibullah did understand that politics in Afghanistan is not made with the Bolshevik-style “proletarian masses”, nor with Western-style “citizens”, but with

¹⁰¹ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. Pp.213-214.

¹⁰² Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. Pp.198-199.

¹⁰³ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.171.

notables and warlords, and he had the skills to put into practice a policy consistent with this view. What Najibullah was actually building up in Afghanistan was a sort of feudal state, where he would have played the role of “king” and the militia warlords would have been his vassals.¹⁰⁴

It is not coincidental that as the state felt increasingly imperilled by the insurgency and, consequently, increasingly dependent on warlords, the commitment to undertake the sorts of reforms that would have both prodded state-formation and state-building—but would have undercut the prerogative of warlords—dwindled. Indeed, it was as a result of one of the increasingly careful attempts at direct state consolidation by Najibullah—the instalment of an ethnic loyalist in the territory of such a warlord—that resulted in his downfall and the collapse of the PDPA government.

Afghan rulers’ traditional reliance on indirect rule and patronage has depended on local figures of influence who could be paid, coerced, or persuaded to either assist Kabul or at least not rebel against it, though this method had not been without its challenges.¹⁰⁵ Newer generations of powerbrokers, however, were increasingly militarized, organized and oriented towards expansion. These powerbrokers arose in the context of a proliferating and persistent insurgency against the Soviet-backed government that had progressively pushed Kabul beyond its historical reliance on local community-based militias to a significant expansion of their uses, resourcing, and numbers. These militias were headed by leaders who often had military ties and training, and as such, posed a more substantive and potentially dangerous force on the political landscape than the more modest local self-defence militias historically found at the village level. As a new

¹⁰⁴ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. Pp.238-9.

¹⁰⁵ Barfield. 2004. Pp.278-9. “...prior to the Iron Amir [Abdur Rahman], major provinces...has been almost independent from Kabul because they had rich sources of revenue that could finance local armies. And because the relatives of the amir in Kabul usually administered them, they also became major sources of dynastic tension when the governors used them to create independent power bases, often by allying themselves with regional...elites against Kabul. Abdur Rahman destroyed this autonomy by sub-dividing provinces into smaller units and by appointing new governors who were personally loyal to him rather than immediate relatives.”

military class, warlords infiltrated and insinuated themselves not only into the range of existing opposition groups but also established themselves as a presence in the countryside, where their interests moved beyond security and military roles to seizing land and assets, and attempts to assert political influence.¹⁰⁶ As Giustozzi notes,

Warlords in particular proved very apt at incorporating modern elements like organisation, administration and propaganda. This meant that they were more effective militarily than the strongmen's armies of the nineteenth century. Combined with the supply of abundant and technologically advanced weaponry by Arabs and Americans, this meant that the state lost technical and organisational edge."¹⁰⁷

The advantages and disadvantages of relying on warlords and militias were not shared equally. For the Soviets, the expanding use of militias "proved to be a relatively well-suited means of "indirect intervention"...as they could at least guarantee some minimal strategic and security requirements at a low cost."¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, Giustozzi notes that, "Militias were not as successful from the Afghan government point of view, as it had to pay the price of growing anarchy within the country, due to its inability to fine tune the policy once it developed beyond its early stages."¹⁰⁹

The activities of new wielders of coercion on which the state was dependent presented an increasingly intractable problem in terms of both state formation and state-building. While militias and warlords could provide an efficient and relatively low-cost option for addressing "security" concerns and not inconceivably aid in the achievement of some state-building objectives, the dependency and rentier state status of Afghanistan made the strategy unsustainable. The collapse of the Soviet Union and its patronage marked the beginning of the end for the regime in Kabul. Given that warlords and militias represented the addition of new wielders of coercion and a dilution of, if not a full blown threat to, the central state they ultimately stood in the way of Kabul's primitive

¹⁰⁶ Giustozzi.2008. "Afghanistan: transition without end". Pp.27-28.

¹⁰⁷ Giustozzi .2008. "Afghanistan: transition without end". P.27.

¹⁰⁸ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.239.

¹⁰⁹ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.239.

accumulation of power, leaving the country trapped in the limbo of incomplete state formation.

Chapter IV: The U.S.-led Intervention – From 9/11 to Kabul

Though the Afghanistan that the Soviets entered had been destabilized by PDPA efforts at forced Sovietization, the state of the country at the time of the U.S.-led intervention was noticeably worse. The United States and its partners began with a country having undergone significant warlordisation, a compromised state apparatus, collapsed infrastructure, and a largely traumatized population. Despite this, and perhaps because much of the U.S.' prime goals revolved around the Taliban and al Qaeda, who were typically seen as "medieval" and poorly equipped, the hope, as it had been in Moscow, was for a limited engagement.

In contrast to Moscow, Washington expressed a somewhat muted enthusiasm for most state-building activities in the early years of its presence. Much as was the case with the Soviets, however, a worrying level of insurgent activity marked the beginning of a change in approach. While the Soviets had begun state-building early on despite an insurgency, the U.S.-led intervention arguably began to take state-building more seriously because of one. Operating on the basis on a rediscovery of counter-insurgency (COIN) doctrine and a consequent emphasis on winning over the "hearts-and-minds" of the population, state-building efforts acquired a new urgency. While the Soviets had begun by seeing the fight against an insurgency as necessary for making progress in building a Soviet state, the U.S.-led perspective was effectively reversed: success in a range of state-building efforts came to be seen as instrumental to improving security, and just as importantly to facilitating an exit from the theatre.

This study suggests that in contrast to the Soviets, the U.S.-led intervention has displayed a noticeably lesser degree of attention to Kabul's ability to work towards a direct monopoly on the use of legitimate force. In addition to maintaining the

operational status of warlords and their militias, the U.S., as the dominant Coalition partner, has been keen to explore the use and creation of additional militias from the first days of the intervention. This has been accompanied by an inclusion of a significant number of warlords and their associates into state structures. This approach to both existing and new armed non-state actors has resulted in a gap between the interests of stabilization and the strengthening of the Afghan centre from the outset.

Given the substantial capacity of Afghanistan's armed non-state actors and Kabul's often limited leverage over them, a greater focus on state formation and actor- and social-dynamics would anticipate appreciable levels of resistance to any unsupported attempts by Kabul to assert its will, as well as, selective efforts to both engage with and undermine the state in the face of competition not only the capital but from other "wielders of coercion". As the chapter (and data to be presented in Chapter V) show, this has indeed largely been the case. Given this background dynamic, warlord and militia efforts against the insurgency have been similarly selective and ineffective; indeed, despite the substantive resources provided to often powerful local powerbrokers since the earliest days of the intervention, they proved to have little ability to prevent either the regrouping of insurgent forces, their increasing activity against government and Coalition forces or their gradual expansion into areas previously deemed outside of their influence. The establishment of warlords in state structures through self-co-optation has undercut efforts at state penetration, as local power structures (and revenue streams) have often remained under their influence or outright control.

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The American-led intervention into Afghanistan that arose in the aftermath of the attacks of 11 September 2001 soon expanded beyond its counter-terrorism aims to a broader desire by the international community, including bodies such as the United

Nations, to engage in a more substantive way. Afghanistan presented all the risks and hallmarks of a “failed state” capable not only of harbouring terrorists but producing eye-watering quantities of drugs and at risk of sliding back into civil war in a geopolitically fragile neighbourhood. A growing consensus that the state of affairs had been greatly facilitated by American disinterest with the departure of the Soviets, further added to the sense that decisive action was needed.

That being said, the chastening of the Soviets and even earlier difficulties encountered by the British seemed to suggest a “light footprint” approach which was adopted with only modest numbers of troops being deployed in the intervention’s early days.¹¹⁰ Though the intervention remains a multinational one, the dominant role of the United States was clear from the beginning and underlined by the newer and more aggressive stance on international affairs that had been adopted by the Bush administration.

In the midst of persisting violence, NATO took over command of the U.N.-sanctioned International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which had been based only in Kabul, in August of 2003.¹¹¹ Earlier that year, the U.S. had engaged itself in Iraq, which would draw both attention and resources away Afghanistan, a development which many see as having enabled the violence that ramped up steadily, particularly in the southern and eastern portions of the country; by 2005-2006, the intervention was forced to concede it was faced with a full-blown insurgency. In recent years attention has shifted back to Afghanistan with ISAF troop numbers having reached over 132,000 surpassing Soviet levels.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Only 3,000-4,000 troops were sent to secure Kabul and the area around it.

¹¹¹ In line with one of the provisions in the Bonn Agreement, the Security Council passed a resolution on 20 December 2001 authorizing the deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to Kabul and the surrounding areas (Res. 1386/2001).

¹¹² Figures as of 6 June 2011.

[http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/Revised%206%20June%202011%20Placemat%20\(Full\).pdf](http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/Revised%206%20June%202011%20Placemat%20(Full).pdf)

With the length of the intervention now exceeding that of the Soviets and the financial strain of engagement taking its toll, the intervention is presently entering what many see as an “end game”. Following close on the heels of significant troop surges (particularly of special forces), at the time of writing, ISAF has just begun the formal “transition” process, transferring security responsibilities to Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in seven areas of the country, while several ISAF partner countries have either begun to announce withdrawal dates, or, in the case of Canada and the Netherlands, already withdrawn troops ahead of a scheduled final pullout in 2014.¹¹³

4.1 U.S.-LED EFFORTS AND STATE-BUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN

Much like the Soviets, the U.S.-led intervention has pursued a combination of military and state-building approaches in Afghanistan; both faced rural insurgencies and both encountered challenges in trying to build a central state able to exert influence beyond Kabul. Despite these fundamental similarities, the two interventions present differences in the size of footprint used, the response to the intervention from the population, levels of state capability at the time of intervention, and the capacity and presence of warlords and other armed non-state actors.

While the Soviets deployed large numbers of troops and substantial resources from the outset, they faced an almost immediate insurgency; they also engaged with a Kabul which was still possessed of some level of state capacity. The U.S.-led intervention, by comparison, was both limited in resources at the outset and then distracted by the needs of Iraq. The state structures it “inherited” bore the marks of Taliban governance and the after-effects of years of conflict, with ethnic and other sub-national identities having become more entrenched as a result of the civil war in the 1990s. The reception

¹¹³ While this security transfer is in many ways symbolic (one of the areas, Kabul, has essentially been under ANSF control for sometime already) attacks in a number of the areas proposed for handover have raised questions about the capacity of the ANSF to secure the country.

from the population was, in contrast to historical precedent, welcoming, in no small part due to the high degree of war fatigue in the population, providing the Coalition with what turned out to be a few years of relative peace in which it could have pursued relatively ambitious goals before the insurgency took root.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, the existing and well-developed powerbases of local strongmen, especially northern warlords, presented an important factor that the Soviets had not had to contend with.

In sharp contrast to the Soviets who had both a tangible reason for persisting in Afghanistan (to prevent the failure of a budding Socialist state), as well as, a doctrine that mapped out routes to Sovietization, the rapid fall of the Taliban and dispersion of al-Qaeda left the U.S.-led intervention at somewhat of a loss. Though there was, as suggested before, a strong sense that the risk of Afghanistan relapsing into a safe haven for terrorism and other problems demanded some form of stabilization effort, there was limited agreement on how to proceed. As Suhrke et al indicate,

A minimalist perspective (“nation-building lite”) held that the main purpose was to establish a stable, reasonably effective and Western - friendly government that could prevent international terrorists from making use of Afghan territory. A more ambitious perspective held up a higher standard: the overarching objective was to develop genuinely democratic and rights-based governing structures as well as to promote economic development. A common denominator was to support the modernist, reformist pro-Western elements in the transitional administration.

The maximalist ambitions were reflected in the language of the Bonn Agreement and the formal template for the political transition. In practice, key international actors - above all the US, but also the UN SRSG - at times acted more in line with a minimalist perspective in order to safeguard short-term stability and limit the influence of conservative Islamists.¹¹⁵

The maximalist approach of the December 2001 Bonn Agreement brought together aspirations for a Weberian-state with contemporary concerns central to international

¹¹⁴ See also Barfield. 2004. P.263. Barfield notes that the American arrival did not provoke massive internal opposition, pointing to changes which had occurred in the relationship between war and political legitimacy.

¹¹⁵ Astri Suhrke, Kristian Berg Harpviken. 2004. “Conflictual Peacebuilding: Afghanistan Two Years after Bonn”. Report 2004: 4. Oslo: Chr. Michelsen Institute. P.4.

bodies such as the UN, in the form of human rights and social justice issues.¹¹⁶ The subsequent Afghan Compact of 2006 was similarly or even more ambitious. Having reflected on Soviet experience, agricultural reforms were noticeably absent.¹¹⁷

The ambitious goals for state-building gave rise to a range of seemingly uncoordinated efforts by the states participating in ISAF, as well as, the U.N., World Bank, and a host of other actors. While certain goals remained central (such as development of the security sector and education, especially for girls), there was little in the way of prioritization, and over time different goals were added or were suddenly deemed “crucial”.¹¹⁸ In practice, the six sequenced areas of “nation-building” as outlined by Dobbins et al. were not to be found, with a full range of efforts being pursued essentially simultaneously.¹¹⁹

The results of this range of efforts have been mixed. Economically, while growth rates have been strong, the Afghan government remains, as has historically been the case, perilously dependent on external support, which the substantial expanding of security

¹¹⁶ Suhrke and Harpviken. 2004. P.3—“The transitional structure that emerged from deliberations at the United Nations, in Bonn and Tokyo and in related meetings had five pillars:

- an interim governing structure with a timetable for a transition to a more ‘broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative’ government
- state capacity to be rebuilt at the central level (with immediate external funding of salaries of government officials)
- large-scale international aid for humanitarian and reconstruction purposes
- a ‘light footprint’ international presence, which meant a UN assistance mission only (with sovereignty residing in the Afghan transitional administration), and a limited international peacekeeping force (only in the capital city)
- the UN rather than the United States would formally take the lead support role during the political transition.”

¹¹⁷ Astri Suhrke. 2006. “The Limits of Statebuilding: The Role of International Assistance in Afghanistan”. Paper presented at the International Studies Association annual meeting, San Diego, 21-24 March 2006. P.12.

¹¹⁸ Examples of this include a marked focus on counter-narcotics efforts by the time of the London event [...] and the more recent concern and preoccupation with corruption as a ‘driver of conflict’. See also Suhrke. 2006. Pp.11-12.

¹¹⁹ Dobbins et al. 2007. The six are security, humanitarian relief, governance, economic stabilization, democratization, and development.

forces has effectively deepened.¹²⁰ Efforts to bring basic services to the public and increase state penetration have, with the exception of education, made limited success in addressing the conditions of the population which remains stuck near the bottom of most international indicators of population well-being.

Efforts to improve governance have, as in the case of the Soviets, faced numerous if rather different challenges. At least initially, there appeared to be a consensus that Afghanistan required a particularly strong central state to respond to its historical centrifugal tendencies, a view largely held by the Afghan population, Kabul and the US. Indeed, this fuelled Kabul's and Washington's desire to hold elections in October of 2004, when basic control over the countryside had yet to be established.¹²¹ Subsequent events, including the massive fraud in the 2009 elections, the current parliamentary standoff over what appears to be President Karzai's use of extra-constitutional measures to control parliament, and increasing questions about the impact of Afghanistan's hyper-centralized governance structures have pointed to a possible need for decentralization and a rethinking of the post-Taliban constitution.

Fundamental questions about the intersection between some aspects of state-building and governance have also been raised. The impact of parallel structures created through the use of large numbers of foreign consultants and aid groups to perform state functions, and Kabul's limited control over the substantial flows coming into the country have prompted debates and accusations regarding issues of sustainability, corruption and accountability. In Suhrke's words,

At the present time, donors have insisted that formal democratic institutions must be part of the modernization package, thereby hoping to moderate the dysfunctional accountability consequences of heavy foreign aid inflows. A strong parliament might work in this direction, although it begs the question of what

¹²⁰ Suhrke. 2006. P.5—A sobering 92% of the total budget for 2004-2005 came from external funds; many analysts have question the sustainability of the armed forces that have been planned for the country.

¹²¹ Suhrke and Harpviken. 2004. P.33.

would constitute its sources of strength if it does not in real terms have the power of the purse that historically has forced kings to subject themselves to the scrutiny of the productive classes.¹²²

The overall weakness of Kabul and the Afghan leadership has also been underlined in the realm of security issues. The lead position in the building up of Afghan security forces was taken up from the outset by the United States, which in light of the ongoing absence of a Status of Forces Agreement (SoFA) and even incidents such as the early replacement of the President's security detail with American forces has only served to call attention to his dependency on external actors, a point which the insurgency has repeatedly stressed.

In itself, the effort to develop the Afghan National Army (ANA) got off to a slow start with troop levels reaching only 22,000 in 2005, a number significantly below the number that of the international troops in the country at the time (30,000). Efforts to develop the Afghan National Police were limited and largely unproductive, with ISAF and OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom, the U.S. forces charged with counter-terrorism efforts) focused on "disarming opponents, deterring rivals, and defeating militant opposition to the central state".¹²³ Efforts to manage the multi-country military operation presented their own imperatives and challenges. Security sector reform was divided between the UK (counter-narcotics), Germany (police training), and Italy (legal reform), with considerable criticism of a lack of progress in any of the areas in questions soon surfacing. The combat willingness of different ISAF members and their use of "caveats" limiting their troops' ability to engage became a point of contention and awkwardness between international partners; as Rubin pointedly noted, "Apparently many nations consider provincial Afghanistan too dangerous for their military, and propose instead that the United Nations and non-governmental organizations continue to send civilians

¹²² Suhrke. 2006. P.18.

¹²³ Suhrke. 2006. P.22.

there without any protection”.¹²⁴ More recent U.S.-led efforts to raise indigenous ANSF troop levels have met with greater success though, as indicated before, this has come at the cost of heightened dependency by Kabul on external patrons and with considerable doubts about troop effectiveness persisting.

Broader state-building efforts during the U.S.-led intervention have followed a somewhat convoluted path reflecting the multiple parties to the intervention, shifting priorities for state-building efforts, and changes in approaches to security and military strategies in the face of the rise of the insurgency and its resilience. While considerable resources have been devoted to improving Kabul’s hold on power through the boosting of Afghan security force capacity, particularly since 2009, this has occurred in the context of a continued strategy of partnership and efforts to resource and engage warlords and militias as auxiliary forces.

4.2 THE U.S-LED EFFORT, MILITIAS, STRONGMEN, AND “WARLORDS”

The U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan has from the outset had to address the issue of armed non-state actors, such as warlords and local strongmen. Perhaps unsurprisingly given that state-building theory is more or less silent on the issue of actors and power relations, decisions regarding the handling of these personalities have largely been made on an *ad hoc* basis and been driven by the needs—particularly the security and political needs—of the moment.

Overall, the intervention, and the U.S. in particular, has taken what has been referred to as a “collaborationist” approach to Afghan warlords.¹²⁵ As regards security matters, this has been seen on a number of fronts. Firstly, given the focus on security and counter-

¹²⁴ Rubin. 2004. “(Re)Building Afghanistan: The Folly of Stateless Democracy”. *Current History*, April 2004. P.6.

¹²⁵ See Giustozzi. 2009. P. 303 for a discussion of what the author has termed a collaboratist versus “rejectionist” approach as advocated by certain actors in the intervention); Also Suhrke and Harpviken. 2004. P.5.

terrorism objectives, established warlords and militias came to be seen as valuable potential partners, much as many of the same actors and larger *mujahedin* forces had been during the Soviet intervention. Secondly, the intervention has seen a string of attempts to create new militias (or, again, as in the case of the Soviets) to re-label existing ones. Though these have repeatedly encountered numerous problems, they have continued to be pursued in the face of the persisting insurgency and the increasing pressure for an exit strategy.¹²⁶ The initial hesitance to deploy ground troops, and a certain degree of cultural consonance with respect to militias have arguably also contributed to American reluctance to expend the effort that would have been required to challenge them.¹²⁷

The Bonn Conference in 2001, as a gathering of victors, gave local “commanders”, particularly those linked to the Northern Alliance, the chance to strengthen their positions through ministerial appointments and partnerships with U.S. Special Forces in counter-terrorism efforts. In fact, OEF forces began to work with local military commanders, as well as, local drug networks as partners in counter-terrorism soon after the installation of the Karzai government.¹²⁸ These moves followed earlier and extensive efforts to foster working militia partnerships:

Most of these commanders were already disarmed once, by the Taliban, and this was the Taliban’s most popular policy. The CIA revived these militias again very quickly in the weeks after September 11, 2001, through the relatively simple

¹²⁶ Attempted programs to stand up militias initiated since 2001 include the Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP), the Afghanistan Public Protection Program (AP3), various Local Defence Initiatives (LDI), and the most recent effort the Community Defence Initiative (CDI). Many have been abruptly halted after inadequate vetting allowed for significant levels of insurgent infiltration, cases of violent and predatory behavior towards civilians, and reports of militias efforts being used to redress local grievances with neighbouring communities or rival tribes instead of addressing the insurgency, among other issues.

¹²⁷ The United States has a long-standing militia tradition that was perhaps being reflected in American officials’ characterization of newly formed Afghan militias as “community watch with AK-47s”. Joshua Paltrow. 6 February 2011. “U.S. initiative to arm Afghan villagers carries some risks”, Washington Post. www.washingtonpost.com

¹²⁸ Suhrke. 2006. P.24.

means of distributing cash in such large quantities that the value of the dollar against the afghani was cut in half in three months, according to the IMF.¹²⁹

Partnerships with warlords and powerbrokers that had entrenched themselves during the 1990s not only served to bolster challengers to Kabul's monopoly on force but also had significant impacts on state-building efforts. In terms of governance, the position of warlords and other non-state power brokers has allowed them to penetrate the governance structure, adding influence in the capital to their already existing local ability to control and undermine government officials sent by Kabul.¹³⁰ The willingness to incorporate significant numbers of warlords and their supporters into state structures has also undermines efforts to build an effective and responsive bureaucracy. As Giustozzi puts it, the generous addition of these actors "begs the question of whether staffing the ministries with illiterate, incompetent, unreliable and/or corrupt people really has no relevance for state building, reconstruction and development".¹³¹

The impact of Coalition willingness to work closely with warlords and similar actors may be most starkly seen in disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) efforts implemented as part of SSR (Security Sector Reform) and state-building efforts. Given the substantive warlord and militia leader presence at the formulation of the Bonn Agreement, DDR failed to be explicitly included in the provisions. In its place was a clause indicating that militias would be placed under the authority of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and reorganized in light of "future security needs". This effectively allowed thousands of militias to continue to operate in Afghanistan on the proviso that

¹²⁹ Barnett Rubin. 2003. "Identifying Options and Entry Points for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in Afghanistan" in Mark Sedra ed. *Confronting Afghanistan's Security Dilemma*. Brief 28. Bonn: Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC). P.40.

¹³⁰ Suhrke and Harpviken. 2004. P.12—"civil servants of line ministries... well as in their offices throughout years of war and turbulence. In late 2001, while in theory controlled by Kabul, most were dependent upon local leaders who reasserted themselves after the Taliban. This was particularly the case in areas with strong self-appointed governors".

¹³¹ Antonio Giustozzi. 2003a. 'Good State vs. Bad Warlords?' Working Paper 51. London: Crisis States Research Centre, LSE. P.12.

they refrained from actively challenging or undermining Kabul.¹³² According to Giustozzi this compromise allowed for a façade of DDR to be maintained while satisfying key players:

This satisfied international actors, who were not willing to risk destabilising large portions of Afghanistan. It also satisfied international organisations, which were not ready to undertake a major challenge without explicit American support. Finally, it satisfied key Afghan players, all of whom were to various degrees linked to militias in different regions of the country and reliant on them to maintain and expand political influence and leverage.¹³³

In addition to leaving the militias and their formations essentially untouched, the compromised approach to DDR allowed the massive quantities of arms that had entered the country over decades of war to remain in circulation.¹³⁴

The entrenchment of the militias in the periphery enabled a continuation of past predatory behaviour which has, as in the past, facilitated local recruitment for the Taliban insurgency and undermine support for the central government. As Giustozzi reports,

Rearmament of DDR-ed militias was already reported in 2005 and such reports intensified in 2006–2007. Sometimes the ex-combatants were recruited back, sometimes their relatives or, in any case, younger men took their place. Abuses

¹³² Giustozzi. 2008a. “Bureaucratic Façade and Political Realities of Disarmament and Demobilisation in Afghanistan”, *Conflict, Security and Development*, Vol.8, No.2. Pp.169-170.

¹³³ Giustozzi. 2008a. “Bureaucratic Façade.” P.170.

¹³⁴ See Giustozzi, 2008a. “Bureaucratic Façade”. Pp.173 and 176. Collecting weapons proved problematic with many of the weapons collected being unserviceable. According to Giustozzi under the DIAG (Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups), “By September 2007, just under 21,000 weapons in working condition had been handed over. Considering ANBP’s (Afghanistan’s New Beginnings Program) own conservative estimates of at least 180,000 men active in illegal armed groups, that amount would represent no more than 10% of the presumed total and probably even less, as many militiamen would have more than one weapon. At the pace of collection recorded during the first quarter of 2007, it would have taken another 400 months to complete it, assuming no new purchases of guns”.

against the villagers and non-state taxation continued and according to some NGOs, like NRC and AIHRC, the number of cases even increased.¹³⁵

Given the dominance of counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency goals, the limited capacities of the Afghan security forces, and the choice of an initial “light footprint”, the Americans, in particular, were keen to secure warlords and militias as partners.¹³⁶ Indeed, as MacGinty points out, militias were an attractive option for the United States given that OEF relied on a two-pronged approach centred on airpower and special operations forces, with limited troops on the ground.¹³⁷ Militia partners were keen to oblige, and used the resources provided as a means for avoiding and undermining co-optation and attempts at state consolidation by Kabul.

Interestingly, the case of Afghanistan does not appear to confirm the argument that warlords, and other armed non-state actors thrive only under conditions of conflict, which they are driven to prolong indefinitely. Afghan warlords and militia leaders have proven adept at exploiting state-building and reconstruction efforts not only in terms of military resources and support, but also in finding new patrons and sponsors and strengthening both their financial base and legitimacy through selective engagement with the state. Instead of concerted efforts to oppose state-building activities, these actors have instead adapted and sought to manipulate them, turning the conditions of relative peace to their own advantage. As Giustozzi points out,

Most of the warlords and strongmen, especially the most powerful ones, opted to convert into politicians, eventually reaping their reward in the 2005

¹³⁵ Giustozzi. 2008a. “Bureaucratic Façade”. P.190.

¹³⁶For examples: Giustozzi. 2008a. “Bureaucratic Façade”. P.188. “[...]an example is the] AMF’s 25th Division in Khost, which continued to operate even after having been formally disbanded. Eventually the unit disappeared, but its commander, General Khialbaz, at the time of writing was still leading a militia fighting alongside US troops”; Giustozzi. 2003b. “Respectable Warlords?” P. 10; and Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah. 2007. “The Inverted Cycle: Kabul and the Strongmen’s Competition for Control over Kandahar, 2001-2006”. *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.26, No.2. Pp.172-173.

¹³⁷ Roger MacGinty. 2010. “Warlords and the liberal peace: state-building in Afghanistan”. *Conflict, Security & Development*, Vol. 10, No. 4. P.587.

parliamentary elections. They also started paying more attention to their financial activities and ...viewed investment in Afghanistan as a way to consolidate their influence because of the patronage implicit in it. As long as peace did not prevent maintaining and/or consolidating territorial control or at least maintaining enough power of intimidation to prevent any threat against their position of prominence, warlords had no reason to object to it.¹³⁸

Using the role of “Taliban-fighter” as a front for increasing their power, much as they had during the Soviet occupation when they reaped the advantages of being “anti-Communist”, warlords have been able to nurture not only powerbases but a façade of legitimacy. Indeed, MacGinty suggests that the combination of state-building conducted in the context of counter-insurgency may have provided a particularly advantageous combination.¹³⁹ In the context of the Coalition’s “collaborationist” approach and keen desire to show progress in Afghan state-building, militia leaders have achieved notable coups in elections, an example being the parliamentary elections of 2007, where a minimum of 90 out of 249 elected members were identifiable as militia leaders or their proxies.¹⁴⁰ This success underlined not only the failure of DDR efforts to disarm warlords and militias, but also their seeming inability to succeed in their stated goal of delegitimizing them.

4.3 THE AFGHAN STATE IN THE MIDST OF U.S.-LED STATE-BUILDING

The U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan has reflected a state-building effort which has often been overshadowed by other goals, most conspicuously by counter-terrorism concerns and the attention bestowed on events in Iraq. It has also reflected what has at times appeared like a division of labour, with the U.S. tending to focus on “security” as a distinct task, with other state-building activities (such as improvements in governance) tending to be seen as the responsibility of Kabul in coordination with the “international

¹³⁸ Giustozzi. 2007d. “War and Peace Economies of Afghanistan’s Strongmen”. *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 14, No.1. (Jan.). Pp.79.

¹³⁹ MacGinty, Roger. 2010. P.585.

¹⁴⁰ Giustozzi. 2008a. “Bureaucratic Façade”. P.190.

community”.¹⁴¹ Given that the U.S. strategy to stabilize Afghanistan and improve security has been open to relying on warlords, while Kabul (at least initially) sought to constrain them and enhance control over the use of force, a gap between security and the primitive accumulation of power has overshadowed the intervention from its outset.

The government of Hamid Karzai was initially well-received and seen as committed to the progressive reforms that the international community had articulated in the Bonn Agreement. Containing a significant number of Western-educated technocrats, the Afghan leadership embarked on a range of reforms covering the constitution, banking, strengthening of the secular legal system and education among others, including efforts to boost the security forces.¹⁴² Despite this, the situation facing Kabul at the beginning of the U.S.-led intervention was markedly different, but in key ways, just as circumscribed as that facing the PDPA government in 1979. The significant power base of many warlords, coupled with the role they had played in battling the Taliban had left them influential potential challengers to Kabul. As MacGinty indicates,

Figures like the infamous General Abdul Rashid Dostum had fought alongside U.S. Special Forces in clearing the Taliban. Karzai and his international allies could not simply thank the warlords for their patriotism and ask them to civilianise. The warlords expected and received senior positions in the new administration. As Suhrke observed, “Karzai had to co-opt to survive”.¹⁴³

The pressures to include warlords in state structures were driven in no small part by the U.S. decision not to challenge the warlords and their militias, and careful alliances became central to Kabul’s strategy in the early and fragile days of the new transitional regime. As Giustozzi points out,

¹⁴¹ The recent focus on Afghan elite corruption as undermining governance and other state-building goals has reflected a growing frustration in Washington that Kabul has been an unreliable partner in state-building efforts.

¹⁴² Suhrke. 2006. P.14.

¹⁴³ MacGinty. 2010. Pp.588.

Short of a major intervention by the Coalition, this was the only choice available in early 2002, when all of Afghanistan was under the control of these forces. These alliances coincided to a large extent (and not by chance) with those that the Coalition forces formed with a number of warlords and factional military leaders. ...The assumption appears to have been that the first stage of state rebuilding in Afghanistan could only be based on the cooptation of the warlords into the state administration and security forces, because of the limited resources available and the unwillingness of the Coalition to commit its troops to exercise pressure on the warlords.¹⁴⁴

Despite the domineering position of warlords in the early days of the post-Taliban government, Kabul did gradually begin searching for ways in which to try and constrain their influence and solidify its own position.¹⁴⁵ In some cases, such as that of General Dostum, the pressure to award government positions was dealt with by providing him a position which was largely symbolic and kept him away from his northern powerbase and in Kabul where he might be more readily reined in. Technocrat members of the leadership similarly found ways to leverage their access to international funds and weaken regional powerbrokers by attracting their subordinate commanders.¹⁴⁶ Other areas in which Kabul sought to expand state penetration included a resumption of the long-standing traditional practice of appointing non-local governors and district managers.¹⁴⁷

Late 2002 saw the Karzai administration take a more assertive moving sacking a number of officials “to whom this was not only a warning, but also an attempt to hit the

¹⁴⁴ Giustozzi. 2003a. “Good State vs. Bad Warlords?” Pp.3-4.

¹⁴⁵ MacGinty. 2010. P.589. MacGinty sees the 2003–2006 period as one in which the Karzai administration felt better able to place restrictions on warlords.

Giustozzi. 2003a. “Good State vs. Bad Warlords?” P.13. The Mol was also busy during most of 2003, reclaiming the direct Judging from the appointments made, during the latter part of 2003 and 2004, the government also started to select governors and district managers who were not originally from the area, a practice of the Afghan government until 1992.

¹⁴⁶ Giustozzi. 2003a. “Good State vs. Bad Warlords?” P. 8.

¹⁴⁷ Giustozzi. 2003a. “Good State vs. Bad Warlords?” P.13.

patron/client relationships that are at the heart of their power”.¹⁴⁸ The same period saw a government declaration forbidding warlords from holding both political and military positions, which aimed at de-politicising the army and make it more difficult for warlords to control their followers.¹⁴⁹ While Kabul’s ability to directly confront the warlords was limited, in part due to a slow start to the development of security forces, some of its efforts did bring force into play, pitting warlords against warlords, as the alleged involvement of Kabul leadership in an attack on the major Afghan warlord Ismail Khan suggests.¹⁵⁰

Despite some successes, attempts to constrain warlords have largely met with considerable resistance. Warlords have typically acted with completely disregard for Kabul’s authority; a notable example has been the self-appointment of well-established warlords as provincial governors, with Kabul subsequently forced to formally announce their “appointment”. Ismail Khan, a prime example of an established warlord, maintained a consistently defiant posture towards Kabul refusing to recognize officials appointed by Kabul even after being appointed governor, refusing to choose between a military position or a political one after the previously referred to December 2002 order by President Karzai, and persisting as the last major warlord refusing disarmament of his forces during large scale disarmament of the population.¹⁵¹ Khan was not alone; policy guidelines to provinces continue to be regularly ignored and moves to replace troublesome governors often had limited impact. As Orsini noted in 2007, “Kabul-based warlords have taken to approving governmental appointments in provinces and districts

¹⁴⁸ Giustozzi. 2003b. “Respectable Warlords?” Pp.15-16.

¹⁴⁹ Giustozzi. 2003b. “Respectable Warlords?” Pp.15-16.

¹⁵⁰ Giustozzi. 2003a. “Good State vs. Bad Warlords?” Pp.9-10. “What is especially interesting in this case is that Karzai and the reformist ministers in Kabul resorted to manipulative tricks typical of the warlords in order to weaken Ismail Khan. Unable to push the development of the National Army and other central state agencies fast enough, they opted for buying off middle level warlords and turning them against their old patron. Inevitably this led to armed clashes and loss of life.”

¹⁵¹ Giustozzi. 2003b. “Respectable Warlords?” Pp.13-14.

(the lowest level of governance) in their areas of influence.”¹⁵² Even governors willing to undertake reform face formidable obstacles. According to Suhrke and Harpviken,¹⁵³

...[new governors’] ability to bring about change was limited as long as the rest of the local power structure remained intact...On the district level where so-called second tier “warlords” held sway, local power structures remained largely unaffected by the government in Kabul.

The resilience of the warlords and the limited support available to Kabul has seen a muting of earlier more ambitious efforts to constrain the influence of warlords, with a more personalized and “feudal” strategies of selective co-opting and alliances becoming more prevalent. Despite this, the recent tug of war between Karzai and Washington regarding private security companies, though often dismissed as reflecting an attempt to bolster domestic support, can also be seen as a continuation of past attempts to marginalize and reduce the number of armed challengers to the centre’s primitive accumulation of power, especially given the militia roots and status of many of these enterprises.¹⁵⁴

4.4 CONCLUSIONS

The decision by the U.S.-led coalition to adopt a “collaborationist” approach to warlords and militias in Afghanistan was influenced by a short-term perspective on the security and stabilization dimensions of state-building and external factors, including the reluctance to commit ground troops and the diversion of American attention and resources to the war in Iraq. Beginning with the lack of disarmament provisions in Bonn and continuing with expanding levels of engagement with armed powerbrokers—in the form of newly created militias—the approach adopted towards warlords and militias has

¹⁵² Dominique Orsini. 2007. “Walking the Tightrope”. *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 152, No. 5. P. 47.

¹⁵³ Suhrke and Harpviken. 2004. P.13.

¹⁵⁴ In recent days, the northern province of Kunduz has issued a 20-day ultimatum to militias to hand in their weapons threatening a military response for non-compliance, one of the more direct challenges to militias that has been made. Ray Rivera. “Afghanistan Seeks to Disband Some Armed Militias”. *New York Times*, 2 August 2011. www.nytimes.com .

effectively built these actors into the reconstruction process in Afghanistan, despite Kabul's limited ability to control them.¹⁵⁵

Given the unwillingness of the intervention to directly confront these challengers, Kabul (particularly in the early years of the intervention) employed various strategies in an effort to gain a monopoly over force and effectively undertake the primitive accumulation of power tied to state formation. While some of these strategies relied on co-optation in line with existing pressure to incorporate powerbrokers into state structures, others moves sought to separate warlords from their bases of power as part of efforts to marginalize or at least weaken them. These efforts met with limited success in part due to the sharp increase in insurgent activity post-2005/2006, which has once again increased the value of warlords and militias (new and old), this time as part of the adoption of COIN doctrine. As was seen in 1992, access to global resources, professional military backgrounds, and other factors have made the warlords that arose in the context of the Soviet intervention considerably more of a threat to the state than the relatively unambitious, ill-equipped, and isolated tribal militias of past eras. In light of this, there is very good reason to question the assertion of one author that the insertion of warlords into the state structure represents a new "hybrid model of governance" that is not only an evolution of "traditional" practice but potentially a "model" for future Afghan and "weak" governments.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Giustozzi. 2003a. "Good State vs. Bad Warlords?" P.5: Out of 27 ministers in early 2004, four were warlords or militia leaders (Mohammad Fahim, Mohammad Mohaqeq, Sayyed Hussain Anwari, Gul Agha Shirzai); and at least three more (by a very conservative estimate) could be considered as deeply involved in the warlords system, one being the son of Ismail Khan, warlord of Herat (Mirwais Saddiq), and two close associates of Fahim (Yunus Qanoni and Abdullah Abdullah)...What is true of the central government, applies even more to the local administration. Of the first group of 32 governors appointed in 2002, at least 20 were former commanders of the civil war period.

¹⁵⁶ See, with caution Dipali Mukhopadhyay.2009. *Warlords as Bureaucrats: The Afghan Experience*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Pp.7-8.

http://carnegieendowment.org/files/warlords_as_bureaucrats.pdf

The insurgency that arose in 2005-2006 and the increasing determination of Coalition forces to find an exit from Afghanistan has increased the pressure to achieve security and “stabilization” gains. While substantial effort has been invested in the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) there remains considerable concern about the reliability and effectiveness of these forces, and the possibility of an eventual fracture along ethnic lines, replaying the tensions of the 1990s. Even in the event of a successful state-building security effort with the ANSF, the financial costs of maintaining the large number security forces planned, while “managing” the loyalties of power brokers embedded in the state structure risks leaving Kabul in a highly vulnerable situation with little in the way of direct and sustainable control over wielders of coercion, not unlike that of Najibullah after the Soviet withdrawal.

Chapter V: Measuring State-building and State Formation among Warlords

This thesis has argued that current state-building literature and practice has shown inconsistent consideration for the types of dynamics and attention to “wielders of coercion” that underlie state formation, with a reliance on warlords and militias representing the most pronounced disconnect. This chapter will examine this argument through an examination of select data from the Soviet and current U.S.-led interventions.

Warlords and militias have, in this study and as per the lead of state formation, been seen as detrimental to efforts by “weak” states, such as Afghanistan, to engage in a primitive accumulation of power and increased levels of state penetration. By contrast, warlords’ and militias’ impact on state-building are postulated to be largely though not consistently negative, in part because of both the wide number of activities implicated in state-building, as well as, the unresolved tensions and even contradictions involved in their pursuit. With respect to stabilization objectives—an area of focus for this study—warlords and militias would be expected to act as rational actors seeking not only to protect their powerbases but expand them and, as such, participating and cooperating in stabilization related initiatives insofar as it serves these interests. The calculus underlying cooperation would take into account not only the attractiveness of intervening powers’ offers, but other available prospects, and the domestic “balance of power” between competing warlords and the state itself.

Attempts to measure or quantify progress in either state-building or state formation are exceeding difficult given the sheer range of activities that have been pursued under the name of state-building and in light of the need to recognize that current state formation is occurring under conditions that differ notably from those of early modern Europe. As such, this portion of the study will seek to be suggestive rather than conclusive in

exploring what data from the Soviet and current U.S.-led interventions in Afghanistan have to say about warlords' and militias' impact on the two.

Speaking broadly, state-building's focus on institutions and security, particularly stabilization related objectives, and state formation's attention to primitive accumulation of power and mutual dependencies permit an important degree of overlap in the variables relevant to either. Thus, a variable such as the number of security force personnel can be indicative both of success in building up security institutions, as well as, providing a measure of the state's capacity for coercion. Other variables that could arguably be considered in evaluating either state-building or state formation include territory under the control of the state, desertions, success/ or failure in implementing social reforms or programming, and attacks against state personnel.

Despite this, it is important to note that variables that can conceptually be considered relevant to both state-building and state formation are not given equal weight in their respective literatures. While a variable such as foreign casualties and extractive capacity in collecting tax revenues are arguably possible variables for either body of theory, the former is central only in state-building while the latter is often not included in studies of state-building at all. As an extension of this point, and as suggested earlier, the sheer volume of activities linked to state-building has resulted in considerable debate over priorities, while in practice security-related considerations have often dominated and received disproportionate resources compared to other areas.

For the purposes of this study, four variables—the strength of Afghan security forces, the size of militia forces, the areas of the country under state control, and direct tax extractive capacity—will be examined. The first and third variables can be considered indicators common to both state-building and state formation, while the last, the capacity for direct taxation is particularly important as an indicator of progress in state formation and often of secondary interest in state-building interventions. The third (independent) variable, militia capacity is negatively related to state formation, but has

posed problems for state-building interventions insofar as it has remained theoretically unaddressed and has, in practice been dealt with in varying ways.

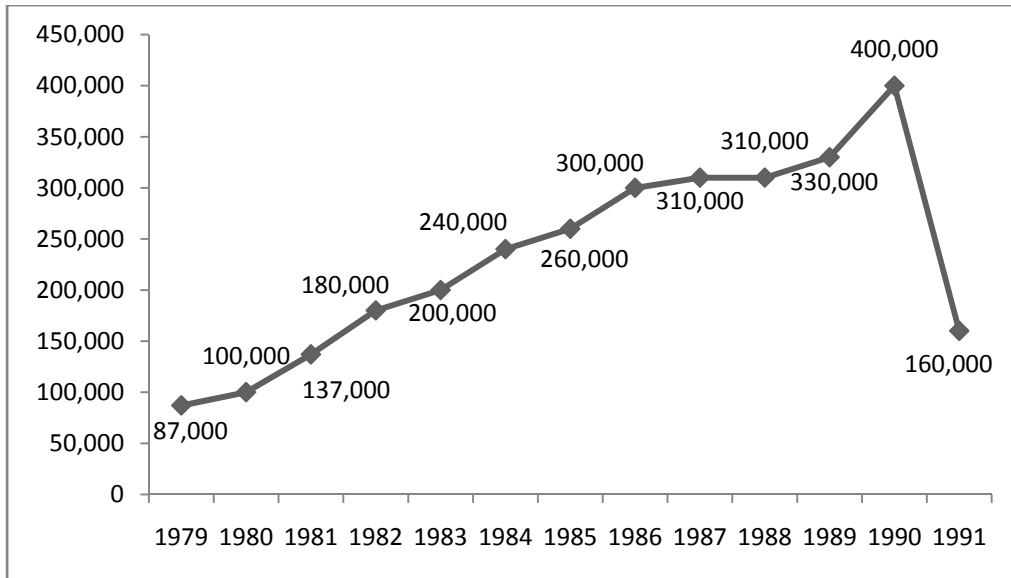
All three dependent variables (size of security forces, areas under state control, and extractive capacity) represent constraints on warlords' and militias' power, particularly the latter two (security forces do not of necessity have to be used against warlords, and thus represent a potential threat, in contrast to the actualized capacity reflected in the other two variables). As such, the variables provide a measure of the capacity of these actors' to challenge the state, and conversely a measure of the strength of the state in the face of the potential challenge of armed non-state actors.

5.1 THE SOVIET INTERVENTION AND NAJIBULLAH (1979-1992)

5.1.1 AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES

As a cornerstone of Soviet state-building efforts, and given the initial hope that Red Army forces would safeguard major centres and key sites while indigenous forces combated the insurgency, significant effort was put into the building up of Afghan forces from the first days of the intervention. Growth was steady until 1986 when it stagnated until picking up again briefly in 1990 (see Graph 1).¹⁵⁷ 1991 saw the size of the forces plummet as the regime in Kabul lost its source of patronage and began experiencing difficulties in the provision of pay and food.

¹⁵⁷Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. Pp.84-86.



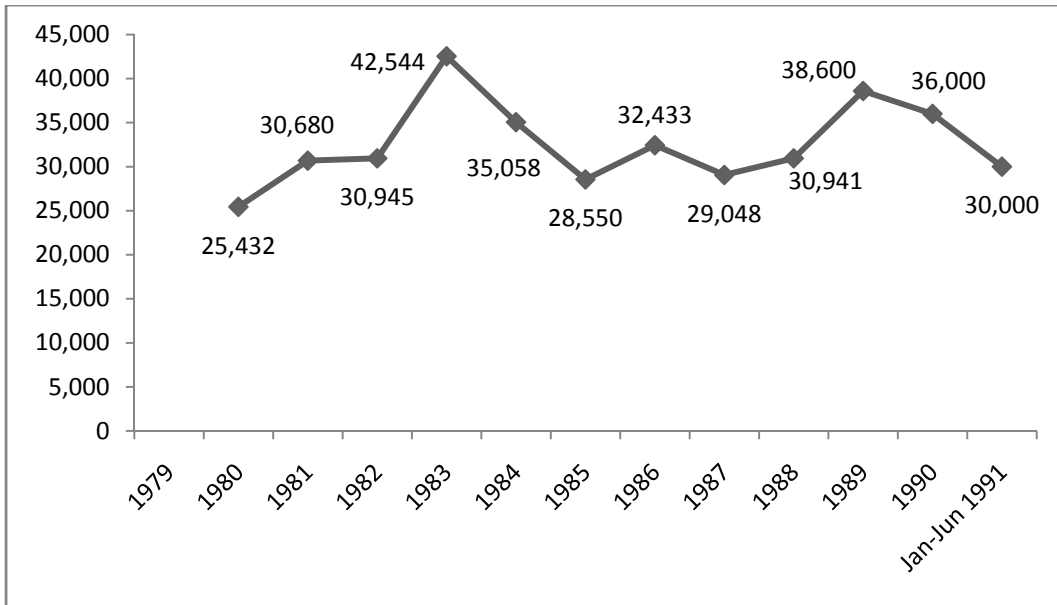
Graph 1 Growth of Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) forces¹⁵⁸

Since the retention of soldiers for the Afghan forces has historically often been as difficult as their recruitment, an examination of desertion rates becomes necessary to gauging their strength (see Graphs 2 and 3). Despite some fluctuations, the intensity and breadth of the population's resistance to the Russian presence was reflected in high levels of desertion for the duration of the war. As Giustozzi indicates,

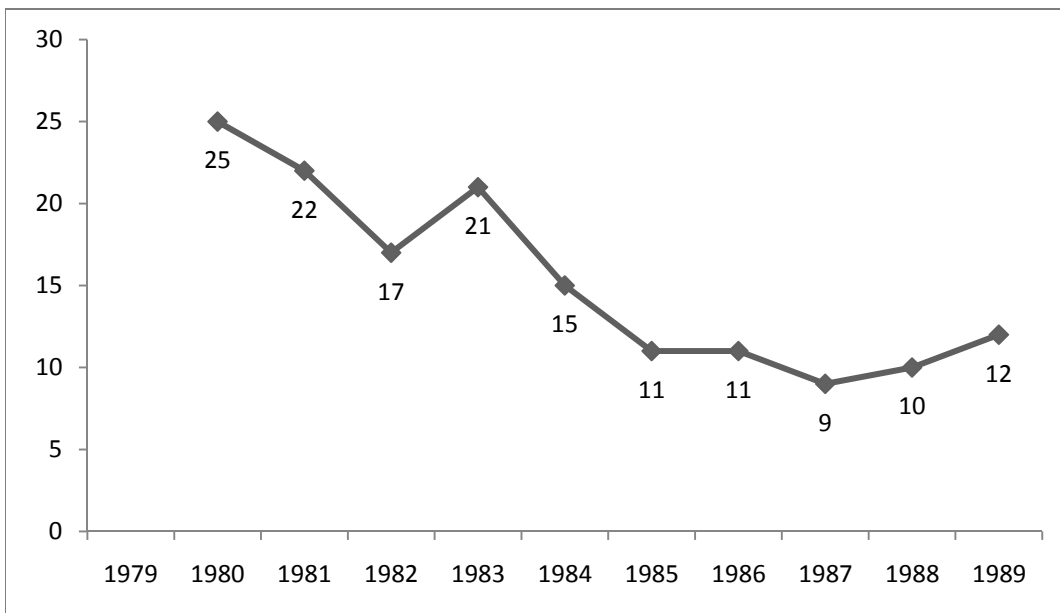
Most rank-and-file were reluctant to engage in an ideological war and pressure to return home and protect one's own family must have been high. The lack of any sense of nationhood, which...had resulted in the use of discipline as the main tool to keep soldiers in the ranks, also led the troops to defect at the first opportunity. There is little indication that the majority went over to the rebels; in fact the large majority of those leaving the army were trying to reunite with their family or simply stay out of the conflict. The army nearly disintegrated despite efforts to draft in as many recruits as possible, while at the same time the insurgency escalated in the countryside.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Based on Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.266.

¹⁵⁹ Giustozzi. 2008. "Afghanistan: transition without end". Pp.37-38.



Graph 2 DRA Army Desertion Rates¹⁶⁰



Graph 3 DRA Army Desertion Rates, in Percentages¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Based on Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.260.

¹⁶¹ Minkov and Smolynec. 2009. "Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989." P.6.

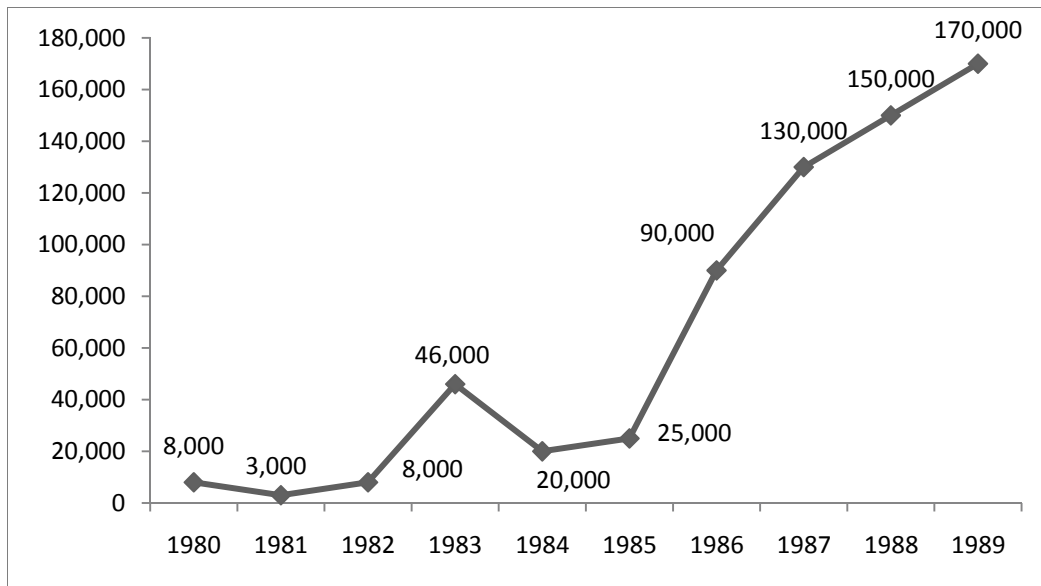
The buildup of Afghan security forces provides a reflection of the level of engagement of the Soviets in state-building efforts from the initial stages of the intervention, despite persistently high desertion rates. Though the hope to retain a “friendly” government in some form in Kabul persisted, Moscow shifted to a two-pronged strategy of reconciliations and militia formation in 1986. Though warlords and militias did not directly confront security forces as potential rivals, they nonetheless had a noticeable impact on them as the stagnation in security force numbers between 1986 and 1990 reflects. The generous terms and increasingly high profile assigned to militias provided a marked deterrent to recruitment in regular forces, and effectively undermined a central effort in Soviet state-building, that of strengthening the capacity for coercion available to Kabul.

5.1.2 MILITIA FORCES

Prior to 1986, when the Soviets were still pursuing a broad-based state-building policy, militia numbers remained relatively low reflecting a mistrust of warlords and militias and their potential to foment revolt. With the decision to focus on an exit strategy, policy was effectively reversed and militia formation became a key state pursuit as an adjunct to the National Reconciliation Policy; numbers shot up dramatically in response (see Graph 3).¹⁶² Under President Najibullah militia usage was expanded even more in an increasingly fraught attempt at regime survival. In one of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces alone, Herat, an estimated 70,000 militia were operational by 1991. Militias were recorded as operational in all areas of the country at some point during the intervention with the exception of the isolated central region of the Hazarajat.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.288, table 57.

¹⁶³ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.287, table 56.

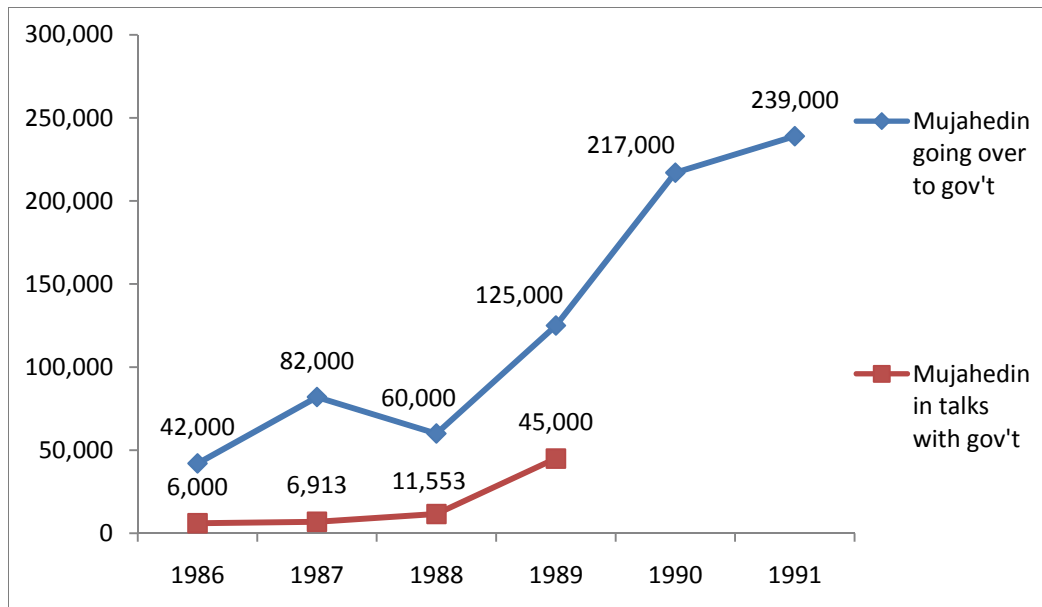


Graph 4 Militia Manpower¹⁶⁴

As indicated, the dramatic growth in militia strength occurred in tandem with the pursuit of National Reconciliation which itself registered very impressive numbers. In contrast to earlier (1983) reports of surrenders under then-President Karmal which did not materialize, National Reconciliation saw 25% of non-government armed groups sign reconciliation agreements with the government and an additional 40% sign ceasefire agreements by the end of 1990 (see Graph 5).¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.285, table 53.

¹⁶⁵ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. Pp.147-148, also see pp.189 and 281 concerning the National Reconciliation program.



Graph 5 National Reconciliation Process, 1986-89¹⁶⁶

While the impressive ramping up of militia numbers resulted in a significant short-term stabilization pay-off in terms of the earlier mentioned drop in casualties noted by the U.N., hopes that militias would at least in part provide a means to beat the insurgency at its own game largely failed to materialize. Many militias did not actively fight *mujahedin*, while some accepted bribes allowing them to pass through roadblocks, *mujahedin* were allowed to move relatively freely in militia areas, and instances of fraternization were also reported.¹⁶⁷ This finding is in line with the study's expectation that warlords and militias will selectively engage with and undermine other competitors, forming alliances and making calculations according to the interests of maintaining or expanding powerbases.

Given that National Reconciliation targeted militias with extremely generous terms (including the right to hold onto their weapons) that were widely regarded as a sign of capitulation by the central government, the success of the program and repackaging of insurgent formations into militias represented a trade-off of territory and the state's

¹⁶⁶ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.281.

¹⁶⁷ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.216.

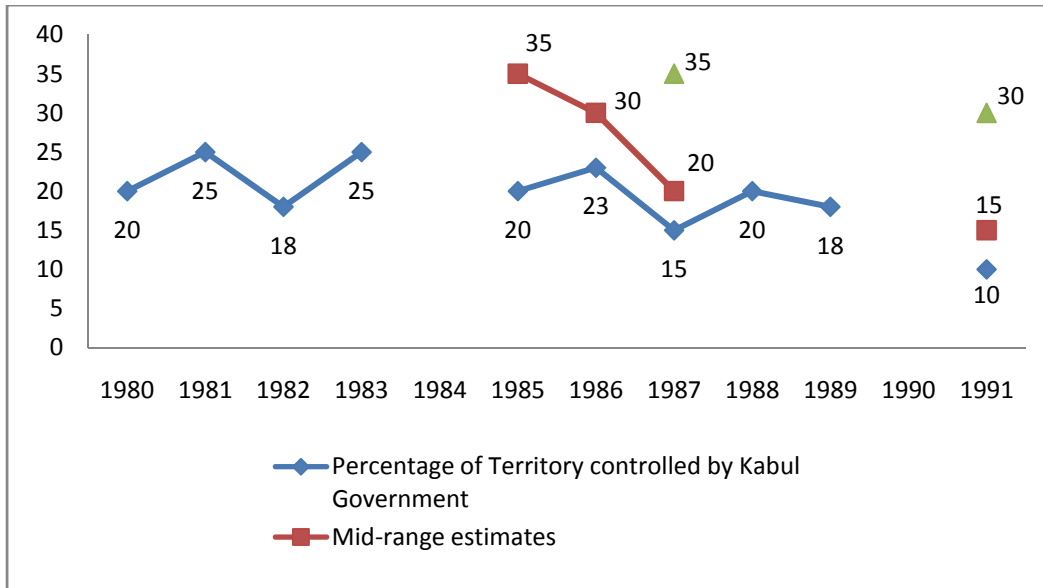
power to achieve at least short-term stabilization goals. By the time this strategy was avidly being pursued Moscow had reconsidered its objectives in Afghanistan and was intent of pursuing an exit strategy from the country.

5.1.3 AREAS UNDER STATE CONTROL

Data addressing territory under state control reflects the impact of militia formation associated by the shift to a National Reconciliation policy in the face of the persisting insurgency. Over the course of the Soviet intervention the territory under state control does not seem to have risen above 35% and according to some estimates to have actually fallen to a third of that figure during some years (see Graph 6). According to Kipping,

Following the invasion, the military situation stabilised around 1983 and remained relatively unchanged until the Soviet withdrawal: The PDPA regime controlled between one fifth and one quarter of the territory during the day, an area that shrunk to the 25 largest cities, the main transport routes, and industrial areas at night. One third of the territory remained disputed; the mujahedin controlled the rest. Thus, by far the largest part of the territory stayed beyond control of the government. Nevertheless, the areas under government control were relatively well protected, and, so long as the Soviet troops were in the country, no major town or government installation was ever taken by the mujahedin.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Kipping. 2010. P.7.



Graph 6 Percentage of Territory Controlled by the Kabul Government¹⁶⁹

On the other hand, the number of *villages* declared to be under state control shows a marked difference between the pre-1986 period as compared to the years following the adoption of National Reconciliation. Prior to 1986 when the Soviets relied on military approaches to address the insurgency, the expansion of government control over villages in the Afghan countryside was proceeding at an average of only 5% a year, with just over 5,500 out of an estimated 35,500 villages under government control as of 1980.¹⁷⁰ National Reconciliation proved considerably more successful in bringing villages on side with numbers almost doubling in the 1986-1988 period. Minkov and Smolynec note that Kabul also claimed to have a further 5,000 villages under “temporary control” which would have raised its area of control to almost half of the rural population (see Graph 7).¹⁷¹

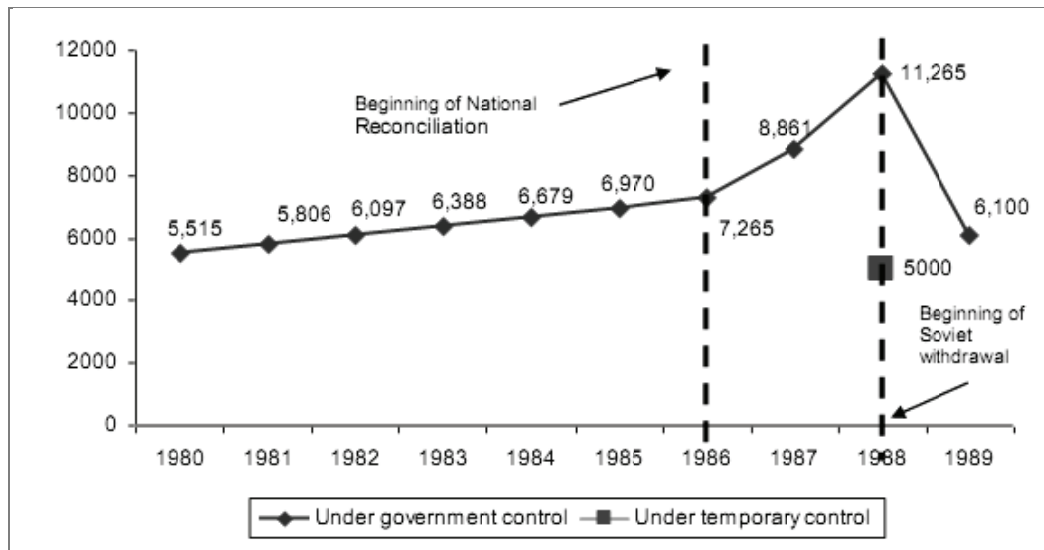
The progress made in increasing the number of villages under states control began to evaporate in anticipation of the Soviet withdrawal in 1988-1989 (see Graph 6). With the

¹⁶⁹ Based on Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.282.

¹⁷⁰ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.17.

¹⁷¹ Minkov and Smolynec. 2009. “Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.” P.23.

departure of Soviet troops in the offing, the number of villages under government control declined by almost half over the withdrawal period eventually falling to less than their number at the beginning of National Reconciliation.



Graph 7 Number of Afghan Villages under Government Control, 1980-1989¹⁷²

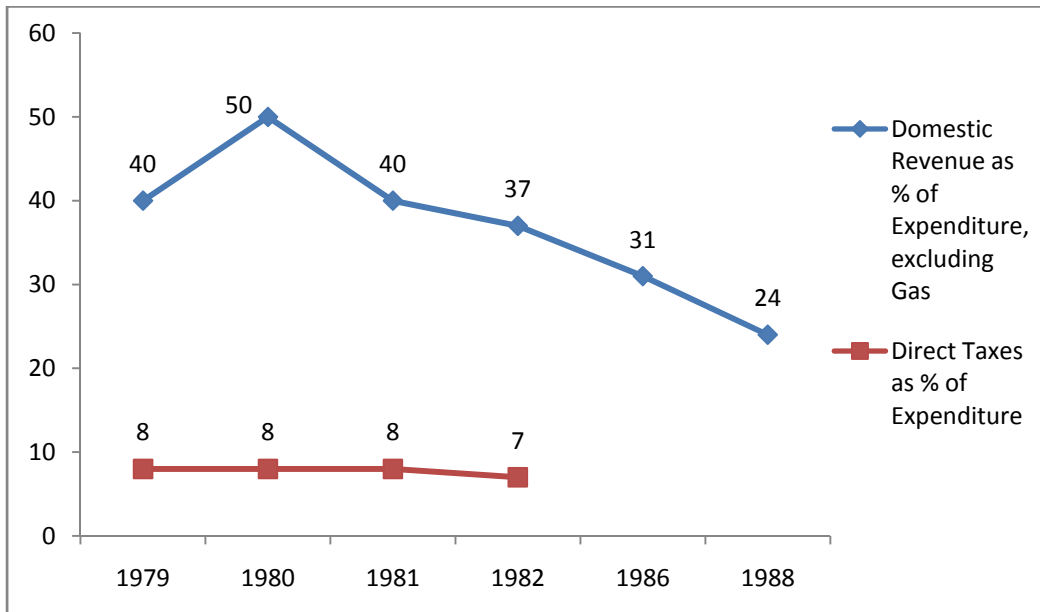
While the number of villages under governmental control seems to present a picture of increased state penetration, the results occurred in the context of “reconciliation” efforts, which included under their very generous terms no less than effective self-rule for signatories. Thus these communities, and the ceasefires that were signed, succeeded in a reducing the number of villages committed to active opposition to the state, but did not produce a correspondingly increase in state penetration and primitive accumulation of power, as “reconciled” villages remained under the control of local powerbrokers. This fundamental distinction is confirmed by Graph 6’s flat or even slightly decreasing percentage of territory under state control after 1986.

5.1.4 TAXATION

¹⁷² Minkov and Smolyneec. 2009. “Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.” P.80.

Given the substantial aid flows that entered Afghanistan from the outset of the Soviet intervention, tax revenue was not instrumental to the operations of the government in Kabul. Indeed, the situation during the intervention represented a continuation of Afghanistan's status as a rentier state. Despite this, it is significant that tax revenue fell dramatically over the first two years of the intervention from 280 million Afghanis in 1979/80 to 16 million in 1981/82 reflecting how government control and influence over the countryside had deteriorated.¹⁷³

As seen in Graph 8, the ability of the government to finance its own operations outside of rentier income (such as gas) fell steadily over the course of the intervention. As Soviet aid was withdrawn, the government responded by printing ever increasing amounts of money in large part due to the need to continue to ensure the loyalty of warlords and militias.



Graph 8 Financing of Government Expenditures¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.10.

¹⁷⁴ Based on Rubin. 1995. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. Pp.296-297.

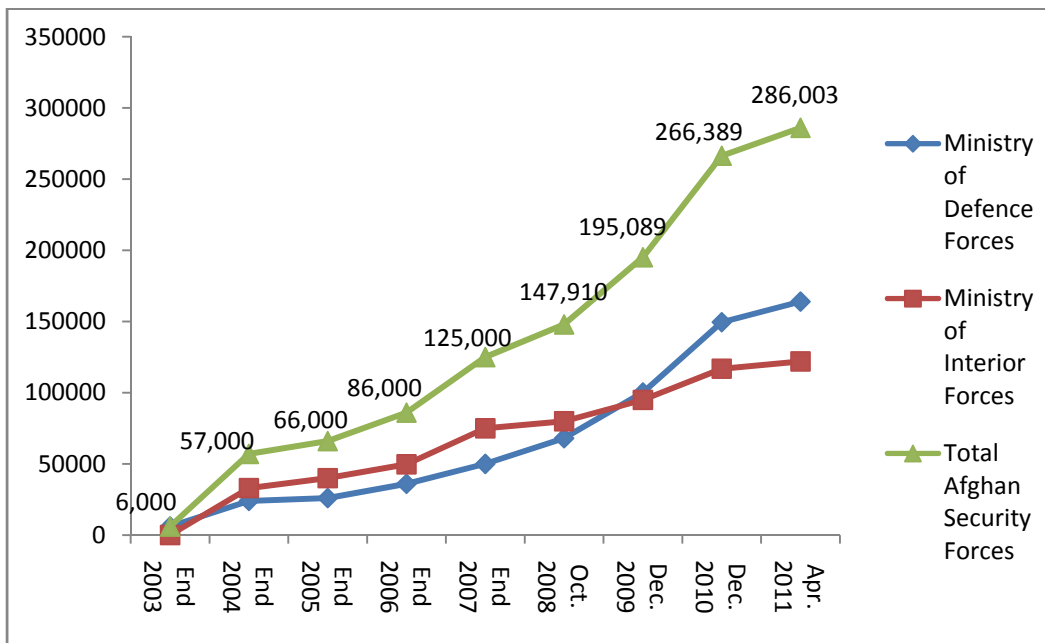
Given the importance attached to the cultivation of mutual dependencies between coercion-wielding leaders and civilian populations, direct taxation represents a particularly important measure of state penetration.¹⁷⁵ By contrast, taxes on customs and borders require substantively less in the way of state power given the limited number of centres that need to be controlled, the reduced numbers of the population impacted, and the likelihood that many of the payers of customs will be foreigners. The case of Afghanistan starkly illustrates the markedly different significance of these two extractive efforts, as illustrated by the historical pattern of rulers of Kabul looking to customs and borders as a relatively low risk source of revenue in contrast to risking revolt by pressing towards direct and broad based taxation efforts. The years of the Soviet intervention continued this pattern with direct taxation remaining limited to non-existent, particularly as the insurgency persisted and Kabul became increasingly nervous about antagonizing the population further. This state of affairs reflected the limited penetration of Kabul into the countryside, a situation which warlords and militias who enjoyed substantial autonomy and were eager to maintain or expand their revenue earning capacity did not improve.

5.2 THE U.S.-LED INTERVENTION (2001-PRESENT)

5.2.1 AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES

In contrast to the Soviets, and despite security related expenditures dominating the U.S.-led intervention's costs, initiatives to build up Afghanistan's national security forces remained somewhat sluggish in the early years of the intervention, showing a more dramatic rise only from 2009 onwards. While five years into the Soviet intervention troop numbers had risen from 87,000 to 240,000 (an increase of 153,000), five years into the U.S.-led intervention troop numbers had increased by a more modest 80,000 (see Graph 9).

¹⁷⁵ See Cohen, et al. 1981 for a study of taxation capacity as a measure of state-making.



Graph 9 Size of Afghan Security Forces on Duty¹⁷⁶

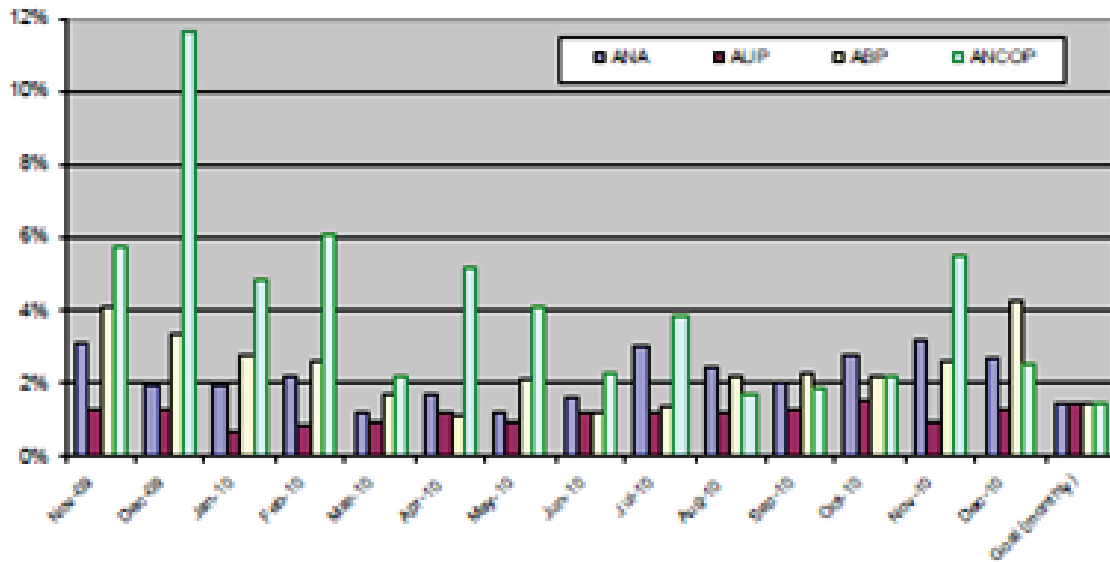
While desertion rates remained high throughout the Soviet intervention, the current rates of desertion from security forces would appear to be at least as problematic. Though annual desertion rates during the 1980s ranged from an initial high of 25% to a low of 9% (graph 3), a 23 August 2010 briefing by US military officials cited a 23% annual attrition rate for the Afghan National Army (see Graph 10).¹⁷⁷ According to figures by Cordesman, January 2011 saw a rate of 2.68% for the month of January alone.¹⁷⁸ Cordesman notes that based on the figures for 2009, efforts to meet the then relevant

¹⁷⁶ Based on data from Brookings Institute, Ian S. Livingston, Heather L. Messera, and Michael O’Hanlon. “Afghanistan Index, Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan”--, June 30, 2011.. www.Brookings.edu P.6.

¹⁷⁷ Based on data from Brookings Institute , Livingston et al. “Afghanistan Index, Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan”--, June 30, 2011. www.Brookings.edu P.7.

¹⁷⁸ Anthony H. Cordesman. 2011. “Afghanistan and the Uncertain Metrics of Progress: Part V, Building Effective Afghan Forces”. Centre for Strategic and International Studies.. <http://csis.org> P.22

force growth goal of 37,000 would require the recruitment and training of 86,000 personnel.¹⁷⁹



ANA : Afghan National Army ; AUP : Afghan Uniformed Police ; ABP : Afghan Border Police ; ANCOP : Afghan National Civil Order Police

Graph 10 Monthly Attrition Rates among Select Afghan National Security Forces, November 2009 to December 2010¹⁸⁰

In contrast to the Soviet intervention, the combination of a “light footprint” approach requiring minimal foreign forces and slow start to the building of Afghan security forces reflected an initial level of hesitation with regard to state building and the influence of the U.S. decision to initiate military action against Iraq. While the militia building efforts of the Soviet intervention in the latter half of the 1980s saw negative impacts on the recruitment and morale in the regular forces, the already well-established presence of major warlords in 2001 produced a somewhat different dynamic. The decision to

¹⁷⁹ Cordesman. 2011. ‘Afghanistan and the Uncertain Metrics of Progress: Part V, Building Effective Afghan Forces’. P.56.

¹⁸⁰ Brookings Institute, Livingston et al. “Afghanistan Index, Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan”, June 30, 2011. www.Brookings.edu P.7.

incorporate warlords and their proxies into state structures has made control and influence over the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior a point of competition. The initial leadership of these ministries post-intervention was awarded to warlords with ties to the victorious, largely Tajik, *mujahedin* party *Shura-e Nazar* resulting in a further entrenchment of both warlords and ethnic identities in the wake of the earlier civil war.

5.2.2 MILITIA FORCES

Determining the numbers of militia forces currently operational in Afghanistan remains a significant challenge. In part, this is a result of a successive wave of attempts to form militias over the years of the intervention. These efforts have run into substantive difficulties typically resulting in halts to efforts, and given that there has been little in the way of concentrated and effective DDR efforts, it is difficult to determine how many of these formations have persisted as “informal” units. Attempts to stand up militias include: Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP); Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3) ; various Local Defence Initiatives (LDI) ; programs under the Afghan “Independent Directorate for the Protection of Public Spaces and Highways by Tribal Support”; Community Defence Initiatives (CDI); and Village Stability Operations (VSO).

The difficulties encountered have been both significant and persistent. Illustrative is the example of the ANAP which was started in 2006 and abruptly disbanded in 2008— despite a vetting process, US trainers estimated that as many as 1 in 10 recruits were agents of the Taliban.¹⁸¹ The subsequent AP3 initiative was started as a pilot project in Wardak province amid reports that the governor had approved the project despite community fears and opposition. Another militia initiative (the LDI) encountered significant difficulties in Shinwari district when militia members used the resources

¹⁸¹ Mark Sedra. 2008. “Security Sector Reform and State Building in Afghanistan” in *Afghanistan: Transition Under Threat*, Geoffrey Hayes and Mark Sedra, eds. Waterloo, Canada: The Centre for International Governance Innovation and Wilfred Laurier University Press. P.198.

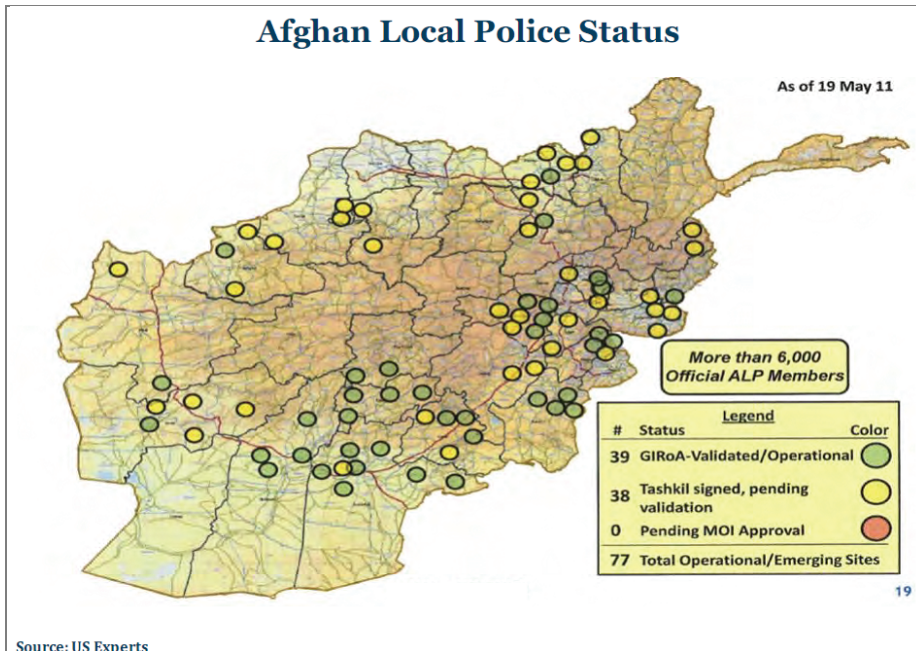
provided to them to settle inter-tribal conflicts resulting in dozens of casualties, homes being burnt down, local destabilization and a quiet closing down of the program.

The attempts to establish formal militias seem to have been noticeably less successful in the case of the current intervention than was the case during the Soviet one. The initial and largest effort, the ANAP, is estimated to only have deployed some 9,000 troops before the program was terminated.¹⁸² A more recent attempt, the CDI, is estimated to involve approximately 14,000 to 18,000 CDI militiamen country-wide “at least on paper”.¹⁸³ Efforts under a current program, the Afghan Local Police (ALP) have pointed to another persistent problem with the militias. In addition to involving relatively small numbers (6,000 as of May 2011, increasing from 4,800 at the end of March 2011), there have been, much as during the Soviet intervention, repeated reports of militia abuses, violence and predatory behaviour (see Map 1 and Map 2).¹⁸⁴ Given that the use of militias has often been justified as providing security in a manner in harmony with local “traditions” and, in some periods of the intervention, as part of “hearts-and-minds” efforts, this outcome seems especially problematic.

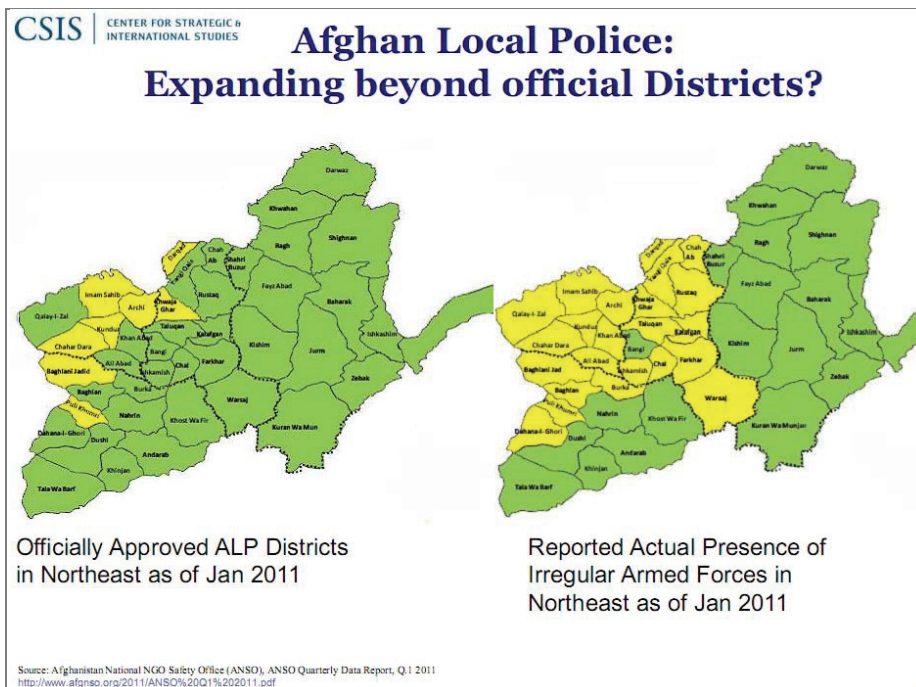
¹⁸² The ANAP-approved staffing structure (*tashkeel*) reached a maximum of 11,271 in late 2006 but the MoI estimates that only about 9,000 recruits were deployed on the ground before the program ended. Mathieu Lefèvre. 2010. “Local Defence in Afghanistan: a review of government-backed initiatives.” Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), Thematic Report 03/2010. <http://aan-afghanistan.com> P. 5.

¹⁸³ Thomas Ruttig. “Militias – The Sorcerer’s Apprentice’s Genies (2): A Look Forward”. Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN). 20-11-2009 <http://aan-afghanistan.com/>

¹⁸⁴ 2011. “Report on Progress toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan”, Report to [United States] Congress, April 2011. Pp.62-63.



Map 1 Afghan Local Police (ALP) Status¹⁸⁵



Map 2 Unauthorized Militias Activities in Northeastern Provinces, January 2011¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Anthony H. Cordesman. 2011. 'Afghanistan and the Uncertain Metrics of Progress: Part VI, Victory is Possible but 'Fragile and Reversible'. Centre for Strategic and International Studies. <http://csis.org> . P.45.

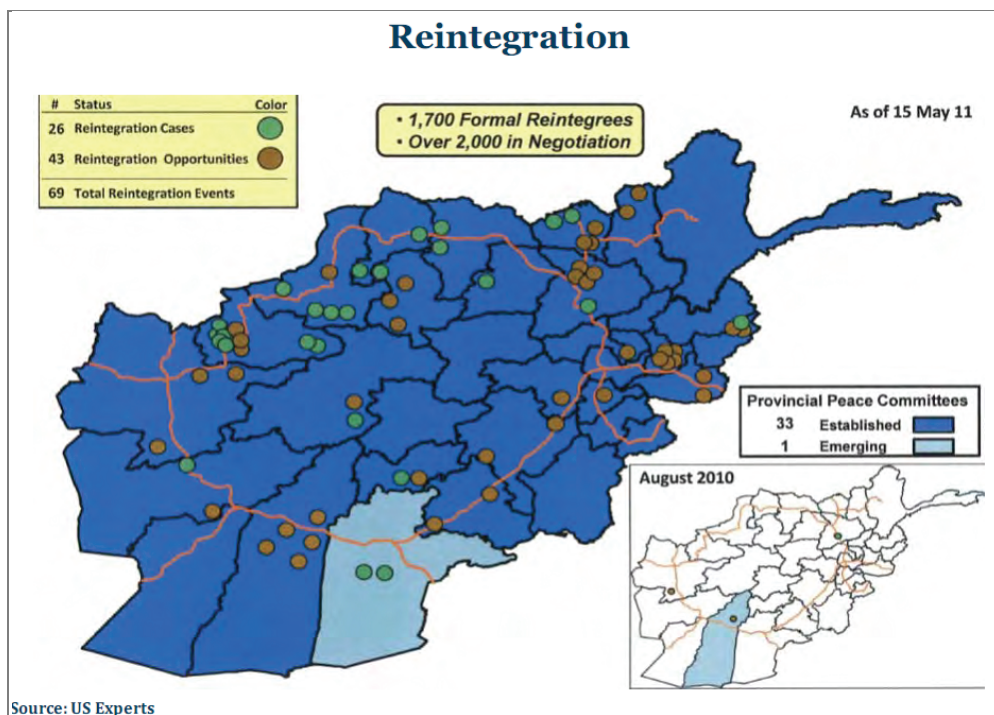
The difficulties in implementing formal militia building have occurred alongside a noticeable rise in the variety and numbers of other armed non-state actors, with “conflict entrepreneurs” and Private Security Companies (PSCs) being perhaps the most conspicuous. While attempts by the intervention to create legal state-controlled militias have enjoyed limited success, available data indicates that militias in a range of other (mostly illegal) formats are likely present in numbers similar to those seen by the end of the 1980s after extensive Soviet efforts. Giustozzi depicts the splintering of militia forces, pointing to surveys and research which identifies upwards of 2,000 “illegal” militias comprising an estimated 180,000 members, as well as, legal or “tolerated” militias, including the 63,000 members of the official AMF (Afghan Military Force) militias believed still operational despite earlier disbandment, approximately 20,000 private security guards, *arbakai* tribal militias, a few thousand militia member’s serving provincial governors, and several thousand anti-Taliban militia members mostly active in the south, south-east and east of the country.¹⁸⁷

As compared to the militia efforts during the Soviet Era, which were focussed from 2006 onward under the auspices of a generously-funded National Reconciliation program, current intervention efforts have spanned the duration of the engagement, resulting in a string of disparate and generally unsuccessful programs. A major difference lies in that fact that while Moscow’s efforts were in many instances directed at negotiating ceasefires with the armed opposition to the state and using militias as a concession that allowed them to be “relabelled”, the U.S.-led intervention has tended to target communities in areas facing significant insurgent activity and sought to offer militias as an alternative to locals who might be tempted to join anti-government forces.

¹⁸⁶ Cordesman. 2011. “Afghanistan and the Uncertain Metrics of Progress: Part V, Building Effective Afghan Forces”. P.93.

¹⁸⁷ Antonio Giustozzi. 2011. “Armed Politics in Afghanistan” in Eds. Mats Berdal and Astri Suhrke. *The Peace in Between: Post-War Violence and Peacebuilding*. London: Routledge.

In contrast to the numbers of fighters involved in reconciliation efforts in the late 1980s (see Graph 5), current efforts have started noticeably later in the intervention and have thus far involved much smaller numbers. Established in July 2010, the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) has as of March 31, 2011, formally registered only 699 insurgents, though by May 15 this number has risen somewhat to 1,700 (see Map 3). A submission to the United States’ Congress included the observation that, “reporting indicates that many insurgents, particularly in the south, have informally reintegrated by quietly opting to end their armed opposition and return to their families and communities”, but does not quantify how many insurgents this might involve.¹⁸⁸



Map 3 Reintegration Activities¹⁸⁹

There are reasons to suspect that the dynamics surrounding reconstruction funding may be playing an important role in the differences in militia recruitment between the Soviet and current intervention. The many opportunities to be had from Coalition

¹⁸⁸ 2011. “Report on Progress toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan”. P.81.

¹⁸⁹ Cordesman. 2011. “Afghanistan and the Uncertain Metrics of Progress: Part VI, Victory is Possible but ‘Fragile and Reversible’”. P.84.

reconstruction efforts have provided lucrative opportunities for militias providing protection and other “services” that surpass those offered in connection with joining Coalition militias.

A second important consideration is the impact the apparent weakness of Kabul has had in encouraging hedging behaviour. Suhrke has suggested that “in the rational actor, perspective, the central government’s manifest dependence on external patrons would introduce a hedging effect by increasing the uncertainty and risk of aligning with the central state.”¹⁹⁰ Given the clear dependence of Kabul on Moscow during the Soviet intervention, the difference in hedging behaviour between the 1980s and early 1990s and the current period would seem to require additional elaboration. Indeed, the steady and significant backing of Kabul until the sudden collapse of the U.S.S.R. in contrast to the relatively more precarious relations between Kabul and Washington and, more importantly, the initial hesitation to commit substantial resources may have combined to encourage higher current levels of hedging behaviour.

Finally, while militias formally “reconciled” during the Soviet era were quick to switch allegiances once the Najibullah regime lost his source of financing, they remained relatively “loyal” otherwise. The current crop of warlords, who often have multiple revenue streams (including combinations of both legal and illegal activity), positions in the government and its structures, and access to the substantive resources accompanying reconstruction—and thereby enjoy greater autonomy—have somewhat more complicated and ambivalent relations with Kabul. Giustozzi has reported that,

Several of the powerbrokers behind the militias, however, have conflicts with the Kabul government and see the appearance of the Taleban in the north as an opportunity to gain leverage vis-à-vis Kabul. They are not interested in decisively defeating the Taleban, even where this is feasible, because that would again reduce the leverage they have gained. Privately, several of them admit informal relations with the Taleban and their disinclination to participate in a decisive effort to defeat them.¹⁹¹

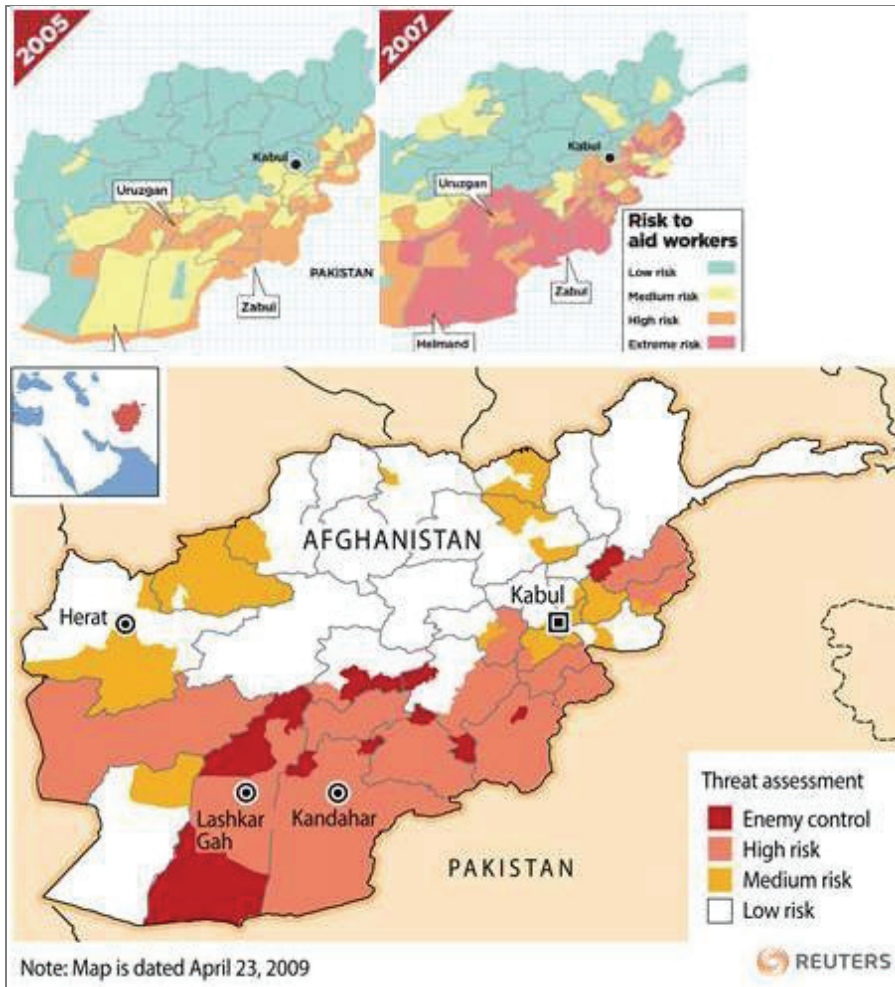
¹⁹⁰ Suhrke. 2006. P.19 also p.44.

¹⁹¹ Antonio Giustozzi and Christoph Reuter. 2011. “The Insurgents of the Afghan North”. AAN Thematic Report 04/2011. <http://aan-afghanistan.com/> p.26

The current intervention's desire to strategically engage warlords and militias would seem to have further empowered a class of competitors to the state who already enjoyed levels of power, influence and autonomy far greater than that historically seen with past local strongmen. This has significantly impeded the processes associated with state formation, with the ability of Kabul to work towards a monopoly on legitimate force and expand state penetration in the face of competitors determined to preserve or expand their powerbases and influence markedly constrained. The seeming goal of standing up militias, addressing the insurgency and promoting stabilization objectives, has also seen limited success as attempts to boost numbers faced difficulties including insurgent infiltration and existing militias have engaged in predatory behaviour towards civilians.

5.2.3 AREAS UNDER STATE CONTROL

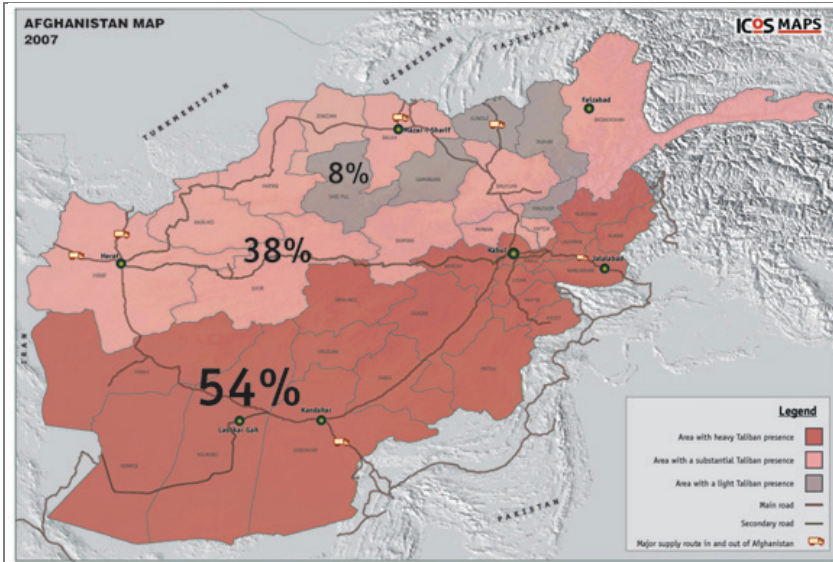
Acquiring data regarding the areas of the country under state control is problematic. As a consequence, this study will look at measures of insurgent activity and threat assessments as a source of estimates regarding the state's level of control in the various regions of the country. Both the level of threat assessments and the size of areas facing moderate to high levels of Taleban activity point to an expansion of insurgent activity in the 2005-2009 period (see Maps 4-7).



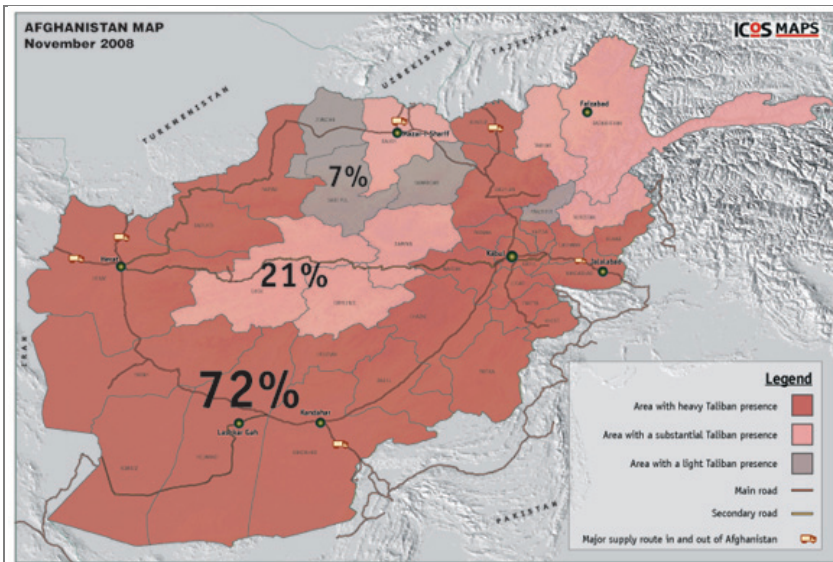
Map 4 Threat Assessments, 2005, 2007 and 2009¹⁹²

¹⁹² Nick Meo. 2007. "Leaked aid map of Afghanistan reveals expansion of no-go zones." *The Sunday Times*. 5 December 2007.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article3000067.eee> and Reuters. 2009. "Government map shows dire Afghan Security Picture. 5 August 2009 www.af.reuters.com/article/idAFTRE5742R220090805



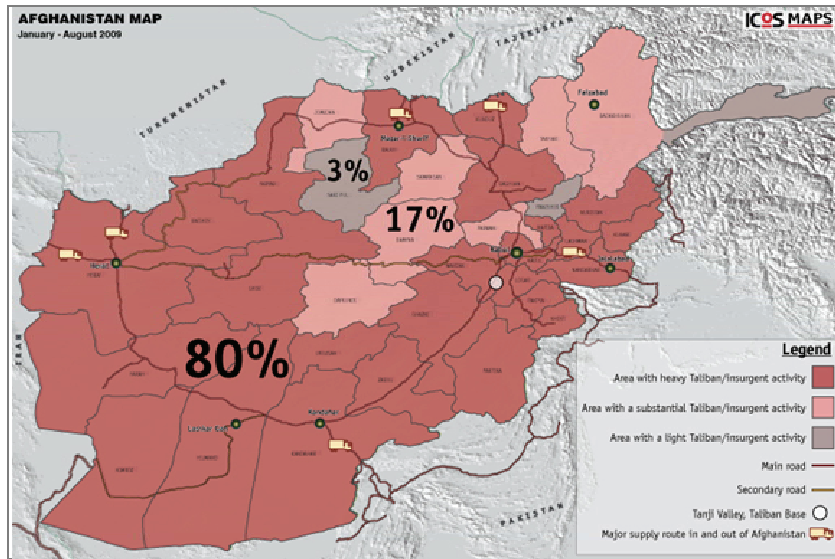
Map 5 Insurgent Activity 2007¹⁹³



Map 6 Insurgent Activity 2008¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ www.icosmaps.net

¹⁹⁴ www.icosmaps.net



Map 7 Insurgent Activity 2009¹⁹⁵

In northern areas, where warlords have exercised significant influence from the end of the Soviet period onwards, violence levels have noticeably increased. A striking example is that of Balkh, home to the largest city in northern Afghanistan, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Governor Ustad Atta Mohammad Noor, a former Jamiat “commander”. Writing in 2009, Mukhopadhyay noted that,

he has established near control over the use of force within the province by installing his men throughout the provincial administration. Residents often point to this racketeering arrangement as the primary basis for Balkh’s relative security and stability.¹⁹⁶

After a brief surge in violence in 2009 that seemed to be tied to elections, violence began to rise, effectively doubling by late 2010 and even reaching the outskirts of the capital, Mazar-e Sharif. Recent research by Giustozzi and Reuter research in the fall of 2010 has subsequently identified insurgent activity in about half of the province’s districts.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ www.icosmaps.net

¹⁹⁶ Mukhopadhyay. 2009. P. 11.

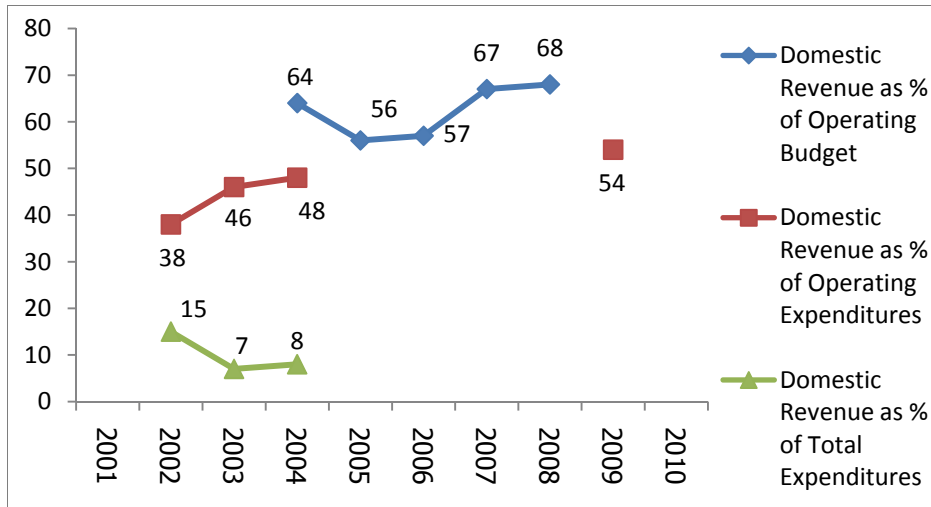
¹⁹⁷ Giustozzi and Reuter. 2011.

The province of Balkh has reflected a broader increase in insurgent activity across provinces in the north, a significant development given that the expansion of insurgent activity has occurred in areas previously deemed safely under the state's control and resistant to the Taliban by virtue of lying outside of their traditional base of operations in Pushtun areas.

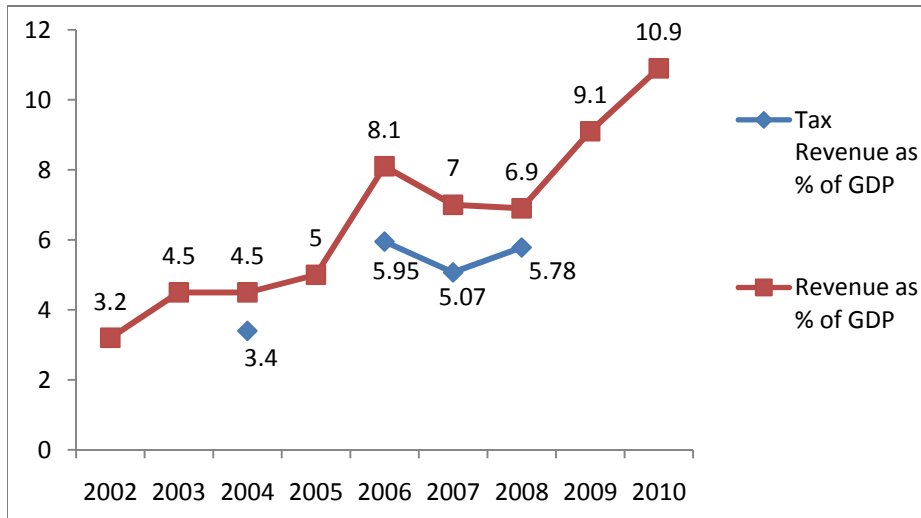
Maps 5, 6 and 7 suggest a pronounced deterioration in the level of state control over territory, with the 2007-2009 period showing an increase from 54 to 80% of the country experiencing "heavy" Taleban activity. By contrast the Soviet intervention saw a stable if limited level of territorial control which is not estimated to have surpassed 35%, even according to the most generous figures.

5.2.4 TAXATION

Data on taxation shows the current government in a financially more vulnerable and more deeply entrenched rentier status than its predecessors during the Soviet intervention. While the 1979-1988 period saw domestic revenues (excluding gas) exhibit a decreasing ability to cover expenditures starting from highs of 40 and 50% before dropping to 24% in 1988 (see graph 8), the 2002-2004 period saw Kabul's revenues only able to cover 15% before sliding down to 7 and 8% (see graph 11). The World Bank has noted that Afghanistan remains a poor performer even by the standards of low income countries, generating tax revenues of only one quarter of the average of other low income countries. Given that major efforts to expand the Afghan National Security Forces only began after that period and represent a massive financial outlay, these figures are likely to have deteriorated since then.



Graph 11 Financing of Government Expenditures¹⁹⁸



Graph 12 Revenue as Percentage of GDP¹⁹⁹

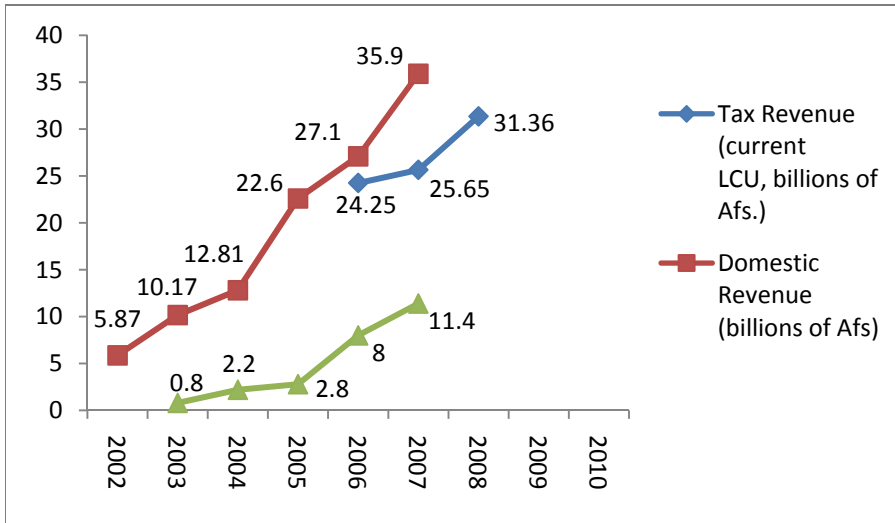
¹⁹⁸ Afghanistan Parliamentary Assistance Project. “Domestic Revenue in financing of Operation Budget, 2005-2008” from The Afghanistan Parliamentary Assistance Project. <http://apap.af>

From Report on Progress toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan, Report to [United States] Congress, November 2010. P.73: As a comparison, Pakistan’s number is 13.4%...The Afghan government is able to cover only 54% of its operating expenditures in the absence of grants.

¹⁹⁹ Tax Revenue as % of GDP, 2006, 2007, 2008 From www.indexmundi.com/facts/afghanistan/tax-revenue (sources: International Monetary Fund, Government Finance Statistics Yearbook and data files)

From Report on Progress toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan, Report to Congress, November 2010, p. 73: Afghanistan still collects revenue equal to only nine

As has historically been the case, and long preceding the Soviet and current interventions, the extractive capacity that would allow for direct tax collection has proven very limited. While domestic tax collected doubled over the 2001 to 2005 period, figures remained quite modest.²⁰⁰



Graph 13 Revenues²⁰¹

As in the past, customs revenues continue to be preferred to taxes that would directly affect the population reflecting the tentative nature of state penetration and limited strength of Kabul. Giustozzi indicates that in 2002, tax collection at the village level was

percent of GDP (up from 6.9 percent in Afghan FY 2008-2009). As a comparison, Pakistan's number is 13.4%.

Statistics for 2004-2009 from World Bank, siteresources.worldbank.org/AFGHANISTAN/EXTN/Resources/305984-1137783774207/Afghanistan_pfm_chapter4.pdf

2005 figure from Suhrke, 2006. P.16.

²⁰⁰ Suhrke. 2006. P.16; From "Report on Progress toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan"; Report to Congress, April 2011. P. 87: Domestic revenue collected March 2010 and March 2011 of 80 Billion Afs, a year-over-year increase of 26 percent revenue collected equal to only 10.9% of GDP, up from 6.9% in Afghan FY 2008-09.

²⁰¹ Tax Revenue, 2006, 2007, 2008 from www.indexmundi.com/facts/afghanistan/tax-revenue (sources: International Monetary Fund, Government Finance Statistics Yearbook and data files)

Domestic revenue 2002-2004, World Bank.

estimated to stand at approximately at only 6 to 8% of customs revenues collected.²⁰² The situation can reasonably be assumed to have deteriorated with the spread of insurgent activity. On 7 June 2011, the Afghan news network Tolo reported the Afghan Finance Ministry as having announced its inability to collect income taxes anywhere in the country outside of the city of Kabul.²⁰³

The other side of this limited state penetration has been the ongoing ability of warlords, even those who have been appointed as government officials, to raise, obstruct and divert tax revenues. The substantial local presence of these figures has allowed them to “charge” a range of taxes (both official government ones and traditional, Islamic ones), as well as, to refuse to handover taxes collected. The best known example of this has been the power struggle waged between Kabul and the current government Minister of Water and Energy (then Governor/warlord) Ismail Khan in Herat province who was, only with great difficulty, persuaded to handover a portion of the substantial custom revenues he collected.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

As indicated earlier, state formation theory suggests that a reliance on armed non-state actors poses significant risks to successful state formation, jeopardizing its basic requirements of a primitive accumulation of power and the development of mutual dependencies between “coercion-wielding” rulers and civilians—characteristics still of immediate relevance to current-day expectations of functional states. This thesis has argued that state-building efforts in which warlords and militias become a key element

²⁰² - Giustozzi. 2003b. “Respectable Warlords?” P.6. “By 2002 it was estimated that tax collection (or extortion) in the villages amounted to around US\$40 million in the whole of Afghanistan [at 48 afs = 1,920 M], as opposed to between US\$500m and US\$600m collected in custom revenues.”

²⁰³ Tolo News. 2011. “Finance Ministry Unable to Collect Taxes Outside Kabul”. 7 June 2011. www.tolonews.com (original source Afghanistan New Center,(ANC), 7 June. www.afghanistannewscenter.com)

of state-building strategies would be expected to encounter negative impacts on variables and dynamics related to state formation, with negative impacts for efforts in key state-building areas of interest. Though the limited availability of some types of data makes categorical assertions difficult, the examination of the variables included in this study suggests that the Soviet and current U.S.-led interventions do indeed confirm these expectations.

As suggested earlier, the two interventions display noticeably different approaches to warlords and the use of militias. In the case of the Soviet intervention, militia numbers showed a dramatic shift prior to and after the adoption of the National Reconciliation Strategy in 1986, with an initial reluctance to use militias and risk a negative impact on the state's monopoly on force being replaced by a concerted effort to stand up militias as part of securing an exit for the Red Army. While militia numbers, with the exception of one year, stayed below (sometimes well below) the 25,000 mark prior to 1986, from then onwards numbers shot up dramatically. Though data for the Najibullah years immediately after the Soviet withdrawal is limited, militia numbers of 70,000 were reported for the province of Herat alone, during that period.

In sharp contrast, the current intervention has showed a persistent interest in militias but enjoyed limited success in their establishment, with different initiatives appearing to have difficulty going beyond the 5,000-20,000 man range and accompanied by reports of Taleban infiltration and predatory behaviour towards civilians. As the research cited earlier suggests, formal militia numbers paint an incomplete picture of the number and range of armed non-state actors, including security contractors and illegal militias that currently occupy the field. A combination of factors including limited and problematic attempts at disarmament in the initial phases of the intervention, large revenue streams available as part of reconstruction efforts, and the embedding of warlords and their proxies in government structures have combined to provide warlords and militias with a range of options outside of joining militia efforts, while providing increased autonomy

with which to resist the co-optation attempts that have been made by the Afghan government.

The impacts of this variance in approaches to militias on the variables of state-controlled security forces, state control of territory, and state capacity to carry out direct taxation reflects the negative impacts on primitive accumulation of forces and the fostering of mutual dependencies between “coercion-wielding” rulers and the civilian population that state formation theory would anticipate.

The expansion of the strength of Afghan security forces under state control—thereby aiding in a primitive accumulation of power—experienced noticeable stagnation with Moscow’s shift from a policy of minimal militia engagement to the introduction of a militia-focused “exit strategy” in the latter half of the 1980s. The sheer attractiveness of opportunities provided by militia enrolment to both combatants actively challenging Kabul and the broader population eligible for recruitment undermined efforts to increase numbers of regular forces. Despite this the militia strategy can be seen as a partial success insofar as it did allow for a Soviet withdrawal (albeit after 3-4 years) and was able to lower civilian casualties in the years immediately following its launch. It also provided the means for President Najibullah to retain power until 1992, which though hard to reconcile with the more ambitious goals of state-building, represented a significantly longer period than expected. This measure of success is tempered by the fact that the Soviets were no longer actively pursuing state-building objectives when militia formation activities became central and that even Moscow’s more modest goals of a “friendly” regime in Kabul were ultimately not realised as Najibullah’s downfall at the hands of a former DRA army commander-turned-warlord was followed by a period of civil war.

The data for the current intervention suggest a less consistent level of concern with the ability of the state expand its power and penetration. While efforts to (re-)establish

militia forces and develop partnerships with warlords and other local powerbrokers have been included in lead-partner strategies since the initial days of the intervention, the development of Afghan security forces, by contrast, remained sluggish for a number of years. Though there is little evidence to suggest that formal Coalition-sponsored militia initiatives has had a significant impact on regular force recruitment, the large numbers of “irregular” and “illegal” militias and armed non-state actors raise important questions. Specifically, they raise the issue of how the tolerance of many of these groupings coupled with the incentives provided by the current U.S.-led intervention’s approach (such as contracts to private security providers) may have encouraged the formation of large numbers of “illegal” militias and other armed non-state actors, not only weakening Kabul’s coercive capacity but also paradoxically undermining the Coalition’s own militia-building initiatives.

While the Soviets were not able to put down the substantive insurgency that faced them from the outset, they managed with the aid of an immediate and substantive military presence to maintain a fairly stable territorial presence as the years progressed. Given that the militia strategy employed by Moscow targeted those directly fighting Kabul and involved the conclusion of cease-fire agreements, the appeal to powerbrokers and militias did not significantly impact (positively or negatively) on the amount of territory under state control. As already indicated, this development can be seen as a partial success in terms of stabilization goals, though it should not be confused with progress in state formation given that there was no corresponding progress in strengthening Kabul’s fundamental position and “gains” seen occurred in the context of individual villages still under the control of local powerbrokers, gains which evaporated with the anticipated withdrawal of the Soviet Red Army.

In contrast, the current intervention’s “light footprint”, the redirecting of resources to the Iraq conflict, and variations in state-building approaches and priorities over time and among partners impeded the Coalition’s ability to take advantage of the opportunities

provided by the initially quiet years following 2001 and before insurgent activity began affecting progressively larger areas of the country. The decision to “accommodate” warlords and militias and engage them as security partners would appear to have done little to prevent the subsequent development of the insurgency or the buildup in insurgent attacks, even, most recently, in northern areas previously deemed hostile to Taleban advances where research points to warlords engaging in strategic alliances with Taleban as part of competition between warlords, insurgents, and Kabul itself. Numerous researchers have also pointed to militia activity and predation as having aided the Taleban in expanding its base, much as was the case with the initial rise of the Taleban during the civil war following the collapse of the Najibullah government. Though the data does not permit a fully direct comparison, the available data suggests that the area currently under state control and not facing substantial levels of Taleban operations has deteriorated noticeably and is likely under the 50% mark; worst case estimates suggest figures that may not be substantively different from that which the Soviets faced during the time of their intervention.

Both interventions have demonstrated little ability to increase the extractive capacity of the central government, particularly in the key area of direct taxation of the population, though the current intervention has seen some success in increasing overall tax revenues. The data available for both the Soviet and current interventions points to difficulties in pushing overall tax revenue above 7 or 8% of total expenditures and, in the case of the current intervention, the recent concerted efforts to substantially expand the ANSF suggest that these figures may have sunk even lower. As indicated earlier, in the key area of direct taxation, a recent announcement by the Afghan Ministry of Finance has indicated its inability to collect taxes outside of the capital. The alternatives to a limited internal capacity to raise funds—foreign dependence and rentier status—proved critical during the immediate post-Soviet era as the loss of Moscow’s patronage exposed the state’s limited authority and vulnerability, and undermined the central pillar of Najibullah’s regime survival options: the paying off of warlords and their militias

that had been created and manipulated to provide him with support. In the case of the current intervention, the strategic partnerships with warlords and fostering and tolerance of militias has allowed these actors to engage in extra-legal taxation undermining the influence of the state and its ability to enact policy, particularly in the countryside, while providing a revenue stream for Kabul's challengers. As the previously mentioned case of Ismail Khan suggests, the involvement of state officials in resisting to handover revenues collected has undermined state-building goals, compromising governance, democratization, anti-corruption and anti-trafficking efforts, as well as, the state's legitimacy.

As the data suggests, the differing approaches to warlords and militias adopted by the two interventions resulted in important impacts on key state formation variables and state-building efforts reflecting the multi-dimensional and negative impact of these actors on the state's ability to engage in the primitive accumulation of forces while also limiting the fostering of mutual dependencies between "coercion-wielding" rulers and the civilian population that underlie successful state formation. In contrast to the current intervention which has seen its warlord and militia strategies produce generally negative results in terms of the variables examined (including the capacity to reduce desertion levels and reconciliation efforts), the past Soviet intervention can arguably claim partial success along two of the dimensions examined, namely, reconciliation efforts and territory controlled by the state. These partial successes can be seen as having allowed for the effective prosecution of an "exit strategy" in the face of a well-supported insurgency. By contrast, they did not allow for the effective carrying out of the state-building efforts or regime goals that had brought the Soviets to Afghanistan in the first place.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

This study has examined the impact of differing approaches to militias and warlords on state formation related dynamics and the state-building efforts undertaken during the current U.S.-led intervention (2001-present) and that of the Soviets and the government they left behind (1979-1992). As both the qualitative and quantitative analysis has indicated, the differing approaches to warlords and militias adopted by the two interventions have produced varying impacts on key state formation variables and state-building efforts reflecting the multi-dimensional impact of these actors. While this study has found that the current intervention has seen its warlord and militia strategies produce generally negative results in terms of the variables examined, the past Soviet intervention can arguably claim some partial successes. Though these partial successes allowed for the effective prosecution of an “exit strategy”, it is important to indicate that they did not aid in the state-building efforts or regime stabilization goals that had been their initial and primary goals.

In practical terms this thesis has argued that the case of Afghanistan points to the significant and problematic omission of actors and social groupings, such as warlords and militias, in state-building theory. An examination of the two interventions also indicates that security goals as typically addressed in state-building need not be synonymous or even conducive to the primitive accumulation of force that historically spurred the dependency relationships found in past state formation. The underestimation of domestic power architecture and the failure to appreciate the important gap that can form between state-building strategies and the principles underlying state formation may lead to efforts that do little to increase the long-term stability of states experiencing intervention and in the worst-case scenario may further undermine their strength and render state-building efforts pointless or even damaging.

6.1 THE SOVIET AND U.S.-LED INTERVENTION CASE STUDIES

The Soviet intervention, despite its brutal tactics and ultimate failure, seems to have recognized some of the tensions between its state-building efforts and the underlying power architecture that state formation pressures had produced in Afghanistan. Its early wariness about the use of militias and reliance on warlords, and about the risks of creating a “state within a state”, reflected concerns about the dilution of power and coercive capacity for the viability of the Afghan state and broader state-building efforts.²⁰⁴

The change in strategy to a reliance on militias in the second half of the 1980s reflected an effective abandonment of the Soviet state-building experiment in the countryside, and an increasing focus on securing an “exit strategy”. Central to these efforts was a focus on “stabilization” and a setting aside of core elements of state-building in the form of Soviet institution-building and reforms. Given the increasingly dramatic measures (including the public abandonment of Marxism) that were taken in conjunction with the sustained effort to build up militias and secure regime survival, there is good reason to believe that the Soviets saw little connection between the use of militias and effective state-building.

There is reason to question whether the Soviet intervention enjoyed a reasonable chance of success, in light of the immediate and substantial resistance it engendered. In the face of significant cultural and religious based opposition, the sole base of support

²⁰⁴ Giustozzi. 2000. *War, Politics and Society*. P.219; See also Giustozzi. 2003a. “Good State vs. Bad Warlords?” Pp.10-11. “Although the communist governments of 1980-1992 also often dealt with warlords, they were always keen to keep them away from the central state administration. No warlord was ever appointed to the cabinet during the communist years, nor as provincial governor, although some of them succeeded in becoming district managers. As a rule, they were appointed military commanders or received honorific and ceremonial positions, such as senator or loya jirga (tribal council) delegate, but no direct contamination of the state administration was allowed. Even if, as military commanders, they were often in a position to influence the administration of the districts, they were kept separate from it.”

that might have aided the PDPA and gained then legitimacy (and one which Najibullah pursued after Soviet withdrawal) would have been to foster and appeal to the small pockets of Afghan nationalism that existed, but that the Soviets, as an external power supporting Kabul, had by definition alienated. Under these circumstances, the use of militias and warlords as a survival strategy provided a certain, if limited, level of success. As Minkov and Smolynec note, “these changes in strategy facilitated the orderly withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989 and the survival of the pro-Moscow Afghan regime until 1992 when the Russian Federation cut off all aid to Afghanistan following the collapse of the Soviet Union.”²⁰⁵ The ability of the Najibullah regime to outlast critics, analysts, and Afghan public expectations reflected both the skill of Najibullah himself in manipulating internal divisions and the presenting of a new and less culturally provocative face for the government. It was also completely dependent on Soviet resources as the basis for the militia loyalty which allowed Najibullah to stay in power. It is conceivable that the maintenance of a “friendly”—if not Soviet—regime in Kabul could have been extended under a leadership in Kabul that provided Najibullah’s skills, eventually allowing Kabul to assert its authority, but this was ultimately dependent on a very prolonged period of substantial resources from Moscow, which all too soon became impossible.

The ability of the Soviets to use the combination of National Reconciliation and the standing up of militias as a “stabilization”/ “exit strategy” was a reflection of the generosity of the terms of National Reconciliation and the broad (and not entirely incorrect) perception on the part of warlords and militias that the government had effectively capitulated and was returning power back to the local level and “periphery.” With the abandonment of state-building efforts, territory was effectively ceded in exchange for short-term stabilization which permitted a Soviet withdrawal. This did little to push state formation forward in Afghanistan and the war which followed the collapse

²⁰⁵ Minkov and Smolynec. 2009. “Social Development and State Building in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period, 1979-1989.” P.iii.

of the Najibullah government saw the effective disintegration of the country into a series of fiefdoms and tribally-run areas.

In contrast, the current U.S./NATO-led coalition has appeared less aware of the potential tensions between state formation and its various state-building efforts. The combination of a “light footprint”, limited early success in building up Afghan security forces, and intense focus on Iraq occurred simultaneously with a broad and sometimes arguably inconsistent range of institution building efforts (including a push for democratic elections) which reflected little of state-building literature’s concerns with “sequencing”, or issues regarding the primitive accumulation of power or monopolies over legitimate use of force.

Significantly, the intervention’s initial focus on “stabilization” and reluctance regarding state-building was accompanied by a decision to accommodate existing and well-established warlords and to pursue the additional force-multiplier benefits of “new” militias. This was done through a number of different policies and actions including, but not limited to, a weak effort to disarm militias, the incorporation of warlords in state structures through various political and military appointments and awards, and the pursuit of a range of militia-building initiatives to aid in the pursuit of stabilization, as well as, counter-terrorism goals.

Much of the policy towards warlords and militias in the current intervention seems to have combined a confidence both in the manageability of warlords and militias by the intervention, and the ability and willingness of these actors to resist the insurgency. It is thus significant that the decision to accommodate warlords from the outset of the intervention did little to prevent the eventual regrouping and launching of the insurgency that first started in 2003, while leaving warlords in their positions. Indeed, the confidence regarding warlords seems to have proved problematic on both counts; as Giustozzi notes,

It was assumed that with the development of the National Army and the re-training of police, the strongmen were rapidly becoming redundant. Moreover, they had appeared to be not that good at providing security either, as the restart of Taleban guerrilla activities in the south in 2003 seemed to demonstrate.²⁰⁶

To the contrary, some analysts and researchers have pointed to active hedging behaviour on the part of warlords with respect to insurgents:

This year's alarming security developments in northern Afghanistan, which has witnessed an increase in suicide attacks against ISAF and domestic security forces, point to the fact that a significant number of warlords formerly loyal to the Northern Alliance are re-arming, while some may even be co-operating with insurgents. While it would be nonsensical to argue that these warlords have withdrawn their tacit acquiescence to the international community's presence, they are hedging their bets by agreeing to *ad hoc* co-operation with anti-government elements.²⁰⁷

The adoption of a "state-building with warlords" approach by the current intervention also seems to have resulted in a much broader array of armed non-state actors and conflict entrepreneurs than seen under the Soviet intervention. The immense amounts tied to reconstruction efforts have proved immensely lucrative for "private security companies" and other ventures which have provided cover for militias and warlords to strengthen their powerbases and diversify revenue streams. The increased autonomy and newfound wealth of an increasing number of local powerbrokers with varying degrees of coercive capacity has both complicated stabilization efforts and reduced the leverage of Kabul, while undercutting the prospects of success for militia-building strategies, and arguably for recent reconciliation efforts, up to this point.

As a consequence of the factors mentioned, when efforts by Coalition forces drive out or kill insurgents in specific areas have been successful, they have often found themselves limited in their ability to advance either state formation or broader state-building efforts. With existing powerbrokers having been strengthened, new powerbrokers having been established, and a significant warlord presence in Kabul

²⁰⁶ Giustozzi and Ullah. 2007. P.180.

²⁰⁷ Orsini. 2007. P.48.

contributing to weak governance, there has been an inability to extend state penetration, with newly “secured” areas ultimately becoming fields of competition for non-state actors and leaving them vulnerable to insurgent re-occupation, a phenomenon currently being seen across most of the provinces in the north of the country.

Finally, an additional effect of the “state-building with warlords” approach seems to have been to induce a heightened amount of “hedging” behaviour. The significant powerbases of warlords, as well as, Kabul’s dependence on external financial and military support have underlined the weakness of state in the face of alternative powerbrokers. The support for warlords and continued operation of militias, who are often associated with past (and ongoing) human rights abuses, as well as, extensive corruption, has also undermined state-building goals by reducing the legitimacy of the government and elections, as well as, support for the broader intervention. From the point of view of counter-insurgency efforts, Suhrke et al note that “while communities often have the capacity to prevent armed incidents in their areas - unless they have been forcibly disarmed by the Coalition forces - they do not have a motive for putting themselves at risk. As a result, they end up by de facto endorsing the attacks”.²⁰⁸

6.2 STATE-BUILDING: MISSING ACTORS, NETWORKS, POWER DYNAMICS

The impact of militias and warlords on both the Soviet/ Najibullah era and current U.S./ NATO-led intervention in Afghanistan points to serious inadequacies in current theoretical and practical approaches to state-building.

The multiple levels of influence of warlords and militias underline the absence of attention given to local power-brokers as actors able to impact state-building efforts. The persistence throughout Afghan history of informal powerbrokers as players in the domestic power architecture makes this a significant omission, and one which is

²⁰⁸ Suhrke and Harpviken. 2004. P.44.

reflected in the experience of other countries where external interventions have taken place.²⁰⁹ The balance of power, dependencies, opportunities, and incentives that exist between different powerbrokers, as well as, between the centre and periphery represent powerful forces in states facing state formation challenges, and ones which are insufficiently addressed by concepts such as “governance” and “ownership”.

This study has suggested that state formation theory, with its close attention to wielders of coercion and other social grouping, as well as, the power relations between them may provide useful insights into how warlords, militias and broader domestic power relations interact with the opportunities and constraints generated by interventions. At minimum, cases such as Afghanistan point to the importance of examining domestic power structures and the potential value of approaches such as coalitional analysis to provide insights into power relations and their impact on “centre-periphery” relations.²¹⁰

By pitting state-building goals such as governance and justice against stabilization goals, warlords and their militias also underline the unresolved tensions implicit in competing visions of state-building. In the case of the Soviets, this potential seems to have been recognized insofar as reliance on warlords and militia usage does not seem to have been seen as an effective means for advancing state-building. Security and stabilization goals were pursued with (often brutal) counter-insurgency methods that were combined with efforts to stabilize and expand party structures, security forces, and the implementation

²⁰⁹ Somalia arguably providing a particularly stark, though not the only, example.

²¹⁰ Jonathan Di John. 2008. “Conceptualising the Causes and Consequences of Failed States: A Critical Review of the Literature”. Working Paper No. 25. London: Crisis States Research Centre. Pp. 35-36; Giustozzi. 2008. “Afghanistan: Transition without end”. P.46. “The causes of the crisis can be economic, financial, political or ideological, for example – but only if the set of social relations that forms the basis of the state is destroyed will state collapse follow. Amongst other things this explains why certain states can be so resilient despite the degradation of most of their ‘Weberian’ features. Hence the importance of studying the set of social relations at the core of the state (‘coalitional analysis’).”

of various reforms, but without a pronounced reliance on militias and warlords so long as Moscow still entertained hopes of salvaging an operational Soviet state from the ashes of the Afghan conflict.

In the case of the current intervention, militias and warlords have fundamentally pitted stabilization objectives attached to security concerns against numerous non-security state-building objectives. While some formulations of state-building, such as Paris and Sisk's, have pointed to the building of institutions as a necessary component for peace-building, and Dobbins *et al* have listed "security" as a precondition for a range of subsequent tasks associated with state-building, the case of Afghanistan has seen the persistence of the insurgency coupled with a rediscovery of counter-insurgency theory mark and effective reversal of these state-building formulations with a tendency to view many of the tasks associated with state-building as secondary enablers for progress in stabilization.²¹¹

This study has also suggested that in addition to the tensions *within* state-building, there is a fundamental gap between the understandings of security historically associated with state formation and those that often become linked to state-building. This potential for tension between state-building activities, particularly in the pursuit of stabilization goals, and the primitive accumulation of power and capacity for state penetration is particularly apparent in the reliance on warlords and militias in state-building efforts.

²¹¹ MacGinty. 2010. P. 579. MacGinty cites Paris and Sisk as outlining a case for peace-building via state-building: "Increased attention on state-building as a foundation for peace-building made good sense. The assumption that political and economic liberalization could be achieved in the absence of functioning, legitimate institutions—an assumption that implicitly underpinned the design and conduct of peace-building in the early years—was deeply flawed [...] Institutional strengthening, alone, would not produce peace and prosperity, but without adequate attention to the state-building requirements of peace-building, war-torn states would be less likely to escape the multiple and mutually reinforcing 'traps' of violence and underdevelopment."

While current practice in evaluating and setting goals for security and stabilization in state-building interventions often looks at variables like numbers of casualties, attacks on government forces, and insurgents killed or “reconciled”, these numbers, though valuable, can also in some instances be grossly misleading as the case of militias who had “completed” DDR in the initial years of the current U.S.-led intervention suggests.²¹² More importantly, these variables are limited in their capacity to measure the degree of “political expropriation” the state has been able to affect in consolidating its hold over the means of coercion and the broader power architecture, that is to say the types of variables that might indicate that progress in state formation has been achieved.

Such variables can also readily be impacted by domestic political considerations (including financial costs and casualties) which have little to do state strengthening. In some instances, stabilization, as in the case of the Soviet search for an “exit strategy”, may be divorced from state-building altogether and viewed through the prism of regime security and survival. The implications of this are significant insofar as regimes dependent on external patronage or foreign troops for security may ultimately persist in experiencing incomplete state formation with little in the way of a state monopoly over means of coercion and penetrative capacity while still possessed of a relatively high level of “security” and arguably be deemed a “success”.

In their examination of political power structures in Kabul in 2004, Wimmer and Schetter point to two lines of conflict: the first reflecting inter-governmental power struggles, the second emerging between regional powerbrokers and the central government. That parties to both of these lines of conflict are members of the Afghan warlord class or their proxies underlines the damage that warlords and militias have

²¹² Tallies of numbers of insurgents killed can also be problematic: “In 2006, the British government estimated that the Taliban had an active strength of 1,000. ISAF claims to have killed over 14,000 in the last two years”. Matt Waldman, 8 July 2009. “The Aid Afghanistan Really Needs” www.guardian.co.uk

inflicted across the state-building spectrum.²¹³ Indeed, state-building stabilization efforts and other initiatives which fail to speak to issues of primitive accumulation of power and state-society dependencies run the risk of running counter not only to the trajectory of past state formation dynamics, but also to the Weberian goal of a state monopoly on the use of legitimate force which is often cited as fundamental to state-building efforts. In these instances, efforts to use militias and warlords to pursue state-building with security in the form of “stabilization” standing as the first priority in a long list of state-building tasks runs the risk of finding itself “stuck” at step one.

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6.3 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings and conclusions of this research project indicate both that fuller consideration needs to be taken of the interactions of warlords and militias with state-building efforts and environments, and as a parallel, that state-building theory and practice contain important omissions that can negatively impact on strategies and decisions adopted during the course of interventions, such as those in Afghanistan.

Accordingly, the research project points to the following policy recommendations:

- Care is required to ensure that state-building policies in security area do not become dominated by a narrow interpretation of “stabilization” objectives. Though factors such as decreasing foreign casualties or reducing overall numbers of attacks on government forces clearly represent desirable goals, they do not necessarily provide an accurate picture of the strength of the state experiencing intervention and its ability to withstand internal competition;

²¹³ Andreas Wimmer and Conrad Schetter. 2002. “State Formation First – Recommendations for Reconstruction and Peace-Making in Afghanistan”. ZEF-Discussion Papers on Development Policy, No 45, (April). Bonn: Centre for Development Research. <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/wimmer/B55.pdf> P.531.

- State-building efforts, where undertaken, need to ensure they do not leave behind armed powerbrokers, such as warlords and militias, that can either directly challenge the state or leave it unable to function or exert authority in significant areas. The arming of non-state actors—barring a subsequent and determined effort to disarm, neutralize or co-opt these actors—poses the risk of undoing state-building through undermining short-term state-building efforts in a range of areas or posing medium- and long-term risks either through potential direct attacks on the state, or the enabling of internal conflict;
- Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) needs to be assigned a higher level of priority in state-building efforts particularly in the initial phases of an intervention. The reduction of internal threats is just as significant as efforts to build up security forces to meet them. This is magnified in circumstances, such as those seen in Afghanistan, where efforts to expand security forces will demand a long-term financial commitment from external actors and leave the state experiencing intervention facing high levels of economic vulnerability and dependent on rentier income;
- The often considerable attention paid to broader regional power dynamics needs to be matched with a greater awareness of internal power dynamics. The apparently weak and limited nature of formal government characteristic of states experiencing intervention often obscures both highly resilient and extensive networks of power and legitimacy among non-state forces. The latter can provide formidable resistance to the development and strengthening of central authority;
- Efforts to address warlords (and other local powerbrokers and potential “spoilers”) need to show both greater commitment and creativity. Strategies that rely on enlisting warlords and their militias as force multipliers or the awarding of state appointments run the risk of effectively handing over territory or key elements of state structures to actors with little if any interest in seeing a strengthening of effective or meaningful central authority or governance. This is

not to say that co-optation is not an important strategic option in addressing warlords, but that these efforts need to be more responsive to the opportunities and constraints driving individual warlord behaviour. As actors that impact across “military”/security, political, economic and social realms, the range of tools that should and can be considered to neutralize, marginalize, co-opt or otherwise address the power exercised by these actors needs to be both more carefully examined and more extensively deployed.

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